

CHARLES E. PETERSON, F.A.I.A. *Architectural Historian, Restorationist and Planner*

October 8, 1980

George L. Collins, Director
Henry George School of Social Science
413 South Tenth Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147

Re: The little brick house at 413 South Tenth

Dear Mr. Collins:

Attached is a marked up set of advance prints of the Henry George Birthplace. They represent the graphic analysis we are making of the little brick house at 413 South Tenth Street. These record drawings will be combined to make seven final sheets prepared in accordance with the present standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey for accession at the Library of Congress. There they will be available for all to consult and to be copied in a routine way. Over six hundred Philadelphia buildings are already in the collection.

Using preliminary source materials already assembled by the Philadelphia Historical Commission (of which I happened to be the first appointee in 1956) we have established that the house was built in the 1820's over a swampy site on the poverty frontier of southeast Philadelphia. We have the will and inventory of carpenter Edward Harland who built it and died bankrupt. After two sheriffs' sales the property fell into the hands of George F. Smith, partner in a typesetting firm that made an immense fortune for its owners. He owned it when Henry George was born there.

In the last hundred years the house has undergone some unfortunate changes, though we are happy to find the original trim still in one of the rooms (second floor, rear).

It will be possible to develop a documented historical essay in rather quick order if you care to have it done. It would be an indispensable aid to preparing restoration plans and making discussions.

Future Development

I understand that your school is growing and that you will need more classroom space. That may, when plans are submitted to the Department of Licenses and Inspection for approval, bring your whole operation under the scrutiny of fire hazard experts.

If a classroom is built in the rear yard, egress will be possibly only through the house or through the little brick arched passageway on the south side. That may not be judged adequate. They may even demand a fire escape on the front of the house which would be architecturally and historically unfortunate.

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My suggestion is that you quietly inquire into the status of No. 411, the house which immediately adjoins on the north. Its first floor could be made into a medium-sized classroom exiting directly into the street. There would also be an exit in the rear. The two upper floors could be made into an apartment (for staff or rented out). Doors could be cut through the party wall as desired.

As to the possibility of sale or longtime lease I don't know. The whole neighborhood is on the rise (the movement now reaches from river to river). But at the moment many houses are for sale by owners feeling the current mortgage squeeze and it would seem a good time to try to acquire.

Restoration Measures

Our record drawings can be completed soon and restoration studies sketched. If you want us to make drawings leading to estimates some stripping of the walls will be needed. Since the Birthplace is regarded as a museum I should think that you would at least want the first floor front room restored. This would involve taking off all the modern wall sheathing and opening up the fireplace which is undoubtedly present, though completely concealed.

Please let me know what direction to proceed. In the meantime Jim Collins will complete his set of careful drawings. Their filing in the Library of Congress should help you gain the recognition needed for entry on the National Register.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Charles E. Peterson
Consultant

CEP:hg
In Duplicate

P.S.: Many thanks for the check received last night.

CEP

cc. Mr. Biddle