

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

13 November 1990

David Brownlee, Chairman

The thirty-eighth meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, 13 November 1990 in Room 1301, 1401 Arch Street, Philadelphia Historical Commission Conference Room.

Present: David Brownlee, Chairman of the Committee on Historic Designation

David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Janet Klein

Hymen Myers

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Philadelphia Historical Commission

Randal Baron, Preservation Planner

Philadelphia Historical Commission

Frederick Richards, Consultant

Deborah Kelly, Preservation Coalition

Elise Vider, Preservation Coalition

Reverend George E. Gibson, Jr.

Janice Meade

Arthur Pasquarella

NEW BUSINESS

The Committee reviewed the preliminary application for a Strawberry Mansion Historic District after having met at 10:30 a.m. in the morning to walk around the proposed district. The Committee discussed whether there is the potential for an historic district roughly between 31st and 33rd, Oxford and Diamond Streets. The Committee also reviewed the issues of significance submitted by the Preservation Coalition for the proposed district.

The preliminary issues of significance and revised map are included below.

The Committee voted unanimously in favor of recommending preliminary approval for a Strawberry Mansion Historic District.

The Committee reviewed nominations for the following historical and architectural resources.

Beth Israel Synagogue
Andrew J. Sauer, Architect

1801 North 32nd Street
1908

The Committee unanimously agreed that the building possesses significance because of its Byzantine Revival style, it's design by Andrew J. Sauer and it's connection with the Strawberry Mansion Jewish Community. However, it was also agreed upon that the nomination was seriously flawed with little serious discussion about these points and unrelated discussion of other material. The Committee listed the nomination's flaws and asked that they be corrected by the preparer and/or the applicants. It was agreed that the nomination should not go forward until a corrected nomination is resubmitted to the Committee.

Mellor and Meigs Atelier
Mellor and Meigs Architects

205-207 S. Juniper Street
1912/1928

This brick building possesses significance as a fine example of the American Arts and Crafts style, the work of the well known Philadelphia architectural firm Mellor and Meigs and for its use as the offices and studio of this important firm. The building, an interpretation of an English Cottage, expresses a full range of Arts and Crafts features including the use of hand crafted materials such as decorative brickwork with pebble dash mortar, multicolor and multi-sized slates, leaded and stained glass and wrought iron produced by the firm of Samuel Yellin. The architects and original occupants of the building Mellor and Meigs became nationally renowned in the first half of the 20th century for their outstanding residential design for wealthy suburbanites. The Atelier building has been assessed as one of the firm's best works.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend the building for historic designation.

The Committee took up the issue of the designation of the Morris building of the Girard Bank at 1411-23 Chestnut Street. In 1976 the domed Girard Bank Building at Broad and Chestnut Streets was designated by the Historical Commission but the record was ambiguous as to whether the attached Morris building at 1411-23 Chestnut was designated at the same time. The evidence in favor of the building having been included in the designation was that the designation card, file label, and designation book listed the addresses including up to 1421 Chestnut Street. Similarly to the domed building, the Morris building was designed by Furness Evans for the Girard Bank Company. The building is listed as significant in the National Register Inventory for the Broad Street Historic District. The

evidence against the building having been designated was that there is no mention of the Morris building in the Commission meeting minutes and the fact that the building has been badly altered with removal of the cornice and a newer base. Also, the Mc Kim, Meade and White Girard Bank addition comparably attached on the north side of the domed building is not mentioned either in the designation minutes or the designation card for the original designation.

After reviewing the information, the Committee advised that we cannot know for sure what the Commission members of the past were thinking when they designated the Girard Bank. However, because of the individual landmark emphasis of the former Historical Commission it seems unlikely that they would have included the Morris Building in the original designation. The Committee would more likely look at the whole complex if they were to designate the Girard Bank today. The members adjourned to look at the Morris Building and came back advising that the staff should not prepare a nomination form for the structure.

The Designation Committee adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Randal Baron
Preservation Planner

RB:sj