

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

14 September 2001

**1515 Arch Street, 18th floor
Thomas Sugrue, Acting Chair**

Present

Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Acting Chair
Warren Huff, City Planning Commission
Harris Steinberg, AIA

Julianne L. Brennan, Historic Preservation Planner
Laura M. Spina, Historic Preservation Planner
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Mark Zecca, Senior Attorney, Law Department

Also

Anthony De Simone, Manayunk Club
Jim Pearl, City of Philadelphia, Law Department
Susan Milner, Jefferson Hospital
Michael Giduck, Exelon Corporation
Michael Stern, First Tabernacle
Theresa Stuhlman, Fairmount Park Commission
Al Ryan, Exelon Corporation
Curtis Caldwell, First Tabernacle

Mr. Sugrue called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

120 South 10th Street, Jefferson's Old Main Hospital

Date: 1903-07

Architect: James and John Windrim

Owner: Jefferson Hospital

Ms. Spina gave a slide presentation on the nomination. Designed by the father and son team of James and John Windrim, the hospital meets criteria a, d, e and j of Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code. Old Main represents an example of the skyscraper type of hospital design, popular from the 1890s to the mid-twentieth century. With its polychromed exterior of Roman brick and terra cotta, the building offers an excellent example of the Beaux Art style. Ms. Spina described the history of Jefferson Medical College, founded by Dr. George McClellan, Sr. in 1824, and the commission of the hospital building, one of six commissions the Windrims received from the college.

She noted the one major alteration to the building. In 1989, the school altered Old Main so that it could continue functioning as a hospital. The first three easternmost bays were transformed into a vehicular drive for arriving and departing patients. All of the windows along the first floor of the east façade and the first three bays on the Sansom Street façade were removed, turning that portion of the building into an open areaway. Committee members agreed that this change did not diminish the importance of the building.

Susan Milner, Director of Space Planning for Jefferson Hospital, noted that Jefferson University and Jefferson Hospital became two distinct corporations in 1991. She asked how designation would affect the use of the building as a hospital and any future changes the hospital wished to make. Mr. Tyler explained the scope of the Historical Commission's jurisdiction.

Mr. Huff made a motion to recommend the designation of 120 South 10th Street to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Mr. Steinberg seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote.

Dickens and Little Nell Statue, Clark Park

Date: 1890-01; installed at current location: 1901

Sculptor: Frank Edwin Elwell

Owner: City of Philadelphia, Department of Recreation

Ms. Brennan made a slide presentation of this object to the Committee. *Dickens and Little Nell* meets criteria a, b, g, h and j of the Preservation Ordinance. Originally, Stilson Hutchins, owner of the *Washington Post*, commissioned Frank Edwin Elwell to create a statue of Charles Dickens. Elwell chose the image of a seated Dickens in conversation with Little Nell, a character from his book, *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Although Hutchins lost interest, Elwell completed the statue in 1891 and it toured England and the United States. It was soon discovered that Dickens' will stated that he should never be "the subject of any monument, memorial or testimonial." Because of this language, *Dickens and Little Nell* is the only known public sculpture of Dickens. In 1893, Elwell displayed the statue at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and then sent the statue to storage in a Philadelphia foundry. In 1901, the Fairmount Park Art Association purchased the statue and placed it in Clark Park in West Philadelphia. There, the statue has become a strong visual landmark for the neighborhood. Mr. Sugrue stated that criterion e should be added to the nomination. Ms. Brennan noted that the original base for the statue would not withstand an outside environment, so Elwell, in part, designed the current granite base.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend the designation of the Dickens and Little Nell statue as an historic object, adding criterion e. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Wissahickon Memorial Bridge, 4200 block of Henry Avenue

Date: 1927-32

Architect: Paul Philippe Cret; Engineer: Ralph Modjeski

Owner: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Ms. Brennan made the presentation of this structure to the Committee. The Wissahickon Memorial Bridge meets five criteria of Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code, a, d, e, f and h. Upon its completion in 1932, the Wissahickon Memorial Bridge gained the title of the world's largest reinforced concrete, single span, open spandrel arch bridge. It is one of two such bridges in Philadelphia; the Manayunk Bridge is the other. Designed by Paul Philippe Cret and engineered by Ralph Modjeski, the bridge has masonry cladding which varies from rusticated rock-faced to smooth limestone ashlar. Set within the dramatic natural setting of Fairmount Park, its clean lines integrate well with the environment.

Mr. Sugrue stated that the bridge also meets criterion j since it is the result of a massive public works project at a time when the government sponsored this type of development.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend the designation of the Wissahickon Memorial Bridge as an historic structure, adding criterion j to the nomination. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3901 North Delaware Avenue, Richmond Power Station

Date: 1923-25

Architect: John Windrim; Engineer: William C. L. Eglin

Owner: Exelon Corporation (formerly Philadelphia Electric Company)

Ms. Spina presented the complex of buildings that constitute the Richmond Power Station, which meets criteria a, c, d, e, f, h and i of the Preservation Ordinance. As a result of a major expansion campaign, the Philadelphia Electric Company built the Richmond Power Station in 1923-25, the third of three new stations. The complex consists of four separate buildings: the coal tower, which loaded coal from barges; the strainer house, which strained the river water of any foreign material; the main building, housing the boilers, turbines and switches; and the converter building, which converted the electricity's cycles for railroad use. Over the years, Philadelphia Electric added smaller buildings and fuel tanks to the property; however, only these four buildings date to the original design and function of the station. Ms. Spina described the history of the Philadelphia Electric Company and the importance of the station in the history of electric generation. Designed by the team of John Windrim and William C. L. Eglin, the station became a symbol of the Philadelphia Electric Company. Its classically inspired exterior evoked the stability of ages past, while the interior embodied the modern age.

Al Ryan, attorney for Exelon Corporation, and Michael Giduck, engineer, questioned the impact of designation. Mr. Ryan stated that the company had only a short time to investigate the effect that designation would have on the operations of the company. Mr. Huff asked if staff contacted the owner. Ms. Spina replied that the Commission sent notice letters to the owner at least 30 days in advance of the meeting and, upon request, she subsequently sent Mr. Ryan the Commission's Ordinance and Rules and Regulations. Mr. Ryan asked for an opportunity to meet with the staff to discuss the designation. Mr. Giduck questioned the designation of the four buildings, noting their deteriorated state, especially the coal tower. Mr. Sugrue stated that the nomination clearly defines the period of significance for the complex and that all four buildings played an integral role in the station's use. Mr. Huff stated that the Planning Commission is establishing a North Delaware Riverfront Plan and the designation of the power station could make it eligible for rehabilitation tax incentives. The Committee noted that other uses may prove suitable for the buildings if Exelon wishes to sell the property. Mr. Tyler thought the coal tower analogous to the grain elevator behind the main branch of the Philadelphia Free Library.

After some discussion, the Committee asked the staff to meet with representatives of Exelon to discuss the designation. Mr. Ryan requested that the Commission review the nomination at its November meeting rather than in October. The Committee and staff agreed.

Mr. Huff made a motion to recommend the designation of 3901 North Delaware Avenue. Mr. Steinberg seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

602 South Broad Street, Episcopal Church of the Ascension

Date: 1886

Architect: Charles M. Burns

Owner: First Tabernacle Beth El Church of God and Saints of Christ

Ms. Brennan presented the nomination. Designed by Charles M. Burns and completed in 1886, the church meets criteria a, d, e, h and j of Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code. Founded in 1837, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension serviced the African-American community. In the 1880s the congregation followed the westward trend and purchased a lot at a prominent location on Broad Street. Mr. Tyler noted that this church may have been founded as a mission church, a practice typical of Episcopalian congregations in the 19th century. Ms. Brennan noted that the church did not complete Burn's design because the congregation could not attain ownership of the corner property.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend the designation of the 602 South Broad Street. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

235-49 Gay Street, Fairview Cottage a.k.a. Manayunk Club

Date: 1857-61

Architect: unknown

Owner: Manayunk Club

Ms. Spina explained the application for rescission of 235-49 Gay Street. In March of this year a fire this building, leaving the four exterior stone walls. The Fire Department declared it a case of arson; the investigation remains open. The Manayunk Club did not have insurance on the property and did not have the money to repair or rebuild the structure. In July the Department of Licenses and Inspections found the building imminently dangerous and ordered the owner to demolish or repair the premises. The Manayunk Club demolished the building, and the staff of the Historical Commission subsequently approved the application to legalize the demolition.

Mr. Tyler argued that since the structure no longer stands, the basis of the historic designation does not exist. He supported the rescission of the designation. Ms. Spina argued against rescission, stating that the Commission should still exercise its jurisdiction when reviewing the new construction. Otherwise, other owners may see rescission as a reward for not maintaining and securing their properties.

Mr. Sugrue stated that the nomination for the property noted both the building and the site as sources of the property's historical significance. Although the building no longer stands, the site remains unchanged and may still possess significance. Mr. Huff stated that the Planning Commission supports the fullest development of the site, and that the property is zoned for semi-detached housing. Anthony De Simone, president of the Manayunk Club, said that club wishes to sell the property and continued designation would prove burdensome. Committee members discussed the significance of the site.

Mr. Huff made a motion to rescind the designation of 235-49 Gay Street. Mr. Steinberg seconded the motion, which failed to pass with one yea and two nay votes.

Mr. Harris made a motion to split the basis of the rescission. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed with two votes. Mr. Huff dissented.

Mr. Harris made a motion to rescind the designation of house only. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Harris made a motion to maintain the designation of the site, owing to its importance as noted in the nomination. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed with two votes. Mr. Huff dissented.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.