

THE MINUTES OF THE 289th STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

9 APRIL 1985

F. Otto Haas Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas Chairman

David Hollenberg

Joan Ferreira

Caroline Golab

Jason Nathan

William Thompson

Christine Washington

Charles Pizzi, First Deputy Director of Commerce

James S. White, Commissioner, Department of Licenses & Inspections

Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning Commission

Eileen Weinstein, Director of Policy and Planning, Office of Housing

Kenneth Cooper, Esq., Deputy City Solicitor, Law Department

Richard Tyler, Historian

Patricia Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian

Randal Baron, Executive Secretary

Terry Koob, Clerk Steno II

Also: Earle Ball, Grace Wheeler and John Kremer of William Penn Charter School;
and Charles Hough, Architect, and David E. Thurston, Esq., representing
William Penn Charter School

Dr. Guy Lacy Schless, President of Victorian Society of America

Robert Sklaker, A.I.A., Victorian Society

Dr. Satoko I. Parker, President of Philadelphia Chapter of the Society of
Architectural Historians

Gersil N. Kay, Restore Philadelphia

Elizabeth Solomon

Dorothy Bulmash, Loudoun Mansion

Marie H. Pearce, Loudoun Mansion

Christopher Hyk

Mary Lou McFarland, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

Bill Blades, Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation

A. Robert Jaeger, Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation

Sue B. Gilfillan, Philadelphia Committee Person

Mary Beth Lonergran, Gray Smith's Office

Anita M. Mastroiemi, Germantown Courier

Helen Dorwart

and others

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

THE MINUTES of the Architectural Committee for 20 March 1985, Herbert W. Levy,
A.I.A., Chairman. The motion was made to accept the report of the Architectural
Committee with the exception of 333 South Street and the Steel House, 3001 School
House Lane, which were separated for individual discussion.

The remainder of the report was approved and directed to be filed with the offi-
cial copy of the minutes of this meeting.

Owing to the many persons in attendance with a concern for the Steel House, the Chairman directed that Old Business be discussed first.

OLD BUSINESS

Steel House, 3001 School House Lane. Mr. Hollenberg reviewed the matter of the Steel House with the other Commission members. He reported that representatives of Penn Charter School appeared before the Architectural Committee at its meeting of 20 March 1985 to request permission to demolish the Steel House and its accessory buildings. At that time the members of the Architectural Committee voted, unanimously, to recommend to the Commission the imposition of the statutory six-month delay available under the old ordinance.

The Chairman opened the floor to the representatives of the Penn Charter School, owners of the Steel House. Grace Wheeler and Earle Ball of Penn Charter School reviewed the history of the school's interest in the Steel estate for use as playing fields and the acquisition of the property. Ms. Wheeler explained that after looking "longingly" at the Steel estate for several years, Penn Charter purchased this property in the Fall of 1984 with the express purpose of using it for athletic fields. Ms. Wheeler stated that the Steel House possessed little historical or architectural significance, and noted that it did not appear in the Foundation for Architecture's Philadelphia Architecture: A Guide to the City and merited listing only in the appendix of Elizabeth Yarnall's monograph on Addison Hutton. She also suggested that Steel was not a "household" word in Philadelphia and that the existence of several other Hutton buildings in the area rendered the demolition of the Steel House no loss to the community.

Mr. Ball explained the necessity of the school's acquiring additional space for playing fields. The present configuration of Penn Charter's athletic fields poses a safety problem and is inadequate for competition games. In addition, the school now admits female students and needs more facilities for them. He expressed his belief that Penn Charter had an ethical, moral and legal responsibility to provide proper playing fields for all its students, male and female, intramural and inter-academic. To meet these needs, the school had investigated several other properties in the vicinity of the school before moving to acquire the Steel estate. None of these, however, really presented workable solutions to the school's problem. Moreover, it was the opinion of Mr. Ball that the school was in no position to contract with another source for the sale or rental of available land for use as athletic fields for it has strained its finances with the \$750,000 purchase of the Steel estate.

Dr. Guy Lacy Schless, President of the Victorian Society of America, read a statement opposing the demolition of the Steel House. Dr. Schless, an alumnus of Penn Charter School, expressed his concern about the school's strong emphasis on athletics.

Several other persons present also testified in favor of the buildings' preservation.

Subsequent to this testimony, the Commission staff received at the meeting a typewritten statement from Dr. Satoko I. Parker, President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, urging the Commission to impose the six month demolition stay on the property at 3001 School House Lane.

Following Penn Charter's presentation, the Chairman thanked the representatives of the school for appearing at the meeting and advised them that they would be notified shortly of the Commission's decision regarding their application.

The Commission then proceeded to discuss the merits of the building and a course of action. At this time, Mary Lou McFarland, Executive Director of the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, expressed her concern for the preservation of the Steel House and its accessory buildings. She informed the Commission members that Penn Charter agreed to meet with her and the Middle States Preservation Fund to discuss potential preservation solutions that may be available to the school.

After considerable discussion, the Commission voted to table this matter until the next Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission in the hope that a workable plan could be formulated to eliminate the need to demolish the Steel House. This motion was unanimously approved.

333 South Street. Mr. Tyler reported on the matter of 333 South Street and outlined the recommendations of the Architectural Committee concerning this building. These recommendations include the retention of a six foot storefront recess, the installation of a transom over the door and the preservation of the second floor masonry fabric of the front facade. Mr. Tyler explained that the attorney representing the owner of 333 South Street indicated that the owner was willing to compromise by agreeing to a four-and-one-half foot recess instead of the Architectural Committee's recommendation of six feet. The Committee's position represented a compromise from the original twelve foot recess and took into consideration the natural break in the storefront design.

There was considerable discussion among the Commission members regarding the "mish-mash" condition of the South Street neighborhood. Commissioner White explained that this condition is no fault of the Historical Commission but reflects upon the fact that much work is done illegally without permits from the Department of Licenses and Inspections and that there are currently several civil suits pending.

Ms. Siemiontkowski explained that the 300 block of South Street contains the best collection of turn-of-the century shopfronts in the city.

A motion was made to accept the recommendations of the Architectural Committee. This was unanimously approved.

THE CHAIRMAN then asked the Commission members and staff to introduce themselves since this was the first Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission under the new ordinance.

THE MINUTES of the 288th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 7 March 1985 were reviewed and unanimously approved.

THE HISTORIAN presented the following resolutions to the Philadelphia Historical Commission which were unanimously approved:

Pursuant to Section (4) (h) of Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code, the Philadelphia Historical Commission resolves to establish an Architectural Committee as an advisory committee to the Commission. The architect appointed to the Commission shall serve as chairperson.

The Commission appoints to this Committee David Hollenberg, chair, Theodore Bartley, F.A.I.A., Penelope Batcheler, David DeLong, John Dickey, F.A.I.A. and Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A.

Pursuant to Section (4) (h) of Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code, the Philadelphia Historical Commission resolves to establish a Committee on Historic Designation as an advisory committee to the Commission. This Committee shall consist of the architectural historian and the historian appointed to the Commission, a senior staff member of the City Planning Commission, an historical architect not associated formally with the Commission and two interested citizens. The chair shall be occupied by a member of the Commission.

The Commission appoints to this Committee Grace Gary, chair, Caroline Golab, David Baldinger, Hyman Myers, Sandra Tatman and Janet S. Klein.

Pursuant to Section (4) (h) of Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code, the Philadelphia Historical Commission resolves to establish an ad hoc committee on procedures and guidelines.

The Commission appoints to this Committee James S. White, chair, Joan Ferreira, Jason Nathan, Christine Washington and Grace Gary.

THE COMMISSION discussed scheduling the first Tuesday of each month for the meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission but decided to table this decision at the present time.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Koob
Clerk Steno II