

PRESERVATION MATTERS

The Newsletter of The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

SPECIAL ISSUE
ENDANGERED
PROPERTIES

Third Annual Endangered Properties List

Executive Director's Message

Each year the Preservation Alliance solicits recommendations from community organizations, historic societies, members of the Alliance, and the general public of historic properties and sites for inclusion on our annual Endangered Properties list. The purpose of the list is to draw attention to historic resources that are threatened with demolition or inappropriate alteration and to help develop support for their preservation. We appreciate all of the individuals and organizations that suggested properties for consideration this year.

It may seem strange that the first listing is not an individual property, but an entire neighborhood—Queen Village. This is not to suggest that Queen Village is in a state of decline; it's not by any means. The neighborhood is prospering, houses are well maintained, and there is a lot of new investment going on. But Queen Village is a good example of many neighborhoods whose historic character is being changed by the boom in new residential construction and alteration of historic properties. For that reason we have chosen to highlight the issues in Queen Village—and the solutions the civic association is trying to put in place—as representative of issues and approaches that are relevant to preserving the historic character of other neighborhoods as well.

This special issue of Preservation Matters also includes an update on the status of properties on our 2004 Endangered Buildings list. We are grateful to the William Penn Foundation for a grant that supports this and other advocacy efforts of the Alliance.

JOHN ANDREW GALLERY
Executive Director

- PHILADELPHIA
- QUEEN VILLAGE
 - BOUVIER BUILDING
 - BURK MANSION
 - MT. MORIAH CEMETERY
- REGIONAL
- STONOROV STEEL HOUSES
 - CHESTER HEIGHTS CAMP MEETING
 - BUNTING FRIENDSHIP FREEDOM HOUSE

Queen Village

*Front to 5th Streets,
Lombard Street to Washington Avenue,
Philadelphia*

SIGNIFICANCE Queen Village was established as a seventeenth century Swedish settlement and expanded during the eighteenth century as a neighborhood for Delaware River ship workers. Southwark, as it was originally known, was outside the boundaries of the city of Philadelphia established by William Penn and therefore, the orderly plan created by Penn and his

surveyor Thomas Holme did not apply. This led to a less organized development pattern of speculative housing and small commercial businesses tied to the shipping industry. The neighborhood continued to grow as settlement expanded north and south along the Delaware River. It officially became part of the city when the city and county were consolidated in 1854. The name Queen Village, selected in honor of Queen Christian of Sweden, was adopted in the 1970s. Queen Village's historic character derives from its many eighteenth century residences, "trinity" houses, small streets, and locally owned businesses.

THREAT In recent years, Queen Village has been increasingly affected by development pressures. Developer interest in the neighborhood has resulted in the demolition of houses and commercial buildings for new residential construction that is often out of scale and out of character with the neighborhood. In new developments the first floors have been taken over by garages, and even many existing houses have been altered to insert garages on the first floor. This trend is detrimental to the



New house with garage (LEFT) and (RIGHT) historic house with new garage.



Typical small street in Queen Village.

pedestrian character of many of Queen Village's smaller streets. Although a demolition moratorium—established by City Council at the request of the neighborhood and Councilman Frank DiCicco—has slowed some activity, Queen Village continues to suffer from unmanaged growth and development.

RECOMMENDATION The Queen Village Civic Association initiated a two-phase process to try to establish a means of influencing the character of new development. First, as previously noted, it obtained City Council approval for a moratorium on demolition. Second, the Civic Association is developing a proposal to have Queen Village designated a Conservation District, under legislation also introduced by Councilman DiCicco. The Conservation District designation will provide design guidelines for new construction and substantial alterations that will help preserve the neighborhood's character. It was hoped that the Conservation District would be in place before the moratorium ended in December 2005. Although the Civic Association has almost completed the Conservation District application, it must still be submitted and approved by the City Planning Commission and then by City Council.

The City Planning Commission should help expedite the approval process to put a district in place before or very shortly after the moratorium ends.

The issues in Queen Village—the design of new development to support the existing character of the neighborhood and limitations on the provision of parking to preserve neighborhood character—can be seen in many other neighborhoods that are also the focus of new residential construction. Consequently, the solutions that Queen Village is trying to implement may be an important model for other neighborhoods.

Burk Mansion

*Thompson Street and North Broad Street,
Philadelphia*

SIGNIFICANCE In 1907, Alfred E. Burk, a manufacturer for glazed-kid leather and owner of the Morocco Leather factory in Northern Liberties, commissioned Simon & Bassett Architects to design a Beaux Arts style mansion on the 1500 block of North Broad Street. It was the last of the grand mansions built along this section of North Broad Street.

Burk lived here until 1921, when he sold the residence to the Upholsters' International Union. The building was modified by the Union between 1949 and 1954. Architect Louis A. Manfredi designed new office spaces and a three-story rear addition. In 1970, Temple University bought the residence to house the School of Social Administration and the Center for Social Policy and Community Development. The Burk Mansion was added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1971 and in 1973 it was included in the Historic American Building Survey of the United States Department of the Interior.

THREAT In the mid-1990s a fire in the building forced the School of Social Administration and the Center for Social Policy and Community Development to relocate. Since that time the building has remained vacant. Currently protective fencing surrounds the perimeter of the property, but the lack of use may be leading to continued deterioration.

RECOMMENDATION It is at least fortunate that the Burk Mansion is owned by Temple University. In recent years, Temple

has shown considerable respect for its historic buildings. (For example, a substantial investment is being made in the restoration of the Baptist Temple, once listed as an Endangered Property). Temple has an appropriate concept for the use of the mansion, but lacks the funds to restore it. A generous donor is needed to help move the project forward. Temple should give the restoration of the Burk Mansion a high priority in its facility and fundraising plans or begin to explore ways in which another organization may be able to use and restore the property.



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PRESERVATION MATTERS

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The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia actively promotes the appreciation, protection, and revitalization of the Philadelphia region's historic buildings, communities and landscapes

Bouvier Building

149 S. Hancock Street, Philadelphia

SIGNIFICANCE The Bouvier Building is the last remaining eighteenth century structure in the block bounded by Walnut, Sansom, Hancock and Front streets. It was built between 1824 and 1834 by Michael Bouvier, a cabinetmaker and great-great grandfather of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. The building was used initially for Bouvier's cabinet making trade and later for remanufacturing wool. It was listed in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1976 and is located in the Old City Historic District.

During the 1950s and 1960s, buildings around the house were cleared by the City due to blight and fire damage. In 1987, the Bouvier Building was also threatened with demolition, but Councilman John Street proposed that the Redevelopment Authority purchase the house to insure its renovation. It did so, but the property has remained vacant ever since.

THREAT The Bouvier Building is surrounded by privately owned



vacant land that was once the site of historic residential and commercial buildings that have been demolished. Owners of this land recently obtained a rescission of historic designation of the buildings that once stood on these vacant lots, clearing the way for new

development, presumably high-rise condominiums and parking. The Bouvier Building is threatened in two ways: first, as long as the property remains vacant it will continue to decline; and second, large scale new development on the adjacent land is likely to make it difficult to find a buyer to restore the building.

RECOMMENDATION Fortunately the Redevelopment Authority now recognizes the significance and value of the Bouvier Building. It has completed an appraisal of the property and intends to offer it for sale for rehabilitation within the next couple of months. Adjacent

property owners have indicated that they will not attempt to acquire and demolish it to include it in other development plans. However, there is still a need to find a developer for the property and to insure that adjacent new development is carefully planned so as to enhance the preservation of the house. The later requires the attention of both the City Planning Commission and the Historical Commission.

Chester Heights Camp Meeting

Chester Heights Borough, Delaware County

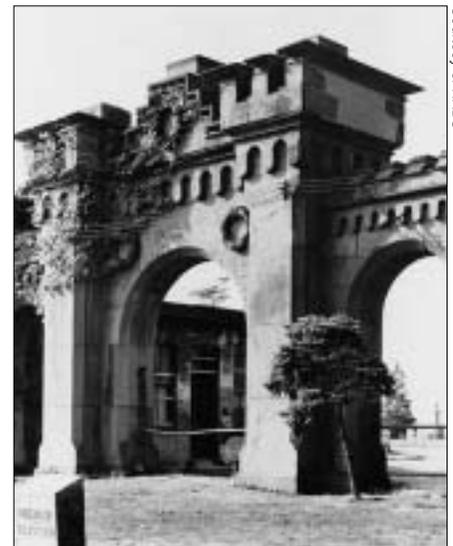


SIGNIFICANCE Founded in 1871, this 31-acre Methodist retreat camp is used by members of the Methodist church for seasonal outdoor worship and as a fellowship center. Like many Methodist camps in the Northeast and Midwest, the Camp Meeting serves as a secondary space that focuses on recreation and cultural uses and as a summer vacation destination for families. In

2001, the Chester Heights Camp Meeting was nominated to the National Register and received a federal Save America's Treasures grant to support restoration.

THREAT In 1999, the Chester Heights Borough filed a complaint against the camp due to its dilapidated state. This led to a Common Pleas Court order closing the camp. In 2002, the court order was modified and camp activities recommenced, but with restricted operation. Although the camp continues to solicit gifts for rehabilitation and maintenance of the buildings, the structures continue to deteriorate.

RECOMMENDATION The dining hall, tabernacle, several dormitories, and many of the single-family Victorian-styled cottages are currently being rehabilitated, but the Camp Meeting needs additional resources and support. This might be obtained by engaging a wider community in the use of the site thereby encouraging contributions for the stabilization and rehabilitation of the site. The Camp Meeting owners should identify the cost of the work needed and organize a capital campaign for preservation of the property.



Courtesy of HABS

Mt. Moriah Cemetery

Philadelphia and Delaware Counties

SIGNIFICANCE Mt. Moriah Cemetery occupies 380 acres along Cobb's Creek covering land in both southwest Philadelphia and in Yeadon Borough. It was established in 1855 and features a Romanesque brownstone gatehouse designed by Philadelphia architect Stephen D. Button. The cemetery

is a National Historic Landmark and is listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It is the resting place of over 5,000 veterans from the Civil War, World Wars I and II and the Korean conflict.

THREAT Mt. Moriah Cemetery has been neglected for many years and was listed on the Endangered Properties List of Preservation Pennsylvania in 2004. Since that time nothing has happened to improve conditions. Historic gravestones are broken and falling over, and the grounds are uncared for. Ownership of the cemetery is unclear, making it difficult for the surrounding community to determine how to get the property improved.

RECOMMENDATION Since the cemetery is listed on the Philadelphia Register, the Philadelphia Historical Commission should contact representatives of Yeadon Borough to conduct a joint investigation to determine ownership of the property. Once done, the owners should be contacted and informed that the Philadelphia ordinance allows the Commission to take actions when a property is being demolished through neglect. A joint plan should be developed with the owners, the surrounding community, and public agencies in both jurisdictions for preservation of the cemetery.



Courtesy of Delaware County Planning Department

Bunting Friendship Freedom House

1205 Main Street, Darby Pennsylvania

SIGNIFICANCE In 1730, Samuel Bunting, a Quaker and husband of the granddaughter of Darby's founder, built a three-room house which was added to in 1791. The Bunting family continued to own and reside in the house for over two centuries. During their ownership the house was part of the Underground Railroad. It is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

THREAT In 1968, the house became a Quaker day-care and community center. However, it has been vacant for some time and the cur-

rent owner wants to demolish the house in order to develop the site for other purposes.

RECOMMENDATION The Bunting house is an early example of residential architecture in Delaware County. Every effort should be made to preserve it.

The Delaware County Planning Commission should continue to encourage the owner make a reasonable effort to find if a buyer willing to preserve the property or to develop a plan that would include preservation of the existing house.

Stonorov Steel Houses

Pickering Road, Charlestown Township, Chester County

SIGNIFICANCE Modernist architect Oskar Stonorov designed and built two steel houses on his family's property in Chester County around 1946. At the urging of Walter Reuther (who was looking for opportunities to continue employment of war-time steel workers), and with the possible collaboration of Louis I. Kahn, Stonorov designed the houses as prototypes of mass-produced pre-fab houses that could be marketed to returning veterans. Stonorov's designs went by the name of Harmon Houses and were manufactured in Wilmington. Some were eventually built but not many before the company went out of business.

THREAT The houses stand in dilapidated condition on Stonorov family property, which is being subdivided and partially developed. The steel houses stand near the main road and proposed entryway to the new development and therefore need to be demolished. However, the family has made



J. Randall Cotton

a proposal to the township that would enable the houses to be disassembled, stored and made available to a new owner who would reassemble them on another site. The township's Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) has supported this approach and the family and other parties have agreed to contribute to the expense of dismantling and moving the houses.

RECOMMENDATION Although these houses are modest, they are an interesting example of the work of an architect who was noted for his interest in housing innovation. They deserved to be preserved and the arrangement that the township, HARB, and the Stonorov family have proposed is an appropriate solution deserving of support.



Matt DeJuli

Dilworth House

Washington Square, Philadelphia

In July 2005, based on extensive testimony organized by the Preservation Alliance and the Society Hill Civic Association, the Designation Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission recommended that the request of the current owner of the Dilworth House to reclassify the property to allow for demolition be denied. Action by the Historical Commission on this recommendation was postponed in September to allow Mayor Street to obtain additional information about the demolition proposal. For further information see the Alliance's website and www.SaveDilworthNow.org.

Chester Avenue Street Paving

Philadelphia

SEPTA reports that the trolley rails on the 4500 and 4600 block of Chester Avenue will need to be replaced within the next year. Due to financial constraints, liability issues, and time, SEPTA does not expect to reset the historic Belgian blocks after new rails are installed even though the street is part of Philadelphia's Historic Streets District. This historic streetscape continues to be threatened with demolition.

**Nugent Home for Baptists -
Presser Home for Retired
Music Teachers**

Philadelphia

In March 2005, the Nugent and Presser buildings were placed under agreement of sale by Visionary Development and Nolen Properties. After working with the three neighborhood organizations that prevented demolition of the buildings and with the Alliance, the developers submitted a conceptual plan for the site, which was approved by the Historical Commission in August (See below.) The plan would preserve all three historic buildings, retain a significant amount of open space, and add approximately 90 residential units in three five-story buildings. Thus far, plans for the new buildings have not been entirely acceptable to the three neighborhood organizations and the Alliance. They are being revised with the goal of seeking Historical Commission approval in January 2006.

Dolington Village

Bucks County

Although Toll Brothers has reduced the number of residential units in its proposed development from 1,200 to approximately 300, Dolington Village's character and residents' quality of life continues to be threatened. The developer is seeking Conditional Use approval and intends to build within the Dolington Village historic district. Current residents fear increased traffic, de-designation of National Register district status, negative impacts on public water, and changes in road patterns to accommodate the new development.

Heidelberg / Kerlin Farm

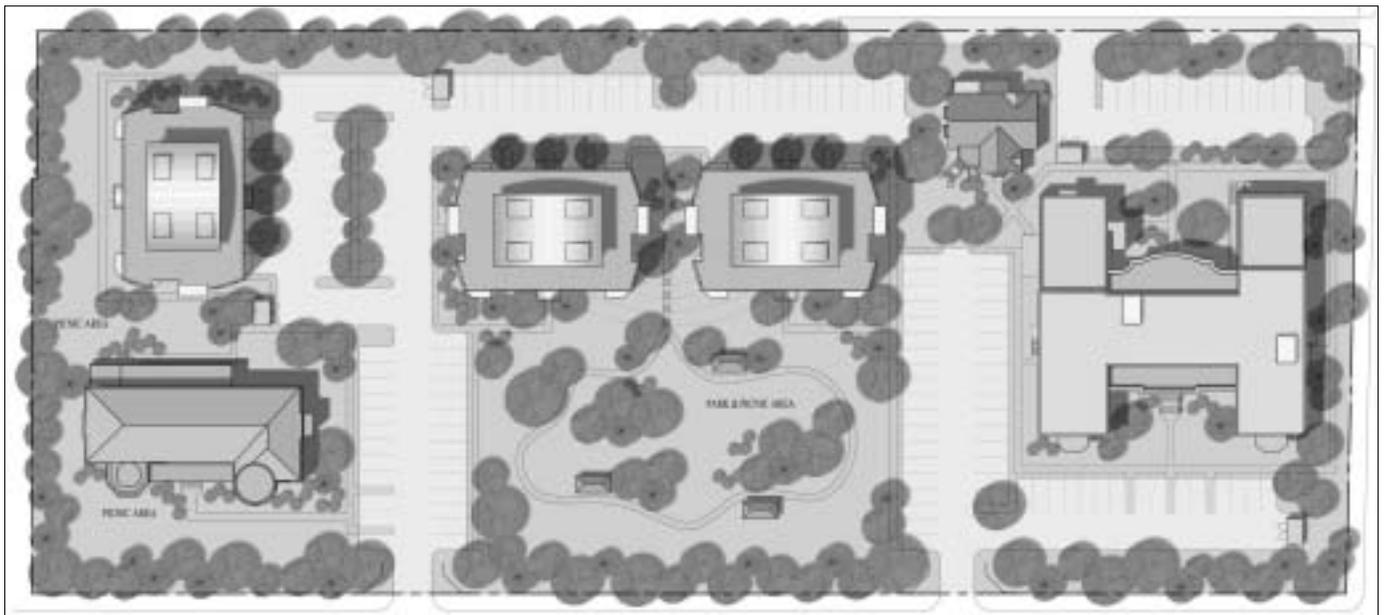
Cheltenham Township

The absentee owner has not taken any measures to stabilize the house and thus the building falls into further disrepair. Advocates for the property are in the process of establishing a 501(c)3 non-profit organization to raise awareness of the threat to the property and to raise money to purchase it. The house has been found eligible for the National Register and a nomination is currently being prepared.

Historic School Buildings

Philadelphia

The Philadelphia School District appears to have made the decision to close West Philadelphia High School and build a new high school on either a vacant site or on the



site of Provident Mutual Insurance Building. No decisions have been made as to what will become of the existing high school building.

Provident Mutual Life Insurance Building

42nd and Market Streets, Philadelphia

As indicated above, the School District is considering the Provident Mutual as a possible site for a new high school. This would require demolition of the Provident Mutual Building. However, as of this date no definite plans have been announced by the School District.

Independence Square

Philadelphia

The National Park Service has agreed to accept the recommendation of the Independence Mall Business and Residents Coalition for a more visitor-friendly method of security screening of visitors to Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Under the new plan, the Park Service will operate two screening stations—one at the entrance to the Liberty Bell Center and one at Old City Hall. This may eventually lead to a reduction in the number of unsightly bike racks that presently surround these historic sites.

Madison Square

Philadelphia

No improvements have been made to the central garden area that gives Madison Square its distinctive character. However, a proposal has been submitted to the Philadelphia Historical Commission to build a new house on the vacant lot in the 2300 block of Madison Square. An initial design was rejected by the Architectural Committee of the Commission, based on comments by neighbors and the Alliance. No new plans have yet been submitted.

Upper Roxborough National Historic District

Philadelphia

Although no action has been taken by the City to make the Roxborough Reservoir available for development, the Upper Roxborough National Historic District continues to be threatened by inappropriate residential development projects around this unusual semi-rural district. Many of River Road's smaller, older homes have been demolished, often to provide sites for larger single-family houses.



BEFORE



AFTER

“Community character is lost one building at a time.”

Ed McMahon, THE CONSERVATION FUND



we would have included the John H. Dearnley Mansion in Roxborough (pictured above) on our Endangered Properties list except that the bulldozers got there before we could go to press. The demolition of the Dearnley Mansion is a good example of how an historic property can quickly go from being a community asset to a community loss.

John H. Dearnley, a wealthy yarn manufacturer with mills in the Kensington section of Philadelphia, retained the architectural firm of Hale and Ballinger to build his home in Roxborough. The house was completed in 1897. Dearnley and his family lived there until his death in 1923 at which time it was sold to the Nazarene Home. In 1979, it was purchased by the Eastern European Research Institute. The property, which includes a large amount of open space, was purchased by Marathon Design & Construction in 2004 with the intent of demolishing the historic mansion to build 13 new houses.

The Dearnley Neighborhood Civic Association petitioned the developer to rehabilitate the mansion and build fewer houses in a character sensitive to the existing neighborhood. While Marathon did not accept this plan, it delayed demolition for 30 days to enable the community to try to find a developer to purchase the property. However, in the end Marathon sold the property to 469 Flamingo Street Associates LLC of Narberth, which, in spite of protests from the community organization and Councilman Michael Nutter, began demolition of the mansion in mid-October.

Is there an historic property in your neighborhood that you would miss if it were demolished? Don't wait for it to appear on our 2006 Endangered Properties list — tell us about it NOW and let us help you find a way to protect it through historic designation or other means.

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