



SPECIAL ISSUE
ENDANGERED
PROPERTIES

PRESERVATION MATTERS

The Newsletter of The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

Eighth Annual Endangered Properties List

DIVINE LORRAINE ♦ CRUISER OLYMPIA ♦ ALFRED E. BURK MANSION ♦ PROVIDENT MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING
DILWORTH HOUSE ♦ LYNEWOOD HALL ♦ GERMANTOWN TOWN HALL ♦ HENRY PIERCE HOUSE ♦ LAVEROCK HILL ESTATE ♦ 109 ELFRETH'S ALLEY

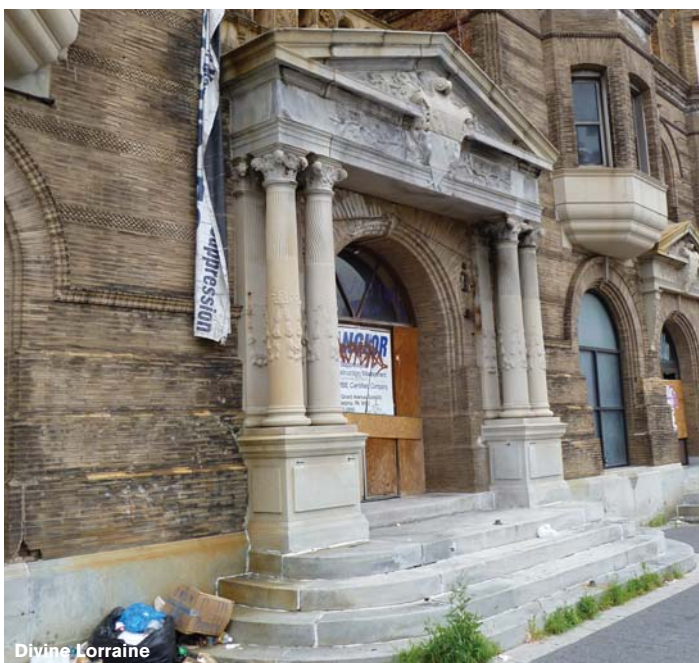
Since the Preservation Alliance began its Endangered Properties Lists in 2003, 61 historic buildings, sites, and thematic resources have been featured. Some of these have since been lost, while more have thankfully been saved. However most remain in a state of dangerous limbo. For this, our eighth annual list, we decided to highlight seven of these previously-listed properties whose exceptional historic and architectural significance is threatened by chronic neglect. These are familiar buildings and sites to most Philadelphians, but this familiarity should not obscure the very real threats posed by inaction, time and the elements. Along with three additional properties appearing on our list for the first time, these buildings highlight the broad spectrum of threats facing Philadelphia's built heritage, from development pressure to disinvestment. Visit our website at www.PreservationAlliance.com/advocacy/endangered.php to learn more about these and past endangered properties and find out what you can do to help.

Divine Lorraine

Willis Hale, 1893

699 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia. Listed in 2009.

Stalled redevelopment plans have left this beloved North Broad Street icon gutted and deteriorating at an alarming rate. Numerous small fires have been reported within the building, which continues to attract squatters and vandals. Current owners have been unable to adequately secure the former hotel and have yet to propose a viable redevelopment strategy.



Divine Lorraine



Divine Lorraine

Cruiser *Olympia* ▶

1892

Penn's Landing, Philadelphia. Listed in 2009.

Unable to secure the estimated \$20 million needed to move and repair this historic vessel, Independence Seaport Museum and Navy officials announced in May a plan to sink the *Olympia* off the coast of New Jersey. Interim repairs will keep the ship open through Spring 2011, when a summit will be held to determine the ship's fate. The Friends of the Cruiser *Olympia* (www.cruiserolympia.org) have developed an alternative preservation plan and continue fundraising efforts to keep the ship on the Delaware riverfront.



Cruiser *Olympia*

◀ Alfred E. Burk Mansion

Simon & Bassett, 1907

1500 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia. Listed in 2005.

Vacant since a fire in 1995, this 1907 beaux-arts mansion continues to face an uncertain future. The building has been owned by Temple University since 1971. Though the school has just completed a stellar rehabilitation of nearby Baptist Temple, Burk Mansion continues to languish without a clear preservation strategy.



Alfred E. Burk Mansion

Provident Mutual Life Insurance Building ▶

Cram & Ferguson, 1926

4601 Market Street, Philadelphia. Listed in 2004.

This imposing West Philadelphia campus, now vacant and owned by the city, is being considered for new Police Department headquarters, but the availability of funding for such a move remains unclear. The building is not listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, raising concerns about adverse impacts to the building and the site.

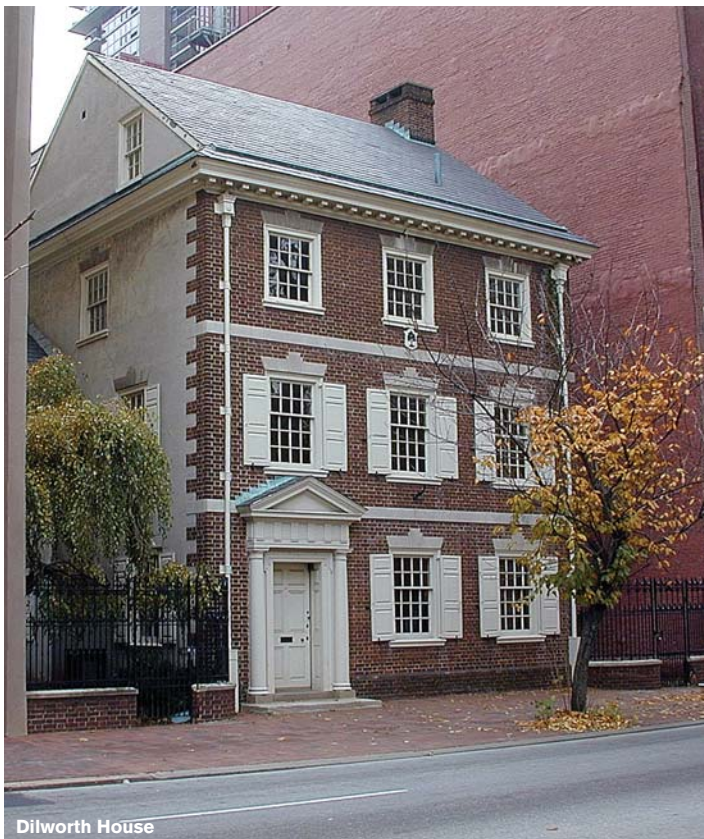


Provident Mutual Life Insurance Building

◀ Dilworth House

*George Edwin Brumbaugh, 1957
223-5 S. 6th Street, Philadelphia. Listed in 2004.*

This Society Hill landmark, constructed by Mayor Richardson Dilworth as a symbol of urban rejuvenation, has been threatened with partial demolition since developer John Turchi announced plans for a new high-rise in 2004. Lengthy legal action resulted in a May 2010 decision upholding protection of the building, but the developer has appealed with support from the Nutter administration. The property meanwhile suffers from deferred maintenance.



Dilworth House

Germantown Town Hall ▶

*John P.B. Sinkler, 1923
5928 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia. Listed in 2003.*

Owned by the City of Philadelphia, Germantown Town Hall has been vacant since the mid-1990s. Despite being listed as available surplus by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, no progress has yet been made in identifying a new use for the structure.



Germantown Town Hall

◀ Lynnewood Hall

*Horace Trumbauer, 1898
920 Spring Avenue, Elkins Park, Montgomery County. Listed in 2003.*

The palatial former estate of P.A.B. Widener, one of Trumbauer's most impressive designs, is often called the "American Versailles." Its sheer size—70,000 square feet and 110 rooms—has proven an obstacle to its reuse. It has stood vacant since 1993, when a fledgling religious organization obtained the property.



Lynnewood Hall

Photo: Eva Pastor



Henry Pierce House

67 Station Road, Glen Mills, Delaware County

SIGNIFICANCE: One of the oldest surviving buildings in Delaware County's Concord Township, the Pierce House was built as a modest two-story fieldstone farmhouse in 1769. A third story with a Queen Anne gable roof was added in the mid-nineteenth century. Deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the building is also a recognized local landmark under the Concord Township Historic Ordinance.

THREAT: In 2005, Toll Brothers purchased the house as part of a planned new 47-home subdivi-

sion. In accordance with the township's preservation ordinance, the sale and new land use agreement required Toll Brothers to restore the house, in good condition at the time. Initial renovation began with the removal of windows and interior partitions, but all activity on the site soon ceased and the property was left with boarded windows and an unfinished roof. In early 2010, Toll Brothers announced its intention to demolish the house, citing structural deficiencies that had developed after the restoration was abandoned.

RECOMMENDATION: In August 2010, a Concord Township engineer's report determined that restoration remains feasible. The developer has offered to fund other historic preservation projects in the township in lieu of saving the Pierce House—a proposal currently being considered by the township supervisors over the objections of the township's Historical Commission and the local historic preservation community. The precedent that such an agreement would set could dangerously compromise the foundations of preservation ordinances across the region. We urge the township to enforce the original land use agreement and Toll Brothers to honor their commitment to retain and restore the Pierce House.



109 Elfreth's Alley

Philadelphia

SIGNIFICANCE: Elfreth's Alley is famous as the oldest residential street in the United States. The alley dates to 1702, and this c.1811 two-bay, Flemish-bond trinity is typical of the alley's well-kept stock of eighteenth and nineteenth-century working-class houses. The entire block, one of the nation's last intact early American streetscapes, is listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and designated a National Historical Landmark.

THREAT: In 2008, 109 Elfreth's Alley was abandoned by its owners, who were in the process of constructing a rear addition to the property. The house and its unfinished addition have sat vacant ever since, suffering from severe water infiltration, mold infestation, and vandalism. In 2010, the house was foreclosed and languishes today in an uninhabitable state.

RECOMMENDATION: This is just one example of a city-wide—and nationwide—foreclosure epidemic. Historic properties, even those on Philadelphia's most historic street, are not immune from this crisis and the resulting glut of abandoned homes.

City Councilmembers Marian Tasco and William Greenlee have introduced a bill requiring mortgage holders to license and maintain all foreclosed vacant residential properties in the city, a small but necessary first step in preventing irreparable losses to the city's historic fabric during the current downturn.

Laverock Hill Estate

1777 Willow Grove Avenue, Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County

SIGNIFICANCE: Laverock Hill, Philadelphia socialite Isaac T. Starr's early-twentieth-century estate, occupies a sprawling forty-two-acre site just beyond the northern limits of Philadelphia. Using a consistent palette of Tudor and Colonial Revival details, famed New York architect Charles A. Platt transformed an existing manor house into an imposing mansion and added a small hamlet of outbuildings—a stable, two-story carriage house, greenhouse, and caretakers cottages. Platt's long-time colleague Ellen Biddle Shipman, an early pioneer in the field of landscape architecture, planted an elaborate sequence of formal



gardens in 1915. Today, both the estate buildings and their gardens are remarkably untouched, standing as one of the few completely intact Platt-Shipman collaborations anywhere in the country and one of Montgomery County's last intact estates.

THREAT: In 2008, Hansen Properties purchased the estate with plans to construct an age-restricted housing community. Hansen initially claimed they would retain the mansion for use as a community clubhouse for the new development. But plans presented to Cheltenham Township officials in 2009 proposed the complete demolition of the mansion and gardens to accommodate eight new four-story buildings. A township preservation overlay district that would otherwise protect the property is nullified by a clause exempting age-restricted developments.

RECOMMENDATION: The Montgomery County Planning Commission has urged the developer to reconsider the demolition of the property, citing its significance in both the township's 2002 comprehensive plan and 2005 open space plan. Hansen Properties has developed an alternative site plan retaining both the mansion and gardens, but this plan has been tabled while the developers pursue approval of their original concept, to be reviewed by Cheltenham Township officials in early 2011. We urge the township and developer to respect the township preservation overlay district and pursue alternatives to demolition, using Hansen's own alternative plan as a starting point for continued negotiation.

PRESERVATION ALLIANCE FOR GREATER PHILADELPHIA

1616 Walnut Street, Suite 1620
Philadelphia, PA 19103

TEL 215.546.1146 FAX 215.546.1180

E-MAIL info@preservationalliance.com

WEB SITE www.PreservationAlliance.com

The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia actively promotes the appreciation, protection, and revitalization of the Philadelphia region's historic buildings, communities and landscapes.