



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
March 8, 2017

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA
Mr. Karst Hoozeboom, Chairman
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Ms. Ruth Taylor

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Dr. Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist
Ms. Michaela Jergensen, Senior Reviewer RIDOT Projects
Ms. Katherine Pomplun, Senior Grants Coordinator
Ms. Elizabeth Warburton, Senior Architectural Historian

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Al Cocce, AIA, representing John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Mr. Darin Early, COO, Commerce RI
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Ms. Lisa Lawless representing Janet Coit, Director DEM
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing the Associate Director of the Division of Planning
Mr. Pieter N. Roos
Vacant

GUESTS

Edward Connors, NR Consultant (St. Joseph's Hospital NR)

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 A.M., Mr. Hoozeboom, Chairman, presiding.

2. Minutes of February 8, 2017

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

VOTED to approve the Minutes of February 8, 2017.

3. Executive Director's Report

- a) The National Park Service has determined that the former Navy Hospital property in Newport is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This action is part of the federal review process for the Navy to transfer the property to the City of Newport. The Navy and RIHPHC are drafting a memorandum of agreement that will require that a historic preservation easement is placed on the historic properties. RIHPHC will hold the easement and review and approve future development.
- b) The Preservation Society of Newport County is completing final plans for The Breakers Visitor Center, and the PSNC will submit the plans for RIHPHC review and approval.

4. National Register of Historic Places

Preliminary Consideration: St. Joseph's Hospital, Peace Street, Providence - continued

Mr. Emidy presented additional information to supplement the information presented at the February 8, 2017 meeting.

Occupying much of a city block in a densely settled, commercial and residential neighborhood of South Providence, St. Joseph's Hospital is a complex of attached buildings exhibiting five distinct phases of development: ca. 1897, ca. 1918, 1929, 1954 and 1964-6.

Within a few years of the establishment of Rhode Island Hospital in 1868, the Diocese of Providence (established 1872) addressed a massive increase in the city's population and a critical need for hospital services with the purchase of the former Broad Street mansion of industrialist Cyrus Harris and refitted it for use as a hospital. Oversubscribed from the beginning, the first building was augmented in 1892 by a brick, 4½-story hospital designed by William Walker and Son. Around 1897, a chapel was constructed to the rear of the Walker building; the Chapel remains as the earliest building on the site. In 1929 the Diocese commissioned architect Ambrose J. Murphy to design a six-story brick wing attached to the 1892 building. The 1892 hospital was demolished in the early 1960s to make way for a substantial enlargement occupying the east end of the hospital property and designed in a distinctly modern style by Kiff, Colean,

Voss and Souder of New York.

St Joseph's was an independent diocesan hospital until 1970, when it was merged with Our Lady of Fatima Hospital in North Providence. The hospital has been closed for several years, though sections of it are still in use as an urgent care center and for other outpatient procedures. Early research does not indicate that the hospital played a major part in the development of the neighborhood – with the exception of immediately adjacent parcels that it has purchased over time. This part of Elmwood was already transitioning from estate houses to streetcar-suburb type of housing when the hospital was established, and this trend continued as the urban city core spread south. Population growth in the area seems to be independent of the hospital's presence. It remains unclear exactly why the Diocese chose this particular parcel to purchase – whether it was purely an economic decision or if there were other factors, like the growing Irish-catholic population in the neighborhood.

When St. Joseph's opened in 1892 it was the first Catholic hospital in Rhode Island. The closest Catholic hospital at the time had been in New Bedford, but it had closed six years prior. There were two private hospitals in Providence at the time: Rhode Island Hospital – founded in 1868 and Homeopathic Hospital (later Roger Williams Hospital) – founded in 1878. Neither was devoted to providing care for the poor or those with contagious diseases (particularly needed at the time was care for those with tuberculosis). RIH would not allow the visitation of Catholic priests at the time, though it did admit Catholic patients. St. Joseph's was apparently established to fill these voids: care for the poor, those with contagious diseases, and provide physical care with spiritual acceptance for the Irish Catholic population that had experienced rapid population growth in the latter half of the 19th century. St. Joseph's also accepted patients with incurable diseases. The hospital provided significant services to soldiers of the Spanish-American War in 1898. It continued to expand its care offerings into the 20th century, adding a special program for crippled children in 1935, emergency room and outpatient clinic in 1954. In 1904, the Diocese purchased a farm in the Hillsgrove section of Warwick for use as a treatment center for tuberculosis patients. This remained in use until the Diocese opened Fatima Hospital in North Providence in 1954. The hospital also opened a nursing school 1899. In 1951, St. Joseph's Hospital affiliated with Providence College to allow students at the nursing school to take courses at PC. Later collaborations would be formed with Salve Regina and RI College.

The 1964-66 tower and entrance pavilion were designed by architects Kiff, Colean, Voss and Souder of New York City. After 1982, a third story was added to the top of the entrance pavilion. The Principal architect appears to have been James J. Souder, who studied architecture and planning at MIT, and in 1948 joined the firm of York & Sawyer, the predecessor firm to Kiff, Colean, Voss & Souder. Souder served in the Surgeon General's Office during WWII. His first exposure to hospital design was in the rapid refitting of merchant ships for the transport of sick and wounded soldiers, sailors, and airmen. This was when he encountered the use of porcelain-enameled steel panels; he appreciated their rapid assembly and clean appearance. After the War, he worked with aluminum window suppliers in the test fabrication of insulated, porcelain-enameled steel panels to fit in standard aluminum window openings for steel-frame buildings. York & Sawyer had developed a specialty for hospital design in the early 20th century, and Kiff, Colean, Voss & Souder continued this hospital work, designing notable

hospitals in the Bronx and Syracuse.

General use of porcelain-enameled panels in Rhode Island construction appears to date from about 1954. In hospital use, they appear on the exterior of RI Hospital's 1955 wing, Veterans' Hospital (1948), Miriam Hospital (1952), and Roger Williams Hospital's mid-century wing. At St. Joseph's, the panels define the architectural expression.

Surviving character-defining features of the 1964-1966 sections of St. Joseph's in addition to the porcelain-enameled window panels include the pink glazed brick and triple-arched concrete entrance canopy, the massing composition of vertical tower and low, horizontal entrance pavilion, and the remnant of a 1960s garden. On the interior, the entrance lobby remains largely intact including varnished wood panels that have had a later vinyl and plaster wall covering applied. Next to the lobby, the original cafeteria also remains largely intact with later wall coverings applied. The elevators have minimal stainless steel trim. Otherwise, the 1964-1966 interior is modestly utilitarian. These elements are distinctly of the 1960s stylistic expression.

Mr. Schoettle recused himself from considering this property because the owner has asked the Providence Revolving Fund to assist the historic rehabilitation project.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato noted that York & Sawyer Architects was an important national firm that also designed the Industrial National Bank tower in 1929 in downtown Providence. Dr. Onorato stated his opinion that the 1960s section of the building is a compelling example of its type in its use of materials, design, and arrangement of building forms. Ms. Taylor agreed, adding that the 1960s building and lobby represent a unified design. Dr. Morenon commented that exterior light floods the open space of the lobby. Stating that St. Joseph's Hospital appears to be a good example of mid-twentieth-century design, Mr. Abbott moved, seconded by Mr. Farzan, and the Commission

VOTED preliminary approval for National Register listing. All Commissioners present voted in the affirmative, except Mr. Schoettle who did not participate in the discussion and did not vote.

Preliminary Consideration: State Home & School for Dependent and Neglected Children, RI College, Mount Pleasant Avenue, Providence

Ms. Warburton presented information about the property. The Rhode Island State Home and School for Dependent and Neglected Children is located in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood in northwest Providence, Rhode Island and now forms the eastern end of the Rhode Island College campus. Despite being absorbed by Rhode Island College, the State Home's eighty acre-property remains intact with boundaries that are largely the same as they were in 1885 when the State Home and School was created.

The State Home and School for Dependent and Neglected Children in Providence was the first institution of its type in Rhode Island. The property is significant because of its contributions to the development of the child welfare system in the state. Based on national ideas implemented in Michigan and elsewhere in the mid-nineteenth century United States, the State Home and School

used spatial planning, landscaping, and scale to create a distinctive environment in which to care for state-dependent children.

The State purchased approximately eighty acres of land, then known as the Walnut Grove Farm, in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Providence for the creation of the State Home. Walnut Grove Farm was maintained as a small working farm and country retreat by George W. Chapin, a Providence textile manufacturer, in the 1860s. The development of the property remained largely unchanged after the State's purchase; the main roadway onto the property remains to the present day, the barn and one of the residences were retained for use by the home's farmer and Chapin's stone villa was adopted for the State Home's superintendent. The landscape of the State Home was an important a feature of the property. The State Home built upon the framework of Walnut Grove Farm and added gardens, walkways, and trees that enhanced the residential character of the property. The use of gardens as tools for teaching good behavior and discipline to children was a common Victorian era practice; Elizabeth Buffum Chace proposed "little gardens for the employment of children at suitable times" for the State Home.

During discussion, Mr. Schoettle questioned the integrity of the physical context of open land surrounding the historic buildings, and asked about the boundary justification. Mr. Abbott said there appears to be an entrance road sequence through the landscape. Several Commissioners discussed whether there is a "designed landscape" or a "cultural landscape" and what historical attributes define its character and significance? Dr. Morenon described his own archaeological investigations throughout the area.

On a motion by Ms. Taylor, seconded by Dr. Onorato, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for National Register nomination subject to further boundary justification and definition of areas of significance for the property.

5. Final Report: Surveying RI Coastal Archaeological Sites Damaged by Hurricane Sandy

The report was postponed due to lack of time and will be rescheduled to a future date.

6. Other Business: There was no other business.

7. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday April 12, 2017 at 9:30 AM.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer