

FINAL APPROVAL

Nov 25/58

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

D R A F T

THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

October 23, 1958

Held in Room 1104, Courtesy of the Water Department

Present were: Mrs. Richardson Dilworth
Mr. R. Morris Williams, II.
Mr. Charles E. Peterson

Mr. William J. Schwabe, representing Mr. L. T. Gametti
Mr. Harry G. McDowell, " Mr. Richard J. McConnell
Dr. Margaret S. Tincorn, Historian
Mrs. Charles J. Maurer, Executive Secretary

Mr. Grant M. Simon, Chairman

The Meeting came to order at 3:40 P. M. Mr. Batten telephoned^d his excuses

The Minutes of the September 30th Meeting were approved with corrections.

DR. TINKCOM'S REPORT

The Assistant historians are continuing the same projects as outlined in the September report, searching for additional information concerning the Society Hill Area and Washington Square West. Photographs of Kensington will be ready for distribution among Members of the Commission shortly, as directed by the Chair. Sixty more HABI Forms are ready to be mailed to Washington, except that the 2½ x 2½ photographs being prepared by the Photographic Division are not ready. A letter from Mr. Pettengill confirms our right to keep the fifth copy of these forms, as we have agreed to open our files to all qualified persons and become to this extent, a public repository for HABI information.

Dr. Tinkcom asked Mr. Peterson about photographs for the photo-data books. Information for the list of ten buildings requested by Mr. Peterson last spring, is complete. Mr. Peterson said that as soon as possible these photographs will be taken.

A note regarding the Philadelphia Historical Commission has been sent to Mr.

Murphy, Editor of the Bulletin Almanac for insertion in the 1959 edition.

The Commission has launched two ~~two~~ public service programs. Mr. Bohan drew up a note of necessary procedure to be followed in tracing the ownership of any old building.

This guide through the deeds, sheriff deeds and pertinent court records will be mimeographed and handed out upon request. Mrs. Maurer made an abstract of those parts of the City's CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES which may apply to restoration of buildings. A number of mimeographed copies were sent to Mr. Dawson, Chief of the Building Inspection Section, who had been helpful in reviewing the abstract and in suggesting which material to include, Mr. Dawson asked for extra copies, saying these would be of great assistance in his department of Licenses and Inspections, in its work with the public.

In a short time it will be possible to cut stencils for the list of all buildings that have been certified by the Commission.

THE BUDGET. The Professional Services fund, Class 200 is practically exhausted. The renewal of the contracts for the assistant historians leaves this fund with a balance of \$70.13. In Class 300, there is a balance of \$198.24, still unencumbered. About \$120 of this will be needed to repay the Photographic Division for work it has done and the balance will be spent to obtain reproductions of old prints in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Mr. Peterson recommended that the Commission also obtain copies of the plates of the Hexamer and Locher map, 1859, relating to the Society Hill Area. This will be done. It was Resolved that all the money be spent, including the \$24.75 in Class 400, which can be used to buy a straight chair or a desk lamp.

Dr. Tinkoom's Report was approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

126 Elfreth's Alley. Mr. Peterson reported that this is owned by the Landmark Society which plans to restore it to its original period c 1762. It will take some time to decide what should be done and there will be a further report at the next meeting.

KIRKBRIDE'S.

No further word from Mr. Baker. It was mentioned that Mr. Hughes wants the building for the City's Archives, but that Commissioner Baker is not interested. Mr. Batten

was to have spoken to Mr. Wagner, but since he was not present, Mr. Batten could not report on this. Mr. McDowell urged that Mr. Batten or Mr. Simon write to Mr. Wagner and he added that it would be wise to note what the loss of Kirkbride's would mean to the City as well as to point out that it would be an extremely convenient place in which to store the City's records.

PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL NURSES' HOME.

Nothing further to report. Mr. Simon said that the Hospital had agreed to give all details of materials to be used in the new building. He reviewed all that had occurred during the summer as reported in the Minutes of the last Meeting.

SCHUYLKILL ARSENAL. Nothing new to report.

FORT MIFFLIN. It is understood that the Federal Government has or is making an elaborate study of this fortification.

CANNON BALL FARM. Nothing new to report.

BENJAMIN RUSH HOUSE

Mr. Thomas Graham is pushing the restoration and preservation of this, hoping to have it restored through the agency of the County Medical Society.

BANNAKER SCHOOL. The Housing Authority hopes to preserve this.

NEW BUSINESS

The Collection of books in the City Architect's office. Mr. Simon reported that it had been suggested that these be placed under the Commission's supervision. Mr. Schwabe voiced his approval. He said that the bookcases could be fitted with locks. It was the opinion of Mr. Williams that it should be clearly understood that the Commission takes no responsibility for the loss of any of these books. If that is so understood the Commission will be pleased to have the books for use in its new office in City Hall.

Functions of the Executive Secretary. Mr. Simon reported that the Commission office is under manned. He read a paragraph in a letter written in December 1956, by Mr. William Smith, the then Administrative Officer for the Department of Public Property,

which indicated that the Commission's secretary was to have equal status with the secretary of the Art Commission and other City Commission³. This is the case, although this Commission, as the Chairman pointed out, has a slightly different legal status from that of the commissions established by City Charter. Now, two years later, it appears that the status of the executive secretary is still not clearly understood. The Chairman called the attention of those present to the prepared statement, describing the secretary's duties, saying that in his opinion, it would be valuable to have this appear in the record. The Members were asked to comment. Mr. Schwabe said that the statement proved that the work of the Executive Secretary of this Historical Commission is indeed comparable to that of other commissions. The Chairman remarked that there are two reasons for presenting this statement now. It was moved and seconded that the statement be incorporated into the body of the Minutes:

Functions of the Executive Secretary

In addition to keeping in close touch with the Chairman and the Historian, preparing the Budget, supervising routine duties of running the Historical Commission's office (attending to its correspondence, filing, Minutes, reports and Petty Cash) one of the Executive Secretary's most important functions is representing the Commission to the public.

Submissions and plans for restoration, alteration and preservation of properties have increased and continue to do so week by week. It is not unusual for the secretary to steer a property-owner through the entire process of obtaining necessary permits for restoring a dwelling that has been certified as being historically significant.

Work with the public implies ability to minimize difficulties real or imagined, which the property-owner may meet before the proper papers are in his hand and the Commission's approval granted for the work he has in mind. This entails knowledge of the requirements of the Building Code and City Ordinances controlling all phases of the work involved. It means having some knowledge of projects under jurisdiction of the City Planning Commission and of any pending rezoning of areas under study by the several agencies involved in expressways or rehabilitation. Working with the public involves knowledge of sources of architectural information, where to find fire insurance surveys, blueprints, photographs, photostats, prints and Historical American Buildings Surveys.

The Executive secretary must know where other pertinent information may be obtained, such as tax records, deeds, court records and the many facilities of the Free Library, Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the American Philosophical Society. Some knowledge of the scope and power of the Redevelopment Authority and the functions of

of such agencies as the Old Philadelphia Corporation are also useful; so is some experience in historical research.

It is essential that she have had some experience in public relations, in view of the exacting nature of the detail and volume of the Commission's work in its rapidly expanding program of preservation and restoration of Philadelphia's unique heritage of eighteenth and early nineteenth century buildings. A major factor in promoting the success of the Commission is that the Executive Secretary be adept in handling intermural contacts, such as the Department of Licenses and Inspections, as they impinge upon the functions of the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

This statement demonstrates that the Commission needs more clerical help and more money. The Chairman

He reminded the Members that Mr. Gennetti had offered to provide typing help whenever possible. It was asked if this would always be convenient. Mrs.

Dilworth wondered if the Commission could count on the loan of a typist twice a week.

Mr. Schwabe reported that the Commissioner's office is equally hard up for typists and secretaries, but reiterated Mr. Gennetti's offer to give the Philadelphia Historical Commission as much help as possible. Dr. Tinkcom confirmed Mr. Schwabe's point that Mr. Gennetti's office is short of typists, and noted that in July, 103 HABI Forms had been sent to the Commissioner's office at his suggestion, for typing. These were returned completed, in October. It seems likely therefore, that in spite of willingness to help, the Commissioner's office would not be able to be of much assistance, if the job to be done were a rush job.

Mr. Simon reported that he had asked that the increase in Mrs. Maurer's salary, approved by the Commission when its budget was presented to the Department of Public property last spring, be reinstated in the Budget. He said that Mr. Gennetti had agreed to look into the matter.

Mr. Simon asked the secretary to read the Landmark Society's letter and Resolution regarding the plans for redeveloping Washington Square East, enclosed with it. Mr. Simon pointed out that in his opinion there were two points to consider: The area must be saved from demolition and high-rise buildings kept to the perimeter. If these were done, the Commission cannot object too much to the proposed plans. The Chairman reminded the Members of the letter sent to the late Commissioner Regalbuto and to others in January 1958, which has received no official recognition. He said

the Commission would like to have the proposals cited in that letter, accepted in some formal way by the Redevelopment Authority.

A discussion of the several plans, on exhibition in the Mayor's office followed. It was reported that the three thirty-story buildings, proposed by Webb and Knapp, for Area A, to contain 900 families, agree with studies made by Wright, Andrade and Amenta, who had mapped that area with intent to make best use of the land where the wholesale markets on Dock Street are presently located. All four firms which are bidding for contracts to redevelop Area A, used this map. The comment was that it is inevitable that some houses have ~~have~~ to go and there will be some high-rise buildings, no matter which firm obtains the contract. It was also noted that a restudy of Area B appears likely.

It was suggested that the Commission issue a restatement of its previous recommendation: That the area from Second to Fifth, Walnut to Pine be set aside as an historic area; that there should be no high-rise buildings within it; but that outside this area, the Commission recognizes the necessity of growth and progress. The restatement should be sent immediately to Mr. Rafsky, Mr. Day, the Mayor, Mr. Wagner, Dean Perkins and others. Mr. Peterson suggested that the statement be sent to as many people and organizations as possible.

Mrs. Dilworth remarked that high-rise buildings on the west side of Fifth Street cut the area off from Washington Square, which in her opinion is not desirable.

STATEMENT OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION ON THE REDEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY HILL

The Philadelphia Historical Commission is required by Section 14-2008 of Bill #695, passed by the Council and approved by the Mayor on November 8, 1956, "to promote the public welfare by preserving historic buildings.." and "to afford the City, interested persons, historical societies or organizations the opportunity to acquire or to arrange for the preservation of such buildings."

The Commission has recommended, as an essential part of this preservation, the creation of AN HISTORIC AREA of about thirty-six acres bounded on the west by Fifth Street, on the east by Second Street, on the south by Pine Street, and on the north by a line about 220 feet south of Walnut Street. The AREA contains, and the Commission has so

certified, 319 buildings of historic significance, contemporary with the founding of the Nation. It adjoins the Independence National Historic Park which is recognized nationally as the most important historic site in the country, because of Independence Hall and the other historic buildings nearby.

Parts of this AREA are now under consideration for redevelopment.

The Philadelphia Historical Commission, on October 28, 1958, unanimously reaffirmed its conviction that this AREA must be preserved by restricting it to residential uses, qualified by the maximum competent restoration and preservation of the existing historic buildings and by the construction of new houses, providing they are in considered harmony and scale with the existing buildings.

The Commission believes that the construction of contemporary residential and commercial high-rise buildings around the perimeter of the AREA, if competently designed and executed, and the Commission believes that the Old Philadelphia Corporation will insist on this, will be an important contribution to the welfare of the City. They should help to stabilize the economy of the neighborhood and protect the historic buildings in the AREA.

It recognizes that as the plans for redevelopment are of considerable scope, adjustments both to the boundaries and the uses of the AREA may be found necessary. It believes they will be minor changes and can be made without materially qualifying the historic values. It also observes that Washington Square, while outside the AREA geographically, is actually an integral part of it historically. The Commission finds that it should not be separated from the AREA by high-risk buildings.

The redevelopment of the AREA under consideration can be either another project similar to commercial enterprises here and abroad, or, it can be distinguished both by serving contemporary needs and contributing to the preservation of this incomparable collection of historic buildings, which will constitute a unique setting of commensurable value to it. It must be remembered, and the plans based on the fact, that the fortunate existence of these buildings to-day, is the one essential reason for this redevelopment.

For the Commission

Grant M. Simon, Chairman

The Meeting was adjourned at five o'clock.

Respectfully submitted

Charles E. Peterson
Secretary.