

2

MINUTES OF THE 22nd STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

3 August 1978

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: Janet S. Klein, Vice Chairman of the Commission
Mrs. James C. Crumlish, Jr.
Edward Pinkowski
Val Mogensen, Executive Assistant Director of Finance
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission
Barbara Liggett, Archaeological Consultant to the Commission
David Rosenblum, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Executive Assistant to the Chairman

Also: Sheila Stevens to request the certification of the Erlanger Theater,
Twenty-first and Market Streets.
Tom Hine, reporter for THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER.
Representatives from Kensington Action Now.

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

THE MINUTES of the Stated Meeting, 6 July 1978, were approved. Mr.
Pinkowski noted that the statement read by Mrs. Kearney of Kensington
Action Now concerning the certification of the Midway Theater at the
July meeting was not included as part of the Minutes as requested by
the Vice Chairman. Mrs. Kearney was asked to supply the Commission
with a copy of the KAN statement. She agreed to do so.

REPORTS

The Report of the Architectural Committee. Owing to the strike of
non-uniformed Civil Service employees during the week of 17 July 1978,
the regularly scheduled meeting of the Architectural Committee was
not held.

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

At the request of the Water Tower Advisory Council and Commissioner
Robert Crawford of the Department of Recreation, the Philadelphia
Historical Commission members considered for certification the Water
Tower at Ardleigh and Southampton Streets in Chestnut Hill. The
tower constructed in 1859 for the Chestnut Hill Waterworks now belongs
to the City of Philadelphia and is under the administration of the
Department of Recreation.

REPORTS (Cont'd)

In accordance with the recommendation of the Commission's Historian, a motion to certify the Water Tower was made, seconded and carried. A second motion directing the staff to look into the possibility of certification of the other buildings within the park, presented by Mr. Pinkowski, was also seconded and carried. Finally, it was suggested that an effort be made to record the interior of the Water Tower. Mr. Tyler agreed to make the necessary arrangements for a City photographer to obtain access to the tower. A member of the Commission staff will accompany the photographer to direct the recording of the structure.

The second item on the agenda to be considered for certification was the Erlanger Theater at Twenty-first and Market Streets.

Sheila Stevens expressed to the members of the Historical Commission her personal interest in the theater and in its preservation and reuse. The present owners, according to Ms. Stevens, have placed the building on the market for sale. If the theater proves to be unsalable, the structure will be demolished and the land placed on the market for new development.

Ms. Stevens, in her request for certification of the Erlanger, suggested that historical designation of the theater might assist in the effort to raise the funds needed to restore the building to its former use as a legitimate theater and cinema. At least, the Historical Commission's power to withhold approval of a demolition permit for six months would allow additional time to search for funding. Mr. Levy pointed out that although local certification can delay demolition for a limited period of time, federal registration is required to obtain government funding and to become eligible for the benefits available under the Tax Reform Act of 1976. With the six month delay on demolition, however, Ms. Stevens proposes to make application for federal registration. Mr. Tyler suggested meeting with the owners to discuss the advantages of certification, particularly federal certification, which might become available to the owners of the theater should the building be entered on the National Register.

After considerable discussion of the matter, Mr. Pinkowski presented a motion to certify the theater, to have the staff contact the Department of Licenses and Inspections in order to determine the status of the demolition permit and to consider the possibility of preservation and reuse of the theater. Both Mr. Levy and Mr. Hogensen expressed their opposition to the certification of the theater at this time on the basis that sufficient information was not available from which to make a determination. Mr. Levy, in accord with Mr. Tyler's earlier suggestion, proposed that the owners be informed of the possibility

REPORTS (Cont'd)

of historical certification and its ramifications but that the theater not be locally certified prior to such a meeting with the owners. A breakdown of the motion presented by Mr. Pinkowski was requested.

Following the Commission's suggestion, Mr. Pinkowski made a motion directing the staff to look into the present status of the demolition permit for the Erlanger Theater. This was seconded and carried. Secondly, a motion to investigate the intentions of the owner and to point out the possible advantages in the certification and retention of the existing building and to take whatever steps are necessary to preserve the building, was made, seconded and carried.

Finally, the motion to certify the theater locally was withdrawn.

REPORT on Historical Commission Staff Activities, Richard Tyler, Historian. Mr. Tyler's report for the month of July was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

The Historian at the request of Mr. Mogensen elaborated on the proposal to realign Delaware Avenue in the vicinity of Old Swedes' Church to improve the efficiency of the docks and the highway. Barbara Liggett asked that some archaeological investigations of the site be undertaken prior to construction particularly if there should be any excavations planned at Swanson Street. According to Ms. Liggett the possibility that an eighteenth century log road, similar to that uncovered at Dock Street, might lie below the existing grade at that location. Mr. Tyler agreed to notify the proper authorities of the archaeological significance of the Swanson Street site.

Building Permits, 1889-1906. Mr. Mogensen, a member of the committee appointed by the Vice Chairman at the 6 July meeting to study the advisability of proceeding with the Xeroxing and indexing of building permits issued between 1889 and 1906, reported to the Commission on the committee's findings.

The Committee consisting of Mrs. Klein, Mr. Mogensen, Mr. Levy and Mr. Tyler studied samples of the building permits to determine the scale of the program and to project its cost.

The Committee examined three volumes selected at random from the 72 cubic feet of documents or approximately 575 volumes -- in this collection at the Record Storage Center, 401 North Broad Street. This examination revealed that relatively few of the permits list the architect. Inasmuch as only these permits are to be copied, the Committee estimated that fewer than 1,500 documents would be Xeroxed

STATED MEETING

4

3 August 1978

REPORTS (Con't)

and that the project cost would be substantially less than the previously anticipated \$800. The Committee determined that \$300. would be adequate; half of this has been committed by the Athenaeum and the Society of Architectural Historians. In addition to the Xerography, Mark Lloyd, a Ph.D. candidate at Temple University, will prepare an index of the copied permits by architect and location. He has offered to perform the entire task as a volunteer with two volunteer assistants.

The Committee unanimously agreed that the project is feasible and desirable and recommended that the Commission endorse it and underwrite half the anticipated cost.

Mr. Tyler reported that Commissioner Sabatini had given his consent to the program by telephone which the Commissioner will confirm in writing.

Mr. Mogensen made a motion for the approval of the copying and indexing of the permits as described above and for the expenditure from the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund of an amount not to exceed \$150. to cover half the cost of the project. This motion was seconded and carried.

The Vice Chairman thanked Mr. Lloyd for coming to the meeting to answer any questions concerning this project that the Commission members might have had.

Ms. Liggett expressed her concern over the Hexamer Industrial Surveys stored at the Free Library. None of the 2700 plates have been duplicated and all are in poor condition.

Ms. Liggett agreed to prepare a funding proposal to the National Endowment for the duplication of these surveys if the Historical Commission would accept the money through the Harry A. Batten Fund.

The Vice Chairman suggested that the proposal be made through the Free Library. Ms. Liggett agreed to talk with both Messrs. Post and Doms concerning this matter.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Executive Assistant to the Chairman