

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Robert Thomas, Chair
Commission Conference Room, One Parkway, 18th Fl., 1515 Arch St.
21 May 1999

Present

Robert Thomas, Chair
Herbert Levy
Daniel McCoubrey
Suzanne Pentz

Elizabeth Harvey, Historic Preservation Planner
R. Scott Jacob, Executive Secretary
Laura Spina, Historic Preservation Planner
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Mark Zecca, Esq., Deputy City Solicitor

Also

Pearl M. Cappel
Joan Less, Coalition for Philadelphia Art (CPA)
Marsha Moss
Geoffrey Jarvis, Esq., Sprague & Sprague
Richard Sprague, Esq., Sprague & Sprague
George O'Connell, Esq., Barbin, Lauffer and O'Connell, Attorneys at Law
Susan M. Davis, Redevelopment Authority
Jerald M. Goodman
Thomas Nichols
Ann Saul, CPA
Karen Schwartz, CPA
G. Hahn
Stephan Salisbury, Philadelphia Inquirer
Joseph Hetrick, Esq.
Mina Smith-Segal
Elizabeth Armour, Society Hill Civic Association
Janet Mason, CPA
Elaine Grossman, CPA
Penny Bach, Fairmount Park Art
Sharon Erwin, Esq.
Jennifer Darr, Philadelphia City Paper
Maevernon Varnum, Art Defense League
Paul Sofian
Patricia Aden, Preservation Alliance
Alik Strakes, Preservation Alliance

Dream Garden Mosaic Mural, Curtis Building Lobby, 170 South Independence Mall West

Estate of John W. Merriam, Applicant

DATE: 1914-1916

PROPOSAL: Removal

Ms. Pentz recused herself from the discussion and the vote.

Mr. Tyler described the function of the Architectural Committee as an advisory body to the Historical Commission.

Prior to this meeting, Commission staff sent a letter to the applicant requesting information (see attached). The Estate responded (see attached).

Ms. Harvey and Ms. Spina gave the staff's recommendation opposing the removal on preservation grounds and made a presentation with supporting documentation and slides. Their written testimony is attached.

Attorneys for the applicant were present.

Richard Sprague, Esq., counsel for the applicant, asked that the slides presented by Ms. Spina and Ms. Harvey be numbered and made part of the public record in conjunction with a written transcript of their presentation.

Geoffrey Jarvis, Esq., attorney for the applicant, was asked if he wanted any additional time to submit to the Committee any response to the staff presentation, and he declined. Attorneys for the estate expressed the opinion that the Architectural Committee review was not necessary and that the matter should go straight to the Committee on Financial Hardship.

Several members of the community, including Patricia Aden of the Preservation Alliance, Susan Davis of the Redevelopment Authority, Thomas Nichols and Elaine Grossman of the Coalition for Philadelphia Art, and Maevern Varnum of the Art Defense League, voiced strong opposition to the removal of *Dream Garden* from its location in the Curtis Building Lobby. Ms. Aden spoke regarding the importance of the Architectural Committee meeting as a forum for public comment.

Penny Bach of the Fairmount Park Art Association listed six issues regarding the mural as public art: 1. *Dream Garden* is public art; 2. it is a site-specific work; 3. moving it will destroy its integrity and diminish its value; 4. removal will endanger the mural and no condition report has been submitted by the applicant; 5. *Dream Garden* is a truly unique contribution to Philadelphia's public art; and 6. the mural is part of Philadelphia's cultural heritage. She also stated that a privately owned work does not mean it cannot constitute a cultural or public asset. There was discussion by the Committee members.

It was announced that the Special Commission Meeting on *Dream Garden* will be held on 28 June 1999, at 2:00 p.m., in Room 18029, 1515 Arch Street.

Mr. Levy made a motion to recommend denial of the application to remove Dream Garden from its historic and present setting. Since the applicant has stated that it would like to make a financial hardship claim, Mr. Levy also moved to recommend referral by the Commission of this claim to the Committee on Financial Hardship. Mr. McCoubrey seconded the motion which carried with three votes. As mentioned above, Ms. Pentz recused herself in advance of the discussion and did not participate in the discussion or the vote.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Scott Jacob
Executive Secretary