

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

21 May 1980

Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman

Present: Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman, Architectural Advisor to the Commission
Theodore T. Bartley, Jr., A.I.A., Preservation Committee, American Institute
of Architects, Philadelphia Chapter
Penelope H. Batcheler, Architect, National Park Service
Henry Magaziner, A.I.A., National Park Service
Russell Milnor, A.I.A., Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority
Janet S. Klein, Vice Chairman of the Commission
Val C. Mogensen, Member of the Commission
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Executive Assistant to the Chairman

Also: Tom Hine, The Philadelphia Inquirer
Joan Benjamin, Architect, to present her proposal for the restoration of
143 Monroe Street.
Phil Franks, The Druim Moir Corporation, to present plans for renovations
to the historically significant buildings within the Druim Moir complex.
Hugh Zimmers, Architect, to present revised plans for the preservation and
re-use of Musical Fund Hall, 808 Locust Street.
Stephen White, Architect, to present his proposal for the rehabilitation
of 1940 Green Street.
Michael Olderman, Architect, and Jay Nathan, Developer, to present plans
for renovations to the Drexel Building, 1441 Walnut Street.
Marianna Thomas, Architect for the Philadelphia Historic Preservation
Corporation, to present rehabilitation specifications for 902 Spruce
Street.
Ed Robbins and Al Eisen of City Stores Corporation, Robert Greenfield,
Attorney for City Stores and James McCullough of McCullough-Howard
Company, Inc. to request permission to demolish the Lit Brothers
Department Store, 8th and Market Streets.

SUBMISSIONS FOR ALTERATIONS

143 Monroe Street, Joan Benjamin, Architect. Ms. Benjamin presented to the
Committee her proposal for the restoration of the house located at 143
Monroe Street. This small eighteenth century building stands two-and-a-half
stories high and two bays wide. Later alterations to the building include
window sash and door replacement and the removal of the original cornice.

Following a detailed review of the architect's proposal, the Committee
members made several suggestions and corrections. It was recommended
that extreme care be taken in removing the paint from the old brickwork.
The Committee suggested cleaning a sample area of brick to determine
the effect of various cleaning methods before proceeding with the full

facade. Concerning the cornice, the architect was asked to move the gutter within the cornice up the roof slightly and to correct a section of the cornice molding. Mrs. Batcheler pointed out additional molding corrections for door and shutter details which the architect agreed to make.

In all other respects, the Committee found Ms. Benjamin's proposal to be acceptable. The architect agreed to revise her drawings in conformance with all of the above recommendations and forward them to the Commission staff.

The Committee recommended the approval of Ms. Benjamin's submission for the restoration of 143 Monroe Street subject to the changes outlined above.

Druim Moir, The Druim Moir Corporation. Phil Franks, representing James Kise of the Corporation, presented to the members of the Architectural Committee plans for renovations to the historically significant buildings within the Druim Moir complex.

Following some discussion of the project, the Architectural Committee voted to recommend the approval of the proposed renovation work as presented by Mr. Franks.

214 Spruce Street. Constructed c. 1775, this three-and-a-half story brick house underwent numerous alterations and stands today as a combination of periods and styles. Since Mr. Zimmers was not present to submit his drawings to the Committee members, the plans were reviewed without the benefit of his comments on the proposal.

Following considerable discussion of the house and the proposed restoration project, review of the submission was tabled pending the receipt of further information. Mrs. Batcheler and Mr. Bartley agreed to meet at the site and to make a physical inspection of the structure. They will report their findings to the Architectural Committee at its next scheduled meeting. At that time, Mr. Zimmers' proposal will be considered again.

1940 Green Street, Stephen White, Architect. Built c. 1865, this corner structure suffered considerable ground floor mutilation when converted into a bar several years ago. Mr. White, in presenting his plans to the Committee for consideration, noted that the building will remain commercial on the ground floor and residential above. In order to maintain the Victorian character of the neighborhood, the architect designed a period storefront to replace the existing pseudo-colonial-designed front.

Although the Committee members found Mr. White's proposal to be generally acceptable, they suggested that he eliminate the brick infill panels between the vertical pilasters and fill the area instead with appropriate

wood panels. The architect agreed to revise his submission and to arrange with Mr. Levy for an informal review.

The Committee agreed to recommend the approval of Mr. White's plans subject to the correct revision of the storefront design.

Drexel Building, 1441 Walnut Street, Kenneth Parker Associates, Michael Olderman, Project Architect. Mr. Olderman and Mr. Nathan, Developer, presented to the Architectural Committee for review their plans for the rehabilitation of the Drexel Building. Built 1925-27 by Day and Klauder, Architects, the Drexel Building stands as one of the finest examples of the Italian Renaissance palazzo style adapted to twentieth century office use.

Owing to a procedural error, a building permit for 1441 Walnut Street was issued by the Department of Licenses and Inspections without the approval of this office. As a result, construction is currently underway. At the request of the staff, however, Mr. Olderman and Mr. Nathan agreed to appear before the Committee for a review of their plans.

After considerable discussion concerning code requirements, design considerations and the use of materials, the Committee agreed to recommend the approval of this project. The architect was asked to revise his Walnut Street elevation to conform with his plan to construct a dark bronze, duronatic canopy rather than a granite one.

Musical Fund Hall, Hugh Zimmers, Architect. Mr. Zimmers presented to the Committee for review his revised plans for the preservation and re-use of Musical Fund Hall. The original proposal, reviewed and rejected by the Committee and the Commission several months ago, called for the introduction of twenty-two apartments into the basic envelope of the building. Mr. Zimmers' new proposal not only reduces the number of apartment units in the building but also makes a section or slice of the ceiling available to several of the units. The auditorium ceiling, as a result of this new design proposal, will not be available for public view. It will, however, be more sensitively preserved.

After some discussion of the new proposal, the Committee voted to recommend an approval, in concept, of Mr. Zimmers' new treatment of the structure. In addition, the Committee recommends the approval of the architect's request to install windows in the return of the Hutton facade.

Before a final approval can be granted, a complete set of working drawings and specifications must be submitted for review.

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REHABILITATION SPECIFICATIONS

902 Spruce Street. Designed by Thomas U. Walter and built 1831-33, 902 Spruce Street stands at the east end of Portico Row, Philadelphia's last surviving stylish residential development of the Jacksonian era. This particular house was altered significantly circa 1867 and today encompasses a combination of Jacksonian and Victorian characteristics.

At the request of Marianna Thomas, Architect for the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation, the Committee was asked to consider rehabilitation specifications calling for the preservation of the later fabric of the building. These specifications were prepared on the basis of an 1867 insurance survey on file in the Commission office. The proposed treatment of the building, as pointed out by the Commission staff, agrees with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. It recognizes the changing character of a building and encourages the preservation of sympathetic alterations.

Following some discussion of the matter, the Committee voted to recommend the approval of the specifications as prepared by Ms. Thomas and as documented in the 1867 insurance survey.

DEMOLITIONS

Lit Brothers Department Store, 8th and Market Streets. Representatives of City Stores Corporation and James McCullough of McCullough-Howard Company, Inc., appeared before the Architectural Committee to request permission to demolish the historically certified Lit Brothers Department Store at 8th and Market Streets. Those in attendance included Ed Robbins and Al Eisen of City Stores Corporation and their attorney, Robert Greenfield. Mr. McCullough represented the contracting firm selected by City Stores to demolish the complex.

A series of buildings, constructed between 1859 and 1918, comprise the Lit Brothers complex. These structures stand as an outstanding example of the nineteenth-century architectural and commercial development of Market Street, and the evolution of a major Philadelphia Department store. They were certified by the Historical Commission as being worthy of preservation on 30 June 1970.

At the request of the Committee, Mr. Greenfield explained City Stores' position concerning Lit Brothers and the firm's desire to demolish. Mr. Greenfield noted that the complex presently stands vacant and in a deteriorated condition. Loose and falling terra-cotta trim generated concern for public safety and as a result, a demolition permit was sought. In addition, Mr. Greenfield noted that efforts on behalf of City Stores to find a developer interested in preserving and reusing the Lit Brothers store proved non-productive. In view of this, it was determined by City Stores that the buildings were not economically viable and that they represented a public hazard in their present condition.

For these reasons, City Stores decided to proceed with demolition and prepare the site for marketing as cleared land.

In response to a request for information on the immediate future use of the cleared site, the Committee was informed that no concrete plans exist currently. The applicants, at this time, presented for the Committee's perusal a study undertaken by Vincent Kling Associates. This study dealt only with the clearance of the land and total new construction. It was noted that while the site is zoned for 2 million square feet of usable space, there exists presently only 1 million square feet of floor area.

Even with tax incentives and disincentives, it is the owners' belief that the property will be more marketable when unencumbered by the existing buildings. Mr. Robbins pointed out that in its present deteriorated condition, the complex of buildings posed a marketing problem. In his opinion, because the buildings now stand within a modern context, they are ahistorical and an encumbrance upon the site. When asked about the potential timetable for development of the site as cleared land, Mr. Robbins responded that within a year the land would most likely be acquired and subsequently developed. This would occur rapidly because of the tremendous carrying charges, primarily taxes and interest rates, which the developer would face. At this point, Mr. Robbins expressed City Stores' willingness to cooperate in the complete documentation of the buildings as required before demolition takes place.

Following this discussion, the staff and the Committee advised the City Stores' representatives of at least three current interests in the acquisition and development of the Lit Brothers Store. According to Mr. Eisen, a number of studies were undertaken to determine the feasibility of reusing Lit Brothers. The idea, he reported, was abandoned because of cost considerations. The numbers, in Mr. Eisen's opinion, have not changed since the completion of those studies.

Because obtaining creditor and court approval for any action under the provisions of Federal Bankruptcy legislation will take two to three months, demolition could not begin immediately. In view of these circumstances, the Committee noted that the Commission's six-month delay period should not impose any undue hardship upon City Stores. Mr. Robbins disagreed. He reported that an additional four months delay would be critical particularly in view of the structures' rapid deterioration.

When asked whether consideration had been given to lowering the asking price of the property, the Committee was informed that the site had been appraised by an official appraiser of the court and that it could not be sold for less than 70% of that value. Moreover, it is the owner's belief that the site would bring a higher price as cleared land. The demolition cost was estimated to be approximately \$800,000.

Following considerable discussion of tax incentives and disincentives, zoning bonuses, facade easements and other preservation tools, the Committee members asked to have made available to them the feasibility studies alluded to earlier by City Stores. While these could not be provided, Mr. Eisen agreed to prepare a list of those developers who have studied the potential development of the property. The Committee agreed also to ask the Department of Licenses and Inspections to examine the buildings to determine their structural condition. It was suggested that City Stores seek the advice of Keast and Hood, structural engineers, concerning the safety of the buildings and the possibility of stabilizing them.

At this time, Mr. Bartley presented a motion recommending that unless the Department of Licenses and Inspections finds the Lit Brothers buildings to be imminently dangerous and a public hazard, the Commission impose its six month statutory delay. This motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

PLAQUES

129 Pine Street. The owner's request for a plaque was tabled pending an inspection of the building by Mr. Bartley and Mrs. Batcheler.

339 Queen Street. The Committee recommended that a plaque not be issued to 339 Queen Street. If the following items are corrected, however, the Committee will be pleased to reconsider the owner's request:

- 1) shutters should be hung properly.
- 2) inappropriate lighting fixture should be removed.
- 3) vent in cellar window must be painted to blend into the surrounding fabric.

119 Elfreth's Alley. Mr. Levy examined the building and recommended that the Commission not issue a plaque to 119 Elfreth's Alley at this time. The following items must be corrected before a plaque can be awarded:

- 1) the door must be painted an appropriate color.
- 2) the ends of the pent eave should be coped to meet the shape of the molding.
- 3) the tin on the sides of the cornice must be replaced and properly finished.
- 4) the cellar shut cover should be constructed of wider boards with a simple bead.

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436 Fulton Street. Mr. Bartley reported on his inspection of the building and recommended that a plaque not be issued at this time. Mr. Bartley found the dormer window to have been poorly restored and the second floor shutters to be incorrect.

The Committee members and the staff, at this time, expressed their thanks to Mrs. Batcheler for agreeing to serve on the Architectural Committee. The Committee is pleased to have such a knowledgeable restoration architect as an apt successor to Mr. Pedersen.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 P. M.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Executive Assistant to the Chairman