

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION
MINUTES

7 April 1980

Present: Edward Pinkowski, Chairman of the Committee on Certification and Member, Philadelphia Historical Commission.

Janet S. Klein, Vice-Chairman, Philadelphia Historical Commission.

Theodore T. Bartley, Jr., A.I.A., Member of the Architectural Committee, Philadelphia Historical Commission.

John O. Higgins, Chief, Area Planning Division, City Planning Commission.

James E. Rooney, Director, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Hyman Myers, A.I.A.

Richard Tyler, Historian.

Patricia Szymonkowski, Executive Assistant to the Chairman.

Jefferson M. Noak, Historical Research Technician.

Also: David Pudlin, owner of 2129 Cypress Street, to request historical certification.

The third meeting of the Committee on Certification met at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, 7 April 1980, in 1311 City Hall Annex.

OLD BUSINESS

2129 Cypress Street. Nominated by the owner, David B. Pudlin. As directed by the Philadelphia Historical Commission at its meeting of 6 December 1979, the Committee on Certification reconsidered Mr. Pudlin's request for the certification of 2129 Cypress Street. The Committee had recommended previously that this house not be certified.

Originally constructed as part of a row of ordinary, three-story houses in the mid-nineteenth century, 2129 Cypress Street was remodeled by Louis I. Kahn in 1957. It was the opinion of the Committee, expressed at its meeting of 16 November, that the building possessed little distinction in itself and did not contribute to the quality of the streetscape. Moreover, it was agreed that the Kahn association alone was not sufficient to warrant the building's certification.

Mr. Pudlin appeared before the Committee on 7 April and requested a reconsideration of his application for certification. While acknowledging the lesser significance of the front facade, Mr. Pudlin asked that the building be evaluated for certification primarily on the basis of its Kahn designed interior space.

Mr. Pudlin's request raised two issues. The first concerned the advisability of certifying private residential interior spaces and the means for implementation of controls; the second addressed the question of the significance of Kahn's alteration to 2129 Cypress Street.

7 April 1980

Following an extensive discussion, the Committee voted to stand by its 16 November recommendation that 2129 Cypress Street not be certified. Janet Klein abstained from voting on this matter. The Committee members asked that a letter be sent to Mr. Pullin thanking him for his continued interest and concern for the preservation of 2129 Cypress Street.

505 North Twenty-first Street. Nominated by the Spring Garden Civic Association. At its meeting of 16 November 1979 the Committee recommended to the Commission the certification of 505 North Twenty-first Street as requested by the Spring Garden Civic Association. Built in 1857, this house comprises half of a three-story, brick, semi-detached structure. Executed in the Italianate style, the building was determined to contribute to the Victorian character of the Spring Garden district.

As a result of the owner's objection to the historical certification of her building, the matter was again brought before the Committee for consideration.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the Committee would not recommend the imposition of certification in this case. Instead, the Committee suggested that the Spring Garden Civic Association be alerted to the situation and asked to monitor the building. Upon change of ownership, the question of certification of 505 North Twenty-first Street can be reopened.

624 North Twenty-first Street. Nominated by the Spring Garden Civic Association. At its meeting of 16 November 1979 the Committee tabled the nomination of 624 North Twenty-first Street pending additional information. Research into early sales, subsequent to the 16 November meeting, indicated the house to have been constructed as a free-standing structure and not as part of a row as had been suggested.

In view of this, the Committee recommended unanimously the certification of 624 North Twenty-first Street.

NEW SUBMISSIONS FOR CERTIFICATION

In its on-going attempt to certify locally all those buildings placed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1966, the staff nominated three structures for the Committee's consideration.

7 April 1980

Reading Terminal, 1115-1141 Market Street. Nominated by the Philadelphia Historical Commission staff. The Reading Terminal head house and train shed stand as a significant engineering work and rare use of a composite Renaissance style on a railroad terminal. Both structures were entered into the National Register on 30 June 1972.

Built 1891-93, the train shed, designed by Wilson Brothers & Co., architects and engineers, has suffered little mutilation. The head house constructed at the same time from the designs of Francis H. Kimball underwent alteration on the interior and on the exterior ground floor in 1946. In both instances, however, the original integrity of the structure has not been lost.

The train shed remains as the world's oldest long-span roof structure and America's only surviving single-span arched train shed. The construction of the Conventer Connection Tunnel under the shed is currently proceeding. Thanks to a recommendation from the architectural offices of Day & Zimmerman the train shed has been underpinned and will be preserved rather than demolished as originally planned.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of the Reading Terminal train shed and head house.

30th Street Station, northeast corner of 30th and Market Streets. Nominated by the Historical Commission staff. Entered on the National Register of Historic Places on 7 June 1976 the 30th Street Station has served for more than forty years as Philadelphia's principal railroad passenger station. Begun in 1929 from the designs of the Chicago firm of Graham Anderson Probst and White, the station and its attendant trackage have undergone little change since the completion of their construction in 1934. The Philadelphia 30th Street Station stands as a good example of a monumental building in the modern classical style. Rehabilitation of the station will begin shortly as part of the Northeast Corridor Improvement Program.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of both the interior and exterior of 30th Street Station.

Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Building, Pennsylvania Avenue and Twenty-sixth Street. Nominated by the Historical Commission staff. Designed in 1926 by the Philadelphia architectural office of Zantzinger and Borie, the Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Company building was entered on the National Register on 2 July 1973. Its richly sculpted exterior facades, its prominent location on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and its unique site plan make this building one of Philadelphia's most significant twentieth century commercial structures.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of the Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Company building. A letter of notification will be sent to the Department of Public Property.

7 April 1980

In its continuing effort to certify buildings in the Old City National Register Commercial District legally, the staff presented several structures for the Committee's review. These buildings, added to the list in 1972 as part of a district designation, were not certified as prescribed by the Commission's ordinance. As a result, the staff continues to review those buildings entered on the list in 1972 and prepare individual nominations for the Committee's consideration.

301-303 Cherry Street. Built between 1860 and 1866, this three-story, five-bay, brick, commercial building reflects clearly the nineteenth century character of the Old City District. Its ornate facade contains a first story arched cast-iron front with Corinthian columns and a bracketed cornice, decorative brick corbelling and a heavy bracketed cornice at the roofline. This structure has been attributed to Stephen Sutton, Architect.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 301-303 Cherry Street.

136 Race Street. Erected in 1854-55 by Matthew Fife, a box manufacturer, this brick dwelling rises three stories high. Decorative marble sills, lintels, an arched entrance hood and a heavy, bracketed cornice ornament the facade. The building remains as a fine example of a mid-nineteenth century urban dwelling.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 136 Race Street.

219 Race Street. Erected c. 1850, this three-story, three-bay, brick, commercial building reflects the commercial character of the Old City National Register District. Over the years the building has suffered little mutilation and stands virtually intact.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 219 Race Street.

225 Race Street. Although somewhat altered since its construction, this four-story, three-bay, brick commercial loft building with its iron front retains much of its original integrity. The building contains some original arched casement window sash, its heavy, molded iron cornice and representative ornamental details.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 225 Race Street.

7 April 1980

243 Race Street. This four-story, two-bay, brick, commercial building with cast-iron ground floor, erected c. 1850, typifies the commercial character of Old City. The building has undergone minimal alteration since its construction.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 243 Race Street.

245 Race Street. Like 243 Race Street, this four-story, two-bay, brick commercial building, erected c. 1855, represents the nineteenth century commercial character of the Old City District.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 245 Race Street.

247-249 Race Street a.k.a. 201-203 North Third Street. Erected c. 1850, this four-story, stucco over brick, commercial building stands at the northeast corner of Race and Third Streets. Although its ground floor has been extensively altered several times, the building still reflects the dominant commercial character of the Old City District.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 247-249 Race Street a.k.a. 201-203 North Third Street. In addition, the Committee recommended that a special letter be sent to the owner of the building requesting that consideration be given to a more sensitive treatment of the ground floor elevation along Race Street. The members suggested continuing the pilaster and cornice design across the Race Street facade or, at least, suggesting the rhythm of the fenestration through a superficial treatment of the wall.

208-10 Race Street. Constructed after the turn of the century, this building stands one-story high and three bays wide. Although the building does not reflect the predominant nineteenth century character of the district, Mr. Myers stressed its importance as part of the continuing commercial development of the area into the twentieth century.

Following considerable discussion, the Committee recommended that 208-10 Race Street be certified. There were three votes in favor of certification. Janet Klein opposed; Mr. Bartley and Mr. Pinkowski abstained.

212-14 Race Street. Like many others in Old City this four-story, four-bay utilitarian classical loft building, erected c. 1840, reflects the basic commercial character of the area.

The Committee unanimously recommended certification of 212-14 Race Street.

216 Race Street. Similar in design to 212-14 Race Street this building, too, reflects the nineteenth century commercial character of Old City.

The Committee unanimously recommended certification of 216 Race Street.

218-220 Race Street. Although similar in design to 212-14 and 216 Race Street, this building was not constructed until 1916-18. Although erected more than 50 years after 212-14, 216 Race Street, the building conforms in design to the earlier structures adjoining to the east and reflects the character of the Old City Commercial district.

The Committee unanimously recommended certification of 218-20 Race Street.

222-226 Race Street. This late Victorian commercial loft building, erected in 1885, stands four stories high and eight bays wide. In its design, use and date, this building clearly adds to the nineteenth century commercial flavor of the Old City Historic District.

The Committee unanimously recommended the certification of 222-226 Race Street

Before adjourning, the Committee on Certification agreed to schedule its next meeting for 19 May 1980 at 2:30 p.m. in the Historical Commission office. As usual, a packet containing information on each of the nominations to be considered will be sent to all Committee members. Mr. Myers volunteered the use of Lay & Zimmermann's Xerox machine for reproduction of the photographs to be included with the printed matter.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Executive Assistant to the Chairman