

Public Comment on  
5801-03 Germantown Ave/Parker Hall

January 17, 2023

Comment – 5801-03 Germantown Ave, Nomination

I applaud the submission of a nomination to recognize Parker Hall, however, I am discouraged that the package shows a Period of Significance of 1900 – present yet doesn't state anything for the period from 1940-2000.

The preparer has many suppositions included citing the obvious "white flight" in Philadelphia, as well as the "blockbusting" that was happening in Germantown. One could easily also expand upon this by mentioning the existence of "Jim Crow" in Philadelphia that continued to plaque African Americans throughout WWII in cities across the country and in Philadelphia and still existed during my Philadelphia childhood of the 60's.

I suggest adding a section head of 1940 – 2000:

Move the photo of soldiers to this segment and a paragraph that would explain why the photographed event would have taken place. In fact, if you search Black USOs, this photo looks exactly like many you will find. You can easily include this quote:

"According to a 2000 article by Gretchen Knapp in the Journal of Policy History, "USO centers were often segregated [during this era and it was not uncommon to see two separate USOs in the same town], either because of local regulations or by the request of African Americans who deplored the tensions that arose when they entered the USO center. In 1943, more than 180 of 1,326 USO operations were designated for African Americans."

Source - <https://www.uso.org/stories/3001-how-the-uso-served-a-racially-segregated-military-throughout-world-war-ii>

Either the USO or a private organization would have planned such an event at Parkers Hall to ensure the local soldiers could have an event and freely enjoy themselves.

I suggest the last section be titled: 2000 – present ACES Veterans Museum

The current ACES Veterans Museum, established in 2000, exists solely because of the revelation of Parker Hall possibly as a Uniformed Service Organization (USO) for the African American troops during WWII. This nomination disturbingly limits that the existence of this building as a museum to little more than a sentence. This museum is a part of the Historic Germantown consortium of sites, recognized by the City, many national veterans organizations, offices within the Department of Defense, site of the Vietnam War Memorial Plaque donated by the Philadelphia Inquirer, etc. and is also a certified Veterans Services Organization (VSO). The programs of the museum encompasses the exhibits and Parker Hall.

As an Air Force veteran, and member of the ACES Veterans Museum Advisory Board, I encourage your consideration to include these suggested additions to ensure the complete description of the significance of Parker Hall which includes the present and future activities of the ACES Veterans Museum is captured in this document that would be permanently on record if approved. In fact, there has been some work completed to the property so updated pictures could replace those included in the nomination for the final package.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Gary', with a stylized, flowing script.

Deborah Gary  
President