

August 5, 2020

Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Ref: 1615-31 N Delaware Historic Nomination

To Whom It May Concern;

I object to the 1615 N Delaware Avenue Historic Designation and ask that it be rejected for reasons listed below. The nomination was submitted by Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society. I do not agree with many of Oscar Beisert's submittals. At the end of the process they are a harassment of the property owner, a burden to the Historical Commission and of little or no value to the citizens, whether selected or rejected. But I feel this nomination is a new low. Let me start with a brief property history.

1875 – unknown	Ice House
1895 – 1944	Bradlee & Co Empire Chain Works
1945 – 1950	Auto Wrecking
1951 – 1965	Kulp and Gordon Motor Freight
1966 – 1976	Bickleys Express Trucking
1977 – 1988	Big Dave's Buildarama
1988 – present	Stepnowski General Contractors

The above information is based on my research and that of two environmental surveys performed. If you are not aware environmental surveys include very in-depth research. Over the years from 1940 to 1965 the roof lines changed considerable from obvious alterations. The rear section of the nominated structure was removed by 1965 and replaced with a separate 50' x 50' structure.

The original nomination was based on criteria (c) and (j)

(c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style

- Oscar Beisert was originally drawn to and most intrigued by the masonry wall along Susquehanna Avenue calling it "striking". I'm not sure what he was looking at and apparently neither did the Committee because they rejected this category saying it was "not distinctive" and "not pretty".
- I agree completely, in fact it's ugly. The "funhouse affect" you see in the photos is not an illusion, it's even more pronounced in person.

LMM Associates

1615 N. Delaware Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa 19125
Phone 215-427-0800 Fax 215-247-0433

- The “funhouse affect” is the result of a poor foundation and the building may be short lived to stand the test of time as evidenced by the attached Engineers Reports prepared by Joseph Mullaney, P.E. and Thomas Faranda, P.E.
- Therefore, there is no intelligent reason to retain any portion of the structure

The Committee on Historic Designation recommended that the property be included on the Register based on criteria (i) and (j)

(i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history

- This designation was added by the committee at the Historic Designation meeting because across the highway AECOM performed an exhaustive search and found some interesting artifacts. This seems to be an inappropriate stretch on the part of the committee. It is outrageous to accuse us of having hidden artifacts on our property without a single piece of evidence which suggest the artifacts exist. By this measure every property in the City of Philadelphia could be deemed historic.
- I can guarantee you there are no interesting artifacts here. We have performed numerous excavations throughout the property and found nothing of interest.
- Eventually the property will be redeveloped and when that event happens it is likely that excavations will be kept to a minimum due to fact that most of the property resides in the floodplain and for environmental concerns.

(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

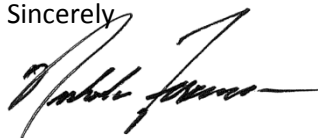
- As stated above there is no logical reason to retain the structure. It’s ugly and you can’t polish this ugly pretty. I don’t think anyone would care to keep it as a reflection of their community.
- This (j) category cannot stand alone without some other redeemable quality or feature.

I have worked in the engineering and construction fields for the past 45+ years. I have been a principal of Stepnowski Bros General Contractors for 36 years and during that time I have had the pleasure to work with the Historical Commission Staff numerous times. I have always found them to be professional, knowledgeable, demanding and cooperative. Please remember the Historical Commission Staff recommends “that the nomination fails to demonstrate that the property at 1615-31 N Delaware Avenue satisfies any Criteria for Designation”.

Think about this, 110 years ago these smoke billowing industrial sites littered the area and polluted the ground. People clamored for clean-up and now you want to memorialize it. But there is nothing of any substance here to memorialize.

Please reject this nomination.

Sincerely



Nicholas Foremen
General Partner, LMM Associates

JOSEPH MULLANEY, P.E.

ARCHITECTURAL/ STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

18 Dillon Way
Washington Crossing, PA 18977
215-499-3544

July 30, 2020

Ref: 1615-31 Historic Nomination

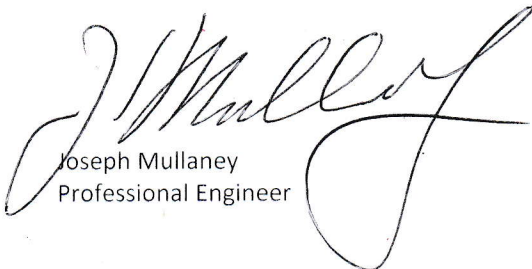
To Whom It May Concern;

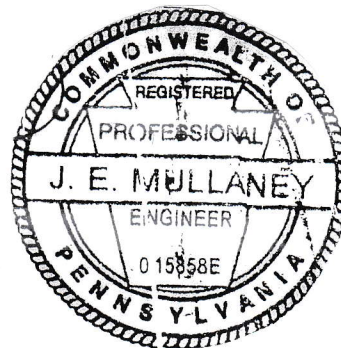
I have inspected the historically nominated building on the northwest corner of 1615-31 N Delaware Avenue property. The building is a one story structure approximately 50' x 180' with masonry walls and wood framed roof. As with many industrial buildings it has obviously had many renovations over the years and it is difficult to determine what elements are from the original structure. Some of the roof framing is older and may be original, but it is certainly unconventional (non-professional). The concrete floors were installed much later in the buildings evolution and at multiple elevations with half of the floors being filled to loading dock height. The southeast and southwest walls are a combination of concrete block masonry and steel frame that are also of more recent construction. The northwest (Delaware Ave) and northeast walls (Susquehanna Ave) are brick masonry and appear to be of the 1905 original building construction. On a whole this building appears to be put together with "spare parts" and it is not pretty.

The northwest (Delaware Ave) and northeast walls (Susquehanna Ave) seem to be the focal point of this nomination. I was provided a survey performed by Nick Foreman of these walls and I personally verified the data acquired and can attest to its accuracy. The said survey is attached. It indicates that the wall foundation has settled in a "rollercoaster" fashion as much as 9.6", which is very extreme. This settlement has caused the wall to drift out of plumb as much as 8" and portions of the wall are now being restricted from collapse by interior steel reinforcement. I was informed that this building once extended to the corner of Susquehanna and Beach Street and it would not surprise me if the remainder of the building collapsed.

Over my 50 plus years of structural engineering experience I've been asked to provide engineering solutions to reinforce a structure so that it may provide another 20 to 40 years of useful life. In my professional estimation the useful life of this building is very near its end and the only way to save it would be to rebuild it completely starting with an adequate foundation.

Sincerely,


Joseph Mullaney
Professional Engineer



THOMAS C. FARANDA, PE
Structural Engineer

August 3, 2020

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Philadelphia Historic Commission

RE: **PHC Nomination 1615-31 North Delaware Avenue**
Bradlee & Company Empire Chain Works

To Whom it May Concern,

I have reviewed the Keeping Society nomination of the 1615-31 N Delaware Avenue property. The building at the corner of Delaware Avenue and Susquehanna Avenue, particularly the brick masonry walls on Delaware Avenue and Susquehanna Avenue, were the primary points of interest in the nomination. I understand that over the years the building has served as an icehouse, chain manufacturer, auto salvage, trucking terminal, building supply warehouse, and a contractor's storage warehouse and that it has undergone extensive alterations over time. A visual inspection of these walls, together with a survey provided by the owner (attached), reveals that the building foundation along Susquehanna Avenue experienced settlement as much as 10" and consequently the wall is now out of level by as much as 10" and out of plumb by as much as 8". Although the building is currently stable, structurally speaking the foundations have failed, and by a large degree. This condition strictly reduces the remaining life expectancy of the building. The options to retain the walls would include:

- A) underpin the foundation and add structural elements to support the wall in place as-is,
- B) remove and rebuild the wall and foundation completely.

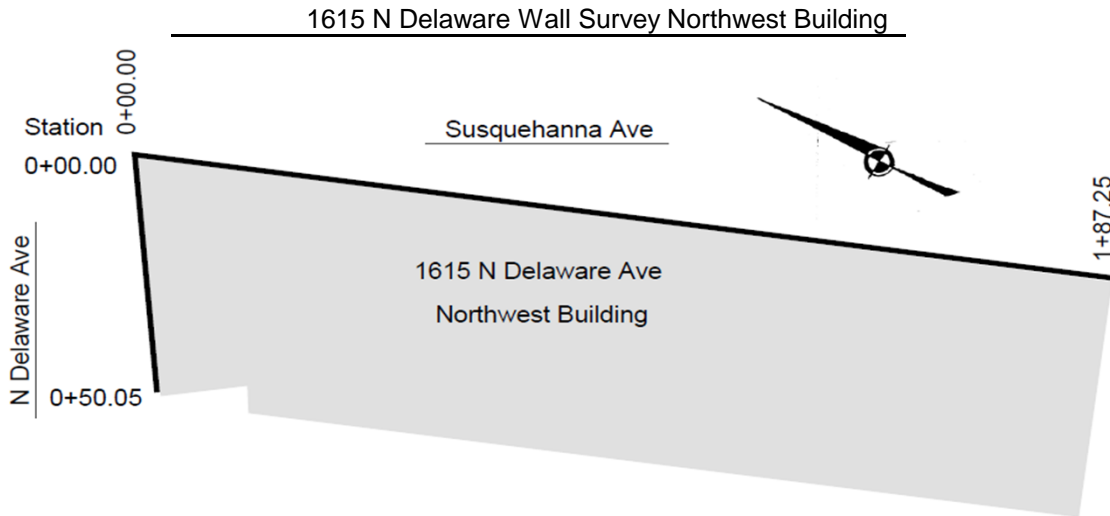
Each option is costly, technically challenging, would place a significant financial burden on the current owner, and would achieve extraordinarily little in terms of historic preservation.

Thank you for considering this engineering input to this nomination.

Thomas C. Faranda, PE



CC: N. Foreman, LMM Associates



N Delaware Ave

Station	Inches of foundation settlement	Inches out of plumb per 16' vertical
0+ 0.00	(0.60)	0.00
0+ 1.75	(0.48)	0.00
0+ 17.83	(0.36)	1.00
0+ 32.00	(0.48)	1.00
0+ 50.05	0.00	0.00

East Susquehanna Ave

Station	Inches of foundation settlement	Inches out of plumb per 16' vertical
0+ 0.00	(0.60)	0.00
0+ 1.75	(0.84)	1.00
0+ 20.67	(3.12)	2.50
0+ 33.92	(5.64)	2.00
0+ 48.00	(8.04)	2.00
0+ 61.17	(9.60)	4.00
0+ 74.67	(9.12)	4.00
0+ 88.17	(8.52)	0.00
1+ 1.75	(6.48)	3.00
1+ 15.33	(3.36)	2.00
1+ 28.83	(0.36)	3.00
1+ 42.25	(1.08)	2.00
1+ 55.67	(1.44)	5.00
1+ 70.50	(1.92)	8.00
1+ 85.50	(3.48)	5.00
1+ 87.25	(1.92)	5.50

The northeast and the northwest walls are the only remaining portions of what is assumed to be the Bradlee and Co. 1910 building. The building was probably reconstructed for the Kulp and Gordan Trucking operation. The two aforementioned walls are ugly due to alterations to maintain it as an envelope wall only and because the foundation has settled close to 10". The settlement has caused out of plumb walls and unsightly visual sight lines

Susquehanna Ave and Delaware Ave Front Elevations



Delaware Ave Front Elevation

1615 N Delaware Ave Buildings looking form the rear of property





LMM Associates

1615 N. Delaware Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa 19125
Phone 215-427-0800 Fax 215-247-0433

615-31 N. Delaware Ave.

8/2/2020

Philadelphia Historic Commission

I question the validity of the nomination and request that this nomination be rejected as inaccurate and incomplete.

1. Address is accurate, however only one structure of several on the site is in question. **The property consists of 45,904 sq. ft. of ground.**
2. Name of Historic Resource may be accurate
3. Type of Historic Structure Building was accurate. **However this criterion has been disallowed so it is no longer accurate.**
4. Property Information
Condition is not fair it is obvious that **condition is poor.**
Occupancy is not unknown **it has been for many years and remains occupied by four tenants: a general contractor, a minority owned specialty contractor, a woman owned landscaping company and a non-profit organization.**
5. Boundary Description
6. Description
Physical Description
"Standing at the north corner of Delaware and Susquehanna Avenues.....
.....The subject property is otherwise neighbored primarily by vacant lots and miscellaneous commercial buildings." **The property is not primarily neighbored by vacant lots, besides the occupants it is primarily neighbored by a moving company, a food distribution business and a**

highway contractor who is performing the I-95 project. There are a couple of vacant lots in the general area.

There is one aerial photograph of part of the site on the cover page of the nomination and seven photographs of the brick walls on Susquehanna Avenue and Delaware Ave. There are no photos of the cement plastered walls on the other sides of the property. There are no pictures of the garage doors and the loading docks as they clearly show substantial past alterations to the building. No description of the entire property or photographs of the site, setting and surroundings were submitted.

Criteria for Designation:

(c)" Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style. **This was rightfully dismissed as it is a common style of brickwork.**

(i) "Has yielded, or may likely to yield, information important to in pre-history or history" **This was not submitted with the initial nomination and there is no documentation supporting this criteria. Specifically there is not a narrative statement of its significance citing all Criteria for Designation set forth in Section 14-2007(5) of the Philadelphia code that the resource satisfies.**

(j)"Exemplifies the cultural, political economic, social or historic heritage of the community." **It does not exemplify anything other than a manufacturer occupied this building like so many manufacturers occupied buildings in Philadelphia.**

This nomination is incomplete and should be dismissed as such.

John Stepnowski,

Partner, LMM Associates



8/4/2020

LMM Associates

1615 N. Delaware Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa 19125
Phone 215-427-0800 Fax 215-247-0433

Members of the Philadelphia Historical Commission

I am a partner in LMM Associates the owner of this property. The partners of LMM are also principals of Stepnowski Bros., Inc. a general contractor of which I am the President. The business has been in continuous operation in Philadelphia since it was started by me and two of my brothers in 1976. We were all born and lived a few city blocks from this site as well as many members of our family that remain in this community.

Though we primarily work in the private sector we have performed work on several historic structures including: Philadelphia's Parkway Central Library, Philadelphia's City Hall, and Three Bears Park. We also completed the restoration of Thomas Mill Covered Bridge, and did the site work, wall openings, and restorations for the sprinkler system installation at Carpenters' Hall as well as various repairs to that celebrated building. We are truly pleased to have contributed to the restoration and preservation of these truly historic structures. We encourage and support historic preservation we discourage keeping an old structure simply because it is old.

We have rented and occupied portions of this and an adjoining property since 1988. In 1999 LMM Associates purchased this property. In addition to Stepnowski the tenants are Sable Construction, a minority owned contractor; a tenant since 2005, The National Multiple Sclerosis Society; who warehouses equipment and promotional products for their events; the Walk-a-Thon, Bike MS, Walk MS, and other fund raising events. The NMSS has been a tenant since 2010, Digs Living a woman owned landscaping company had first rented a few hundred sq. ft. of open lot space for outside storage and has grown to leasing an 11,000 sq. ft. section of the property as well as a building for her growing company. This property has been vital as an Incubator for these businesses affording them reasonable rents in an industrial area in which they can function unhindered by neighboring residences as there are none.

I believe small business preservation is as noble a cause as historic preservation. Adding restrictions to this property will be of no benefit to anyone; but more likely to be a detriment to many.

I fail to see how the proposed Historic Designation of this site will be important to the education, culture, traditions, and economic values of the city; how it will strengthen the economy of the City, or will enhance the city's attractiveness to tourists and stabilize or improve this property's value and foster civic pride in the architectural, historical, cultural and educational accomplishments."

I respectfully ask that you reject this nomination and reserve Historic Designations for those that deserve that recognition.

Michael A. Stepnowski,

Partner, LMM Associates



LMM Associates

1615 N. Delaware Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa 19125
Phone 215-427-0800 Fax 215-247-0433

1615-31 N. Delaware Avenue

Dear Commission Members

It seems that this nomination does not meet any of the Criteria for Designation.

(c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; This has been dismissed as it is a common building style

(i) Has yielded, or may likely yield, information important in pre-history or history;

There is no evidence supporting this notion and no documentation has been submitted with the nomination. A remark that digging across the street found archeological remnants added this to the criteria. This site and the building in question appears to have been built on imported fill as the failing foundation of the building, several excavations for removal of a number of underground tanks, a massive excavation for a billboard foundation, various plumbing trenches, and extensive test core borings have indicated that it is imported fill.

“(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.” This encompasses a great deal and accepting this would include almost every industrial building, church, synagogue, corner store, tavern, bakery and residence from the twentieth century be included. To stand alone as the lone criteria to preserve the remains of a poorly built structure and restrict the entire 45,000 sq. ft. property seems to be wanting.

To state that this unattractive building, which apparently was poorly constructed and that consequently contributed to its current poor condition exemplifies the heritage of the community could be considered a slight to this community past and present.

Regina Stepnowski, Partner