

MINUTES OF THE FIFTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

May 31, 1961

Present were: Mr. Harry A. Battqn
Mrs. Richardson Dilworth
Dr. Roy Franklin Nichols
Mr. Charles E. Peterson
Mr. R. Norris Williams, II.
Mr. Grant M. Simon, Chairman
Also present: Mr. Philip Carroll, representing Commissioner Gennetti
Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom, Historian
Mrs. Charles J. Maurer, Executive Secretary

Unless otherwise stated, all actions mentioned herein were taken after motions properly presented, seconded and carried.

THE MINUTES for April 25, 1961 were approved as read.

REPORTS

There having been no meeting of the Historic Values Committee in May, Dr. Nichols had no report to present.

The report of the Architectural Committee Meeting was read and approved. It is attached to the official office copy of the Minutes.

Dr. Tinkcom's report on the Commission's activities was read and approved. It is filed as above.

NEW BUSINESS

The Commission concurred with the recommendation of the Department of Licenses and Inspections that the legend "Complaint and/or Violation Report" be struck out and that "Not a Violation" be stamped where this complaint or violation is normally indicated when field inspectors' reports are sent out with the notification that a building has been certified as historically significant.

Citizens Council on City Planning. The Historian suggested that the Commission become a full member of this organization instead of subscribing to its Zoning Alerting Service only. The Commission decided that it will discontinue its subscription to this service. It was the sense of the meeting that the City's Zoning Board should report on all matters relating to buildings on the Commission's list which are scheduled to come before that Board. A letter asking that this be arranged will be sent to Victor Wright, Chairman of the Board. If its proposal is not agreed to, the Commission will ask the Law Department or Mr. McConnell for advice.

Plaques for Washington Square West. The Historian reported that several owners of certified houses in Washington Square West have requested plaques for their homes. It was moved, seconded and carried that the policy of the Commission with regard to plaques in Washington Square West should not differ from that established elsewhere in the city.

119 and 125 Elfreth's Alley. After considering the report on 125 Elfreth's Alley, the Commission agreed that, if louvered shutters were added to the upper story windows, where existing hardware shows them formerly to have been, a plaque may be awarded to it. Considerable work, however, will have to be done

to restore 119 Elfreth's Alley to a point where it merits a plaque.

It was moved and seconded that a letter be written to Elfreth's Alley Association, asking for a copy of their recent list dating the houses in the Alley and suggesting that copies of insurance surveys in the Commission's files will be made available to the Association in return.

Proposed New Houses for South Third Street. The Chairman reviewed the background for the recent meeting (May 29, 1961) in Councilman Victor E. Moore's office and asked Mr. Williams to report on that meeting.

In spite of cogent statements regarding the Commission's position presented by Mr. Simon and supported by letters from Mr. Batten and Dr. Nichols, neither of whom could be present, Messrs. Bacon, Geddes and Martin, representing the City Planning Commission and the Board of Design, apparently will not reconsider the design of the new town houses to be built on the east side of Third Street immediately south of St. Paul's Church.

It is the Commission's considered opinion (1) that Mr. Andrade's design for the Spruce Street town houses could be continued up Third Street to St. Paul's without increasing the cost to the developer or without involving the City in contractual difficulty; or (2) that Mr. Pei's design be modified, particularly with respect to the ribbon window arrangement of the third story, to bring it into greater harmony with Philadelphia building. Photographs of Robert Mills's Franklin Row and of the houses 929-933 Spruce Street were introduced as evidence of this. Finally, the Commission agreed that, in its opinion, the views of professional historians as to what will enhance (or detract from) the atmosphere of an historic area should be considered as well as those of professional city planners.

429 Spruce Street. Mr. Peterson drew attention to the fact that the rear end of the Swanwick-Madison houses, 429 Spruce Street, had been torn off by the Redevelopment contractors last week. The marks on the party wall to the east show that the stairway ascended in that area. Mr. Batten agreed that if Mr. Peterson would establish the facts by exact measurement and correlation with the documents he would take steps towards having the damage corrected. The house had been certified and the OPDC had listed it as a "name" house which would be likely to interest a private restorer.

WASHINGTON SQUARE EAST UNIT II. Mr. Peterson discussed the bill before City Council which calls for approval of the Unit II plans for Washington Square East. He stated that if these plans were literally carried out, at least fifty-five good houses in the area would come down. Particular mention was made of the houses on the north side of Lombard Street between Third and Fifth Streets and the houses on both sides of Fifth Street between Spruce and Pine where a shopping center has been tentatively located. He believed that all the old buildings of importance could be saved and the proposed new uses properly adjusted to them.

The Commission had previously notified the Redevelopment Authority that it favored the retention of these buildings and suggested that a letter be obtained from the neighborhood associations (SHARA) backing the same idea.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 P. M.

Respectfully submitted
Charles E. Peterson, Secretary