

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION
MINUTES

14 September 1982

Present: Edward Pinkowski, Chairman of the Committee on Certification and
Member, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Janet S. Klein, Vice-Chairman, Philadelphia Historical Commission
David Baldinger, Chief, Area Planning Division, Philadelphia City
Planning Commission
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman, Architectural Committee, Phila-
delphia Historical Commission
James E. Mooney, Director, Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Richard Tyler, Historian, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Jefferson M. Moak, Executive Assistant to the Chairman, Philadel-
phia Historical Commission
Patricia A. Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian, Philadelphia
Historical Commission

Also: Frank Thomas, Esq., City Solicitor's Office
Richard H. Dilsheimer, Locust Development Corporation
Richard Frey
David W. Maxey, Esq., Drinker, Biddle & Reath
Christopher F. Stouffer, Emergency Aid of Pennsylvania
Robert Taplinger, Taplinger Real Estate Company
Janet R. Terry, Foundation for Architecture

The thirteenth meeting of the Committee on Certification met at 2:30 P.M.
on Tuesday, 14 September 1982 in Room 1313, City Hall Annex.

OLD BUSINESS

1631-1633 Locust Street: The A.C. Harrison Residence
1635-1637 Locust Street, A.K.A. 235 S. 17th Street: The Charlton Yarnall Residence

The Commission certified these three buildings located at the corner of
17th and Locust Streets on 1 July 1982 after prior consultation with the ma-
jority of the members of the Committee on Certification. The real and equita-
ble owners objected to their certification by letter and in person at the 2
September 1982 Commission meeting. At the latter meeting, the Commission re-
ferred the matter back to the Committee on Certification for further considera-
tion and review.

Cope & Stewardson, known principally for designs of many buildings on the
campuses of the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University and Bryn Mawr
College, also designed a number of townhouses in the Rittenhouse Square area
including 1631-1633 Locust Street and 1630 Locust Street. The significance of
1631-1633 Locust Street stems from its place in Philadelphia's architectural
history, its connection with a large and prominent Philadelphia family, its

design by one of the city's prominent architectural firms and its location along Locust Street near St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Erected in 1899, the architects neatly inserted these buildings into a neighborhood of mid-19th Century structures without disturbing the rhythm or scale of the existing buildings. Their client, Alfred C. Harrison, stood high as one of Philadelphia's industrialists, a partner in the sugar refining firm of Harrison, Frazier & Company and a director of the Western Savings Fund Society and the Philadelphia National Bank. The Harrison family had hired Cope & Stewardson for all three of the major Harrison Buildings in Philadelphia in addition to the Harrison stable at 1713-1715 Rittenhouse Street, less than a block from this residence. This latter building was certified by the Commission in April 1981.

The Charlton Yarnall Residence at 1635-1637 Locust Street, a.k.a. 235 S. 17th Street, rests its significance on the same points as the A.C. Harrison Residence with the additional connection with two of the preeminent service organizations of the 20th Century. This residence exists as one of Frank Miles Day's few attempts to create a work in the Jacobethan style. Although many of his earlier works, such as the Art Club, drew heavily upon European designs, by the early 20th Century, Day had become an advocate for the Arts & Crafts movement in America, a movement which emphasized a concern for detailed craftsmanship, a relationship of a house to its site, and vernacular simplicity. Day designed many residences which followed the basic principles of this movement during the early 1900s. This exists as one of the only townhouses which has been credited to Day during this period of his career. His client, Charlton Yarnall, a partner in the chemical firm of Ellis Yarnall & Son, also commissioned another advocate of the Arts & Crafts movement, Violet Oakley, to paint a mural for this residence. J.S. Cornell & Son, Inc. constructed the Yarnall Residence. They were also hired in 1941 to perform interior work for the United Services Organization (U.S.O.) when the Philadelphia branch of that organization was established, and again in 1956 by the American Red Cross, which used this building as their headquarters from 1956 to 1974.

Both the equitable owner of the properties and the real owner of two of these properties appeared at the Committee meeting and were invited to present their opinions. David W. Maxey, Esq., attorney for the equitable owner, Richard Dilsheimer, basically reiterated the same arguments to the Committee that were presented to the Commission on 2 September 1982: i.e., that the action of the Commission was unwarranted and possibly illegal; that the ordinance under which the Commission operates provides no consideration for streetscapes but specifically refers only to buildings, therefore a building may not be considered in relation to other neighboring buildings but on its own merits; that these three buildings lacked any historical merit that would make them worthy for preservation; and that the entire process of certification is unconstitutional, in part because the owner is not consulted prior to Commission action. Mr. Maxey then requested that the Committee recommend that the Commission reverse its certification of the three buildings. Mr. Robert Taplinger, owner of 1631 and 1633 Locust Street, supported Mr. Maxey's position.

Mr. Frank Thomas, Esq., replied to several of the arguments, remarking that the Commission's action on certification and the procedures followed by the Commission were legal and in accordance with the guidelines set down in Section 14-2007 (4) (a) of the Philadelphia Code. Notification of an owner of impending certification is not required, although it has been a policy of the Commission to notify owners of its actions after such an action has taken place. If an owner objects, the Commission may take the objection under advisement but is not required to rescind its certification of a building. Mr. Richard Tyler also confirmed that consideration of a streetscape as a criteria for certification has been part of the Commission's policies and procedures since 1962 at the latest, and read the appropriate passages from the Commission's Criteria for Certification.

Mr. Christopher F. Stouffer, representing the Emergency Aid of Pennsylvania, indicated his and his client's support for the certification of these buildings on their architectural and historical merits and urged that the Committee reaffirm its earlier recommendation that the buildings be certified as worthy for preservation. Mr. Richard Frey and Ms. Janet Terry also gave brief statements of support.

After hearing from all parties represented, the Chairman asked for a motion regarding these three buildings. Ms. Janet Klein moved, and Mr. Herbert Levy seconded, that the Committee confirm its earlier recommendations that the Commission certify the A.C. Harrison Residence and the Charlton Yarnall Residence at the northeast corner of 17th and Locust Streets. The Committee then voted, in three separate ballots of 5-0, to recommend to the Commission that they reaffirm their certification of 1631 Locust Street, 1633 Locust Street and 1635-1637 Locust Street, a.k.a. 235 S. 17th Street.

2000 Mt. Vernon Street: The Robinson House

Constructed in 1860-1861 by Jacob B. Shannon as the end building of a row of three-story dwellings, this building has suffered only one major alteration during its 121 year history: that of conversion from a single-family dwelling to a store and dwelling in 1921. It is significant as a representative of a largely intact row of three-story buildings erected by developers along Mt. Vernon Street. As such, the building and the row contribute to the Spring Garden National Historical District.

The Commission certified this entire block of Mt. Vernon Street on 1 May 1975. The owner objected to the certification and the Commission decertified the building on 5 August 1976, charging the staff to contact the owner at a later date regarding certification. On 12 January 1982, the building changed hands and present owner has contacted the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation regarding a facade easement. With this change of ownership and the apparent willingness of the new owner to preserve the structure, the staff submitted 2000 Mt. Vernon Street to the Committee on Certification for nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The Committee then voted 5-0 to recommend recertification of 2000 Mt. Vernon Street, the Robinson House, on account of its architectural importance to the 2000 block of Mt. Vernon Street and the Spring Garden National Historical District.

14 September 1982

245-247 S. 17th Street: The Edward R. Wood Houses

Frank Miles Day designed this double house for Edward R. Wood in 1890-1892. Many alterations throughout the 20th Century have considerably altered the buildings' appearance as they have been converted from private single family residences to commercial and multi-family dwellings. In addition, 247 S. 17th Street has lost its fourth floor.

Day used his European training to great profit in Philadelphia. His design of the Art Club building on Broad Street helped propel him into the spotlight of Philadelphia architecture. His use of European form and texture on his early residential work is illustrated on this example. It closely resembles some of his contemporary works standing at 1922 Spruce Street and 1920-1930 Pine Street in its use of materials and details. Although much altered, the flavor of Day's work which exhibits his influence by European models still remains.

245-247 S. 17th Street presently appear on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places but no record of any formal Commission action regarding certification exists in the minutes. The buildings were nominated for certification at the Commission's meeting on 1 July 1982 but several objections were raised by Commission members. On the basis of these objections, the Commission sent the nomination back to the Committee on Certification for review.

The Committee, by a vote of 5-0, recommended that the Commission ratify 245-247 S. 17th Street, the Edward R. Wood Houses, citing their importance as an early work by Frank Miles Day, their importance to the architectural history of Rittenhouse Square and Philadelphia, and their position as integral elements in the overall streetscape surrounding 17th and Locust Streets.

NEW BUSINESS

1707-1709 Arch Street: the Philadelphia Tract Society, Methodist Church Building

Constructed in 1922 from the designs of Horace W. Castor, this building actually served as an annex for the Methodist Church, which erected their headquarters at 1701-1705 Arch Street in 1914 and allowed the Robert Morris Hotel to be constructed atop their office building in 1921. Castor designed many buildings throughout Philadelphia during his long career. First setting himself up with George R. Sterns to form the firm of Sterns & Castor, Castor continued to work long after the dissolution of the partnership in 1916. Among his many church commissions are found Methodist Churches erected at 5540-5546 Race Street, 438 N. 63rd Street and 17th & York Streets, all of which were constructed between 1899 and 1908. Probably his two major buildings are the Scottish Rite Temple at Broad & Race Streets and the old Terminal Building for the Municipal Airport. His design for 1707-1709 Arch Street incorporated several of the architectural elements of the Ballinger-designed Wesley Building at the corner but contained them within a design which fully proclaims its 1920s Art-Deco heritage with its flatness of surface, abundance of detail and use of materials.

The Committee originally considered the certification of 1707-1709 Arch Street in November 1981 when they nominated the Robert Morris Hotel. Although the Committee recommended certification at that time, they were acting without a proper nomination form for the Robert Morris Hotel form described only the building at 1701-1705 Arch Street even though the form read 1701-1709 Arch Street. The Commission certified 1701-1705 Arch Street and requested that a new form be prepared and submitted through the proper certification channels for 1707-1709 Arch Street.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend certification of 1707-1709 Arch Street, the Philadelphia Tract Society Building.

1632-1636 W. Diamond Street: Bell Telephone Company, Diamond Street Exchange

This 4-story Georgian Revival brick structure rests its significance on its architecture, its association with one of Philadelphia's premier institutional architects of the early 20th Century and its position as one of the earliest extant buildings constructed for and connected with the then-fledgling telephone industry.

The architect, John T. Windrim, started his career in the office of his father, James H. Windrim, architect of the Masonic Temple and for many years Director of Public Works for the City of Philadelphia. Many of the younger Windrim's office building designs, such as those located at 12th & Chestnut Streets, 15th & Chestnut Streets and the Bell Telephone Building at 17th & Arch Streets, reflect his association with D. Burnham & Company in the construction of the John Wanamaker Department Store. These office building designs originated in the Sullivanesque and Commercial styles advocated by this major Chicago firm. Windrim's use of the Georgian Revival for this small telephone exchange at 17th & Diamond Streets coincided with a desire by various institutions to erect buildings in what they considered a dignified style. Architects also experimented with other styles such as the Renaissance Revival and Beaux Arts Classicism for institutional buildings. Windrim followed their lead and designed the Oliver Bair Funeral Home in the former style in 1908 and in his later career created such architectural monuments as the Franklin Institute and the Municipal Court Building on the Parkway, both of them based upon the latter style.

The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania traces its history to 1879 when Thomas Cornish applied to Alexander Graham Bell for rights to the Philadelphia market. A charter granted to the Bell Telephone Company of Philadelphia on 13 September 1879 enabled telephone service to begin within the city. By 1905, the company was using 19 different locations throughout the city, most of them in rented quarters. Only an exchange at 10 N. Preston Street in West Philadelphia erected in 1902 from the designs of Davis & Davis exists today as a known telephone company- erected structure predating the 1906 17th & Diamond Streets exchange.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend certification of 1632-1636 Diamond Street, the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Diamond Street Exchange.

14 September 1982

2600 N. Lawrence Street: St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, founded in 1875, is among the first ten children's hospitals founded in the United States and Canada. The original hospital building was constructed in two stages: the rear wing completed in 1884 designed by G.W. & W.D. Hewitt, and the front wing in 1890, probably from the designs of Frank Miles Day. The eighth-oldest children's hospital still in existence, St. Christopher's operated in rented quarters during the first nine years after its founding before commissioning the construction of its first building at the northwest corner of Lawrence and Huntingdon Streets in 1883. Today, it may stand as the oldest children's hospital building still in active use by its original occupants, for although older hospitals, such as Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (founded in 1855) are still active, they have moved, removed, or constructed later facilities on the site of their original structures.

The use of the Georgian Revival style is indeed remarkable. Although the earliest example appeared in Boston in 1859-1861, the style did not really achieve social recognition in Philadelphia until after the completion of the Germantown Cricket Club in 1890. The architects, G.W. & W.D. Hewitt, are known principally for their Queen Anne and stone Victorian residences and churches during this phase of their careers such as those constructed in Chestnut Hill for Henry H. Houston and in Powelton for the real estate firm of Wendell & Smith. The involvement of Frank Miles Day also comes as a surprise for this commission was executed during a period in which he favored European designs and textures and not a return to the American Colonial period. Later, the majority of his work can be classified under the broad heading of Colonial Revival but this work predates by almost 12-15 years the beginnings of his Colonial Revival/Arts & Crafts period.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend certification of 2600 N. Lawrence Street, St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, on account of its architecture, and its position as the oldest children's hospital building still in active use in Philadelphia and possibly within the United States. Ms. Klein asked whether the nomination included all the buildings presently on the grounds of St. Christopher's Hospital. The nomination form indicated, and the Committee agreed, to limit the nomination to just the one building located on the northeast corner of Huntingdon & Lawrence Streets.

8238-8240 Ridge Avenue: Thomas Shepard's General Store

Erected between 1799 and 1827, the significance of this 2½-story stone structure stems from its survival from the early days of Roxsborough Township as a little-altered example of rural architecture of the early 19th Century. It, along with its neighbor at 8232 Ridge Avenue, stands as one of the few early-to mid-19th Century structures still extant in this part of the city. The commercial use of 8240 Ridge Avenue is part of its original character. Deed records have continually recorded the transfer of a store and dwelling on this site since 1827. Thomas Shepard, a house carpenter, constructed this stone dwelling and store at the intersection of Ridge and Port Royal Avenues as part of a small commercial district in which he also operated a blacksmith shop and a tavern.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend certification of 8238-8240 Ridge Avenue, Thomas Shepard's General Store, as a fine example of rural commercial architecture of the early 19th Century.

1917 Walnut Street: The Wanamaker-Foerderer House

The significance of this 3½-story brick dwelling rests both on its architecture and its association with its residents. Joseph Huston, architect of the Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia and the State Capitol Building in Harrisburg, designed this dwelling for William Wanamaker of the clothier firm of Wanamaker and Brown. The use of the Jacobethan style helps make this structure an integral part of the streetscape of the 1900 block of Walnut Street facing Rittenhouse Square. The actual building is older than its appearance. In 1900 Wanamaker commissioned Huston to design alterations to an existing building on ~~this~~ site. Huston, who had earlier designed the townhouse for Francis L. Potts at 1913 Walnut Street, gave the building a completely new exterior appearance, making it harmonious with its neighbors at 1913, 1921 & 1923 Walnut Street. The early residents, William Wanamaker, Percival E. Foerderer, president of the Robert Foerderer leather manufacturing company, and Thomas Love Latta, founder of the building firm of Armstrong & Latta, are typical of the merchant and industrial classes which composed a large proportion of the area's population during the late 19th- and early 20th-Centuries.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend certification of 1917 Walnut Street, the Wanamaker-Foerderer House.

1921 Walnut Street: The McKean-Moore House

The McKean-Moore House, a 3½-story brick structure, rests its significance upon its architectural style, its contribution to its immediate neighborhood, and its connection with its early residents, Thomas McKean, Jr. and Alfred F. Moore. Thomas McKean, Jr. commissioned Cope & Stewardson to design both 1921 and 1923 Walnut Street in 1897 replacing earlier houses designed by Fraser Furness & Hewitt around 1869. Similar in its appearance to other commissions by the same architectural firm throughout the immediate neighborhood of Rittenhouse Square, this dwelling helped bring acceptance to the Georgian Revival style for townhouse designs.

McKean was a member of the McKean sugar refining family, which, along with the Harrison and Knight families, made Philadelphia a center for the sugar refining industry. After constructing these two dwellings, he sold 1921 Walnut Street in 1898. Two years later, Alfred Fitler Moore, president of the Alfred F. Moore electrical wire manufacturing firm, bought the house and lived here until his death. After the Moore family sold the building in 1923, it was converted to commercial uses.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend the certification of 1921 Walnut Street, the McKean-Moore House, citing its architectural qualities and its position as an integral element in the Walnut Street streetscape, along with its associations with both the McKean and Moore families.

4624-4642 Walnut Street & 201-213 S. 47th Street: Breslyn Apartments

Designed and constructed by Frederick C. Michaelson, whose father developed large tracts of West Philadelphia during the late 19th Century, in 1913, the Breslyn Apartments reflect the flurry of housing construction which followed the construction of the Market Street Elevated rail line in 1907. It stands as a significant example of speculative housing for a middle-class clientele. Its use of rough-faced stone at the street frontage sets it apart from the smooth brick that has been the traditional building material for Philadelphia dwellings. Its scale relates well to that of its rowhouse neighbors, preventing it from becoming an awkward, aberrant folly. It remains as a significant example of marrying careful investment, middle-class taste and sensitivity to - and successful resolution of - social pretensions and the existing built environment. This architecturally pretentious development best represents an unusual and short-lived building form in Philadelphia: the three-story walk-up apartment.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend certification of 4624-4642 Walnut Street & 201-213 S. 47th Street, the Breslyn Apartments.

216 N. 33rd Street, a.k.a. 3300 Powelton Avenue: the Frederick A. Poth Residence

Designed by Albert W. Dilks in 1887-1888, this building served as the residence of one of Philadelphia's beer barons and major land developers in North Philadelphia and the Powelton sections of the city. It stands as one of the most important mansions of Victorian Powelton and contributes both architecturally and visually to the overall character of this area. The design is probably Dilks' first after leaving the architectural offices of T.P. Chandler, and helped launch him on a career which spanned 30 years. This commission led to other work from Poth in the immediate area which contributed to Dilks' success in the architectural profession. Owned by Drexel University today, the Poth Residence presently houses the Alpha Pi Lambda Fraternity.

The Committee voted 5-0 to recommend certification of 216 N. 33rd Street, the Frederick A. Poth Residence, on account of its architectural qualities and its importance, architecturally, historically and visually, to the Powelton section of the city.

Before adjourning, the Committee agreed to schedule its next meeting for Monday, 15 November 1982, at 2:30 P.M. in Room 1313, City Hall Annex.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jefferson M. Moak
Executive Assistant to the Chairman

MEMORANDUM

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

TO : Members of the Committee on Certification

FROM : Jefferson M. Moak, Research Historian

SUBJECT: Meeting of the Committee on Certification

DATE 8 Sept. 1982

The 13th Meeting of the Committee on Certification will be held at 2:30 P.M. on Tuesday, 14 September 1982, in Room 1313 City Hall Annex. The following items will be on the agenda:

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- S-O 1631-1633 Locust Street: The A.C. Harrison Residence
- S-O 1635-1637 Locust Street, A.K.A. 235 S. 17th Street: The Charlton Yarnall Residence
- S-O Lewis 2000 Mt. Vernon Street: Robinson House
- S-O Ratify 245-247 S. 17th Street: The Edward R. Wood Houses

New Nominations for Certification

- S-O 1707-1709 Arch Street: Philadelphia Tract Society, Methodist Church Bldg.
- S-O 1632-1636 W. Diamond Street: Bell Telephone Company Building
- S-O 2600 N. Lawrence Street: St. Christopher's Hospital for Children
- S-O 8238-8240 Ridge Avenue: Thomas Shepard's General Store
- S-O 1917 Walnut Street: Wanamaker-Foerderer House
- S-O 1921 Walnut Street: McKean-Moore House
- S-O 4624-4642 Walnut Street: } Breslyn Apartments
201-213 S. 47th Street: }
- S-O 216 N. 33rd Street, a.k.a. 3300 Powelton Avenue: Frederick A. Poth Residence

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