

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

**David Brownlee, Chair
Commission Conference Room, One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
26 July 1999**

Present

David Brownlee, Ph.D., Chair
Hyman Myers
Ernest Leonardo, Deputy Planning Director, City Planning Commission
Sandra Tatman, Ph.D.
Stephanie G. Wolf, Ph.D.

Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Elizabeth Harvey, Historic Preservation Planner
R. Scott Jacob, Executive Secretary
Laura Spina, Historic Preservation Planner
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Also

William Taylor, Chemical Heritage Foundation
Virginia Restemeyer, Manayunk Neighborhood Council
Edward Weiner
Alik Strakes, Preservation Alliance
David Anderson, Richard Conway Meyer Architects
Richard Meyer, Richard Conway Meyer Architects
Arnold Thackray, Chemical Heritage Foundation
David Schaaf, City Planning Commission
Jane Glenn, Manayunk Neighborhood Council
Merlin Schreiner

250 Lyceum Avenue, "Fairview Cottage"

Ms. Spina presented slides of the building and summarized the statement of significance which discussed its history and construction. The property meets criteria "a" and "h" of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. She stated that Virginia Restemeyer researched and wrote the nomination.

Committee members discussed the possibility that the front stairs, porch and balustrade date from the early 20th century. The main portion of the Gothic Revival stone house dates from 1857. Mr. Brownlee recommended that the description in the nomination be amended to include architectural issues such as the probable date of the front entrance elements, and noting architecture as an area of significance on the nomination.

Mr. Brownlee made a motion to recommend adding 250 Lyceum Avenue, "Fairview Cottage," to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, with the description in the nomination amended to include architectural issues such as the probable date of the

front entrance elements. Ms. Wolf seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

313 Chestnut Street

At its May 1999 Stated Meeting, the Historical Commission reviewed a proposal to remove the 1953 Classical Revival facade on 313 Chestnut Street (hereafter 313) and replacing it with a contemporary glass and brick facade. At that meeting the Commission suggested that the applicant request the rescission of the designation of the property as prescribed in the Ordinance.

The Chemical Heritage Foundation owns 313 and 315 Chestnut Street and intends to use the buildings jointly as offices and a research library facility. 313 currently serves as the entrance for 315 Chestnut Street (hereafter 315), the First National Bank building designed by John MacArthur in 1870, but the owner wants to reopen 315's front doors.

Richard Meyer, architect for the planned renovation of the building, explained that he examined the reports of the Committee on Historic Designation regarding these two addresses, and maintained that the Committee and the Historical Commission acted in error in designating 313 individually in 1980. 315 was designated individually in 1970. According to the Committee report and Commission Meeting minutes, 313 was designated to protect the First National Bank. Mr. Meyer noted that protection of a neighboring historic resource is not a criterion for designation according to the City's Preservation Ordinance.

Arnold Thackray of the Chemical Heritage Foundation discussed the history and mission of the Foundation. He explained that the high concentration of important historic sites associated with the history of the chemical industries in the vicinity of the subject buildings makes them the perfect setting for the proposed facility. The Foundation wants to expand the windows facing Independence National Historic Park. In 1995, the Commission approved the expansion of the center column of windows on the facade of 313 to provide more light and a better view of the Park and its historic buildings. That proposal was never executed. Mr. Meyer presented a letter from the National Park Service stating its position that the proposed new facade on 313 will not adversely impact the Park's setting.

In response to Hyman Myers' inquiry, Richard Meyer stated that 313 was designed by the firm of Trautwine and Howard. Mr. Myers contended that 313 was designed specifically as an addition to 315, as evinced by the repetition of architectural details and compatible building materials. Mr. Myers also conjectured that the stone surround of the front entrance of 313 was salvaged from an older building, though obviously not the Furness-designed bank the current building replaced.

Aliki Strakes of the Preservation Alliance voiced the Alliance's concerns about the de-designation process. She asked the Committee to consider that de-designation to accommodate rehabilitation plans is a tenuous proposition and such action must be taken with great caution, so that precedent is not set to allow similar occurrences in the future.

Mr. Leonardo made a motion to de-designate 313 Chestnut Street, subject to the submission to the Commission of a written statement from the owner that this de-

designation does not include 315 Chestnut Street. Ms. Tatman seconded the motion which carried with two votes. Ms. Tatman dissented. Mr. Myers and Mr. Brownlee abstained.

Mr. Myers asked the applicant to consider retaining the masonry context of the first floor of 313, perhaps even retaining the existing front door because of its compatibility with 315 Chestnut Street. Mr. Brownlee concurred.

Changing Boundaries of the Diamond Street Historic District

Ms. Spina showed the Committee a color-coded map of the Diamond Street Historic District showing the location of demolished buildings within the western end of the district. Mr. Myers noted that some original buildings remain at the north side of the western end, just not a complete row. The Committee suggested keeping the north side of the western end, but removing the south side from 20th to Van Pelt Streets owing to the demolition of all of the buildings. One owner neglected all of the buildings on the south side of Diamond Street from 20th to Van Pelt Streets to a point where the Department of Licenses and Inspections declared them imminently dangerous and demolished them. The owner had applied to the Commission to demolish these historic structures and was informed of his responsibility to preserve them.

Policy concerning the de-designation of properties no longer extant

The Committee reviewed a list of individually listed historic buildings that have been demolished. Mr. Brownlee asked the Committee to recognize a distinction between structures that were demolished *legally* and those demolished *illegally*. Generally, a structure razed without a demolition permit can be considered *illegal*, while circumstances involving a listing by the Department of Licenses and Inspections as imminently dangerous or legitimate disasters like fire or floods constitute *legal* demolitions. The Committee also noted that some demolitions occurred because the structures were declared imminently dangerous by the Department of Licenses and Inspections, but owing to neglect on the part of the owner. The Committee did not want to reward those owners by conceding automatic de-designation.

Mr. Tyler suggested that all individually listed demolished historic buildings be stricken from the register of historic places. The Committee discussed the possibility that some portion of the historic resource may still exist, and hesitated to assume that a known demolished structure merits de-designation. Committee members also objected to asking staff to seek out addresses to de-designate, and favored handling such situations when the need arises. The Committee will confer with counsel regarding policy for de-designating portions of structures.

The Committee formulated a recommendation for a general policy regarding the de-designation of individually listed properties no longer extant:

- * Automatic de-designation shall be generated following demolition approved by the Historical Commission on financial hardship or public interest grounds, and inspection by Commission staff to determine that no historic resources remain at the address.

- * Following all other demolitions and application by the owner for de-designation, staff will investigate and determine whether to bring the issue before the Committee on Historic Designation and the Historical Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Scott Jacob
Executive Secretary