

THE MINUTES OF THE 185th STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

6 June 1974

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman  
Mrs. James C. Cramlish, Jr.  
The Hon. John B. Kelly, Jr., Councilman at Large  
Edward Pinkowski  
Robert Silver, Commissioner, Department of Public Property  
James Ferguson, Deputy Director of Finance  
Henry J. Magaziner, A. I. A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission  
Richard Tyler, Historian  
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Executive Assistant to the Chairman  
David Rosenblum, Assistant City Solicitor  
Edward Mtinger, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority  
Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom

Unless otherwise noted, all action taken herein is the result of motions correctly made, seconded and carried.

**PRESENTATION** of gift to Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom. The Philadelphia Historical Commission Board and its staff presented to Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom, in recognition of her retirement as the Commission's Historian, a first edition Birch print, dated 1799, of Cooke's Building at the Southeast corner of Third and Market Streets. Dr. Tinkcom graciously accepted the gift and thanked the Commission and its staff.

**THE MINUTES** of the Stated Meeting, 25 April 1974, were approved and directed to be filed.

**REPORTS**

The Report of the Architectural Committee for 14 May 1974 was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes. [Developments, subsequent to the 14 May 1974 meeting of the Architectural Committee, led to a reevaluation of the matter concerning the St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church and is discussed under Old Business.]

Recommendations by the Staff for the Certification of Buildings, Richard Tyler, Historian. A request for the certification of a number of buildings in the Spring Garden Area was brought before the Board for review. Mr. Tyler reported the Spring Garden Civic Association's submission of adequate data including photographs, maps, chains of title, etc. At the request of Mr. Pinkowski, the Board agreed to table the matter until the next meeting. Mr. Pinkowski and Mr. Tyler were directed to make a more detailed study of the area, especially of the buildings along Fairmount Avenue, and submit their report at the August meeting.

Report of the Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff for May 1974, Richard Tyler, Historian.

## REPORTS (Cont'd)

## OLD BUSINESS

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Richard Tyler, Historian. The Chairman reported to the Historical Commission members the inability of the Commission to settle its problems with the St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, and the subsequent agreement of the staff and the Board to decertify the church. This action was taken to avoid the involvement in a court case which the Commission might lose. At the suggestion of Henry Magaziner, the Historic American Buildings Survey will be asked to prepare a set of measured drawings for the building before it is unsuitably altered.

Also under discussion at this time was the problem of serving adequate notice to the owners of historically certified buildings. It was agreed that certified letters, with return receipt requested, be sent to institutions, companies, churches, or wherever there may be multiple ownership of a building.

Finally, neighborhood and civic associations will be required to show a proof of public interest before a large number of buildings are reviewed for certification at the association's request.

John Wanamaker's Philadelphia Store. Richard Tyler, Historian. The proposal for the certification of John Wanamaker's Philadelphia Store submitted to the Store's management was approved by the Commission with the amendments stipulated by the Store. The formal certification of the Store reads:

The certification of the John Wanamaker, Philadelphia Store by the Philadelphia Historical Commission acknowledges the significance of the structure to the architectural, commercial and social history of the City. This certification includes only the exterior of the building, the Grand Court and the Crystal Tea Room.

The Commission, of course, recognizes that changes in retail practices may from time to time necessitate alterations in the particular arrangement of the certified portions of the interior and seeks only the preservation of the basic structural configuration and ornamentation of those parts of the store. Similarly, the economic use of the store building may require some modifications to the exterior which, of necessity, must be made with materials now available. In the event of such modifications, the Philadelphia Historical Commission asks that any proposed alterations be compatible with the original design of Daniel Hudson Burnham and that the Commission be consulted while the desired changes are being planned.

## NEW BUSINESS

Philadelphia Historical Commission Jurisdiction when Interior Alterations Affect Exteriors, Richard Tyler, Historian. The policy of Commission control over the interiors of historically certified buildings was reviewed by the Board at the request of the staff. It was agreed that the Commission exercise its jurisdiction over interiors of buildings open to the public.

## REPORTS (Continued)

Mr. Tyler reported the City's interest in the Van Rensselaer Mansion and the proposed alterations to convert this residence into a commercial use by DESIGN RESEARCH. Mr. Zecca of the Mayor's Office questioned the possibility of the City's acquiring the buildings. It was the opinion of the Board that such acquisition would be satisfactory.

Requests for Data on Certification Nominations, Richard Tyler, Historian. The Commission, at the request of Mr. Tyler, agreed to require the submission of substantial data--briefs of title, photographs, name of present owner--before considering a building for certification.

Penn Treaty Park, Richard Tyler, Historian. At the request of George Baker, the Historical Commission was asked to consider supporting Mr. Baker in his effort to erect a plaque commemorating the traditional site of the signing of Penn's treaty with the Indians. Mr. Tyler reported the opposition of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to Mr. Baker's proposal. After some discussion, it was agreed to suggest to Mr. Baker the erection of a marker by his group needing only City approval. If such an arrangement is satisfactory, the Commission agreed not to object to such a marker. However, a letter of support to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission cannot be written until documentary evidence is submitted for review.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemionkowski  
Executive Assistant to the Chairman

PAS/meh