



## **PRESERVATION ALLIANCE**

*for greater philadelphia*

For Immediate Release

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### **Judge Authorizes Preservation Alliance to Stabilize and Protect the Garrett-Dunn House: Historic Mt. Airy House Was Left Exposed After Rehabilitation Halted**

(December 23, 2008) – In a major historic preservation victory, a Court of Common Pleas judge has authorized the City to engage the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia to immediately retain contractors to stabilize and protect the endangered Garrett-Dunn House in Mt. Airy.

Working closely with the Philadelphia Historical Commission and the Philadelphia Law Department, the Alliance participated in the court proceedings that culminated with Judge Peter F. Rogers order.

“This significant historic structure was abandoned during construction, leaving its structure exposed and vulnerable to the elements,” said Alliance Executive Director John Andrew Gallery. “Without intervention, it is unlikely to survive the winter. For that reason, the Alliance was happy to intervene in the case and assume responsibility for quickly stabilizing and protecting the property. We applaud Judge Rogers, the Philadelphia Historical Commission, the Philadelphia Law Department, the Philadelphia Department of Licenses & Inspections and National Penn Bank, all of whom moved conscientiously and expeditiously to save this historic property before it was too late.”

The Alliance will retain a qualified contractor to protect the walls and exposed section of the roof of the house from the weather, shore up a decaying section of the house’s first floor and stabilize and protect the gable wall of the adjacent stone barn. In addition, the property will be better secured. The scope of work was determined by an engineering evaluation commissioned by the Historical Commission and made earlier this month by the Philadelphia engineering firm Keast & Hood Co. after Judge Rogers granted the City the right to examine the property. National Penn Bank, the mortgage holder on the property, agreed to pay up to \$20,000 for the necessary work under a “protective advance,” secured by its mortgage.

The Garrett-Dunn House at 7048 Germantown Ave. is a rare example of the residential work of noted architect Thomas Ustick Walter, who designed the dome of the U.S. Capitol, Girard College and other 19<sup>th</sup> century landmarks. In April, developer John Capoferri ceased work converting the building to condominiums and failed to seal the exposed structure from the elements.

In October, after the owner failed to correct code violations issued by Licenses & Inspections, including “failure to preserve and protect historic property,” the City filed suit in the Court of Common Pleas.

The Garrett-Dunn House is listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property was home to the Garrett family, one of Philadelphia’s founding families. Records recently discovered in the Girard College archives confirmed that the house was designed by Walter. The Garrett-Dunn House and the Biddle family estate Andalusia on the Delaware River are among the few surviving examples of Walter’s residential work.

Judge Rogers ordered the City and the Preservation Alliance to provide the court with a status report on January 6.

*The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia actively promotes the appreciation, protection and revitalization of the Philadelphia region’s historic buildings, communities and landscapes. To learn more, visit [www.PreservationAlliance.com](http://www.PreservationAlliance.com).*

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