

**THE REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

Herbert W. Levy, FAIA, Presiding Chairman

**Commission Conference Room
Suite 1301, 1401 Arch Street**

28 May 1992

Present

Herbert W. Levy, Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Presiding Chairman
Tony Atkin
Penelope H. Batcheler, Historical Architect, Independence National Historical Park
William Cornell
Don Stevenson

Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also

Jeff Player, Philadelphia Center Realty
John and Julie Liedman, owners, 221 Bainbridge Street
Richard Cole
Kurt Fisher
Arthur Russle and Fran Lewis, Olivet Covenant Church
Edward J. Reader, architect
Leonid Vaintrub, owner, 104-6 S. 8th Street
Dennis Feldsher, Fairmount Park Commission
Robert Powers, Spring Garden Civic Association
Bert Jackson, Morse-Diesel Temple / Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority
William Gardiner, Strouse Greenberg/Reading Terminal Market
Vincent Maiello and Brian Yachyshen, Kelly/Maiello Architects
William McDowell and Mary Ann Duffy, McDowell Associates
Nathan Saltz, Saxon & Capers
John Rodgers, Reading Terminal Market Preservation Fund
Duane Perry, Reading Terminal Market Merchants
William Burke, Art Commission
Warren Huff, City Planning Commission

DEFERRAL

104-106 South Eighth Street: Owner Lee Vaintrub proposes to install a large wooden sign on the north side of this building. The brick side wall rises two stories above an adjacent commercial building, so the sign will be visible down 8th Street. Mr. Vaintrub submitted a sketch of a sign of billboard proportion and asked the Committee to inform him of the sign dimensions permissible by the Zoning Code.

Warren Huff of the City Planning Commission informed the applicant that the Zoning Code permits fifteen square feet of signage for each linear foot of street frontage of his property. In October, the permissible square footage will decrease to two square feet per linear foot of frontage. It was noted that the Art Commission, which has jurisdiction because the property is within the Center City Special Controls District,

may impose more restrictive standards.

The Committee suggested preparing a more complete drawing of the proposed sign with dimensions using seven by twelve feet as a general parameter. The Committee advised the applicant to remove the telephone number from the sign, to add a frame and to use a typeface with serifs. The applicant should submit this revised drawing to the Art Commission for its review. After securing Art Commission approval, the applicant should return to the Committee.

The Committee deferred this matter until the applicant submits a more complete plan for the sign.

Rodin Museum, Benjamin Franklin Parkway at 22nd Street

Dennis Feldsher, staff architect of the Fairmount Park Commission, proposed replacement of the steps at the Museum, built 1927-29 of a design by Paul Cret and Jacques Greber. The original steps, cast of a highly textured limestone quarried in France, have been deteriorating and present minor hazards at places. The Park Commission proposes to replace them with new Indiana limestone with a rough finish.

The Committee encouraged the applicant to consult with stone conservation specialists before proceeding with this proposal. Given the beauty and significance of this major public monument, the Committee requested that the applicant examine three alternative possibilities:

- conservation of the existing steps with patches where necessary;
- turning around the stone block steps, so the less worn side faces out; and
- replacement in granite.

The Committee specifically suggested that the applicant contact Frank Matero, an expert in stone conservation who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania.

The applicant was amenable to this advice. The Committee deferred this matter until the preceding suggestions have been explored.

CONCEPTUAL APPROVAL

Olivet Covenant Presbyterian Church, 610-622 North 22nd Street

The church proposes to install two signs, one on the tower of this church and the other at the southeast corner of an adjacent parking lot which was once the site of a related ecclesiastical building. The church maintains that the sign will enable motorists driving up 22nd Street to see notices of services and other special announcements. Representatives of the Spring Garden Civic Association (SGCA), however, objected to the church's original proposal; these representatives maintain that the sign should be designed for its primarily pedestrian, residential environment, not for cars moving at high speeds.

Following discussions with representatives of the SGCA, the church revised its earlier plans for the free-standing sign. That sign has been significantly reduced in size, placed atop a small berm and modified to evoke features of the church architecture. Robert Powers of SGCA, however, insisted that the sign is still too large. It will be thirty square feet and stand seventeen feet above grade.

It was noted that a free-standing sign is not permitted by right in an "R-10" zoning district. The applicants must obtain approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment prior to installation.

The Committee recommended approval in concept for the sign on the side of the building as well as the berm in the corner of the parking lot. The Committee also recommended approval of a sign in the shape proposed. However, the members encouraged the applicants to sustain their discussion with the neighborhood association to reach a mutually acceptable size for the free-standing sign.

APPROVAL

The Ralston School, 221 Bainbridge Street: Architect Kurt Fisher presented plans to rehabilitate this school building constructed in 1869 by the City. The building was altered circa 1920 for use as a piano factory and has been vacant since the 1960s, when it was acquired by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for demolition for the defunct South Street expressway project. Since then, the building has suffered considerable deterioration. John and Julie Liedman acquired this decrepit landmark at an auction with the intent of rehabilitating it for use as a family residence. The plans presented include: restoration of the exterior walls and most features, removal of the roof on a newer section of the building to create an open deck, creation of a garden in the northeast corner of the property, infill of basement windows creating shallow reveals and the addition of gates where they existed historically. Finally, the plans depict the installation of solid garage doors filling two existing openings.

The Committee commended the owners for their exciting proposal. One suggestion offered was to retain an existing fixed grid of windows at the top of the proposed garage door opening to serve as transom lights. The Committee suggested this idea as a modest improvement to an exceptional proposal.

Mr. Liedman, a civil engineer, expressed his reservations with the preceding idea; he believes the proposal as drawn appropriately identifies the new function of these openings with new materials. He conveyed concern with the appearance and stability of the suggested design.

The Committee enthusiastically recommended approval of this proposal.

Reading Terminal Market, Rear of 1115-1141 Market Street

As part of the rehabilitation of the Reading Terminal Trainshed for use as the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Market will undergo alterations as well. The Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority contracted with three different architectural firms for the renovations to the Market: Kelly/Maiello, McDowell Associates and Saxon/Capers. There are approximately sixty-nine merchants and several more stalls in the Market. The Historical Commission previously approved some plans for this part of the project. However, much of the work had not been reviewed by the Committee and other work had been revised substantially. The Commission staff informed the Authority that these revised plans required Committee review and Commission approval. At this time, all merchants anticipate remaining open throughout a phased construction program. Although this will entail certain inconveniences, including sharing stalls, the Merchants' Association prefers it to the previously proposed three-month closing.

Kelly/Maiello Architects

The plans prepared by Kelly/Maiello include mechanical systems, one stall with historic fabric and exterior facade work on Filbert and 12th Streets. Although the Market currently has some air conditioning over entrances on 12th Street, the proposal entails complete air conditioning with hanging ductwork suspended from the ceiling throughout the Market. These rectangular ducts will range in size from 74 x 32 inches to

branches of 32 x 16 inches. New round ducts for kitchen exhaust will be installed as well. *The Committee recommended approval of this configuration.*

Regarding signage on one historic stall, the architects propose to reuse the existing signboard, installing a thin piece of wood over the old sign within the frame and using lettering similar to that of the old sign. This scheme will preserve the historic sign behind the new board. *The Committee recommended approval of this proposal and encouraged all three architectural firms to employ historically appropriate sign lettering at all locations.*

Mr. Maiello next discussed plans for rehabilitation of the exterior facade at the location on 12th Street where Commerce Street once entered the building's freight area. Here, an opening will be filled with brick to match the rest of the 12th Street wall. *The Committee recommended approval of this work, pending review by the staff of the proposed brick.*

Finally, Mr. Maiello discussed proposed work on the area south of Filbert Street. Though the scope of work has been reduced, much of this wall will be restored to replicate the original as seen on the north side of Filbert Street. *The Committee recommended approval of this work.*

McDowell Associates

William McDowell presented plans for alterations to various merchant stalls throughout the Market. Any historic features within the scope of their work will be retained. Where non-historic stalls are being rebuilt, the architects propose to use two different ceramic tile patterns with six different colors to achieve some visual diversity. Existing counter-tops, some of which are made of plastic laminate, will be replaced with a higher quality synthetic material which has a stone-like finish.

The Committee recommended approval of the proposed stall reconstruction plans, contingent upon:

- consultation with the individual merchants regarding the proposed color and pattern schemes for each stall; and*
- the use of white as the field upon which various colors will form patterns.*

The Committee particularly noted that the proposed material for the counter-tops is a distinct improvement.

The architects propose to replace portions of the brick floor in sections of the Market.

The Committee recommended approval of this work contingent upon toothing together the brick at joints to reduce the contrast between old and new materials.

McDowell Associates also propose to remove two mezzanine structures. They propose to build a mezzanine above Fisher's Treats in the northwestern corner of the Market where it will hide the new cinder-block fire stair tower. *The Committee recommended approval of this work with the condition that windows proposed as octagonal be replaced with a row of transom lights as on the existing mezzanine.*

Saxon/Capers Architects

This firm received a contract for work on the balance of the merchant stalls, including many which include historic material. All historic features are being preserved, though some will be moved. Nathan Saltz presented plans for changes to the Down Home Diner.

The Committee examined several specific proposals:

- The shelving and bean bins at Margerum's will be rebuilt in wood to approximate their present appearance and to meet health code.
- The section backboard and counters from Godshall's will be moved and reinstalled intact at the New Moyer's stand.
- The exterior walls at the Down Home Diner will be faced with new enamel-faced, metal panels where there is now drywall and beadboard.
- Many non-historic stalls will be rebuilt using plastic laminate.

While members acknowledged the importance of retaining the eclectic mix of historic features, styles and forms throughout this Philadelphia landmark, they did not wish to become too detailed in their review of non-historic features or new construction. They acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the proposed renovation did not result in excessive standardization. The Committee also delegated further detailed review of non-historic features to the staff.

The Committee recommended approval of this project, incorporating all of the preceding comments and specific recommendations.

DISAPPROVAL

John Wanamaker's Department Store, 1301-1324 Market Street: Jeff Player of Philadelphia Center Realty presented plans to alter a storefront and entrance at the subway concourse level of this building, a subterranean public facade. This symmetrical facade, which projects several feet into the public thoroughfare, features a rose-colored marble base and piers with a central recessed entrance, brass window frames, Wanamaker's name plaques and light fixtures. The marble wall currently extends only part way down the west side of the facade. The applicant proposes to clean and repair the area east of the entrance. His proposal for the west side is more complex.

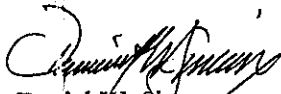
In the interest of easing the flow of pedestrian traffic between trains, SEPTA has asked the applicant to pull back their store frontage several feet to the property line. Further, the Authority has considered establishing a SEPTA Security mini-station in part of the new storefront. As a result of these discussions with SEPTA, the applicant has proposed to demolish a marble pier and base on the west side and to construct a new facade of gray granite that will be flush with the building line.

Following preliminary review, the Commission staff objected to the destruction of the symmetry of this front facade and to the contrast between the color and materials of the restored east storefront and the proposed west storefront. After further discussion with staff, the applicant proposed the possibility of incorporating some salvaged red marble into the new storefront up to its first pier. This pier would project slightly to mark the west side of the recessed entryway.

The Committee, with the exception of Mr. Cornell, was disturbed by the proposed destruction of the symmetrical entryway and the loss of the red marble fabric. The Committee recommended retaining the existing piece of marble fabric on the west side of the entrance and building the gray granite facade in a recessed plane west of that fabric. It was noted that the passageway is wider at that point in any case and therefore does not impede the flow of traffic.

The Committee adjourned at 5:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission is scheduled for 10 June 1992, in Room 401 City Hall, the City Council Caucus Room.

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary