

MINUTES OF THE 214th STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

2 June 1977

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman of the Commission
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 Taxin
Val Mogenssen, Executive Assistant Director of Finance
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission
David Rosenblum, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Sienickiowski, Executive Assistant to the Chairman

Unless otherwise noted, all action taken herein is the result of motions correctly made, seconded and carried.

THE MINUTES of the Stated Meeting, 5 May 1977, were approved and directed to be filed.

REPORTS

The Report of the Architectural Committee for 18 May 1977 was reviewed and approved with one correction. Mr. Levy noted that the minute relating to 6 North Third Street should suggest that the first floor window openings be covered with an "opaque", rather than a "translucent", spandrel glass.

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

There were no recommendations presented.

Report on Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities, Richard Tyler, Historian. After a brief discussion of several items including the staff's filing of an application for survey funds available through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Dr. Tyler's report was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

Certification and Old City, Richard Tyler, Historian. Dr. Haas introduced the topic and provided the Commission members with his view of how historical certification could apply to the Old City Historic District. He suggested using the quantitative

OLD BUSINESS (Cont'd)

evaluation form designed by the Commission's Architectural Advisor and the staff for assigning values to buildings in the Old City area as a criterion for certification. Using this system as a certification criterion and imposing more stringent standards for certification were two points raised by the Chairman and suggested for discussion.

As a result of the questions raised concerning preservation and certification in the Old City Historic District at the Commission's May meeting, the staff prepared a packet of material relating to the validity of district certification for the members to review. The items included in the packet were described to those present by Dr. Tyler and will be discussed in depth at the July meeting.

Dr. Tyler noted that the landmark era in preservation is being replaced with a concern for district and neighborhood conservation. Preservationists today are striving to protect the character of an area by retaining the rhythm, texture, color, scale and setting of buildings without regard to specific detailing. Such district designation places primary emphasis on the preservation of the quality of the district as a whole rather than on the particular details of its constituent parts.

The Commission's reasonableness in dealing with owners of certified buildings was brought to the attention of the members by the Historian and the Architectural Advisor. The rehabilitation of a building, recently damaged by fire and one viewed by the Commission members at its last meeting, situate at 6 North Third Street was cited as an example. Following a meeting in the Commission office with the owner and his attorney, an agreement to preserve the basic fabric of the building was reached to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The possibility was raised of creating district supervisory committees within the Commission as a supplement to the Commission's traditional review process.

Mr. Mogensen questioned the process of certification and its validity in being applied not only to landmark buildings but to buildings of value as part of the streetscape as well. The Commission's counsel pointed out that the same certification process is being used for all buildings. Since 1955, the year of the Historical Commission's establishment, preservation concepts have changed and the ordinance, designed for landmark certification, has been adapted for use in the conservation of neighborhoods.

OLD BUSINESS (Cont'd)

Finally, the Commission members were asked to review the packet of material distributed to them and to address themselves to the issue of whether the Commission should adopt a program of establishing districts through certification or to confine itself to landmark designation.

NEW BUSINESS

Historic American Buildings Survey and the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund. The Commission approved the use of the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund as a method for the Historic American Buildings Survey to reimburse, through a recognized agency, the funds temporarily advanced by the Chairman, in his private capacity, to the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1976 for the photographing of measured drawings of Philadelphia buildings. The \$2499.00 has been received by the Commission from the Historic American Buildings Survey. The Commission voted to authorize the reimbursement of this sum to Dr. Haas.

It was suggested that the Historic American Building Survey send to the Commission a letter detailing the specifics of this arrangement for file. Finally, Janet Klein asked that a letter be written thanking Dr. Haas for his assistance in making the photographing of these drawings possible for the HABS.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Sienientkowski
Executive Assistant to the Chairman

/pas