



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
October 12, 2016

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Mr. Al Cocce, AIA, representing John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Ms. Lisa Lawless representing Janet Coit, Director DEM
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing the Associate Director of the Division of Planning
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Pieter N. Roos
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer
Ms. Ruth Taylor

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Ms. Joyce Gervasio, Chief Financial & Administrative Officer
Ms. Michaela Jergensen, Senior Reviewer RIDOT Projects
Ms. Katherine Pomplun, Senior Grants Coordinator
Mr. Glenn Modica, Senior Project Review Coordinator
Ms. Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator
Ms. Elizabeth Warburton, Senior Architectural Historian

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Darin Early, COO, Commerce RI
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom, Chairman
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Vacant

GUESTS

Ms. Virginia Adams, PAL (Central Falls Historic District)
Mr. Peter Friedrichs, City of Central Falls Director of Planning & Development
Mr. Chris Isse & Jason Martin, Providence Dept. of Planning (Providence Public Library)
Edward Connors, NR Consultant (Lafayette Mill)
Mr. John Grosvenor & Cheryl Hackett (Restmere)

GUESTS continued:

Mr. Bill Gately (Naushon Mill)
Mr. Jack Martin, Executive Director, Providence Public Library
Mr. Aaron Peterman, Associate Director, Providence Public Library
Mr. Rob Taylor, Chair, Providence Public Library Trustees
Ms. Elizabeth Debs, Providence Public Library Trustees
Mr. Dennis Branchard
Ms. Susan Tenerowicz

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 A.M., Dr. Onorato presiding in place of Mr. Hoozeboom, Chairman.

2. Minutes of September 14, 2016

On a motion by Mr. Farzan, seconded by Dr. Morenon, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the Minutes of September 14, 2016.

3. Executive Director's Report

- a) Ms. Pomplun reported that review of State Preservation Grant applications continues and the Grants Review Panel will meet on October 19. Final decisions by the RIHPHC Commissioners will be scheduled for the December 14 meeting.
- b) Mr. Sanderson distributed a State Fiscal year 2016 Expenditures Report that was prepared by CFO Joyce Gervasio. The Report shows that RIHPHC programs had a combined value last year of \$3,194,200. Funding sources included State and Federal appropriations, earned revenue, and contributed services.

4. National Register of Historic Places

Evaluation of Significance: Providence Public Library

RIHPHC Architectural Historian Joanna Doherty presented information about the historical and architectural significance of the Providence Public Library. A written version of Ms. Doherty's presentation was distributed to RIHPHC Commissioners, PPL officials, and interested parties in advance of the October 12 meeting. A copy of that memorandum is appended to these Minutes. The original Library building was constructed in 1900 and is an outstanding example of Renaissance Revival architecture. The Library addition was completed in 1954 and is an example of Classical Moderne architecture. The Library (original building and

addition) were listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Downtown Providence Historic District in 1984. The reason for today's presentation was to evaluate the historical and architectural significance of the addition. Ms. Doherty's presentation (and written memorandum) argued that the 1954 addition has historical and architectural significance in its own right and as part of the Library complex.

Mr. Jack Martin, Executive Director of the Providence Public Library was invited to respond to Ms. Doherty's presentation. Mr. Martin distributed written comments that he sent to RIHPHC on October 11. He requested that the Commission take additional time to read and consider PPL's comments. He questioned the period of significance of the Downtown Providence Historic District and stated that the 1954 addition was later than the district's period of significance. He stated that the addition is larger than the original Library building, that it is out of scale with the 1900 building, and that the addition obscures views of the original building. He also said that the architectural design of the addition was "budget compromised" and "derivative" of the design for the Toledo, Ohio public library building. He concluded by urging Commissioners to take time to read and consider PPL's written statement.

Mr. Sanderson thanked Mr. Martin for his comments. Mr. Sanderson agreed that Commissioners would need additional time to consider the PPL statement, and he suggested a procedure that Commissioners should proceed with discussion of the issues and perhaps reach a preliminary conclusion. The Agenda for the November 9, 2016 meeting could include further consideration of the matter, which would provide additional time for Commissioners' consideration before making a final decision. The suggestion was generally agreeable.

In discussion, Mr. Abbott said that the PPL's architects for the addition were engaged to make the addition "state of the art" and that they seemed to intend for the addition to be a significant addition both functionally and architecturally.

Ms. Taylor found Ms. Doherty's report "persuasive," and she noted the addition is a good example of its type, it is a significant event in the Library's history, and its design reflects a particular moment in time. She felt the significance of Downtown Providence extends into the 1950s.

Dr. Morenon noted that the design, scale, and siting of the addition relates to the increasing importance of Empire Street after its widening and increased development.

Dr. Malone said that many historic buildings retain their historical integrity even with a later entrance addition or new primary entrance. He said that personally he is not attracted to the architectural style of the 1954 addition, but he is convinced that the addition is a significant product of its historical time.

Dr. Onorato observed that in the 1970s he "wrote one of the earliest scholarly articles on the architects of the 1900 building, Stone, Carpenter & Willson, and that he never felt that the new addition obscured or otherwise compromised that Beaux Art/Renaissance revival design. In fact

you might say that it sets off the older building from the cacophony of Empire Street and frames the Stone, Carpenter & Willson building in a way that emphasizes its detailing.”

Dr. Onorato further stated that “the addition relates to other national trends, not just in library buildings but in other buildings as well: the best known example is probably the 1940 Tiffany Company Building on Fifth Avenue, but there are others in this pared-down mid-century modern style in such urban centers as Washington DC and Philadelphia as well. The combination of flush set limestone, polished granite, glass and aluminum finds such a resolved expression nowhere else in the state but it reflects a national architectural language very much of its time. The rhythms of rectangles that makes up the composition of every elevation again suggests a very complete design, brought to a high degree of resolution.” He concluded that in his opinion the 1954 addition has architectural significance in its own right and it adds to the overall architectural value of the Downtown Providence Historic District.

Mr. Roos said he was satisfied that Ms. Doherty’s evaluation was consistent with National Park Service guidelines for evaluating the significance of later additions, and he agrees with the conclusion that the addition has gained significance in its own right and contributes to the significance of the Downtown Historic District.

On a motion by Mr Abbott, seconded by Ms. Taylor, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to endorse the RIHPHC Staff evaluation presented by Ms. Doherty that concludes the 1954 addition to the Providence Public Library possesses historical and architectural significance in its own right and as a contributing element in the Downtown Providence National Register Historic District. This finding will be considered preliminary until the Commission’s November 9, 2016 meeting when the question will be reconsidered or reconfirmed.

Final Review: Naushon Company Plant, 32 Meeting Street, Cumberland

RIHPHC Architectural Historian Elizabeth Warburton presented information about the property. The Naushon Company Plant (1902-1904, 1945, 1952) is a textile manufacturing complex located on a 3.5-acre riverfront site in the Valley Falls section of Cumberland, Rhode Island; the complex is composed of five contributing 1-and 2-story buildings, four of brick and one wood frame, and one noncontributing late-20th century concrete building. The early-20th century structures were designed by mill engineer and architect William T. Henry of Fall River, Massachusetts in 1902-1904 as a weaving and finishing mill for cotton wash goods. The Main Building (No. 1), is a two-story brick building including additions through 1952. It is noteworthy for the survival of most of its original wood-frame segmental arch windows, sawtooth roof, and a series of evenly-spaced brick heating/ventilation pilaster flues spaced along the south (river) elevation. It is adjoined by a small 1-and 2-story frame Office (No. 2). In the rear and connected to the Main Building are a single-story Engine/Pump House (No. 3) and a tall, single-story Boiler House (No. 4). Unattached and adjacent to the Boiler House is a 2-story brick Carpenter Shop/Store House (No. 5).

The Naushon Company Plant is eligible for listing in the National Register at the local level under Criterion A in the area of industry and Criterion C in the area of architecture. The Naushon Company built the substantial mill complex at 32 Meeting Street, Valley Falls (Cumberland), R.I. in 1902-1904. Successive owners expanded and adapted it for other types of textile manufacture until the early 1950s. This plant represents six decades of textile manufacture, transitioning through several owners from cotton goods to cotton-silk blends and, later, to camel hair, mohair, worsteds, and synthetics. From 1902 to 1909, the Naushon Company wove and finished cotton (predominantly gingham) wash goods. By 1905, the plant housed 100 broad and 700 narrow looms and employed 350 operatives. Labor strife and changing market trends led to changes in ownership and collapse in 1914. Subsequent owners continued textile manufacturing into the 1960s.

The plant was designed by well-known Fall River, Massachusetts architect and mill engineer William T. Henry. One of its defining features is a forced draft ventilation system designed by B. F. Sturtevant as a series of tapered brick pilaster flues rising from an underground masonry duct running along the rear of the building. These sturdy structures provided heated air and ventilation to both floors.

During discussion, Dr. Malone stated that the Naushon Plant is a significant example of an early mechanical ventilation system, and the weave shed retains its sawtooth roof. Its location on the Blackstone River is also important and adds to the nationally significant industrial corridor.

On a motion by Ms. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Roos, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the nomination.

Preliminary Review: Central Falls Mills Historic District

RIHPHC Deputy Director Jeffrey Emidy presented information about the property. He summarized the information prepared by the Public Archaeology Lab that recommends expansion of the current Central Falls Mill Historic District to include the buildings at 381, 396, 403, 404, 413, 548, and 558 Roosevelt Avenue. The resources in the original historic district were constructed between 1825 and circa 1910. All of the buildings were constructed for industrial use. The PAL report indicates that the additional buildings proposed by the city for inclusion all fall into the same relative time frame and use as those originally included in the district. The two additional buildings that PAL included in the expansion abut the south edge of the city-proposed extension and also fall into the same relative time frame and industrial use as the buildings originally included in the district.

During discussion, the Commissioners expressed interest in the role that the various industrial properties and the companies that operated them played in industrial and economic development of Rhode Island in the mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Dr. Malone was interested in how the proposed larger district reflects a logical Rhode Island expansion of industry from water-power to steam and from textiles to wire to jewelry manufacturing.

On a motion by Dr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the Commission unanimously VOTED preliminary approval for the proposed expansion of the Central Falls Mill Historic District.

Preliminary Review: Lafayette Mill Office & Visitors Apartment, Hamlet Street, Woonsocket

Mr. Emidy presented information about the properties. The two buildings are remnants of the much larger Lafayette Mill that was demolished to provide the site for two new middle schools. Usually remnant properties are not considered for National Register listing. However, in this case the properties represent the very significant worsted textile industry in late 19th-century Woonsocket. Woonsocket Mayor and later Governor Aram Pothier was instrumental in attracting the Belgian owners of the Lafayette Company to bring their “French Worsted” method of production to Woonsocket in 1900. In addition to the City’s thriving industrial economy, the City’s French-Canadian workers were attractive to the company. The Office is a small, well-designed brick structure with mansard roof that housed the mill’s managers. The wood-frame Visitors Apartment was a residence for visiting Belgian representatives of the Lafayette Company.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato expressed interested in the late but well-executed Second Empire design elements of the Office. Mr. Abbott stated reservations about loss of the mill complex while recognizing the potential importance of the two surviving buildings. Dr. Malone felt the Office was exceptionally well designed for a mill office, and he noted the unique significance of the Visitors Apartment as reflecting a European connection with Woonsocket textile manufacturing. Mr. Hebert said these two properties possess local significance to the social and labor history of Woonsocket, and they appear to have potential for redevelopment.

On a motion by Dr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Roos, the Commission unanimously VOTED preliminary approval for the nomination.

Preliminary Review: Restmere, 1 Ichabod Lane, Middletown

Ms. Doherty presented information about the property. The house was built 1857-1858 for Alexander Van Rensselaer and his wife, Mary Howland. It is a high-style Italianate dwelling with unusual applied stickwork at the attic level. In 1870 it was published in *Beautifying Country Homes: A Handbook of Landscape Gardening* by Jacob Weidenmann [*superintendent of parks in Hartford, CT*]. A neighboring property, the Hamilton Hoppin House built 1856-57 was designed by Richard Upjohn for Hamilton Hoppin and Louisa Howland (sister of Mary). There is no documentation of Upjohn designing Restmere, but it has been attributed to Upjohn. In addition, there is evidence that Richard Morris Hunt was involved either in the initial design of Restmere or in renovations completed in the 1860s. Later Classical Revival/Beaux Arts-style elements, dating to the early 20th century, are significant in their own right. The original

landscape setting has been altered by mid-20th-century residential subdivision, but Restmere remains with a high degree of integrity.

On a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Dr. Malone, the Commission unanimously VOTED preliminary approval for the nomination.

5. Other Business: There was no other business.
6. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday November 9, 2016 at 9:30 AM.
7. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer