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MINUTES OF THE 226th STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

6 July 1978

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: Janet S. Klein, Vice Chairman of the Commission
Mrs. James C. Crumlish, Jr.
The Hon. John B. Kelly, Jr., Councilman-at-Large
Edward Pinkowski
John Taxia
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission
Commissioner Robert Silver, Department of Public Property
Val Mogensen, Executive Assistant Director of Finance
David Rosenblum, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department

Also: Daniel McKenna, Managing Director's Office
Tom Hine, reporter, THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
Jack Smythe, reporter, THE EVENING BULLETIN
Deborah Kearney and representatives of Kensington Action NOW
to read a statement to the Commission concerning the
Midway Theater.

Unless otherwise noted, all actions taken herein are the
results of motions correctly made, seconded and carried.

THE MINUTES of the Stated Meeting, 4 May 1978, stand, as
approved by telephone.

REPORTS

The Report of the Architectural Committee, 17 May 1978,
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the
Commission. The report of 17 May was approved and directed
to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

Mr. Mogensen, although questioning the Committee's
recommendation for the approval of glass block and stained
in the rehabilitation of 134 North 3rd Street, voted to
accept the report of 17 May.

The Report of the Architectural Committee for 21 June 1978
was reviewed by the Commission.

REPORTS (Cont'd)

The Historian brought to the attention of the Commission members the matter relating to the proposed demolition of the south and west walls of 225-27 Spruce Street and their reconstruction. At the Architectural Committee meeting, Mr. Tyler suggested that the extensive demolition of the building required by its structurally unsound condition in effect constituted a demolition of the historic structure, that the new work would consequently fall into the category of reconstruction, not restoration, and thus outside the Commission's jurisdiction. The Committee did not accept this view and recommended that the required demolition be permitted and that the Commission exercise jurisdiction over the new work.

After some discussion, a motion was made to request that the Architectural Committee restudy this matter and make a recommendation to the Historical Commission concerning the establishment of policy relating to the substantial reconstruction of a historically certified structure. This motion was seconded and carried.

With the exception of the matter relating to 225-27 Spruce Street, the Report of the Architectural Committee for 21 June 1978 was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

RECOMMENDATIONS by the Staff for the Certification of Buildings,
Richard Tyler, Historian.

The following list of buildings was presented to the Philadelphia Historical Commission to be considered for certification:

Christ Church Cemetery, Fifth and Arch Streets
Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park
St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church, Fourth and
New Streets
INA Building, 1600 Arch Street
Strawberry Mansion Bridge, Fairmount Park
Furness Library, Thirty-fourth and Walnut Streets
Requet Club, 275 South Sixteenth Street
Royal Theater, 1524-26 South Street

REPORTS (Cont'd)

After some discussion of the merits of certification of several of the structures, a motion was made to accept the certification of Christ Church Cemetery, Memorial Hall, St. Augustine's Church and the Furness Library. The remainder of the list of structures, the INA Building, Strawberry Mansion Bridge, the Racquet Club and the Royal Theater, will be referred to the Architectural Committee for a recommendation on certification.

This motion was seconded and carried.

Commissioner Silver suggested that the name of the person or group requesting certification be listed on the agenda with the name and location of the property being nominated. It was agreed that this should be done.

REPORT on Historical Commission Staff Activities, Richard Tyler, Historian. Mr. Tyler's reports on staff activities for the months of May and June were approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

Midway Theater. As a result of the Philadelphia Historical Commission meeting of 4 May 1978, the owner of the Midway Theater was notified of the Historical Commission's intent to certify the Theater as being historically and/or architecturally significant. Messrs. Nicoletti and Bressi, owners of the Midway Theater, responded by declining certification of the building. In accordance with previous policy, the Historian suggested that the matter of certification of the building be referred to the Architectural Committee for a determination as to whether or not the theater should be certified over the objection of the owners. A motion was made to this effect. It was seconded and carried.

Deborah Keatney, a representative of KAN, requested permission to read a statement in support of the certification of the Midway Theater to the Commission members.

OLD BUSINESS (Cont'd)

Mrs. Klein allowed Mrs. Kearney to read the statement and requested that she supply the Commission with a copy for file.

Mr. Levy suggested that the staff request of the Preservation Committee of the American Institute of Architects, Philadelphia Chapter, a copy of the minutes of that Committee relating to the Midway Theater.

NEW BUSINESS

A Question of Nomenclature. The Commission's Historian asked that the Commission members consider giving a name to its list of historically certified buildings. Mr. Tyler pointed out that both the State and Federal preservation offices have adopted specific titles for their lists of historical sites and suggested that Philadelphia do the same.

After some discussion, it was agreed to leave the choosing of a name to the discretion of the staff.

Building Permits, 1889-1906. The Commission's Historian reported to the members on a proposal made at an A.I.A. Preservation Committee meeting for the xeroxing and indexing of building permits issued between 1889 and 1906 and presently stored in the Records Storage Center at 401 South Broad Street. These records contain significant information on building construction in Philadelphia and are an important research resource. A Temple University Ph. D. candidate has agreed to xerox and index the permits on a volunteer basis. Mr. Levy and Mr. Tyler suggested at that meeting that the Historical Commission might be willing to underwrite the cost of xeroxing. Initially the student proposed to use the Savin process of copying which employs inferior paper and is a wet process copier. It was recommended that a more permanent, although more costly, method be used. The Victorian Society offered the use of its machine at cost. It has been estimated that \$800.00 would be needed to cover the cost of this undertaking.

NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

Mr. Tyler noted that the project was, indeed, a worthwhile one and that the Commission consider using money in the Batten Fund to cover the cost of photocopying these records.

Mr. Kelly asked whether microfilming of the records had been considered as an alternative. Mr. Tyler replied that it had been considered but rejected since microfilm would be more difficult to use and index. Mr. Tyler reported that the proposal had been discussed with Allen Weinberg, City Archivist, and David Wisner and Richard Gatzmar of the Department of Licenses and Inspections. They agreed to allow the release of the records for copying and their temporary storage at the Athenaeum until the project is completed.

Following a discussion of the merits of this proposal, Commissioner Silver suggested the appointment of a committee to study the matter further. The Vice Chairman appointed Herbert Levy and Val Mogensen to the committee. Mr. Tyler, Mr. Levy and Mr. Mogensen agreed to inspect the records and to confer with Mr. Weinberg and Mr. Sabatini, Commissioner of Licenses and Inspections, on the advisability of proceeding with this project and to agree on an appropriate repository for the records and the index. Mr. Tyler will arrange such a meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 P. M.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Slomontkowski
Executive Assistant to the Chairman

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