

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

The thirty-fifth meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 12:45 p.m. on Monday, 17 April 1989, in Room 1313 City Hall Annex.

Present: David Brownlee, Chairman of the Committee on Historic Designation
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City Planning
Commission
Caroline Golab
Janet Klein
Sandra Tatman

Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Philadelphia Historical Commission
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Philadelphia Historical Commission

NEW BUSINESS

The Committee reviewed a nomination for

Engine House #29	1221-1225 North Fourth Street
Attributed to John Torrey Windrim, Architect	1894

The Fire House at 1221-1225 N. 4th Street possesses significance as an outstanding and rare example in Philadelphia of the Richardson Romanesque style. This style is represented in this building in its wide Syrian arch carriage openings, the arrangement of the upper windows into bands and registers, the use of carefully coursed rock faced stone, the polychromy of the materials, the Romanesque foliate carvings and the projecting covered pavillions. Philadelphia made very sparing use of this nationally important style and most other examples in the City do not use the characteristic polychrome materials. In addition the building represents the expansion of the Fire Department in Philadelphia during a period of significant reform and expansion in City services in the late 19th century.

The Committee expressed interest in a number of fire houses which they said should be brought up for designation. Caroline Golab said that nominations on firehouses should include some social history as these buildings often served as social centers for their neighborhoods.

The Committee voted unanimously (5-0) in favor of recommending this building for designation.

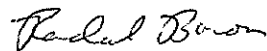
The Committee next considered the Stage I application for the proposed Penn Knox Historic District. In this stage, the applicant must submit a list of issues of significance and a rough map of the proposed district. The Committee determines if in fact they agree that an historical resource exists in that location and what are the issues of significance for that resource. The Committee visited the Penn Knox area on 3 April 1989. A list of the issues of significance as submitted by the Preservation Coalition is attached.

The Committee members at first expressed some concern over the tremendous diversity of buildings in the district because it includes both residential and commercial structures from the 18th through the 20th centuries. After discussing the resources of the area, however, it was agreed upon that this diversity can be explained by the fact that Germantown has passed through a number of phases in its history from being an 18th century town, to a suburban commuter area of rural estates on the edge of Philadelphia to being a fully built up residential neighborhood of the larger City with its own shopping core. The neighborhood possesses a unique history and significance based on the integration of these phases of its history. It was also agreed that greatly expanding or shrinking the boundaries of the proposed district does not remove the issue of its heterogeneity. The Committee decided to plan to tour around Germantown in a van to get a better idea of how this proposed district fits into the history and architecture of Germantown as a whole. While they agreed that there are also other significant areas of Germantown, they voted unanimously in favor of the idea that an historic district resource does exist in the approximate area proposed by the Preservation Coalition provided that some changes were made in the name of the district and the list of issues of significance. They suggested that the name be changed to Germantown Historic District I rather than Penn Knox. The issues of significance should be revised to:

1. Place more emphasis on the 18th century,
2. Be structured to talk about the history of Germantown in the aforementioned stages,
3. Discuss the institutional history of the neighborhood since it includes several schools.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Randal Baron



Preservation Planner

Issues of Significance

Proposed Penn Knox Historic District, Germantown

January 9, 1989

1. Penn-Knox is a predominantly residential mid- to late-nineteenth century suburb, developed as a result of new transportation links to Philadelphia (Germantown and Norristown Railroad, 1832; horse-drawn streetcars, 1859; Chestnut Hill line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, 1884).
2. Within the boundaries of the district are reflected several time periods of development in the history of the city, including eighteenth century houses clustered mainly on Germantown Avenue, nineteenth century suburban estates, and turn of the century houses designed to fit into the development patterns of the nineteenth century suburb.
3. The Penn-Knox district contains residential, commercial and institutional architecture, all reflective of the growth of this area as a vital, active community from the early eighteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century.
4. Penn-Knox contains excellent examples of nineteenth century architectural styles, including Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival.
5. Penn-Knox contains work of prominent architects Wilson Eyre, Henry M. Congdon, George T. Pearson and Thomas U. Walter.