

# THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION: ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES

MARGARET B. TINKCOM\*

## I

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

When the Philadelphia Historical Commission was appointed in the spring of 1956, it was the first historical preservation agency to have jurisdiction over the entire area of a major American city.<sup>1</sup> Other cities, among them Boston, Charleston, and New Orleans, had boards with similar duties but each operated within a strictly limited area in their respective municipalities. Since no precedent existed for the creation of a board of architectural and historical review with so extensive a field of endeavor as the city and county of Philadelphia provided, the content and phraseology of the enabling legislation under which the Philadelphia commission would act was of necessity *sui generis*. The bill drafted for presentation to the city council was couched in general terms and was designed to allay the fears of any opponents while at the same time giving the city a board with sufficient authority to be effective. The necessity for this kind of discrete compromise was recognized by the bill's supporters who noted that, if the ordinance as drawn omitted certain desirable provisions, it was "at least, an important step toward the legislation we hope finally to have enacted."<sup>2</sup>

The ordinance's declared purpose was

To regulate the demolition of historic buildings in the City of Philadelphia; providing for the appointment of an Advisory Commission on Historic Buildings; prescribing duties for the Department of Public Property and for the Department of Licenses and Inspections; providing for a list and classification of historic buildings; providing for the postponement of the demolition of certain historic buildings; and providing penalties for violations thereof.<sup>3</sup>

Prepared by the Deputy City Solicitor and introduced into City Council July 28, 1955, by Victor E. Moore, then a member-at-large of that body, the bill, designated Bill No. 493, called attention to the "substantial" contribution to the "public welfare" made by well-preserved historical structures, and noted the "detrimental effect on [the] cultural, historic and economic values in the City" which resulted from their thoughtless demolition.<sup>4</sup> The Committee on Public Works and Public Property to which the bill was referred in turn submitted it to the Philadelphia City Planning

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\* Historian, Philadelphia Historical Commission.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Mayor, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, News Release (Mar. 19, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Grant M. Simon to Frederick Rath, June 21, 1955, on file in Philadelphia Historical Commission.

<sup>3</sup> 2 JOURNAL OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA 1702-06 (1955).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 596-97, 1702-06.

Commission, as required by terms of the City Charter. The Planning Commission postponed action while it solicited the opinions of various societies within the city that had shown an interest in preservation problems. Response was generally favorable, and on September 7, 1955, the Planning Commission discussed the bill in executive session and agreed to support it.<sup>5</sup>

That hurdle cleared, the bill's passage was in little doubt. It was favorably reported out of committee October 13, given its first reading a week later, and passed unanimously October 27, 1955. Shortly thereafter someone apparently had second thoughts about the wording of the bill. On November 10, a resolution to recall it was introduced in the council and a motion to reconsider was unanimously adopted. The bill was recommitted to the Committee of Public Property for further study. The following week, on November 17, 1955, the Committee reported that it had "again considered and amended the same [Bill 493], and returns the attached bill to Council with a favorable recommendation." The changes made in Committee were interesting. As one might expect, they placed some further limitations on the Commission's actions, such as requiring it to reply within sixty days to any proposal to demolish an historical building. The original ordinance had set no time limit for this. As it has turned out, this change has proved advantageous to the Commission. Since it requires the Commission to answer any proposal within sixty days it impliedly gives that body the right to postpone a decision for that length of time. Also a provision was made for the inclusion on the Commission of two members of the city administration to serve *ex officio*, namely, the Director of Finance and the Commission of Public Property. At the same time the Commission's authority was increased by giving it control over *all* alterations proposed for any historic building, not just over "*material* alterations" as in the original version. Finally, the Committee's revision removed the provision of the original bill which limited the application to buildings constructed prior to 1850. Having been for a second time reported out of committee favorably, the bill went through its required readings and once again was passed unanimously. This time it was signed into law on December 7, 1955, by Mayor Joseph S. Clark.<sup>6</sup> Thus, there was brought to successful conclusion several years of effort by a number of concerned persons, chiefly Grant M. Simon, FAIA, and Judge Harold D. Saylor, then chairman of the Philadelphia Historical Buildings Committee, an informal group of preservationists operating under the aegis of the Greater Philadelphia Movement.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Executive Session Minutes (Sept. 7, 1955).

<sup>6</sup> <sup>2</sup> JOURNAL OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA 798, 820, 823, 845-46, 879, 880, 898, 931, 1686, 1687, 1702-06 (1955). Two subsequent legislative acts should be noted: the first (Bill No. 695) "to amend Chapter 14-2000 of the Code of General Ordinances to provide for the regulation of the demolition of historic buildings," approved November 8, 1956; the second (Bill No. 1391) "to amend Section 14-2008(2)(b) and (3) of the Philadelphia Code, relating to the regulation of the demolition of historic buildings, by changing the designation of the Advisory Commission on Historic Buildings to the Philadelphia Historical Commission," approved June 29, 1957. These two amendments are included in the ordinance as reprinted in the Appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Philadelphia Historical Buildings Committee Report on file in Philadelphia Historical Commission (undated, but probably prepared in February, 1958).

The first Advisory Commission on Historic Buildings was appointed March 19, 1956, by Richardson Dilworth who had succeeded Clark as mayor in January of that year. In addition to the Director of Finance and the Commission of Public Property who were to serve *ex officio*, the Commission consists, by law, of "five persons learned in the historic traditions of the City, and interested in preserving the historic buildings of the City . . . ." That no provision was made for the compulsory representation of qualified members of the professions commonly associated with preservation activities (architects, historians, urban planners, and lawyers) has occasioned some surprise. As a matter of fact, the first Commission included two architects, Grant M. Simon and Charles E. Peterson, and a historian, R. Norris Williams II, Director of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The fourth appointee, Harry A. Batten, Chairman of the Board of N. W. Ayer, Inc., was an influential member of the Greater Philadelphia Movement. The appointment by Mayor Dilworth of Victor E. Moore as the fifth commissioner began a practice which still continues of appointing a member of the city council to the Historical Commission's board.<sup>8</sup> While the inclusion on the Commission of two ranking members of the city government, the Director of Finance and the Commissioner of Public Property, was undoubtedly intended to provide a measure of control over Commission activity and to prevent any inconvenient tendency toward free wheeling on the part of this new advisory board, it has, in fact, worked to the Commission's advantage in providing an important bridge between the Commission and the city administration.

## II

### IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The history and classification of the city's historic buildings were first among the tasks assigned by law to the new Commission. Fortunately, perhaps, the ordinance did not define "historic" nor in any way limit what should be considered "of historical significance to the city."<sup>9</sup> This left the Commission free to develop its own criteria. Taking a broad view of history both as regards time and content, the Commission has been able to include under its umbrella architectural monuments like the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society's building at Twelfth and Market Streets, built 1930-32, and Gloria Dei, dedicated in 1700. A building associated with an event or a person of national or local importance obviously rated inclusion on the Commission's list. Buildings of this sort include Independence Hall, Christ Church, the Carpenters' Company, all associated with events leading to the founding of the United States; Musical Fund Hall, where the Republican Party had its first national convention in 1856; the Deshler house in Germantown, where George Washington lived for a time; and Thomas Eakins' house, 1729 Mt. Vernon Street.

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Mayor, News Release (Mar. 19, 1956).

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix for text of the ordinance.

A building does not have to possess an association of this kind to merit preservation in the Commission's eyes, however. If it did, the houses on Cuthbert Street (c. 1740); on South American Street (c. 1830); on Woodland Terrace (c. 1865); or Rowan Street (the 1880's) would hardly qualify. Possibly the Cuthbert Street houses might be included on the grounds that any structure that had survived in an urban area for more than 200 years deserved the Commission's imprimatur. All are in fact on the Commission's list because each has something notable to say about the taste, the style of living, and economic status of a given group of Philadelphians or about technological changes and their effects on Philadelphia living.

In areas with a high concentration of buildings which have potential interest because of their age, design, or known associations, the Commission's staff begins its study by comparing the plates of the nineteenth century fire insurance atlas issued by Hexamer and Locher with the corresponding plates of the current Sanborn atlas. Building profiles and notes on materials of construction indicate continued existence of an old structure or, conversely, its replacement by a newer one. These maps also provide valuable evidence of interior court houses not easily visible from the street. Armed with this preview of the neighborhood, a field survey is made on foot. Structures of interest are described briefly in a field report and photographs are taken. These will include head-on shots of buildings of particular architectural interest, while angle shots up and down the block on both sides of the street provide a graphic record of the condition of the neighborhood at the time of the survey.

Having found a collection of buildings of merit, the Commission's next job is to provide these with an identity—to identify a family with a house, a congregation with a church, a merchant or businessman with a warehouse or factory. Abstract of title is the first step to this. The search for an insurance record on the property is the next step. Insurance surveys are very useful in reconstructing the history of a building because they not only describe a building; they also note its use, since this affects the rate of insurance; and they provide the name of the occupant, who may or may not be the owner.

Philadelphia is particularly blessed with insurance records. The Philadelphia Contributionship, the first fire insurance company in Philadelphia, began insuring houses in 1752 and its records are extant from that date. In 1783 the Mutual Association was organized to provide coverage for home owners who wanted insurance *and* trees. The Philadelphia Contributionship had decided that trees were fire hazards. These two companies were followed by the Insurance Company of North America in the 1790's, and by the Fire Association and the Franklin Fire Insurance Company early in the nineteenth century.

When the insurance record for any given building extends over a period of years, successive surveys document the changes which a new use or a new fashion dictated. They also record the introduction of such amenities as central heating,

indoor plumbing, gas, and eventually, electricity. Photocopies of these are filed in the folder which is developed for each building on the Commission's list.

A typical folder will contain at least one current photograph of the building being reviewed, as well as copies of any old ones that may have been discovered in the city's libraries or in the city archives. These institutions offer a rich treasure of prints and drawings recording the city in pre-Daquerre days, and photostats of these are often included. An abstract of title and all of the available insurance surveys are added as a matter of course. On occasion, tax records and wills with their estate inventories are made part of the record. With this kind of information at hand, the Commission is able to explain its designation of the building as worthy of preservation, or document its recommendations when an owner embarks on a restoration project.

### III

#### CERTIFIED BUILDINGS

By terms of the ordinance, now entered in the city code under title 14, Zoning and Planning, any list of structures the Commission deems "historically significant to the City" must not only be maintained in the Commission's office but must also be made available to the public in the Departments of Records and of Licenses and Inspections. Up-to-date lists are also provided by the Commission for the offices of the City Planning Commission, the Redevelopment Authority, the Library of the Real Estate Board, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and several of the title insurance companies. The Philadelphia Historical Commission undertook to place lists in these additional depositories in order to prevent, in so far as possible, an owner from being able to claim that he did not know that the Philadelphia Historical Commission had a measure of control over his building. Owners are also given written notification when their properties are placed on the Commission's list. This information is passed on to subsequent purchasers by the title companies and by the deeds, recorded by the City's Recorder of Deeds, which make a property's certification as historical a matter of Public record.

Two items included in the ordinance are currently by-passed. The first of these is the requirement that the Commission make a division of the buildings it considers worth preserving into "convenient classifications based upon their historical significance."<sup>10</sup> The Philadelphia Historical Commission has so far declined to classify its structures on the grounds that the preservation of a building classified "B" or "C," or even lower on the scale, becomes unnecessarily difficult, since the threat to its continued existence increases as its rank diminishes. This difficulty in preservation of lower closed buildings could deprive the city of all evidence of where and how its ordinary men and women lived, leaving us with nothing but a

<sup>10</sup> PHILADELPHIA, PA., CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES § 14-2008(4)(b) (1956).

lopsided picture of an upper-class environment. The second regulation not enforced precisely as intended is the provision that "The Department of Licenses and Inspections shall examine all of the buildings set forth in such list and report to the Commission on the physical condition of each building."<sup>11</sup> At the outset this was done, but with the expansion of the list of certified buildings and the shortage of inspectors in the Department of Licenses and Inspections, the mandated procedure became impractical. Should the need arise, it is possible for the Commission to ask the Department of Licenses and Inspections for information, including copies of any notice of violations of the city code which have been sent to the owner of an historic building. Precise knowledge of a building's soundness is essential if the Commission must decide whether to permit an historical building to be demolished, or whether such permission can reasonably be withheld. A case illustrating this point is now under review. The Redevelopment Authority asked permission to demolish a house which they reported was "unsafe and unsaleable." The Historical Commission then asked the Department of Licenses and Inspections for a report on the structure's safety and was informed that it was not in any respect in violation of the city code. The Commission recommended, therefore, that the Redevelopment Authority make a renewed effort to find a purchaser for the building and this they are doing. It should be noted in passing that the Commission, unfortunately, has no power to compel an owner to keep his property in repair. Thus, demolition by neglect is a disturbing possibility.

#### IV

##### THE COMMISSION IN OPERATION

Given a set of criteria, a list of buildings worth trying to preserve, and an established means of publicizing this list, how does the Philadelphia Commission perform its other duty—preventing the demolition or unsuitable alteration of any building on that list?

When Bill No. 493 was being studied by the Planning Commission, the Deputy City Solicitor who drafted it noted that it did not offer much assistance to the cause of the preservationists, since its control over demolitions was limited to a period of six months. The legality of even so mild a prohibition was then in doubt, but it was hoped that the "raising of the character of an area" through the preservation and restoration of its ancient buildings might be offered as sufficient justification for the law.<sup>12</sup> And so it proved to be, for although the Commission has little power to enjoin, it has been given a valuable opportunity to persuade, and of this opportunity it has made much use.

The chance to talk to the owner and to attempt to persuade him from altering his building in an undesirable manner or from removing it completely is assured by

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* § 14-2008(4)(c).

<sup>12</sup> Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Executive Session Minutes (Sept. 7, 1955).

the fact that an owner or his agent must apply to the Department of Licenses and Inspections for a permit before making any change to his property. Since, by law, no permit may be issued for a certified building without the Philadelphia Historical Commission's approval, the application is sent to the Commission office to have the plan, whether it be for restoration or for demolition, reviewed. If the work projected is internal—such as a rewiring job or the installation of a new heating system—the permit and plans will probably be approved and the Commission's stamp affixed at once. Immediate action is also forthcoming in the case of a building which has been cited by the Department of Licenses and Inspections for any violation which makes it unsafe for habitation. Should exterior work other than painting be involved, however, the plans must be referred to the Commission's architectural committee. There the plans are studied in conjunction with the record in the folder for that particular building. Based on this record, the plans are either approved or modifications are required and a resubmission is requested.

The success of the Society Hill renewal and the example of the meticulous restorations by the Independence National Historical Park have created a climate which assists the Commission's operations. As a result of these projects, laymen are more knowledgeable today. They are aware of the financial value of a good restoration. Compared to fifteen years ago it is now much easier to persuade them of the wisdom of hanging the right kind of shutter, of restoring a dormer, of rebuilding a chimney—even if they will be unused.

In renewal areas the cooperation and muscle of the Redevelopment Authority have been of tremendous assistance. According to the terms of the contracts between the Authority and the owners of property in Washington Square East (Society Hill), each owner is obligated to restore the exterior of his property in accordance with specifications developed by the Authority's consulting architect.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, another provision of the contract requires that the plans, prepared by a registered architect, have Philadelphia Historical Commission approval before the Redevelopment Authority will give them its blessing. Owners must also post with the Authority "obligation security deposits adequate to ensure the terms of the contract." This enables the Authority to take appropriate remedies, if the contract is not fulfilled within a specified time.<sup>14</sup>

The Redevelopment Authority and the Philadelphia Historical Commission have a truly reciprocal relationship. The kinds of assistance sought and received are different. The Redevelopment Authority looks to the Philadelphia Historical Commission for expertise in historical architecture. The Commission relies on the Authority's controls. The usefulness of the two agencies, each to the other, is evident and the regard is mutual. For example, at the Commission's suggestion the

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<sup>13</sup> These specifications, incidentally, are based on the Philadelphia Historical Commission's records and approved by the Commission.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Mae Belle Segal, Project Manager, Washington Square East Rehabilitation Program, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, to Jerry D. Spencer, April 8, 1971.

Redevelopment Authority has agreed to insert a clause in all contracts made between the Authority and developers working in any part of the old city which requires the developer to give the Historical Commission exclusive right of entry to the site in order to retrieve any archaeological materials that may be uncovered there.<sup>15</sup>

One other instance of inter-agency cooperation should be mentioned at this point. By Commission invitation, the Commission's architectural committee includes the Redevelopment Authority's consulting architect, John F. Lloyd, and the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation's officer, Erling Pedersen. This ensures that all three agencies are fully aware of each others' concerns and makes it possible for the Commission's records to be used most effectively in areas of overlapping jurisdiction.

How does the Commission proceed when faced with a request for a demolition permit for a historical building? After examining its own files in order to find the necessary information on the condition of the building, its location with regard to other certified structures, and its historical or architectural value, the Commission checks with the City Planning Commission and, if the threatened structure is in a renewal area, with the Redevelopment Authority, to see whether either has an interest in its preservation. The zoning regulations are also examined because a proposed use that varies from the established zoning for the area will require a hearing before the Zoning Board of Adjustment. This hearing will offer the Commission another avenue for expressing its opposition. Community sentiment as represented by local civic associations or historical societies is also determined. All of this information is reported to the Commission. Should the Commission decide that every effort must be made to preserve the threatened building, it may, and frequently does, table the application, taking advantage of its legal right to withhold comment for sixty days. At the end of that period the request for permission to demolish is denied and the Department of Licenses and Inspections must refuse to issue the necessary permit for six months. An owner who wishes to appear before the Commission to explain his reasons for a proposed demolition is always allowed to do so.<sup>16</sup> This opportunity has been made use of rather infrequently. This fact raises the interesting question of whether, in the case of a denied demolition permit, property owners do not contest the Commission's denial of a demolition permit because it is easier and cheaper to simply wait six months, the maximum period of effectiveness of a Commission order. In any event, although the Commission has been threatened with litigation on a number of occasions, none has ever been instituted.

If any one of the three other city agencies listed above becomes involved, the

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<sup>15</sup> In proposing this, the Commission cited as precedent the Antiquities Act of 1906, ch. 3060, 34 Stat. 225, *as amended*, 16 U.S.C. §§ 431-33 (1964).

<sup>16</sup> The same procedure is available to the owner whose plans for alterations have been turned down by the Commission.



Commission has a reasonably good chance of preserving the building. Both the City Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Authority have legal and persuasive powers that go far beyond those of the Historical Commission and the Commission has enjoyed a notable degree of success before the Zoning Board the decisions of which more often than not have favored the Commission's views. In all too many instances, however, none of these agencies can help in any direct way. No change in zoning was needed to replace Holy Trinity Church with an apartment complex when its existence was threatened several years ago so the issue never came before the Zoning Board. In a separate case both City Planning Commission and Redevelopment Authority plans for Market Street East make retention of the Friends' Twelfth Street meeting hall on its present site appear impracticable. In such cases the Commission follows a regular course of action, alerting the preservation committee of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Historic American Buildings Survey, if the building is on that list, the newspapers, and all local societies that may be expected to raise their voices in opposition to the proposed destruction of another historical edifice. If federal money is involved in any way and the building is on the National Register of Historic Places, the aid of the National Advisory Committee is sought. By bringing the matter to the attention of the public in this way the Commission is acting in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance,<sup>17</sup> and is hoping for one of two things—to generate sufficient pressure to persuade the owner to change his plans, or to find a way to transfer the structure to more sympathetic caretakers. Newspaper cooperation was particularly useful in the case of Holy Trinity. The *Evening Bulletin* kept the matter before the public through a continuous series of reports until it was brought to a successful conclusion by vote of the congregation to retain the church. We are, unfortunately, not always so successful.

Another problem area involves the owner who proceeds with alterations, or even with the demolition of a small structure, without benefit of a permit. In many of the old river wards of the city, it has long been a practice to work on the houses on weekends. Sometimes the work is done with the help of contractors, but frequently it is done by the owners themselves, and in both cases work is often commenced without a permit, either through ignorance of the law or a wish to save the cost of a permit. Since the Commission has no inspectors on the street, much activity of this sort would go completely unnoticed were it not for alert neighborhood associations. Many persons have called the Philadelphia Historical Commission office over the years to report that "something is going on" at a particular address. If no proposal for work has been presented and approved, a call is made to the Department of Licenses and Inspections to determine whether a building permit has been issued. With rare exception, the answer is a negative one. The Commission

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<sup>17</sup> PHILADELPHIA, PA., CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES § 14-2008(6)(a), (b) (1956).

then requests the Department to both send out an inspector and issue a work stop order until the owner has complied with the law. An irate owner may soon appear at the Commission office, but unless the work has gone too far, the danger has been averted. Very recently, however, there was a demolition of the old Pennsylvania Railroad station at Broad Street and Washington Avenue, through which passed all the Union soldiers enroute south by way of Philadelphia during the Civil War. It was owned by the federal government, and since the station was no longer needed, it was torn down. The United States government is not required to apply for demolition permits when removing a building from its own property.

#### CONCLUSION

The Philadelphia ordinance regulating the city's historical buildings states in a general way what the Philadelphia Historical Commission should do, but the means it should use to accomplish its ends are for the most part unspecified. This allows the Commission leeway to develop its own procedures, on the whole with good results. Experience shows that any commission on historical buildings would do well to include among its members a professional historian with particular knowledge of social or urban history, at least one architect experienced in restoration problems, a lawyer, and a member of the Establishment with a true concern for historical preservation. A revolving fund of some size would also be extraordinarily useful.

The story of historical preservation in Philadelphia can best be described as a tale with an old fashioned moral: what one person or one agency cannot do alone, a united effort can bring to a successful conclusion. Without the help of the Redevelopment Authority and the Department of Licenses and Inspections, the Philadelphia Historical Commission would have had a difficult time getting started. Both agencies were of notable assistance from the very beginning. The City Planning Commission came along more slowly, but that Commission is now consulting with the Historical Commission relative to a proposal for an historic district designed to safeguard the fine mid-nineteenth century commercial structures east of Fourth Street between Walnut and Vine Streets. The Historical Commission has also found the Planning Commission sympathetic in the matter of the transfer of development rights from an historically certified building to an adjacent one. So far this has been done without a special ordinance by making use of the Zoning Board of Adjustment's power to grant the necessary variances. That board also provides the Historical Commission with an opportunity to speak in opposition to any proposal which will downgrade a district where there are a number of historically interesting buildings. This may be done successfully even when no certified property is directly involved. The Commission has also been aided by grants for special projects: from the Redevelopment Authority for a study of Central Germantown; from Model Cities for an historical preview of that section of North Phila-

delphia; from the American Philosophical Society for an architectural and historical study of Southwark, and for an archaeological study of the Dock; from the Barra Foundation for a review of the records of the Mutual Assurance Company.

Clearly, this paper might have been titled: "How to succeed—or at least, how to proceed—with a mini law." The answer is plain. It can be done, but only with the cooperation of many persons.

## Appendix

### Code of General Ordinances of the City of Philadelphia

#### 14-2008 HISTORIC BUILDINGS

(1) *Legislative findings.* The purpose of this section is to promote the public welfare, by preserving historic buildings which are important to the education, culture, traditions and the economic values of the City, and to afford the City, interested persons, historical societies or organizations the opportunity to acquire or to arrange for the preservation of such buildings.

(2) *Definitions.* In this ordinance, the following definitions apply:

- (a) *Department.* The Department of Public Property.
- (b) *Commission.* Philadelphia Historical Commission.

(3) *Philadelphia Historical Commission.* The Mayor may appoint a Philadelphia Historical Commission consisting of the Director of Finance, the Commissioner of Public Property and five persons learned in the historic traditions of the City and interested in preserving the historic buildings of the City.

(4) *Classification of Historic Buildings.*

(a) The Department of Public Property with the aid of the Commission shall prepare a list of buildings in the City of Philadelphia which the Advisory Commission deems historically significant to the City.

(b) In so far as practical, the historic buildings shall be listed in convenient classifications based upon their historical significance.

(c) The Department of Licenses and Inspections shall examine all of the buildings set forth in such list and report to the Commission on the physical condition of each building.

(d) A copy of the above list of historic buildings shall be available for public inspection in the Department of Licenses and Inspections and in the Department of Records.

(5) *Permits.*

(a) No person shall demolish, or alter any building appearing on the list prepared pursuant to this Section unless he has obtained a permit from the Department of Licenses and Inspections.

(b) Upon receiving any such application, the Department of Licenses and Inspections shall immediately forward it to the Department for its recommendation.

(c) The Department shall consult with and seek the advice of the Commission, and shall, within 60 days after the date of the application, determine that:

(.1) There is no objection to the demolition or alteration of the building; or

(.2) That purposes set forth in Section 14-2008(1) may be best achieved by postponing the demolition or alteration for a designated period.

(d) If the Department does not object to the demolition or alteration, the Department of Licenses and Inspections shall grant a demolition or alteration permit, subject to any applicable provisions of the Code or regulations.

(e) If the Department concludes that the demolition or alteration should be postponed, it shall, before issuing any final order with respect to such postponement, afford the applicant an opportunity to appear before the Commission to offer any evidence as the applicant may desire to present concerning such proposed order. No order issued by the Department postponing any proposed demolition shall be for a period of in excess of six months.

*(6) Measures for Preservation.*

(a) Within the period of postponement the Department, with the aid of the Commission, shall consult with civic groups, public agencies, and interested private citizens to ascertain what the City of Philadelphia can do to preserve such historic building, and it shall make recommendations to that effect to the Council.