

**THE PLASTIC CLUB OF PHILADELPHIA: A SITE MANAGEMENT STUDY
AND BUILDING ANALYSIS**

Reagan Baydoun Ruedig

A THESIS

In

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2007

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband,
Adam Ruedig, who has been of tremendous
help and has shown remarkable patience and love.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my neighbor, Michael Guinn, for introducing me to the Plastic Club and its charm, for being on call for my many questions, and for turning the heat on for me in the basement. I would also like to thank Betty MacDonald for her patience and for her extraordinary memory, which has helped me gain a better understanding of the Club's history. Additional thanks goes to the entire Board and Club members for allowing me to spend so much time listening in and exploring the nooks and crannies of the building.

I would like to acknowledge the help and guidance received from my advisor, Randall Mason, and the extra time that my reader, Gail Caskey Winkler, donated to aid my thesis.

Special thanks also goes to Bill Campbell, who so kindly spent much time recounting the history of the Sketch Club.

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Introduction and Methodology

In 1897, the Plastic Club in Philadelphia, PA was founded as an art club for women at a time when such clubs were common only for men. One of the first arts organizations for women in the United States, it was a place where they could meet, create art, and socialize with one another as artists. Although now both men and women are included as members, it is one of the oldest art clubs in continuous operation in the country.

Little has been formally documented about the Plastic Club's history, and even less has been recorded and studied about the historic building that it has occupied since 1909. Currently, it is operating under the original mission and does not identify itself as an historic site; this is an unusual situation in that the historic function of the site is still intact and the original management organization is still in place. As the Plastic Club begins its second century of operation, it is important for the Club to evaluate its current position, its future, and how the management of its historic building can support the management of the organization.

As a case study, the Plastic Club highlights an interesting theme in preservation planning: how can, or should, one apply preservation planning to a site that is active, rather than one whose original function has ceased? This study will apply values-based planning principles to this unique situation in order to promote sustainable preservation of the Plastic Club. It is hoped that this application demonstrates both the flexibility of this approach and the utility of preservation planning to organizations that are not primarily organized as historic sites.

This study applies a values-based¹ examination to the shared histories of the organization and the building in order to evaluate the significance of the site. Based on this approach as well as an analysis of the current organizational needs, the values of the site are determined and a statement of significance is produced. By taking into consideration all the various stakeholders and adhering to the statement of significance, future decisions will be sensitive to and sustain the heritage values of the site. This is not a complete preservation plan; however, it is hoped that this study will provide a basis for future plans, management, and research.

The first chapter contains a short history of the organization, the separate rowhouses, and the later Club House. This history is taken from the archived materials held in the Club itself, such as annual reports, board meeting minutes, photographs, and scrap books. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature concerning historic site management and preservation planning, which form the basis for analysis of the Plastic Club. A study of the organizational structure, the stakeholders of the site, and comparable sites are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 includes the statement of significance for the site and a discussion of the values, on which the statement of significance is based. Chapter 5 contains a summary conditions assessment of the building made through observation and a study of the past work on the building. Additionally, the physical property of the Club—the furnishings and art collection—are analyzed in terms of their significance and value. The final chapter contains concluding remarks and recommendations for the future of the Plastic Club and its preservation.

¹ The values-based approach, a method of identifying the significance of a site and basing all actions and decisions on the principles of its values, is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Chapter 1: History of the Plastic Club and 247 S. Camac Street

History of the Organization

The Plastic Club was founded in 1897 by a group of women artists in Philadelphia who felt the need to emulate several men's art organizations and create "a Club combining social and art interests, whose membership would be limited to 'women engaged in the pursuit of art in any of its branches.'"² At a time when clubs were an important venue for social activity, the Plastic Club was one of many organizations begun by a group of people with similar interests. During the late 19th century, literary clubs, theater clubs, poetry clubs, and the like were very common in Philadelphia and other cities and towns throughout America.

The women who started the Plastic Club were full-time, professional artists, few of whom were married. Their work was often included exhibitions at other art clubs where the members were men and where, as women, they were never granted membership. Consequently, these women decided to form their own art club specifically for women where they could work, exhibit, and talk about their art with one another.³ A number of widely recognized women artists in the city were instrumental in organizing this club, such as Emily Sartain,⁴ then the Principal of the School of Design for Women (later known as Moore College of Art). Of the 57 founding members at the first meeting,

² Sarah F. Crumb, "The House That Jill Built," nd. (Plastic Club Archives).

³ Men were also included in exhibitions other than those that were restricted to members.

⁴ Emily Sartain (1841-1927) was the daughter of John Sartain, an important artist/printer. She studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts for six years and then in Paris. She was a founder and a president of the Plastic Club (1899-1903, 1904-1905). *Notable American Women*, ed. Susan Ware (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 235-236.

Blanche Dillaye⁵ was elected president, and the official name was chosen: The Plastic Club—Art Club for Women, meant to represent the plastic, or changeable, state of an unfinished work of art. A motto was chosen from a poem by Theophile Gautier (1811-1872):

All passes – Art alone
Enduring, stays to us.
The bust outlasts the throne
The coin – Tiberius.

The Plastic Club was immediately flush with members, which indicated not only the spirit and motivation of that founding group to attract other women artists, but the strong need for such an organization and outlet for women artists in and around Philadelphia. Eventually, the Club included more members of middle- to upper-class status, and who were able to afford yearly dues and had the freedom and finances to pursue art as a hobby and sometimes a career. The women often came from prominent Philadelphia families and could afford to travel to exotic places at a time when travel was costly and difficult. Many Club members gave lectures on their travels to the “Orient,” to China, or even “Grand Tours” through Europe and the Mediterranean. Receptions were often held at the large homes of wealthy members who lived on Philadelphia’s “Main Line” or on estates in other suburbs. These women do not necessarily represent the average member of the Plastic Club in its early years, but it certainly shows that some of the members were of upper-class society.

⁵ Blanche Dillaye (1851-1931), who studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and in Paris, was one of the earliest women etchers in the United States. She was the head of the art department at the Ogontz School in Philadelphia for 30 years. *Who was Who in American Art 1564-1975*, ed. Peter Hastings Falk (Madison, CT: Sound View press, 1999), 918.

The Club produced Annual Reports containing a letter from the president or secretary, a list of the board members, and a directory of current members. The surviving reports give a long and sometimes detailed history of the club year by year.⁶ During the early years of the Club, several names appear and reappear as elected officials: Blanche Dillaye, Emily and Harriet Sartain,⁷ Alice Barber Stephens,⁸ and Frances Sheafer.⁹ Seven fully-staffed committees included the Admission Committee, Exhibition Committee, Catalogue Committee, Committee for Designs, Sketch Class Committee, House Committee, and Reception Committee. Eventually more committees were added, such as those for Auxiliary Reception, Wednesday Afternoons, Current Events, and the Building Fund, while others were disbanded when deemed unnecessary.

The number of committees speaks to the social aspects of the Club, and the Annual Reports list a great many events, receptions, lectures, and social gatherings in addition to the three to five annual exhibitions. One of the most popular events was the Annual "Rabbit," named after the Welsh Rarebit that was served at the first gathering. This event began as an elaborate feast and performance hosted on the first Saturday of each New Year, but later was held at different times during the year. The themes would

⁶ These reports were printed and bound first annually then biannually until 1936, after which only hand-written notes and some typed letters and informal reports remain. Annual reports have not been issued since 1996.

⁷ Harriet Sartain (b. 1873), the niece of Emily Sartain, was dean at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 2898.

⁸ Alice Barber Stephens (1858-1932), a successful illustrator, studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and started the first life drawing class for women at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 3161.

⁹ Frances Sheafer (d. 1938) a life member of the Plastic Club and a botanical watercolorist, studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 2998.

be fantastical and exotic, ranging from Egyptian pharaohs to Shakespearean plays to Alice in Wonderland (figures A15-A18).

By the third year of the Club's existence, the membership had more than doubled. From the original 57 members, the resident members in 1901 numbered 140 with 13 absent or abroad. Ten years later, the resident membership had reached 260 with 32 absent. The rules for admission were clearly defined; in order to become a member, one must be nominated by one member and endorsed by two other members. An application for membership was posted for at least 10 days before it was considered so that current members could be notified. The prospective member had to submit three examples of her artwork to the Admissions Committee. If accepted, the applicant had to pay her dues before she was admitted as a member. Two classes of membership were originally available: full membership and non-resident membership (for those living over 50 miles of Philadelphia).

Events and exhibitions grew in number and popularity with the acquisition of a permanent Club House in 1909. In 1912, the first awards were given for the members' show, and the "Medals Show," as it became known, proved to be a lasting event, with gold and silver medals given by a juror each year (figure B113).¹⁰ Though membership continued to rise and fall, many of the lectures, receptions, and events such as the "Rabbit" continued on as tradition. During the early part of the century, the Club was also an active social club known for its contributions to society and especially the art community. During World War I, the Club raised money for the families of French

¹⁰ The juror is a professional artist chosen by the Board to award medals at these exhibitions.

artists who were serving in battle. Approximately \$1500 was raised for the Relief Fund between 1915 and 1917, and in 1918 they endowed a bed in the American Military Hospital No. 1 in Paris and continued to help by selling Liberty Bonds at the Camac Street Carnival in 1919.

The Club continued its full schedule of lectures, events, and exhibitions through the 1920s, though the dues were increased in 1926 because of financial hardship (see below). Revenues received from rentals decreased, but the activities of the Club in its own building increased at the same time. The Club celebrated the Sesqui-centennial in 1926 with a Rabbit themed “Old High Street – 1776-1926” and renovated the gallery for a special exhibition including historical images of Philadelphia.

With the Great Depression in the 1930s, the Club’s membership declined as many members could not afford the dues. However, the activity of the Club remained high. Events and exhibitions continued, with Rabbits with such themes as “Animal Crackers,” “Montparnasse – The Night of the Beaux Arts Ball,” and “La Fiesta.” A community sketch class for young boys and girls in the area was created at the expense of the club and proved very successful, although it lasted only a few years. Lunch in the tea room on Wednesdays remained popular, where the Annual Report noted members were “enjoying a very sociable and clubby hour.”¹¹

In the mid-1930s, the Club began Rotary exhibitions, which consisted of members’ work that traveled to different galleries and colleges throughout the year.

¹¹ Edna Haley Winter, Report of House Committee, 1936, Thirty-ninth Annual Report of the Plastic Club of Philadelphia, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 14.

These exhibitions were very successful and continued for about 20 years. In 1945 the president reported “the Rotary has really become our most important event.”¹² When the cost of shipping became too great for the program to be lucrative, it was discontinued in the 1950s.

During World War II, many members donated their time at the “Stage Door Canteen,” the basement bar and dance hall at the Academy of Music, sketching portraits of the soldiers. Few fund-raisers or drives were named in the Annual Reports, but calls to contribute to and support the Plastic Club were clear. Money and supplies for repairs and events were scarce during war years because of rationing, and much of the food used for teas and entertaining was donated by Club members, as were the funds for minor repairs. Fewer events were held during this time, and the House Committee chair, Elizabeth Schatthausser, appealed to members in her 1943 annual letter to “give a little extra time to your Plastic Club as a War Effort; for we must carry on through this difficult period.”¹³ The usual workshops persisted, however, and in 1944-45 the sketch class used models from the Women’s Officer Group, who posed in various military uniforms. In spite of the lack of funds, the Club hired a housekeeper during the middle years of the 1940s for fixed open house days to keep the Club in order and to cook. The fees for the work eventually became so great (a total of \$520.55 in 1947) that the Club was forced to end this service.¹⁴

¹² Rachel Bulley Trump, Annual Report of the President, in 1945, The Annual Reports of the Plastic Club, 1944-1945, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

¹³ Elizabeth Schaffhauser, Annual Report of the House Committee, 1943, The Annual Reports of the Plastic Club, 1942-1943, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

¹⁴ In the 1950s, another maid was hired at a much lower fee for housekeeping once a week, and several other maids succeeded her through the 1990s.

The Plastic Club remained active in its community during the mid-20th century. In 1957, members sent letters and petitions to the city to save Elfreth's Alley and preserve it as a historic site. The Plastic Club building was added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1962 and was a regular stop on historic, architectural, and women's history tours in Philadelphia. In the neighborhood community, flea markets were regularly held each year to help raise funds for the sketch classes. "Clothesline" exhibitions were open shows for non-members as well as members, and the Club held an annual Christmas Arts and Crafts Festival for the neighborhood.

Although the Club had lost a fair number of members during the Depression, the new members still remained steady—about 12-15 a year. However, new membership began to lag in the late 1940s and slowed dramatically in the 1950s through the 1970s. The membership in 1938 amounted to 210, about 197 in 1956, and then 145 in 1964, when new membership totaled only 3 or 4 new members a year. The inefficiency of the Admissions Committee contributed to the drop in new members. Whereas previously the committee had been fully staffed by motivated members, by the 1950s and 1960s, the committee had dwindled to five members who met about three times per year instead of the monthly meetings as originally planned. This discouraged new members who had to wait for long periods of time before they could be considered for membership.¹⁵

¹⁵ Eventually, the role of the Admissions Committee was relegated to the entire Board, so that new members are now considered at each monthly Board meeting (Elizabeth MacDonald, telephone conversation with author, 18 April 2007).

Additionally, the migration from the city to the suburbs in the post-war years was another factor in the loss in membership as well as the declining safety of the neighborhood.¹⁶

The number of exhibitions and events stayed somewhat constant during this period, but in 1976, for the first time, the Annual Rabbit was canceled due to lack of interest. By the mid-1980s, attendance at lectures and arranged events had dwindled to such a small number that letters were written to urge members to be more active. In the early 1990s, it was decided to cancel these activities as it seemed as though home television entertainment was preferred.

However, starting in 1978, the most active members of the Club and its board began to recognize the need for new members and renewed interest. With the loss of the Camera Club as a much-needed tenant, the “Friends of the Plastic Club” group was formed to help raise money to replace the loss of income. While income from the classes and workshops helped sustain the club, additional pledges of \$50 from members were taken to keep the operation afloat. Finally, in 1987, the Club was granted exemption from real estate taxes as a 501(c)3 non-profit.

Their tax-exempt status also makes the Plastic Club eligible to receive grants from many institutions, and during the mid-1990s the option of applying for available grants was discussed. Inquiries were made into several different granting arts institutions, but it was found that not only did the applications demand time and effort, an annual audit was needed to provide their financial status as required by these granting institutions. This

¹⁶ Elizabeth MacDonald, interview by author, Narberth, PA, 28 February 2007; Joan Taubel, telephone conversation with author, 20 March 2007.

proved to be too expensive and time-consuming, and thus grants have not been sought by the Plastic Club.

In order to try to attract new and younger members, the board decided in the 1990s to offer awards of free memberships to two college graduates from local art schools, and this award is still in practice today.¹⁷ The letters from the president in the mid-1980s had stated that the greatest goal was to make the Plastic Club better known in Philadelphia and to increase membership. “There is prestige in belonging to ‘the oldest art organization in the United States for women,’” said then-president Catherine M. Robinson. Clearly, the threat of the Club’s eminent demise was real. The cost of the Wednesday luncheons had consistently been raised over the years to increase the income, and flea markets were still held to bring in additional money.

Finally, in 1991, membership was opened to men artists. As new members were desperately needed, the membership felt there was no longer a need for an all-woman club. Men had often taken part in the workshops and classes, and they had always been a part of the non-member exhibitions. This decision was a turning point in the Club’s outreach initiative, as a larger range of artists could now become involved.¹⁸ It was during the 1990s that membership and activity started to increase, and these new members brought more energy to the Club. Although traditions such as the Wednesday luncheon ended due to lack of enthusiasm for it, the variety and number of workshops

¹⁷ Now two-year memberships are offered for two students each at four major art institutions in Philadelphia: Moore College of Art and Design, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts, and Tyler School of Art at Temple University. This ensures new, young members each year, some of whom decide to continue their membership with the Club after their award expires.

¹⁸ Of course, some members were upset with the change and left the Club, but the majority of the members welcomed the new male members as it increased activity and the dues necessary to keep the Club alive.

increased and they were scheduled at times more convenient for a greater number of people. Previous workshops had been scheduled during the morning of weekdays; when evening and weekend workshops were added, attendance numbers rose dramatically.

As more workshops became available and more artists began to take advantage of them, membership continued to increase. More exhibitions were scheduled and the submissions to open shows increased to the point that size restrictions had to be imposed in order to include all the submissions. The exhibitions were also opened to all media. The Club had begun by awarding medals to winners of its Oils Show once a year, but in the 1940s it had begun to alternate with a Watercolors Show. These biennial members-only medal exhibitions continued into the 1990s, when the submissions were too few to make up a full exhibition. The decision was made to open the medals show to all media, a practice extended to all other exhibitions. This openness has made shows extremely popular and has drawn a wide variety of pieces. Although shows are often themed and will have size restrictions, mixed media attracts experimental artists as well as traditional painters and drawers.

In 1997, the Plastic Club celebrated its centennial anniversary. A special exhibition was planned with many celebratory events, including an anniversary luncheon in the garden hosted by the neighboring restaurant to the south, The Inn Philadelphia. The Plastic Club had negotiated a lease with the restaurant to use the garden for their diners, and in return they provided food and their indoor restaurant space for the Club's party. The Plastic Club put much effort into publicity for this party and their anniversary year, and then-mayor Edward Rendell made an appearance to celebrate with the Club.

The Club has continued to expand programming and has tried to promote more social activity on a regular basis. New types of exhibitions have been proposed, and events such as “Instant Art Shows” have been tested and met with great enthusiasm and approval.¹⁹ The most recent years have seen a growth in activity and membership, which continues to be a promising sign of renewed life in the Plastic Club as long as there are enthusiastic members to keep the spirit of the Club alive.

Building History

The land along what was originally Dean Street between Locust and Spruce Streets was granted to John Savage and Joseph Dugan on March 21, 1822 by Sarah S. McCall, Eliza Gibson, Louisa Gibson, James Gibson and wife Elizabeth B., and John Gibson.²⁰ The land was divided into parcels by Savage and Dugan, and they began to rent the plots with the agreement of possible future ownership to the tenants.

The parcel for what is now 247 South Camac Street was granted on May 18, 1824, by Savage and Dugan to Briton Corlies and Ambrose Cowperthwaite, bricklayers, for \$1.00 and a yearly rent of \$22.50 paid in half yearly payments. In the agreement, if rent was paid for 7 years, the grantees would be able to buy the property for \$375. However, a clause in the lease agreement stipulated that a substantial brick building had to be built on the lot within one year to secure their rent, thus indicating that the lot was

¹⁹ The “Instant Art Show” is a one-day event, where artists paid a \$5 admission to hang their work. It is essentially a party where food was served and many people attended. Artists who sold work received the full selling price, and donations were made for the food, making the event profitable. At the end of the day, unsold pieces were taken down and returned to the artist.

²⁰ Deed Book JH no. 3, p. 249. All original deeds are held in the archives of the Plastic Club.

empty in 1824.²¹ Only a year later, on August 31, 1825, Cowperthwaite bought Corlies's share of the lot for \$750.²²

On January 20, 1831, seven years after the original lease was signed, Cowperthwaite purchased the property for \$375 from Curry William Hillier and wife Frances Papegay Hillier (also named as attorney), who had bought the land deed from Savage and Dugan on March 16, 1827.²³

On January 8, 1833, Cowperthwaite sold the property to John Wiegand and Thomas Snowden, surgical instrument makers, for \$2000.²⁴ Only four years later, Wiegand and Snowden sold the property, again for \$2000, to Nathaniel B. Cooper, a blacksmith.²⁵

On October 24, 1841, Cooper died and left the property to his wife, Hannah, and his three children, William H. Cooper, James B. Cooper, and Martha Cooper. William H. Cooper sold his share on July 12, 1862, to James H. Bryson,²⁶ who then sold his share to Bradbury Bedell on February 20, 1890.²⁷ Bedell died on May 23, 1902, leaving 2/3 of his estate to his wife, Emmeline Reed Bedell, and 1/3 to his mother, Sarah W. Bedell.²⁸ The second son of Nathaniel Cooper, James B. Cooper, sold his interest to Ida Silberman

²¹ Deed Book GWR no. 11, pp. 79-82.

²² Agreement written on the back of the original deed, Deed Book GWR no. 11, pp. 79-82.

²³ Deed Book AW no. 9, p. 58.

²⁴ Deed Book AM no. 32, p. 180.

²⁵ Deed Book SHF no. 8, p. 611.

²⁶ Deed Book ACH no. 22, p. 466.

²⁷ Deed Book GGP no. 591, p. 489.

²⁸ Will Book 241, p. 3.

on November 17, 1896.²⁹ The daughter, Martha Cooper, married Albert H. Sappington and kept her share.

After Hannah Cooper died on February 11, 1908, the remaining owners of the property at 247 S. Camac Street, who were Emmeline Reed Bedell, Sarah W. Bedell, Ida Silberman, and Martha Cooper Sappington, sold the property to E. Milton Dexter, confectioner, on April 16, 1908, for \$3000.³⁰ Dexter then sold the property to the Plastic Club on February 6, 1909, for \$3,950.

The adjacent plot to the south, what is now 249 South Camac Street, was originally granted by John Savage and Joseph Dugan to Michael A. Cline for \$1.00 and a yearly rent of \$24 on November 5, 1829.³¹ Fewer details are known about the ownership of this property, but it is recorded that when Michael Cline died in 1868, the property passed to his wife, who consequently willed the property to her eldest daughter, Hannah Gyger Cline. It seems the sale of the house in 1908 to the Plastic Club was a complicated issue because of the large number of people who claimed title to the property at this time. On December 7, 1908, the property was sold by former Sheriff Wilson H. Brown and Sherriff Joseph Gilfillan to George B. McCracken for \$2500 in the Court of Common Pleas. W. Henry Sutton, assignee of Levi S. Cline, brought a claim to the court against Hannah G. Cline, William F. Ristine, Sarah A. Ristine, Elisabeth A. Messick, Ambrose S. Cline, Eleanor G. Peterson, John Franklin Peterson, Mortgagors and Real Owners, Levi S. Cline, John H. Peterson, George Wilfong, Rebecca Derrick, and George Derrick and

²⁹ Sheriff's Deed Book 160, p. 385.

³⁰ Deed #176346

³¹ Deed Book GWR no. 32, p. 610.

Wilbur S. Risting, Real Owners for the sale of the property. This court order was done in order to clear and organize the deed from the various owners of the property. The court ordered that George B. McCracken was substituted for The Plastic Club as purchaser of the property.³² Thus, when The Plastic Club purchased the property for \$3,500 on January 26, 1909, the title was clear.³³

These two separate houses were typical Philadelphia rowhouses up to the time that The Plastic Club purchased them (figure A8). Although only one photograph is known of these buildings before The Plastic Club moved in, one fire insurance survey from 1890 of 247 S. Camac Street describes how the house was originally configured. Bradbury Bedell bought a fire insurance policy from the Franklin Fire Insurance Company, and the building was surveyed on March 7, 1890.³⁴ The survey described a two and a half story brick house with marble front steps and front cellar doors with marble cheeks and sill. The first floor of the house had yellow pine flooring, while the second floor and attic had floors of white pine. All of the interior walls were plastered. The layout of the floors was typical for a small rowhouse; the first floor had two rooms, a front and back parlor, with a fireplace in each room (figure C1). The second floor also had two rooms reached by a closed stairway along the south wall, and the two rooms of the attic were reached by closed winding stairs. The basement was outfitted with a kitchen, and a shed was attached to the rear of the house. We can assume that 249 S.

³² Deed #197378

³³ Deed #198044

³⁴ Franklin Fire Insurance Co. Survey No. 69508, Franklin Fire Insurance Co. Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (see transcript, Appendix C).

Camac Street was similar in layout and structure, as the buildings were probably built at the same time by John Savage and Joseph Dugan in 1824/25.

When The Plastic Club bought the two houses some 85 years later, many changes were made to combine the two buildings and create a space to support an art club. The most dramatic alteration was the creation of the second floor studio, which necessitated the removal of the party wall *and* the attic floor to create one large, open space. Additionally, the front door and entry to 249 S. Camac Street was replaced with a window to match the original first floor windows (figure B7). Doorways were created within the first floor party walls to connect the two buildings, and an open, winding stair and bathroom was added to the rear of 247 S. Camac Street to connect the basement, first, and second floors.

A contract was drawn up and signed with contractors Feeser & Company and architect William Woodburn Potter³⁵ to provide these alterations, additions, and other details for a fee of \$1,932 on August 9, 1909. The specification documents listed what was to be demolished, altered, and added and in what manner. One specification document and two revisions still exist in the archives of the Plastic Club, though the original drawings that accompanied them have unfortunately been lost.

The specifications naturally dictate that great care be taken with the demolition of certain features in the building, but what is notable are directions to reuse old materials if

³⁵ William Woodburn Potter (1875-1964) studied at Princeton University and the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art. After working with well-known firms in Philadelphia and New York City, he began his own firm, Magaziner and Potter, in 1908 and designed many residences and several banks in the Philadelphia area. Sandra L. Tatman and Roger W. Moss, eds. *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), 618-619.

possible, and the new work to match the existing and be neatly joined. Old hardware was to be reused and new hardware furnished only where required. All new windows and their shutters were built to match the old, and new doors should also match the old. Original doors were reused and reset where needed. This preference for the reuse of original materials might have arisen from financial necessity, but it also speaks to the Club's desire for the buildings to retain their original character and details. This was, after all, the height of the Colonial Revival period in the United States.

The basement was floored with concrete and painted a deep red color, and the lath and plaster of the basement ceilings were removed to expose the beams. The rear sheds and porches were removed, and the backyard was paved with bricks "in a neat manner." The original stairways were to be removed and the old stairwells framed over (figures B35 and B46), and a new stairway addition on the rear of 247 was to be constructed with the wood specified as pine or oak risers and treads and poplar balusters. All new floors were to be No. 1 Yellow Pine to match the original flooring of the first floor in the house.

A new roof was constructed over the second floor Exhibition room (now the studio) with new rafters and joists and sheathed with 1 in. wood boards. The roof was then to be covered in tin painted with one coat on the underside and two coats on the outside with red lead paint. A new large skylight facing north was installed with wire glass set in a galvanized iron frame with certain sections made to pivot. The side walls of the Exhibition room were to have wood wainscoting constructed with matching shutters on the windows, and all the washboards (*i.e.*, baseboards) on the interior walls were to be repaired and added where necessary.

Upgrading the plumbing in the Club House was an important task, and the specifications were quite detailed. Two bathrooms were added: one brick addition at the rear of the new stairway and one in the basement underneath the stairway. All the fixtures for two bathrooms and the kitchen sink were manufactured by Haines, Jones & Cadbury Company. The building was also connected to the water and sewer lines at this time, and specifications were drawn for how this connection was to be made. A gas water boiler was connected to the water supply to provide hot water to the sinks in the building. Gas piping was also installed for the water boiler and the cooking range (type specified and priced at \$24.50) in the kitchen.

For the interior finishing, all of the old wall and ceiling papers were removed, the walls repaired, and new walls received “the best three coat work.” The specifications list how the plasterer should go about plastering the walls and which areas needed plastering. There are no specifications for either the papering or painting of these walls, but all the interior woodwork, except for the floors, was to receive four coats of oil paint. The stair and balcony handrail was to be stained mahogany and varnished, and the risers and treads of the stairs were to be varnished only. The exterior wood and metalwork was to receive three coats of oil paint in addition to the primer, although the yard fence was not to be painted. For all of the paint, the colors were to be approved by the architect and so no mention of specific colors was given in the documents.³⁶

Lastly, a dumb waiter was installed between the kitchen to the committee room and furnished with a car with two shelves (figures B45 and B74).

³⁶ Paint analysis might be used to determine original (or early) colors.

It is unfortunate that the drawings and plans do not survive, because much of what was changed in the buildings was described in these drawings. Some larger changes that are obvious but were not specified in the documents were made, such as the removal of the front door from 249 S. Camac St. and the removal of interior walls and addition of doorways in the first floor. The rear windows of 247 S. Camac St. may have been reconfigured to accommodate the addition of the stairwell and bathroom. The rear windows of the basement and first floor were doubled in width, and no rear window is apparent on the second floor (figure B14). It is difficult to see if this window had been filled in and if the lower two were truly widened, but it would be surprising if the rear of this house was not identical to its neighbor.

Another addition not documented in the specifications was the insertion of radiators in each room. These have since been removed, but they appear in photographs and are described as being independent units hooked up to gas lines.³⁷ Water had to be poured into each radiator, and when a pilot light was ignited, the water would be converted to steam. Asbestos boards were placed behind the radiators to protect the walls, but some areas show damage from the intense heat (figure B68). These heaters were eventually replaced with modern gas-burning space heaters.

History of the Club House

The Club began in a room that was rented at 10 South 18th Street, and during that first year, a one dollar note was found in an exhibition catalogue. This dollar was used to start a Building Fund that would eventually enable the Club to purchase its own Club

³⁷ Elizabeth MacDonald, interview by author, Narberth, PA, 28 February 2007.

House. By 1905, the Club had moved again into another room at 43 South 18th Street, but the members still aspired to own a house of their own. The Building Fund at this time totaled \$1,659.29, with the help of fund-raising such as the sale of postcards designed by club members (figures A1-A7). Four years later, with the assistance of other local Clubs in Philadelphia, the Plastic Club had found a new home.

We have at last succeeded in taking title to two houses in a typical club neighborhood, in the central part of our city. We will, if it goes well, transform these two houses into a club house, with a suitable gallery, well lighted for exhibition purposes, on the second floor; committee rooms, etc., on the first floor, and a grill room and kitchen in the basement. We expect to hold our Fall Meeting in our own house.³⁸

On January 22, 1909, the Plastic Club paid \$3,500 to George B. McCracken for 249 S. Camac Street, and a few weeks later, on February 9, 247 S. Camac Street was bought from E. Milton Dexter for \$3,950. These two adjoining row homes were on what was known as “the Little Street of Clubs,” and was a perfect location for the Club as it was just a few doors down from the Sketch Club, the men’s art club. It was a smaller location than the Plastic Club Board had originally desired. “A Club House on a good thoroughfare with more space than we need, would appear to me more desirable, and more readily financed because of the rental value of that extra space, than would a smaller house on a side street at a less cost, fitted only for the limited needs of our Club,” according to Emma Cooper, the Club president in 1903.³⁹ However, the affordability of

³⁸ Sara Patterson Snowden Mitchell, Annual Report, May 1909, Eleventh Annual Report of the Plastic Club of Philadelphia, 1908-1909, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

³⁹ Emma Lampert Cooper, Annual Report, Seventh Annual Report of the Plastic Club of Philadelphia, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

the Camac Street properties seems to have allowed the purchase of two and their combination.

A task force named “the Salamanders” was organized to oversee the transformation of these two houses into the Club House, to raise money, and to orchestrate the move into their new home. Though the Club was usually closed for the hot summer months, the Salamanders stayed in Philadelphia over the summer and worked to have the new Club House open for the first meeting in the fall. As with almost all construction projects, the work on the house took longer than planned, and the first meeting scheduled for October was canceled. The formal opening of the house took place on November 17, 1909, and it was celebrated with an exhibition and reception (figures A9-A14).

The purchase of the houses and the fees paid to the contractor, architect, decorator (a Miss Abel), and other workers were much higher than the amount of money in the Building Fund. Generous loans and donations from members helped to cover these costs and the mortgages for the first few years until the debts were paid off. The building was often rented for events to bring in additional income, and fund-raising events and parties were hosted by members for the same goal.

In 1914 a new Advisory Committee on Decoration was formed to approve the decoration of the new house as improvements and furnishing purchases were made. A brick wall around the rear garden was constructed, as was “making...a habitable and delightful room out of a dark corner of the cellar, where all the old doors were used with

fine effect to panel the wall and make closets and lockers.”⁴⁰ This southwest room of the basement was transformed into the “Blue Tea Room” where, for ten cents, “members may have tea and crackers at any time when they are not being served by the Club.”⁴¹ This tradition of selling tea and crackers would last for many years and assist the Club’s mortgage payments.

In 1914 it was reported that the kitchen was cleaned and whitewashed, the basement floor was red washed, the front of the house was cleaned, and the first floor was painted and papered. The timing of this maintenance is surprising since the Plastic Club had not been in the building five years. However, many mentions of the need to update and repair the Club House were made at this time, and by 1915 the “Grill Room,” or main basement dining area, had been repainted and redecorated, the Board Room had been redecorated, its furniture recovered, and the adjoining lounge room had also been redone.

Modernization of the building also occurred during the late 1910s, as electrical wiring was installed by 1917, and gas radiators and a new “heating plant” were installed in 1920. The gallery walls were recovered with burlap, and the new electric lighting was a large improvement for visibility in dark corners for both the artists and those viewing the exhibitions.

In 1924, however, the president of the Plastic Club, Georgine Shillard-Smith, wrote in the 27th Annual Report that the necessity to rent the Club House to tenants had

⁴⁰ Harriet Sartain, President’s Report for Year Ending May 6, 1914, Seventeenth Annual Report of the Plastic Club of Philadelphia, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

cost the members their privacy, as the building was “rented so frequently that members cannot always be admitted to see pictures that are exhibited.” The dues were low but the new member admission was very low – only nine new members in the past two years.

A proposal was brought before the board to expand the Club House by building a larger gallery as a memorial to Sara Patterson Snowden Mitchell,⁴² an early member and former president of the Plastic Club, who had died the previous year. The blueprints for this expansion, designed and proposed by Design Committee chair Susette S. Keast, still survive and show a large gallery on the first floor and additional rooms in the basement. This proposal was twice brought to a vote it and rejected on the grounds that it was too expensive. Clearly this caused disappointment in some of the members, but the next Annual Report—1926—exhibited greater optimism. The board had voted to double the dues for both active (now \$10) and absent members (now \$2), and apparently a more vigorous campaign for attracting new members had been successful: 50 new members had been admitted in the previous two years. The increase in revenue lowered the need to rent the building as frequently, thus giving the members a greater sense of ownership of the Club House.

The following years brought another wave of remodeling in the building. As it could not be expanded, an aggressive attempt to make the Club House more comfortable was made. The first floor wallpaper was replaced, damaged areas were replastered, and woodwork was repainted. The gallery floor was oiled and stained, and the burlap on the

⁴² Sara Patterson Snowden Mitchell (dates unknown) studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and in Paris. A well-known Philadelphia painter, she was the president of the Plastic Club from 1903-1915. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 2300.

walls was replaced with “monks’ cloth”—a heavy, burlap-like material—which had just recently been installed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and was also used at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.⁴³

The outdoor garden area was improved with new flowering bulbs, the brick walls repaired, and new steps built from the garden to the basement. In 1925, the Fire Department required the installation of a fire escape, which remains today at the back of the building. The well in the garden was filled in by 1930 as mandated by the city. The garden apparently fluctuated between neglect and renewal; however, in 1929 a Memorial Garden Committee was formed to be responsible for its upkeep.

Around 1930 a piano was bought by the club, a Kranick-Bach Grand, that was used for entertaining and special events. This seems to have been the last big indulgence for the Club before the Great Depression. During the early 1930s, only necessary repairs were made to the house such as a new roof and further electrical upgrades, but the finances for the club were tight during the following years. Several thefts occurred; one on November 20, 1931, of the original Fire Association House Marker, the ghost of which can still be seen on the front façade (figure B10). This was replaced with a replica donated a few years later, which has since disappeared as well.

Though the rentals continued to decline and more resignations were received during the later years of the Depression, the Club managed to maintain the Club House. The gallery floor was refinished and the walls recovered, other walls were repainted,

⁴³ Susette S. Keast, Report of Decorating Committee, Thirty-first Annual Report of the Plastic Club of Philadelphia, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 19.

furniture recovered, and windows re-curtained. In 1940, the kitchen was fully renovated. A new sink was installed, the range and water heater were moved into the corner where they stand today, and the storage cabinets were rebuilt using the original materials.

In 1942, the first complete inventory of the Club's possessions was made. All the items of furniture, kitchenware, and fixtures in the house were recorded. Values were not assigned to these goods, but the location of each item was carefully documented in a notebook (figure A20-A22). During this time, there was a gift of a vacuum cleaner, and the gallery lighting was updated along with laying linoleum on the gallery floor. These and a few other minor repairs were all that the Club could afford during wartime, but several donations of money and time helped to maintain the building. In 1944 the House Committee made a thorough cleaning of the house, disposing "of all unnecessary fixtures – even to the pigeons [*sic*] who had been naming our attic their home."⁴⁴

During 1948-49, another renovation of Club House was undertaken. The walls, woodwork, and floors were all repainted and refinished, and all of the furniture in the basement was refinished. It was also noted that during this year the first floor was used as a little gallery for shows by one or two members for the first time.

By 1951 a man named John Caruso was hired to do all the maintenance and repairs for the Club House, and he remained for more than 30 years. A collection of his bills documents what happened within the Club House during this period. In 1954 many improvements were made including roof repairs, new paint and lighting in the gallery,

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Schaffhauser, The Bi-Ennial Report of the House Committee, 1944, The Bi-Ennial Reports of the Plastic Club for the Years 1942-1944, Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

and the erection of a party fence between the Plastic Club's garden and the rear of the neighboring restaurant to the south, which was at that time Le Coin D'Or.

On June 21, 1957 the Building Fund account was closed, and the money was deposited into the Plastic Club general account. No explanation was found, and it is assumed that a separate account was no longer necessary for the building costs due to a low number or the need in the main budget for extra funds.

In 1958 the walls of the gallery were replastered, and the first floor walls and floor were repainted. In 1962 pegboard was installed in the gallery, which is still in use today. Though this is admittedly not the most aesthetic surface for the walls, it simplifies the process of hanging an exhibition considerably. The pegboard was installed directly over the monks' cloth on the walls, which can still be seen, although painted over many times.

Also in 1962, 247 S. Camac Street was placed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, a local designation which was assigned to the building because of its age and its preserved historic qualities, as well as for the historic significance of the Club. The building was included in many historic architectural tours and women's history tours of Philadelphia that were begun at about this time, and was often mentioned in pamphlets and tourist guides. In 1972, the Club was assigned a plaque for the façade of the building from the Historical Commission of Philadelphia proclaiming its status on the Philadelphia Register. It was granted as an honor to the Club because of its well-kept appearance, as these plaques are not allowed on buildings that show signs of disrepair.

Several more repairs were made in the following years, such as fixing leaks in the roof and plumbing, and in 1975 another renovation of the first floor took place. The floors and walls were repaired and repainted, and the front façade of the building was also painted. The exterior was repainted again in 1984, and the rear exit doors were reinforced with metal. Two years earlier, after two robberies during the summer of 1982, the building was secured with bars on the basement and first floor windows. The basement windows were blocked off completely, as the shutters were closed and the bars installed over them. The window in the basement bathroom was filled in with concrete, as it led to rainwater penetration.

In 1986, two new Vanguard space-heaters were installed in the place of the older radiators in the kitchen and in the first floor main room. These units were connected to the gas pipes and burn the gas to create heat. Eventually, all of the old radiators were either removed or replaced with these units. However, in the spring of 2007, a new forced air system was installed with ducts in the studio and the first floor main rooms, and so inefficient space-heaters could be used less frequently.

In 1986-87, the gallery was updated with the addition of a partition on the western wall to create a closet in which to store chairs and easels. However, in 1987 a fire destroyed the neighboring restaurant to the south, then Deux Cheminées, and damaged the Plastic Club. The interior of the building had been filled with smoke, a portion of the roof was damaged, all the windows in the gallery required repairs, and the front door, garden gate, and party fence were all destroyed. The interior had to be washed, the gallery repainted, and a new linoleum floor installed on the second floor. Though the

building insurance paid for all of the repairs, the premium consequently rose. Fire safety requirements were made stricter by the insurance company as well, including regular testing of fire extinguishers, updated electrical wiring, and the installation of fire exit signs.

The sewer in the front of the building was often in need of cleaning and re-opening, and by the late 1980s the sewer had overflowed and flooded the basement so many times that major repairs were needed. Previous annual reports and receipts indicate that blocked drainage of rainwater in the sewer lines had been a constant problem in the basement, and so the decision was made to repair the water and sewer lines in 1988. The basement floor was excavated, and new piping was laid along the entire length of the building to the curb of Camac Street, and the gas pipe was also repaired. The floor was then re-laid with concrete, and the flood-damaged walls were repaired. The window wells in the front of the house were filled in, and the basement wall was built up to the pavement level. Smaller windows were then installed to fill the space between the original window head and the pavement level. The Club also took this opportunity to remove the bricks in the front sidewalk, level the area, pour concrete and relay the bricks. This has helped to prevent the rainwater runoff from entering the front of the basement through the window wells, and the new sewer line provides better drainage.

In the 1990s, the Annual Reports were no longer published. Board meeting minutes and newsletters record the events of the Club from then to the present, but the information gathered is not as coherent as it was before. Small changes to the building were noted during this decade, such as the theft of the original brass doorbell pull in

1990, the woodwork on the façade scraped was and repainted, and work was done on the roof. Leaks in both the main roof and in the small roof above the rear restroom extension were reported often, and the roof over the restroom was repaired in 1997 for \$2,000. Earlier repairs on the main roof had been done to correct leaking, but a new roof at this time was clearly needed, as it was reported that in the repairs, many layers of previous roofing materials and repairs were found. Estimates were sought for a new, historically sensitive roof (to be approved by the Philadelphia Historical Commission), but they proved to be more expensive than the budget allowed. Finally, in 2005, a new asphalt shingle roof was installed that, while not original, met with the guidelines set by the Historical Commission.

About 2003, the façade was repainted to match an earlier color that was found in the layered paint chips on the windows and shutters, and an early photo was found to validate this color scheme. The trim at that time was a dark green color, but the Club decided to restore it to a mustard-yellow color with a slightly darker shade for detailing. It was during this process of repainting that the second floor shutters were removed for repairs, and it was decided to reopen these second floor windows that had been walled off from the interior in 1909. Some damage was found here from the neighboring fire in 1987, as well as the one rear window that was also reopened in the studio, but the windows were cleaned and the shutters left open rather than closed as they had previously been.

Because of the partition that created a closet along this front wall in the studio, reopening these windows did not eliminate wall space on which to hang artwork for

exhibitions. Additionally, it let in extra light that was indirect and would not disrupt the workshops by cast shadows on a model or still-life. The rear window, however, was not permanently opened precisely because the wall space was necessary for exhibitions, so a small door in the wall was made, on hinges, so that the window might be opened when desired (figure B91).

The latest alteration to the building has been the installation of a forced-air heating and cooling unit in order to make the studio more comfortable and usable during the summer and winter. The gas-burning space-heaters, which replaced the steam radiators, were inefficient and took time to heat the large studio space. The restricted space inside of the building, as well as the desire to alter it as little as possible, demanded a creative method of installation for such a large system. The Club was able to budget enough money to install a small cooling unit on the roof above the rear restroom and a heating unit in the north corner of the partitioned closet in the studio. Pipes were run from the cooling unit, along the roof, into the main furnace through the ceiling. A large, cylindrical duct was placed above this closet, along the west side of the room, with two vents to heat or cool the room (figure B95-B97). Two vents were also opened into the ceiling of the first floor in the main room and in the Board Room to heat and cool these rooms as well (figure B55, B69). The space-heaters were left in place to use if necessary in the first floor and basement.

Overall, the Plastic Club has not received any major changes since its conversion in 1909. Since then, the historic fabric of the building has been fairly well-maintained and preserved. Though some necessary changes have been made to enhance the function

of the building as required for the Plastic Club, such as the installation of the pegboard and the linoleum floor in the studio, the building and all its furnishings has retained the historic character from both its original construction and its design for use as an art club. This historic building will need continued careful maintenance, and future demands will invariably necessitate further changes. The needs of the building, and aspects that should be preserved, are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Plastic Club has been in operation for just over 100 years. It does not consider itself a historic site, although it recognizes its history and its historic building are valuable assets. As discussed below, the guidelines set forth by the Burra Charter and in values-based preservation planning provide a holistic and forward-looking approach to preservation management. The basic principles are flexible enough to be applied to a variety of heritage places, and they provide a basis for the assessment of significance on many levels. This is why the values-based approach is appropriate for a site such as the Plastic Club, which is still occupied and used for its historic purpose.

Understanding and assessing the values associated with the Plastic Club are critical to the formation of a statement of significance, which is a crucial step in preservation planning. Most of the literature about preserving heritage in the context of site management focuses more on interpreted historic sites; however, the different approaches in the following texts are helpful in assessing the values of a site such as the Plastic Club.

The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, better known as the Burra Charter, is the most recent model for preservation and conservation planning that uses a values-based approach.⁴⁵ Though values have been discussed earlier in the preservation planning field (such as in the Venice Charter of 1964), the Burra Charter outlines the process, definitions, and principles that are meant to set a standard of practice for managing heritage sites based on the analysis of site values.

⁴⁵ Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999.

Under the Burra Charter, the site is first identified with all its various associations, and research is done to gather information, data, and records. The cultural significance is then assessed, and a statement of significance, with inherent obligations, is formulated. Other factors affecting the future of the site must be considered, such as the management's needs and resources, external factors, and physical conditions. From the evaluation of all of these factors, a management plan is developed with policies and strategies for implementation.

The guiding principles outlined in the Burra Charter are the use of a careful approach, understanding the context and setting, and identification of all of the values and cultural significance of a site. One of the main points made is that conservation “requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible,” resulting in the least amount of intervention.⁴⁶ This ensures that the site will retain its integrity while improving its preservation.

Different aspects of the site, beside the fabric and contents, must be preserved or considered. These include the use, setting, location, related places and objects, participation (various stakeholders), and the co-existence of cultural values. These are all part of the statement of significance that guides the development of policy and a management plan.

Important aspects of change and intervention that might be necessary are outlined and defined, including maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation, and new work. In all of these approaches, it is understood that there should be minimal

⁴⁶ Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999, Article 3.

change to the fabric and little to no impact on the cultural significance. The conservation of the significant use and the retention of associations and meanings are also given importance and are recommended as aids for interpretation.

As reversibility is an essential principle for responsible management, recording and documentation are imperative to making changes to historic places. Specifically, any disturbance or removal of fabric should be thoroughly documented, and responsibility for changes and management decisions should be clearly assigned. This helps to create sustainability and provide information for future generations. The final step outlined in the flowchart created for the Burra Charter is the review of the management policies that have been set in place, reflecting the need for revisions as the place and its needs change.

In their book *Looking After Heritage Places: the Basics of Heritage Planning for Managers, Landowners and Administrators*, Michael Pearson and Sharon Sullivan focus on using a values-based approach to preservation in Australia.⁴⁷ Although much of their emphasis is on aboriginal sites, their discussion and interpretation of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999, is pertinent to the method of preservation and site management. The sections that are most applicable to studying the preservation planning for the Plastic Club detail values assessment and the statement of significance.⁴⁸

Pearson and Sullivan describe the significance of a site as one of three main components to a conservation plan (a statement of significance, a conservation policy,

⁴⁷ Michael Pearson and Sharon Sullivan. *Looking After Heritage Places: the Basics of Heritage Planning for Managers, Landowners and Administrators*. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, Chapter 4: 126-186.

and a plan for implementation).⁴⁹ It is the product of all the research and the assessment of the cultural values of the site, and these values (according to the Burra Charter) can be aesthetic, architectural, historic, scientific, and social, though not all values are necessarily present at every site. These values are relative and complex, and they are often determined solely through comparisons with other sites. An aspect of the historic value is the “significance of function and use,” which is of particular importance to the Plastic Club. “The continuing traditional function or use of the place” is an aspect of heritage sites that Pearson and Sullivan say is often neglected. If this continuing function is a component of a site, “it must be clearly stated in the statement of significance, as it will have major implications when the manager comes to consider the development of management policy for the site.”⁵⁰

Social value can be a combination and/or a result of many other areas of significance. The Burra Charter defines social value as having the qualities that contribute to “spiritual, political, national, or other cultural sentiment to a majority or minority group.”⁵¹ Crucially, Pearson and Sullivan point out that “the significance of places does depend ultimately on *the value society places on them*” (emphasis mine).⁵² The local as well as the broader community will place their own values upon the site, but when in constant use, the site may be taken for granted. Too often, the community feels the need to express its appreciation only when the site is threatened, and thus the assessment of the social value can be a complex and difficult process. This comes into

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 130.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 147.

⁵¹ M. Walker and P. Marquis-Kyle. *The Illustrated Burra Charter: Good Practices for Heritage Places*. (Australia ICOMOS, Inc., 2004), 73.

⁵² Pearson and Sullivan, *Looking After Heritage Places*, 154.

play with the Plastic Club because its value as a private club for artists competes with its value as an historic institution and building.

Implementing the assessment of significance is also outlined by Pearson and Sullivan according to the guidelines set by the Burra Charter. The first step is the collection of information, documentation, and research of the particular site. Next, the site must be understood in its context by researching regional history and investigating comparable examples in order to gain some perspective on the social values of the site. The results of this research can then be analyzed and synthesized, ultimately leading to a statement of significance. This statement, “a summation of the cultural significance of the place,” does not necessarily take into account its management needs, however.⁵³ Therefore, the final step is the development of management policy, which should be informed by the cultural significance.

Pearson and Sullivan devote an entire chapter to the creation and development of a management plan for heritage sites,⁵⁴ which includes preservation objectives as well as “the range of options available for each heritage place in accordance with its assessed significance.”⁵⁵ Whereas the assessment of significance does not take management into account, one must consider the preservation-related issues when making decisions. The cultural values of a site must be balanced with the other needs of society, such as land use, laws, finance, and social concerns, and from this balance the management policies should be created.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, Chapter 5: 187-219.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 187.

The management plan, as outlined by Pearson and Sullivan, should be produced in a sequence that is slightly different from what the Burra Charter outlines. It includes a statement of legal responsibility, philosophy, and the general policy that will be the groundwork for the plan itself. Then, a written description of the site with its assessed values and statement of significance should be established. Again, it is stressed that this is the most important step in the creation of the management plan, as the statement of significance will determine the preservation needs. Heritage values must also be discussed alongside the other values of the site, such as environmental factors, land-use, and economic issues. The identification of other requirements, opportunities, and constraints of the management of the site is also necessary. This involves laws and legislation that dictate what may or may not be done with the site, such as zoning and the protection of heritage. Financial constraints, physical or environmental constraints, and appropriate use must be considered here with the preservation values. Finally, with all of this information and with the comparative information from similar sites, the conservation and management policies can be created.

Pearson and Sullivan emphasize that these plans and policies cannot be produced from a formula or recipe, because each site is unique and requires specific attention. The policies should be planned and implemented with detailed suggestions and actions that are specific to the site. Though the method of preparing these policies might be repeated, the issues, values, and constraints for each site are specific unto itself, and a professional should be involved to assist in the formation of a conservation and management plan.

These points are further illustrated in the discussion on implementing these plans. Regarding the physical conservation of sites, preservationists have tended towards the absolute conservation of the material, often freezing a building or structure in time and/or reconstructing it to its previous period of significance (as emphasized by the Burra Charter).⁵⁶ However, depending on the character of the values of the site, the opposite approach may be necessary, such as a site where change and adaptation is the tradition. Pearson and Sullivan give the example of sites in China where monuments are traditionally rebuilt, preserving the spirit but not the fabric.⁵⁷ Thus, the values-based method of preservation planning should consider these traditions surrounding historical places, where “western” approaches for material conservation may not be appropriate. This idea is essential to the management of the Plastic Club, since the active use of the site demands that certain changes be made to meet the needs of the organization. The “spirit” of the Club is just as important as its fabric, and so both should be considered in conjunction with one another.

Pearson and Sullivan distill the Burra Charter’s possible conservation actions into five different categories: maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, and adaptation. The Burra Charter defines adaptation as “acceptable where the conservation of the place cannot otherwise be achieved and where the adaptation does not substantially detract from its cultural significance.”⁵⁸ Further, the charter states that any fabric removed in the adaptation should be kept in case it should be reinstated in the future. The Plastic Club has, so far, maintained and adapted its building at 247 S. Camac Street for

⁵⁶ Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999, Article 3.

⁵⁷ Pearson and Sullivan, *Looking After Heritage Places*, 225.

⁵⁸ Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999, Article 20.

the use of the members. In this case, the adaptation has added to the cultural significance of the site, as will be discussed later. Future changes to the building, such as the addition of an HVAC system, the updating of plumbing or electrical systems, or the addition of amenities to the building, will require careful planning to preserve the significance of the site.

Though Pearson and Sullivan have produced one of the most clear and detailed books on preservation and site management using the Burra Charter and the values-based approach, other articles have discussed various aspects of this method. The Getty Conservation Institute has published several proceedings including articles on this values-based method of preservation planning. *Management Planning for Archaeological Sites* is one such publication, and while the articles are based on planning for archaeological sites, they illustrate how this flexible method can be applied to a variety of heritage sites, particularly one such as the Plastic Club.

For example, a chapter entitled “Heritage Values and Challenges of Conservation Planning”⁵⁹ describes the reasons for using a values-based method and how to incorporate it into conservation. This article specifically addresses the question of why values should be used into the planning process and how to incorporate them. The authors argue that three elements must be considered crucial to balanced preservation planning: materials, management, and significance. Whereas the field of preservation/conservation has traditionally focused on materials, a broader context is

⁵⁹ Randall Mason and Erica Avrami, “Heritage Values and Challenges of Conservation Planning,” in *Management Planning for Archaeological Sites*, eds. Jeanne Marie Teutonico and Gaetano Palumbo (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 13-26.

needed to provide a better plan for a site and its sustainability. Preservation planning is now seen as a political and social process, not only focused on saving the historic fabric.

Mason and Avrami give a typological list of values that might be applied to the site: historical and artistic, social or civic, spiritual or religious, symbolic or identity, research, natural, and economic. This list follows closely with what has been suggested in the Burra Charter. Values are defined as the “qualities of the places” that are often “subjective, context-bound, changeable, and malleable.”⁶⁰ Thus, determining values can depend greatly on *who* is assessing the site, and so the participation and inclusion of multiple stakeholders can make a less-biased list of values.

In general, the goal is to preserve the site and its values for as long as possible, taking into account as many stakeholders as possible. The values of different stakeholders will invariably differ and conflict at times, and so this framework may help resolve those differences. Including all stakeholders and all points of view may help to reduce, or at least to understand, the conflicts.

Ultimately, a sustainable plan is the most beneficial model for a heritage site, and this is certainly necessary for an active site such as the Plastic Club. Planning that takes into account the needs of future generations is smart planning, and holistic planning that integrates the site with its surrounding culture will help to ensure the future use and integration of the site in the community. Of course, generating economic benefits will aid in the sustainability of the site as well as the strategic use of the financial, human, and environmental resources.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 15-16.

An essay by Martha Demas, in the same CGI volume, discusses the planning process of a values-based approach.⁶¹ She believes that the *process* of planning is vital to understanding the site and providing for its future. Too often the solution is first conceived, and then the plan is created to achieve that solution. Demas emphasizes that the process should be the reverse, for the process is critical for evaluating the values of the site, making decisions along the way, setting priorities, and thinking holistically to create a sustainable plan.

The planning process outlined here follows closely what was discussed by Pearson and Sullivan and is ultimately the same model. The process begins with the identification and description of the site and its stakeholders. Then, the assessment and analysis of the site should include its values and cultural significance, its physical condition, and context for the management. These three areas are the same as those described by Mason and Avrami as being the three major components to preservation planning. The last step involves making the decisions that determine the policies and objectives. Strategies for reaching these objectives are defined, and a final plan is compiled. Like Pearson and Sullivan, Demas describes each step, warns the reader about pitfalls, and encourages him to consider a variety of viewpoints. Demas also underscores the fact that this method is not a universal formula for making the right plan; each site is different, and this values-based approach is only as good as what the users bring to it.

⁶¹ Martha Demas, "Planning for Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites: A Values-Based Approach," in *Management Planning for Archaeological Sites*, eds. Jeanne Marie Teutonico and Gaetano Palumbo (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 27-54.

Once a plan has been compiled and written, the process is not over. Following up and reviewing the effectiveness of the strategies and plans are necessary to their success. Revisions will be necessary as the site evolves over time. The values, stakeholders, and the social, political, and economic climate of the site will change, and for sustainability the plans must change with them.

An important aspect of sustainability is the economic factor. As the Plastic Club is a non-profit organization, its goal is to generate enough money to keep the organization active and provide enough funds to pay for maintenance of the building as well as to offer current and new programs to the community. An article by David Throsby discusses the economic factors in the sustainability of heritage conservation.⁶² From the perspective of an economist and a preservationist, he agrees with the holistic approach that an assessment of values and cultural significance evaluation brings. He also agrees that it is difficult to evaluate cultural sites within a market context. However, cultural value is clearly related to economic value in that more people will be willing to pay for something that has greater cultural significance.

Throsby uses similar principles as Mason and Avrami to illustrate sustainability: assessment of material and nonmaterial benefits, intergenerational and intragenerational equity, a precautionary approach, and a diverse and holistic approach. Though the world today seems to be increasingly dependent on the marketplace and economics, the principles of sustainability and the idea of “cultural capital” can enhance preservation

⁶² David Throsby, “Sustainability in the Conservation of the Built Environment: An Economist’s Perspective,” in *Managing Change: Sustainable Approaches to the Conservation of the Built Environment*, eds. Jeanne Marie Teutonico and Frank Matero (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2003), 3-10.

planning in respect to economic values.⁶³ Though the Plastic Club, specifically, does not rely on its cultural capital to make money, its historic significance can add to its character and reputation in the community and act as an added point of interest to draw more members and interest from local artists. The organization can certainly take advantage of its cultural capital to reach their goals and help with creating a sustainable and active site.⁶⁴

Another reference containing detailed guidance for managing historic sites is the United Kingdom-based *Manual of Heritage Management*.⁶⁵ Rather than using values-based planning, the authors of this book discuss the adoption of corporate planning models for heritage sites. This book was written at a time when tourism of historic sites and cultural heritage was on the rise, and it appeared that management skills and planning strategies were necessary for the success of these sites.⁶⁶ Although previously heritage sites were considered separate from the corporate world, this book argues “business management is increasingly relevant to all responsible for heritage resources.”⁶⁷ The format of corporate plans, the planning process, the managing strategies and financial considerations are all applied to historic sites, and case-studies are presented to illustrate the applications.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 7-9.

⁶⁴ The financial standing of the Plastic Club is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ Richard Harrison, ed. *Manual of Heritage Management* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., 1994).

⁶⁶ Victor Middleton, “Vision, strategy and corporate planning: an overview,” in *Manual of Heritage Management*, ed. Richard Harrison, (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., 1994), 3-11.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 4.

Linkages and networks discussed by Jonathan Griffin in this same book could be valuable points to consider for the Plastic Club.⁶⁸ Though applied specifically to heritage sites competing for visitors, Griffin presents methods for cutting costs by sharing knowledge, technology, and visitors with other groups through consortia. Using cross-promotion, sites and organizations can assist one other and share marketing research, advisory services, and financial systems to increase management efficiency. The Plastic Club could perhaps bond more closely with similar art organizations, such as the Sketch Club or the Fleisher Art Memorial, as it already has with groups like the Photographic Society of Philadelphia and the Color Print Society.

John Bold's chapter "Defining and recording the resource: the built environment" addresses conservation techniques, recording and documentation, and legislation.⁶⁹ Bold notes that "the recording of buildings is a political act, conditioned by perceptions of historical significance and informed by the making of choices."⁷⁰ For this thesis, the constraints of the research time, methods, and goals have determined what was recorded and prioritized.

Additionally, Bold argues that documentation should be accessible to the public. The primary motive for recording and documenting a site is to provide information for future users. This thesis is only a summary record of the Plastic Club, but it is the first comprehensive attempt to document the history and current state of the building,

⁶⁸ Jonathan Griffin, "Strategic linkages and networks," in *Manual of Heritage Management*, ed. Richard Harrison, (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., 1994), 43-53.

⁶⁹ John Bold, "Defining and recording the resource: the built environment," in *Manual of Heritage Management*, ed. Richard Harrison, (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., 1994), 79-84.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* 79.

organization, and cultural environment. It is hoped that this thesis will provide future researchers with a starting place for a more thorough and detailed documentation.⁷¹

The literature discussed above has provided a basis for a study of site management for the Plastic Club using two different approaches: the values-based approach and the corporate model approach. Though many aspects of the corporate model approach could be adopted for the use of the Plastic Club, such as the ideas behind documentation and recording, the structuring of management plans along the lines of business models is more appropriate for a “typical” heritage site that relies on visitorship and connections with other sites. The Plastic Club is not viewed as an historic site that represents and interprets its history; rather, it is still a functioning entity that has been in continuous operation for over a century. The needs of the Plastic Club differ from those of a standard historic site, and in this case the corporate model cannot address all those needs.

Much of the focus in the literature is on interpretation, which is not of primary importance for the Plastic Club, but what the Club can use is a new perspective on how to plan for its future by preserving its most important physical asset: the Club House and its furnishings. The values-based approach is overall more suitable for the Plastic Club in that, with structured methods and ideas outlined by the Burra Charter, the planning

⁷¹ The various types and methods of recording and documentation are discussed further in this chapter, covering obligations for recording, thematic surveys, data standards, and the difference between publicly and privately funded records. The chapters following Bold’s address, in more detail, the practicalities of the methods of documentation, of artifacts, and of conservation techniques. Though these topics will not be covered in this thesis in great detail, these chapters provide a resource for future researchers and members of the Plastic Club who may need guidance in collections management and objects conservation. See chapters 8-10, 16, and 17 in Richard Harrison, ed. *Manual of Heritage Management*, (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., 1994).

process is emphasized. Stakeholders are all included as major players in the process, ensuring that many voices and points of view will be considered. The significance of the site is the basis for all management decisions and is the key aspect of the site's preservation. What can be applied to the Plastic Club, then, is a new approach to planning for the sustainable future of the Club by putting its values and its significance first.

Chapter 3: Current Organization and Comparables

The Plastic Club is a 501(c)3, public non-profit organization. It is run by a board of directors, and standing committees are responsible for the various tasks and programming necessary to make it function. All of these positions are filled by active members of the Club, and the revenue received from membership dues and workshop fees are sufficient to meet all the expenses.

This chapter will discuss the various stakeholders of the Club and the overall, current goals for the organization. Two comparable examples of other art clubs are discussed in this chapter to create a context for the Plastic Club compares to similar organizations. From these comparables, we can learn lessons in what approaches, attitudes, and actions might be adopted by the Plastic Club.

Stakeholders

The current organization is made up of approximately 10 board members, consisting of the president, three vice presidents, secretary, treasurer, and the committee chairs. Although the standing committees have changed over time, the current committees (listed in the Plastic Club By-Laws, Appendix D) are the Membership Committee, the Committee on Exhibitions, the Library/archival Chairman, the House Committee, the Reception Committee, the Workshop Committee, the Committee on Designs, and the Publicity Committee. In recent years not all committees have been active. In actuality, the “committees” do not necessarily exist as they did in the past, populated with a number of Club members. The president and other board members

wear multiple hats, and those who “chair” are often solely responsible for the duties of these committees.

The membership in 2007 stands at approximately 125.⁷² Five classes of members have been established, each with a different level of dues expected from them. These classes are Active members, Associate members, Non-Resident members, Life members, and Honorary members. The Active members must apply for membership and submit three pieces of artwork, appropriately framed, as they would present the work for exhibition, for review by the board. The application is posted for 10 days so that current members can review and comment on the applicant if they wish, and then the board votes on whether to offer the artist membership. Active members are included in the yearly members-only exhibition at the Plastic Club or in invitational exhibitions, and the only requirement after being accepted is the payment of annual dues of \$60.

Associate members are those who may have a relationship with the Club and its members, but who are not necessarily artists. Their dues are lower than Active members (\$40), and though they may not exhibit their work in the member shows, they can participate by being on the board or chairing committees. Non-resident members live outside of a 50-mile radius of the Club, and their dues are only \$25 a year. Though they may submit work to be shown at member exhibitions, the work must be hand-delivered and retrieved. The option of Life membership, for a one-time, higher price, is not being promoted because it is not a sustainable way for the Club to receive an income. Honorary membership is given to those who, like Associate members, are not artists, but

⁷² This number is still less than the membership numbers in the first half of the 20th century, but the members today are more active than they have been in the past.

who have donated time and professional services to the Club and receive a free, Honorary membership in gratitude.

Other stakeholders include non-members who attend the open workshops and participate in exhibitions, many of which are open to anyone. Other art clubs and organizations, such as the Sketch Club, the Color Print Society, and the Photographic Society of Philadelphia to name a few, network with the Plastic Club, and they all rely on each other for members, events, workshops, and exhibitions. The Color Print Society and the Photographic Society of Philadelphia rent the Plastic Club for their monthly meetings as well.

The community in and around Camac Street is also invested in the Plastic Club and is positively affected by the increase in activity in the building, which brings more people to the area thereby providing more safety. In a neighborhood that has seen fluctuations in population and crime statistics, the more people that are present, the greater sense of security and comfort. The local neighborhood organization, Washington Square West Civic Association, has been involved with the Plastic Club in the past and, in 1994, donated and planted four trees in front of and behind the building in an effort to beautify the neighborhood.

Through the prizes of free membership offered at four major art schools in the area—the Academy of Fine Arts, Moore College of Art and Design, the University of the Arts, and Tyler School of Art at Temple University—the Plastic Club has made these schools stakeholders as well. Two prizes of a two-year membership to the Plastic Club are given to students at each of these four institutions. For the prize to be a worthwhile

achievement for the students, the Club must remain a respected institution. Moore College of Art and Design and the University of the Arts (formerly Philadelphia College of Art) hold additional stakes in the Plastic Club because these schools are written into the dissolution clause of the Plastic Club's By-Laws (Appendix D). In the event that the Plastic Club is dissolved, all of its property and assets will be given to Moore College of Art, where Plastic Club founding member Emily Sartain had been president. If Moore College of Art rejects the property, then it goes to the University of the Arts.

The historical organizations in Philadelphia are also stakeholders in the Plastic Club because, as one of the first women's art clubs in the United States, it holds a significant place in the history of arts organizations, the women's movement, and the city of Philadelphia. As a locally registered landmark, the Philadelphia Historical Commission reviews any changes made to the exterior of the building to protect it from detrimental alterations. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is currently negotiating the receipt of a number of documents and historic items from the Plastic Club, and may then serve as a repository for much of the information on the history of the Club and its members. In the 1980s, the Smithsonian Institution scanned all of the documents in the archives up to the 1940s onto microfilm for their archives.

Occasionally, families of former Plastic Club members contact the Club with questions or donations. In addition to members bequeathing money to the Club in their wills, family members often make donations in the deceased member's name or memory, and these gifts may stipulate how they should be spent or used. Donations of artwork by

deceased members, found in attics or forgotten corners, are also often made to the Club, though there is a growing concern about how these types of donations should be handled.

Goals

The main concern of the Plastic Club today is its future. In the past, membership and activity with the Club had reached such low points that it was uncertain whether or not the Club should continue. However, with motivated, spirited members spearheading the process, actions were taken in order to “change with the times.”⁷³ The Club has rebounded in terms of membership and interest, and the current aim is to ensure that it remains a comfortable place where artists can enjoy the workshops, the exhibitions, and the social aspect of being with other artists. The original mission of the Club “to promote a wider knowledge of Art and to advance its interests by means of social intercourse among artists”⁷⁴ still holds true.

An important lesson to be learned from the past is the need for an organization to adapt to changing demands and interests without losing sight of its original purpose. For example, the “Rabbits” and lectures are no longer desirable events for the current members, but the workshops—three-hour sketching or painting sessions—have proven to be a lasting success. These workshops, open to all artists, are vital to many who see them as a way to practice and exercise their artistic abilities. A variety of different types of workshops might be of interest to members and artists in the future, and the Club should be ready and able to provide this.

⁷³ Elizabeth MacDonald, interview by author, Narberth, PA, 28 February 2007.

⁷⁴ Plastic Club Constitution, Article II (see Appendix D).

Thus the overarching goal of the Club is balance and sustainability. The organization must have enough members paying enough dues to pay for the expenses, and there must be enough interest and enthusiasm to keep the Club active. Too few members and minimal interest, as seen in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, left the Club in danger of dying, running out of money, and becoming obsolete.⁷⁵ On the other hand, there may be a danger of having too many members demanding more from the current facilities than they can provide and more from the management than it is willing to give. Such has happened to the Sketch Club just down the street from the Plastic Club, as its growing budget and membership led them to hire a full-time, paid director. Though their budget is much higher, their growing focus on obtaining grants and outside funding has led some Sketch Club members feeling alienated and dissatisfied with the change (see below).

The Plastic Club's annual budget is currently under \$10,000, but it is flexible with the financial needs of the Club from year to year.⁷⁶ In addition to revenue from the workshops and membership dues, interest is also earned from several CDs, a money market account, a small stock portfolio, and the Sheekman Endowment, whose interest provides the Club upkeep of the studio. The Plastic Club keeps just enough money to have some financial freedom, but its goal is not to make an excess of profit or have a higher budget.

⁷⁵ This situation has happened before at the Charlotte Cushman Club, a club for female stage actors founded in 1907, which voted to disband in 1999 due to disinterest in managing the club.

⁷⁶ Approximately \$2,300 was spent on utilities in 2006, and the insurance for the building is approximately \$3,800.

Comparables

The Philadelphia Sketch Club

The Philadelphia Sketch Club, the oldest continuing art club in America, is the closest comparison to the Plastic Club. Founded in 1860 by a group of students at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Sketch Club became a well-known organization with famous members such as N.C. Wyeth. The Sketch Club provided classes and workshops as well as exhibitions and lectures, and its membership was traditionally all men, although nothing in its By-Laws restricted the admission of women.

The Sketch Club began as an arts organization that included the whole field of arts and crafts and was not restricted to specific media. The mission of the Sketch Club is “to support and nurture working visual artists, the appreciation of the visual arts, visual arts education, and the historical value of the visual arts to the community,”⁷⁷ which was achieved through open workshops, exhibitions, and networking opportunities. Much like the Plastic Club, the Sketch Club had social events and activities to supplement the exhibitions and lectures, and membership to the club was highly sought. The “Annuals” were much like the Plastic Club’s “Rabbits”—theatrical events performed once a year with satirical themes.

In 1903, having occupied several different spaces in Philadelphia’s Center City, the Sketch Club bought two adjoining rowhouses on South Camac Street (numbers 235 and 237). The transformation of the houses into a Club House was similar to that of the

⁷⁷ The Philadelphia Sketch Club, <http://www.sketchclub.org/docs/mission.html>.

Plastic Club—indeed, it most likely served as a model for the Plastic Club.⁷⁸ The top floor of the building was opened up into a studio by removing the party wall and the third floor, and the second floor windows were walled over to create exhibition space. The first floor held a library and billiards room and a meeting room, and the basement was transformed into the “Rathskeller,” paneled in dark wood and decorated by the members, who painted original illustrations on the walls and wood beams, reflecting the idea of a German tavern. Eventually, the third adjoining house was bought and the Sketch Club expanded even more.

It was here where the members of the Sketch Club gathered socially, and the main group of members who met on a regular basis for lunch here was known as the “Grub Club,” begun around 1888. A club within a club, this group was more like a social club, but one specifically made of artists. Like the Plastic Club, the Sketch Club and its “Grub Club,” were more than a social group—it was, in the words of one member, “an art affair that appears to be social.”⁷⁹ The “Grub Club” was an essential part of the Sketch Club as it provided a forum for ideas and for feedback among the artists. It was the active spirit of the club during most of the 20th century.

Though Sketch Club members had traditionally always been men, women were invited to and participated in the workshops, exhibitions, and lectures. The relationship between the Sketch Club and the Plastic Club was quite harmonious, as they often had

⁷⁸ Female artists, many of whom eventually founded the Plastic Club, were often included in Sketch Club exhibitions and attended workshops. In the early years of the Plastic Club’s history, many reciprocal receptions and events were held between the two clubs.

⁷⁹ William Campbell, interview by author, Philadelphia, PA, 16 March 2007.

reciprocal invitations to events and receptions at each club.⁸⁰ Although there may have been some discontent among those women who wished to become members of the Sketch Club, it seems as if the creation of a separate women's art club was a happy solution. During a time when the separation of the sexes was more common, when women's suffrage was active and before women were well-represented in the workforce, the division of the sexes probably provided camaraderie beyond that of being simply an artist. Both the men and women, the members of the Sketch Club and of the Plastic Club, seemed to prefer this arrangement for most of their history up until the late 20th century. Certainly for the women during this period, the founding of the Plastic Club was a political statement—the creation of a place that was just as good as the Sketch Club.

By the 1980s, however, the Sketch Club found itself in a similar situation to that of the Plastic Club. Membership had dwindled as older members died and few new members replaced them. Two members, William Campbell and John Nemeth, worked to bring new members to the Sketch Club. At that time, only 12-15 members were under 30 years old and out of school, but with this active outreach, Campbell and Nemeth began to increase the membership. Part of their effort involved inviting women to apply for membership, as it seemed that the younger members were in favor of including women as club members. Many older, long-time members of the Sketch Club, however, were unhappy about this change and some left. Had women not been admitted as members, however, the Sketch Club might have been in immediate danger of disbanding.

⁸⁰ Sidney Lomas, "Seventy-five Years of the Philadelphia Sketch Club" (The Philadelphia Sketch Club, Philadelphia, PA, photocopy).

A turning point in the Sketch Club's organization and management was the collapse of the brick wall around the garden behind the Sketch Club in the winter of 1989/90.⁸¹ The garden built for the Sketch Club in 1903 contained a fishpond and well-kept landscaping for most of its history. The brick wall surrounding the garden, however, had not been maintained and collapsed into a pile of bricks during a storm. The Sketch Club argued with the insurance agency, which did not want to cover the rebuilding of the wall, as well as with the Philadelphia Historical Commission and the Department of Licenses and Inspection. The Historical Commission insisted that the wall be rebuilt to its original design, which did not meet the building codes of the Department of Licenses and Inspection. Additionally, the cost of rebuilding the wall was greater than permitted by the budget of the Sketch Club. The club then filed for non-profit, 501(c)3 status in order to apply for grant monies.

This change of organizational status was a major point of contention between the Sketch Club members, as many of the older members did not want to be dependent on grant money because they believed that the programs, activities, and direction of the club would be focused on and directed by receiving grants. However, a majority of the club members voted in favor of non-profit status and changing the management to include a full-time, paid director. The original intent, it seems, was to apply for grant money to supplement the membership dues. In actuality, this balance was reversed, and the Sketch Club has since applied for enough grants to constitute a majority of their budget, and membership dues are supplementary to this amount.⁸² A large percentage of grant money

⁸¹ William Campbell, interview by author, Philadelphia, PA, 16 March 2007.

⁸² *ibid.*

has been spent on building maintenance and construction, and a preservation plan recently completed by John Milner Architects.⁸³

Although some are pleased with the larger budget and the increase in preservation and conservation efforts to the building, others say that the old spirit of the Sketch Club has been compromised and has all but disappeared. Several Sketch Club members are disappointed with this new direction, and some have left to join the Plastic Club. William Campbell, the oldest continuous member of the Sketch Club (having joined in 1939), describes the Sketch Club as originally run “by the members, for the members.” Now, the more bureaucratic feel and attitude of the organization disappoints him, and he feels the focus on receiving grants has done harm. The Plastic Club, he says, is closer in management and atmosphere to what the Sketch Club once was in that the Plastic Club is steered by the members and the Board, rather than a paid director whose job is based on grant-writing.⁸⁴

The Salmagundi Art Club

The Salmagundi Art Club in New York City was originally formed as the New York Sketch Club in 1871. The organization adopted the name “Salmagundi Sketch Club” in 1877 after Washington Irving’s publication of *The Salmagundi Papers* (1807-1808).⁸⁵ The Salmagundi Club was one of the most prominent art clubs in New York City, with well-known members such as Childe Hassam, William Merrit Chase, and Howard Pyle.

⁸³ John Milner Architects, Inc., 104 Lakeview Drive, Chadds Ford, PA 19317.

⁸⁴ William Campbell, interview by author, Philadelphia, PA, 16 March 2007.

⁸⁵ The term “salmagundi” is a culinary reference to a stew or salad of various ingredients. Anne Cohen DePietro, “A Fertile Fellowship: The Rich History of the Salmagundi Club,” <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa290.htm>.

In 1917, the Salmagundi Club moved from 14 West 12th Street to a permanent club house at 47 Fifth Avenue, a brownstone mansion that still serves as the club's home. Like the Philadelphia Sketch Club, the Salmagundi Club served as an art club for men, offering classes and workshops as well as a place for artists to meet, socialize, and exchange ideas. Also like the Philadelphia Sketch Club, women were included in exhibitions and workshops but were not admitted as members until 1973.

As New York remains a more prosperous city than Philadelphia, the Salmagundi Club owns a much larger building in a much more prominent location in the city. The membership count is near 700 in 2007, a vast difference from the Plastic and Sketch Clubs in Philadelphia. The historic architectural features of this 1850s brownstone mansion have been well-preserved by the Salmagundi Club, giving it an opulent appearance. The building contains spaces similar to the Sketch and Plastic Clubs, such as a large, open studio and exhibition space, a dining room, a gaming and billiards room.⁸⁶ Similar activities and programs are offered as well, such as workshops and classes, demonstrations and lectures, and exhibitions. As the club is also a public non-profit, 501(c)3 organization, all of these programs are open to the public.

Like the Plastic Club, the Salmagundi Club has several levels of membership. Full members who live within a 50-mile radius of the club pay \$500 a year in dues and have special privileges such as the use of the dining room (which is not public) and the opportunity to show their work in four to seven member-only shows per year. Memberships and some scholarships are available to students, and the non-resident

⁸⁶ Michael Guinn, president of the Plastic Club, described the Salmagundi Club as “the Sketch Club times ten.” Conversation with author, Philadelphia, PA, 10 April 2007.

membership fees are much lower than the active member fees. As a nationally renowned art club, the Salmagundi Club claims many well-known artists as members who live outside of the state of New York.

The club's budget depends on membership dues, the rentals received from various groups and organizations who rent the building for office space or for special events, and the commissions earned from sales during exhibitions. As of yet, the Salmagundi Club has not received any funding from grants, though the current board of directors intends to make a concerted effort to apply for grants in the near future. The upkeep of an elaborate, historic mansion and the amount of programming provided by the club is currently covered in the budget, but special projects, such as the insertion of an elevator into the building, would require extra funding that could be provided by grants.⁸⁷

Like the Plastic Club, the board of directors and a core of active, motivated members push the Salmagundi Club forward and direct its future. Many members are professionals that offer pro bono work and consultation, and donations and bequests to the club are often in members' wills. It is this involved core group of members who, like the Plastic Club, have taken it upon themselves to ensure the future and success of the Salmagundi Club.

This club also seems to have had a downturn in the 1940s through the 1960s, when it rejected avant-garde art such as Abstract Expressionism and held tightly and strictly to representational work. As the modern movement swept through New York City, most young artists ignored traditional, representational artwork, and membership

⁸⁷ Kathleen Arffmann, Salmagundi Club director, telephone conversation with author, 9 April 2007.

declined. In general, the art clubs in New York were considered by young artists as part of the “establishment,” and were rejected solely on this basis.⁸⁸ This lack of interest by young artists caused an age gap in the membership, but as new members eventually started to join again, the club has slowly recovered from this gap. Though the Salmagundi Club now includes contemporary artwork in its exhibitions, representational work is still favored.

Unlike the Plastic Club, the Salmagundi Club’s building is located on a main thoroughfare and in a well-populated area of New York City, and the building has been constantly occupied. As rooms in the building are rented for office spaces, the structure itself has been consistently maintained. Though the gallery is currently open every day during afternoon hours, the building is always occupied, and someone is always there to answer the door or speak to a visitor. The Salmagundi Club still strives to serve the artist population and provide a supportive, open, and welcoming atmosphere. Much like the attitude of the Plastic Club, the Salmagundi Club prides itself in providing this modest environment, and whereas this quality sets it apart from other art centers and organizations in New York City and makes it successful.⁸⁹

By comparing the Plastic Club with two other similar art clubs, some of the management decisions can be more clearly framed with reference to previous examples. Using the example of the Sketch Club, which is still a well-known and well-attended art club in Philadelphia, it is clear that in order to retain the original purpose, atmosphere and environment of the Plastic Club—one that is modest, unpretentious, and open—it must

⁸⁸ Bob Mueller, Curator’s Committee chair of the Salmagundi Club, email message to author, 9 April 2007.

⁸⁹ Kathleen Arffmann, director of the Salmagundi Club, telephone conversation with author, 9 April 2007.

beware of the pitfalls of seeking grants and becoming a larger institution. The Salmagundi Club, on the other hand, has taken care to retain its welcoming, relaxed manner, to which it attributes its success.

Another contributing factor to the success of the Salmagundi Club is its careful attention to the preservation of its building. Though the scale of the building and its maintenance budget is much larger than that of the Plastic Club, the Salmagundi Club has always taken much pride in its historic building and has considered it one of its greatest assets. The same attitude is evident on a smaller scale in the Sketch Club, which has spent a large amount of money (received through grants) on the preservation of its building. These organizations fully realize that their historic buildings contribute to the image of the clubs, and although the Plastic Club also embraces its building for its character, more emphasis can be given to it and its interiors to enhance the image and qualities specific to the Plastic Club.

Chapter 4: Statement of Significance and Values

Preservation planning and management decisions are grounded in a values-based approach to the historic site and its cultural landscape. The statement of significance is meant to clearly summarize the cultural significance of the site as seen by the many stakeholders, and it is formed through the identification of the various values attributed to the site.

Statement of Significance

Located on Camac Street, “the Biggest Little Street in the World,” in Center City Philadelphia, the Plastic Club is the oldest club for women artists in the United States in continuous operation and still serves the art community today, both men and women. The Plastic Club plays historical and social roles and provides a setting for artists to work, exhibit, and socialize. The Club’s original purpose “to promote a wider knowledge of Art and to advance its interests by means of social intercourse among artists” is still upheld by its members.⁹⁰ Throughout the Club’s history, it has adapted and reinterpreted this objective to suit changing needs and circumstances. The Club House on Camac Street stands as a key component to the success of the Club as it enabled artists to work and learn from one another; its historic fabric and character are a testament to this goal.

Values

Historical Value

Founded in 1897, The Plastic Club was one of the earliest art clubs specifically for women in the United States. In a period when clubs were quite popular for social

⁹⁰ Plastic Club Constitution, Article II (see Appendix D).

activities and entertainment, the immediate popularity and success of the Plastic Club spoke to the strong need for a place for women artists to meet, work, and socialize. At the time, no art organization in Philadelphia welcomed women as members, even though their work was accepted at exhibitions and often awarded. When the Club bought and moved into its permanent residence at 247 S. Camac Street in 1909, it joined a community of other clubs that also resided on what became known as “the street of little clubs,” today also named “the Avenue of the Artists.” These clubs included the Poor Richard’s Club, the Charlotte Cushman Club, the Sketch Club, and the Franklin Inn Club—only the latter two remain.

A number of prominent and well-known artists have been a part of the Plastic Club, and this adds to its reputation. They included members such as Violet Oakley,⁹¹ Jessie Wilcox Smith,⁹² Elizabeth Shippen Green,⁹³ Cecilia Beaux,⁹⁴ Alice Barber Stephens,⁹⁵ and Elizabeth Bonsall,⁹⁶ as well as exhibition participants such as Mary

⁹¹ Violet Oakley (1874-1960) studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts as well as in Paris and England. While studying at Drexel University with Howard Pyle (1853-1911), she met Jesse Wilcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green, with whom she worked closely for the rest of her career. A specialist in murals and portraits, she was the first woman commissioned to decorate a public building: the State Capital building in Harrisburg, PA, which is also the largest commission to a woman artist. Peter Hastings Falk, ed., *Who was Who in American Art 1564-1975* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1999), 2450.

⁹² Jesse Wilcox Smith (1863-1935) studied at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women and was an important illustrator. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 3082.

⁹³ Elizabeth Shippen Green (1871-1954) studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and with Howard Pyle at Drexel University. She was a notable illustrator for children’s books. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 1358.

⁹⁴ Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942) studied in Philadelphia and in Paris and was one of the most prominent women portrait painters in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She was the first full-time female instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 252.

⁹⁵ Alice Barber Stephens (1858-1932), a successful illustrator, studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and started the first life drawing class for women at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 3161.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Bonsall (1861-1956) studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and in Paris and was a noted painter and illustrator. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 378.

Cassatt⁹⁷ and Maxfield Parrish.⁹⁸ The Plastic Club has also been associated with leading art institutions in Philadelphia. These associations have brought attention to the Club, and its events and exhibitions were frequently described in local newspapers during the early part of the 20th century. From the mid-1930s through the 1950s, the Plastic Club had Rotary Exhibitions that would travel to different galleries and colleges throughout the United States, earning further acclaim.

The annual reports, scrap books, notes, and letters in the archives of the Plastic Club document the lively history of the Club through the past 110 years. The receptions, lectures, activities, and entertainments are a window into the cultural and social lives of these artists over the years; the presentations about trips abroad, the types of exhibitions held, the themes of the annual “Rabbits” (a banquet and pageant performed by Club members), and the varying number of events held in a year reflect the change in popular fashions and demand for types and styles of entertainment.

The largest record of the Plastic Club is its Club House, which was formed from two neighboring rowhouses built in 1824. The way in which the Club House was originally designed, the changes over the years, and the interior furnishings in the building also record the history of the Club as it constantly reworked its home to be evermore comfortable and functional for its members. The variety of items donated to

⁹⁷ Mary Cassatt (1845-1926) studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and extensively in Europe, where she was influenced by the Impressionists Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas. A painter of women and children, she was the only American (and one of three women) to exhibit with the original Impressionists in Paris. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 591-592.

⁹⁸ Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966), born in Philadelphia, studied in Philadelphia and in Paris. He was one of the great illustrators of the 20th century and produced a number of famous paintings and murals. Falk, *Who was Who in American Art*, 2528.

the Club House by its members over time lends the building a unique character that is an added value to the Club.

The Club House holds some architectural value, but mainly in support of the historical value of the Club. Though the building is historic, it is still a common example of early to mid-19th century residential architecture in Philadelphia. The changes that were made to these rowhouses, however, are fundamental to the function of the building for the Plastic Club as the venue for the artists to work, socialize, and learn from one another. Most of the historic features of the building, dating from this period, are preserved and represent this significant change that was made. The noted architectural features are discussed further in Chapter 5, as well as the notable furnishings inside the building that are historically valuable and somewhat economically valuable.

Social Value

The Plastic Club was created to provide a place for artists to work and socialize. It has always been intended as a comfortable atmosphere for artists, and it fulfills that their need to gather and discuss art. Indeed, the Plastic Club has been, and still is, a major part of many people's lives. Before the revolution in home entertainment with radio, television, and home movies, the Plastic Club was a place for members to meet, socialize, and entertain themselves with a variety of events such as lectures, teas, meals, and pageants. As the 20th century progressed, there was less demand for these types of activities, but different types of social events took their place, such as garden parties, flea markets, and luncheons.

The workshops and classes held at the Club, which have been the mainstays of the Plastic Club throughout its history, offer a communal atmosphere for artists to work as well as socialize, meet artists, and learn from others. These workshops are one of the main reasons for the existence of the Plastic Club, as women artists originally needed a place to draw and paint from models on a regular basis. Today these workshops, open to everyone, still fulfill that need for an opportunity to practice and produce artwork, especially for artists who do not have their own studio space.

This is the reason for the Club's absolute necessity of a Club House—a dedicated space that is likened to “a gym for artists.”⁹⁹ Today, the Plastic Club is one of the few places in Philadelphia that provides these open workshops without instruction. No tuition or prerequisites are required as it is not a teaching institution; those wanting to participate simply pay the per-workshop fee and bring supplies with which to work.

The Plastic Club also serves its community as a place for artists to exhibit their work in any media. Although there are a few other galleries in the area, including the Sketch Club just a few doors down, the Plastic Club provides a unique space with its own character in which to exhibit artwork. More importantly, the policy of the Plastic Club is to exhibit as much work as possible, thus providing opportunities to those who might not be able to show their work in any other professional space, such as amateurs or beginning artists. In all open, non-member shows, anyone can submit a piece to be shown, and as long as there is enough space (and the object fits the size requirements), it will be exhibited.

⁹⁹ Michael Guinn, Plastic Club president, conversation with author, Philadelphia, PA, 19 March 2007.

Additionally, most other venues restrict the media in each show. The Plastic Club began in the 1990s to open their themed exhibitions to all media in response to the small number of submissions at that time. Today, while the Plastic Club may put restrictions on subject matter and/or size for their exhibitions, the shows are open to all media, including photography, ceramics, and sculpture as well as paintings, prints, and drawings.

Chapter 5: Building Condition and Management

The building owned by the Plastic Club is a typical two and a half story brick rowhouse on the façade, but the interior has been altered to suit the needs of an art club. Being adapted from two separate rowhouses, the building has distinct, separate spaces in each floor except for the second floor studio, which was opened to form a single, large room (figures B1-B3). The first floor and basement are comprised of three rooms each: a single room measuring the entire depth of the house to the north and two rooms in the southern half. A rear addition was built along the northern portion to accommodate a stairwell and a restroom on the first floor. A brick and flagstone paved courtyard with a garden in the rear of the building is surrounded by a brick wall, and a sunken area along the back of the building allows for windows and a rear door at the basement level. See Appendix B for drawings and current photographs of the building.

Current Conditions

The front façade of the building is in fairly good condition, though there are areas in apparent need of repointing. There is evidence that the gutter in the center of the façade was once broken, blocked, or has a leak, as a white substance (salts) has formed on the surface of the brick wall just underneath this area (figures B8 and B9). Since the roof and gutters were replaced in 2005, the gutter looks to be in good condition and no more damage should be occurring. The wood trim of the building has been painted fairly recently, and previous layers of paint had been scraped off in the 1980s, leaving a fairly fresh surface. The missing doorbell pull in the main doorframe, the brass original which was stolen in 1989, is a large hole that might introduce moisture into the wood and cause future problems.

The rear façade of the building is in slightly worse condition due to the constant moisture and rising damp from the basement level. The brick wall has been painted from the level of the first floor window sill to the ground, and this paint is peeling (figures B12 and B20). The lowest portion of the wall, in an area about 6 inches from the ground, green biogrowth is apparent on top of the paint layers. Some coloration due to rust is also evident underneath the areas where the iron fire escape ladder is joined to the brick wall (figure B12). Underneath the gutter on the cornice, some small white staining is also visible, but it is not nearly as prominent as on the front façade (figure B11).

The iron fire escape on the rear façade, leading from the studio rear door to the garden, is still in operation (figure B13). It has been scraped and repainted a number of times and was repaired recently, though rust and staining seen on the walls is an indicator of active corrosion, and these areas should be monitored closely.

The brick of the main rear façade wall has been recently repointed, but the walls of the rear stairwell and bathroom extension on the north side were apparently not repointed at the same time, and some areas show mortar loss. The paint on the wood framing of the windows on this extension is peeling and cracking, as is the paint on the southern dormer window (figures B11, B17, and B18). This leaves the wood components of the windows subject to rot from moisture exposure, and the wood should be inspected for any weaknesses. The windows in the stairwell extension have recently been scraped and the glazing reset, but they have not been repainted or fully refitted (figures B15 and B57). An iron plumbing vent runs from the kitchen area of the basement up the center of the rear façade wall, and the paint on this is also flaking and peeling off.

The shutters that have closed the basement windows also have peeling paint, and some wood rot is apparent in the corners. This is due to the constant presence of moisture in this below-grade area, and the entire brick wall of the garden retaining wall, facing these windows, is covered in a light layer of biogrowth (figure B19). The gutter pipe leads from the side wall of the rear extension and empties onto the flagstone and brick paving of the garden, and this water most likely drains down into the earth and exits through this brick wall, if it does not flow directly from the paving down the wall. Additionally, the fact that there was once a well in the center of the garden, which was filled in by 1930, is evidence that there is water present in this particular area, which is what contributes to the endless moisture problems seen in the exterior and interior of the basement.

Cut into the brick retaining wall are two small barrel-vaulted spaces, presumably used for cold storage for the early residents of the houses. These are placed directly in front of the original doorways from the basements to the garden, and there is a small opening in the ceilings of these spaces (figures B22-B24). Small ledges lining the side walls show that there were originally shelves placed in these little rooms, and there is some evidence remaining for doors that would have fit into the openings, though no hinges remain. Biogrowth covers the walls of these spaces as well, and the interiors are cold and damp due to the constant moisture.

The interior of the basement shows signs of severe water damage to all the external walls. The height of the damp line is approximately 2 feet, and in many places where the loss of wall plaster is severe, sheetrock has been inserted to cover the damage

(see figures B27 and B42). The central partition wall in the basement, however, is in much better shape, as it is not exposed to moisture except from the ground below. Before the bathroom window was filled in, water had several times entered the room through this window, and the damage in the bathroom is still evident (figures B28-B30). The room itself is constantly damp and musty, and the plumbing fixtures show some signs of rust.

It is recorded that flooding of the basement would also occur through the front window wells, but since these were filled in 1989, the front section of the basement is in much better condition. Currently, the former tea room in the southwest room of the basement is used as an office and for storage, but the constant dampness of this room makes it unfit for this use. The bookshelf on the eastern wall of this room is made up of separate upper and lower components, but these do not seem to belong to each other originally. The lead caning in the glass in the doors of the upper section have moved and warped the glass, and the wood of the top surface of the lower storage piece, on which the upper sits, is beginning to collapse, probably due to both the weight of the shelf above and the moist environment (figure B39).

The original cooking fireplaces, those with large openings in the rear of the houses, are well-preserved. However, the fireplace in the front section of the northwest corner was covered over in wallboard at some point in the 1970s and its counterpart in the southwest room was removed, an arched opening put in its place, during the conversion of the building in 1909 (figures B31 and B43). The concrete floors, painted red as they were originally specified, are in good condition as they were reconstructed in 1989 when the new plumbing system was installed. The ceilings of the basement have

exposed beams and trusses, and though the wood is painted, no signs of water damage or rot are apparent. Electrical wires, gas and water pipes are run along the ceiling and sometimes through the beams, and all of these systems seem to be in good condition (figure B35). These have been brought up to code at least in 1990 after the stricter insurance policy was put into effect after the Deux Chemineés fire in 1987.

The good condition of the ceiling in the basement reflects the condition of the floor above it. The first floor is the original wood floor of both houses. In the main room, the floor still has traces of the rubber matting underneath previous floor rugs that have adhered to the wood permanently. This has been painted over several times, and then covered with rugs again (figure B51). The walls and ceiling of the first floor, however, are in worse condition. The plaster has cracked in many places, and the layers of paint have begun to separate from the wall and peel off in certain areas (figures B59, B61, and B79). A section of the ceiling in the tea room by the dumbwaiter has begun to fall, possibly due to water damage but the source of the damage is unknown. The plaster seems to have fallen from the lath, and the cracks have been taped together for the time-being, though this condition is currently inactive (figure B75).

The windows of the first floor, as previously mentioned, have been recently scraped and reglazed in the rear, and those in the front are still in decent condition, though they do show signs of age. The lighting system in most of the first floor is fairly recent, though the florescent lights in the tea room, hidden behind ornately cut panels along the edges of the room, are somewhat old and may need to be replaced or upgraded

in the near future (figure B72). This system, with the panels, was also installed in the main room of the first floor but was removed recently and replaced with track lighting.

The small restroom on the first floor behind the stairwell is often cold due to its placement and lightly insulated walls. The condition of the plaster walls is slightly worse here than elsewhere on the first floor, and the ceiling also shows signs of cracking and flaking. The sink is original to this 1909 addition, and is thus rather aged (figure B62), but the toilet has been replaced more recently and is in good condition. The electrical wiring in this room is most likely original to its installation, as it is run along the surface of the walls to the ceiling lamp and to the light switch (figure B59).

The second floor gallery has had many campaigns of renovation and redecoration, as discussed in Chapter 2. The linoleum floor was installed in 1987 after the fire in the neighboring building and is still in good condition, but the walls and ceiling show a great amount of peeling, cracking, and water damage in some areas. The north-facing skylight has been leaking for many years now, and the ceiling below it is severely stained and damaged (figures B86-B88). Other areas of the upper walls are damaged from either water or age and are in need of repair (figures B89, B94, and B95).

The front windows, though hidden behind the partition built in 1986/87, were reopened in 2003 and cleaned, though there is some cleaning and repainting that needs to be done to the window frames (figure B90). The windows all along the second floor—these front windows and the one rear window behind the pegboard—were closed up and walled over in the 1909 conversion of the building from two residential houses to a Club House. The rear window was also recently opened, though the wall and pegboard were

set on hinges so that the wall can be solid for exhibition space but opened when needed (figure B91). These hinges, however, have broken and are in need of replacing.

The dormer windows are in various states of condition as they have been replaced or repaired at different times. The front two dormer windows are in good condition, though are in need of repainting (especially on the exterior, where these have not been painted to match the rest of the trim, figure B8). The northernmost rear window has been recently replaced by a modern, insulated aluminum window (figure B14), but the southern rear window is still original and is in poor condition. The exterior paint is peeling, and there is some evidence of rot. The lower half of the window is occupied by an exhaust fan with a louvered vent on the exterior, which is a possible entry point for moisture (figures B11 and B94).

The roof has been recently replaced (2005), and the asphalt shingles are in good condition (figure B99). However, the skylight should be inspected as it has also been leaking for a long period of time, and this will undoubtedly begin to affect and compromise the effectiveness of the roof in the areas around the skylight. The brick chimneys and party walls above the roofline are in fairly good condition, but there are areas where mortar loss is apparent as well as some brick decay (figures B99 and B100). These areas should be carefully monitored to ensure the safety of the roof as well as the prevention of moisture intrusion.

In February and March of 2007, a new forced air HVAC system was installed in the building. The fan unit and chiller was installed on the roof of the rear bathroom extension so as to be out of sight, and pipes and ducts were run from here along the top of

the roof and into the ceiling of the studio on the north side (figures B87 and B95). A large metal duct with vents was run along the ceiling above the partitioned closet on the west side of the room (figures B82 and B96). The gas heating unit was installed in the north corner of the closet, so as to be as hidden and unobtrusive as possible (figure B97). Vents were also run down through this closet floor and into the first floor front rooms (figures B55 and B69). Although the bright aluminum duct stands out against the white walls of the studio, this system is overall very efficient and provides a very sensitive way to introduce a modern heating and cooling system into a historic building. It will enable the Club to be open and continue operation throughout the entire year, rather than closing during the summer months due to the heat, and ensure the comfort of the artists using the building, especially the studio.

Components to Preserve

Architecture

Only a small percentage of architectural components and finishes original to the construction of the two rowhouses in the 1820s survives, but there are a greater number of significant components that date to the 1909 conversion of the houses into a Club House. This conversion was sensitive to the materials and style of the original buildings, and as much material was preserved as possible. Basic features of the early rowhouses that still exist are the original wood floor of the first floor, the mantle pieces in most rooms (except the one covered in the basement and those removed for construction of the gallery), the coal grate in one of the first floor fireplaces, and some doors, sash, and window moldings. These features should continue to be preserved and used by the Club, and any changes or updates made to the building should be sensitive to these materials.

The most important original feature of the building is its façade. Although the Club altered the façade in 1909 by removing the front door of 249 S. Camac St., the character of the building had been carefully preserved by installing a matching window and shutters in place of the door. Over time, the Club has cared for the exterior by diligently scraping and painting the wood trim when necessary, and it was awarded a plaque from the Philadelphia Historical Commission in 1972 for its well-preserved façade. Because it is listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, the façade and all aspects of the building visible from the street are protected from demolition and alterations that might harm its historic character. The Plastic Club is thus obliged to continue to maintain and preserved the façade of this building, but it should do so to also retain its image, as this is also the face of the Club.

Important aspects of the building that exist from the transformation of the building into a Club House in 1909 should be preserved as evidence of the aesthetics of that time period and the purpose of the Club itself. These aspects include the north-facing skylight that was installed in the roof to illuminate the second floor studio. The wire glass in the skylight is original (no records of its replacement have been found in the archives), as is the iron-pane construction. The blackout shade that was installed during World War II is torn and fragile, but it is a noteworthy part of the history of the building and should also be retained as it causes no inconvenience (figure B86).

The rear stairwell addition and both restrooms also date to the creation of the Club. While the toilet fixtures have been replaced, the sinks in both rooms are original and should be retained. The arrangement and placement of both of these restrooms is

also a telling part of the history of the Club House, as the original women's restroom and "powder room" is larger and on the first floor while the men's restroom is located in a small space under the stairs in the basement.

Although the dumb-waiter is no longer operable it should be preserved as a relic of the past use of the dining room, but also for the chance that it might be operable again in the future. The dumb-waiter was bolted shut about 2001 so that the Club could forgo the unnecessary expense of an annual elevator license.

Other smaller architectural features that should be preserved are moldings, doors, and cabinetry that are currently part of the Club House and are fundamental to the aesthetic character of the building. Although the pegboard on the walls on the first and second floors is out of character with the historic interior of the building, it is a necessary aspect for the Club's exhibitions. It allows for the fast and simple installation and de-installation of exhibitions, and it prevents damage to the plaster walls from nail holes. The pegboard partition in the studio is also out of character, but it provides storage space for materials such as easels and chairs and permits the front windows to be open without reducing wall area on which to exhibit art.

However, behind the pegboard on the second floor, the earlier monk's cloth wall covering still remains, though covered with several layers of paint (figures B92 and B93). This bit of evidence is a reminder of how the walls were covered and exhibitions were hung before the pegboard, and it should be preserved for its archaeological value. In the future, alternatives to the pegboard might be investigated to provide a more aesthetic and

historically sensitive wall covering, one that is still simple to use for exhibitions but approximates the look of cloth.

These smaller and seemingly insignificant components to this historic building should not be overlooked. While they are not integral to the operations of the Club House, they retain historic value, which is one of the great assets of the Club. For example, the glazed transom above the rear door in the tea room is noteworthy because the center pane of glass is made of bulls-eye glass, a feature in such windows up into the early to mid-19th century, when glass was blown and not mechanically produced (figure B73).

Evidence of the original gas fixtures installed in the early 1900s is still seen in several of the rooms in the form of wall-mounted light fixtures (which have been updated with electrical wiring) and gas cocks in several locations (figures B31, B32, and B69). These “pieces of memory” have informational and archaeological value in that they point to the historical function of the building. The more these components are seen as valuable by the members, and the more ownership the Club takes of all the pieces of its historical fabric, the more likely the Club will fully appreciate this important asset.

Furnishings

Most of the furnishings—the furniture, permanent collection of artwork, floor coverings, kitchen utensils, etc.—have been donated by Club members throughout the history of the Club. A few items were purchased, such as the quantity of wood folding

chairs still used in the studio and the antique sofa on the first floor.¹⁰⁰ The majority of the furniture in the Club House dates from the early years of the Club and some items have appreciated in value. These items include chairs and tables, dating from the early to mid-19th century, that were once less-valuable hand-me-downs, but have since acquired historical and monetary value, such as a variety of Windsor chairs, tables, and desks that are period pieces (figures B104 and B105). Some furnishings that are early 20th-century reproductions in the Colonial Revival spirit will appreciate over time.

The building has a history of robberies throughout its life as a Club House. After a burglary in 1982, the Plastic Club decided to informally inventory the contents of their Club House, and each piece was marked with a small “Pc” so that if items were stolen again, they could be identified if “fenced” to antiques dealers. In May, 1988, Raymond M. Spiller and Associates, Inc. was hired to appraise the contents of the Club House; the total value of the furniture, the art collection, and other personal property was \$49,015. Some of the most valuable pieces listed in the appraisal (figures B106-B112) are the American tall case clock from the early 19th century (\$4,600), the mahogany slant-front writing desk ca. 1810 (\$2,200), the antique display cabinet (supposedly from John Wanamaker’s store) ca. 1820¹⁰¹ (\$2,500), the American pine corner cabinet ca. 1830 (\$2,600), the American Empire sofa ca. 1840 (\$2,100), and the English Jacobean chest in the studio from the 17th century (\$3,200). The more valuable pieces of art are the

¹⁰⁰ Recorded in past Annual Reports.

¹⁰¹ This date is not likely if truly original to the Wanamaker store.

drawing by Thornton Oakley (\$1,500) in the basement and the illustration by Jesse Willcox Smith (\$3,000) in the Board Room.¹⁰²

A rider to the building's insurance policy was taken out based on this total appraised value, but the insurance proved to be too costly for the Club's budget and was canceled. The furnishings of the building have not been appraised since then, and the Club's budget is not adequate to insure the furnishings at this time. However, the Club should try to reserve money for the maintenance of these pieces to ensure their future use.

Contents of the building that have not been appraised include the rugs, the linoleum carpets, and the library. The Club has amassed a library since its inception that by the mid-20th century had grown mainly through donations. Many of the books kept in a locked bookcase in the Board Room are first editions, and some may be quite valuable. More books of substantial age are stored in the bookcase in the basement "office," which is a poor environment for books. All of the books have been catalogued and organized in the past, though many of the books have probably been lost or misplaced since the last time they were catalogued. Lists and a card catalogue still exist, and these should at some point be cross-referenced against what is currently found in the bookshelves. This collection should also be appraised by a dealer in art books.

In general, the contents of the building contribute to the history and character of the Club. The furnishings in the building are used; that is, their primary purpose is to be functional for the use of the Club, not as display pieces. The Plastic Club is admittedly

¹⁰² Raymond M. Spiller and Associates, Inc. "Appraisal of the Furnishings of the Plastic Club, May 1988." Plastic Club Archives, Philadelphia, PA. These values are different from today's standards and should be reevaluated.

not run as a historic site or monument, and it is not in the business of being a museum. However, there are some small steps that the Club should take to ensure the life of its furnishings and to prevent further damage or loss. These points will be discussed in the final chapter's recommendations.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The Plastic Club in Philadelphia, PA is the oldest art club for women in continuous operation. It is one of the few remaining organizations of its type in the Philadelphia area. The Club is supported by its members, offering workshops and exhibitions open to the public including the work of artists, whether members or not. Although the Plastic Club was started in a time when clubs of all varieties were more popular than today, it has survived periods of instability, financial hardship, and waning interest. At the turn of the 21st century, it has seen a resurgence in membership and activity encouraged by members who fought to keep this historic organization alive. The Plastic Club is currently in the process of managing its new growth.

With this rise in popularity and activity, the Plastic Club must balance use against what the Club's historic fabric can tolerate. The facilities are not adequate for large dinner parties, for example, and the limited wall space necessitates size restrictions for submitted pieces of artwork. To stay true to its original mission, the Club must maintain a balance between popularity, activity, and a modest, comfortable environment for artists. With the leadership's attention to this balance and the integration of values-centered management, the Club should meet this challenge.

In order to preserve the character and history of the Club, which is one of its greatest assets, it should provide the proper care and maintenance of its building and its furnishings. Building maintenance has been fairly good, but not all the furnishings have been properly maintained. Some maintenance should take precedence over others, such

as roof repairs before peeling wall paint. The following is a prioritized list of repairs and maintenance recommendations:

1. The leak in the studio skylight is a severe threat to the structure of the roof and the ceiling. The skylight should be thoroughly inspected to determine the source of the leak, and during the repair, it is important that all the original materials and structure be preserved. If replacement of any materials is required, like materials should be used and the original components saved (as outlined in the Burra Charter, see Chapter 2).
2. The basement should be inspected by a professional, possibly an engineer, to determine how to correct the moisture problem. There might be ways to redirect drainage and rainwater to mitigate the moisture especially at the rear wall. Professional advice on how to make the basement a more enjoyable and comfortable space would also increase the usable area of the building. At the present time, the damaged walls are unsightly and may indicate a threat to the structure of the building.
3. The rear exterior of the building should be constantly monitored and maintained to ensure its proper, water-tight function. This includes the repointing of the bricks where mortar loss is found, as well as repainting whenever peeling paint can provide an entry point for moisture. Windows are especially important, as wood is much more vulnerable to decay than brick, and areas of weakness, in the form of peeling paint and rot, should be repaired in a timely manner. Not only

does this maintenance help preserve the historic fabric, it prevents the costly replacement of windows caused by rot.

4. The cold, damp air of the basement storage room, where the archives are held, will injure the papers and photographs currently stored there. As of now, the archives are quite disorganized, with unidentified pieces of paper, notes, letters, photographs, and even sketches scattered in the file drawers. Currently, the Club is negotiating with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to assume responsibility of the archived materials, and this is a recommended course of action. An agreement should be made with the Historical Society, located only one block from the Club, to permit members free access to the materials. The Historical Society can store the materials in a proper environment and hopefully will catalogue and organize all the pieces of information. If a satisfactory agreement can be reached, the Plastic Club should entrust their materials to the Historical Society.

5. Cosmetic repairs may seem unimportant steps in the maintenance of a building, but in the case of the Plastic Club, which relies on its walls for the display of artwork, clean, smooth walls and ceilings are necessary. Cracks in the walls and ceilings above the pegboard detract from exhibitions as well as the historic character of the building. The paint should be scraped and cracks repaired sooner rather than later to keep up the appearance of the building. Major repairs are needed in the ceiling of the studio as well as in the first floor tea room, where the plaster has failed, exposing the lath.

6. Some of the Club's furniture is rather valuable, and actions should be taken to ensure their security. Although the security of the building is adequate and the safety of the neighborhood has increased, small steps, such as bolting the standing clock to the wall and keeping the bookcase locked, should be made. Valuable pieces of artwork should be properly maintained as well, and the addition of the HVAC system will provide better climate control for works of art as well as books.

7. Care should be taken to ensure that all furniture should remain in functioning condition; regular repairs and cleaning will prolong their life. A proper inventory, and perhaps another appraisal, should be made of the collection.¹⁰³ Depending on the value of the individual pieces of furniture and their priority of use by the Club, a schedule of maintenance repairs should be made for items in poor condition. Perhaps Club members could be encouraged to assume responsibility for the repair or refinishing of certain pieces if knowledgeable or properly advised.

Along with the increase in and popularity of the Club's events, the use of the building should also increase, and this is not necessarily detrimental. It is quite important for a historic building to be alive and cared for. While increased activity in the building may cause more wear and tear, it may also ensure that problems such as leaks, cracks, and chipping paint will be seen and fixed in a timely manner. Having the building occupied more often will enable curious passers-by or those wishing to view an

¹⁰³ An inventory should include, for each item, a description of the piece, its dimensions, the source of the item, photograph(s), and an accession number, which should be written in an unobtrusive spot on the item. An appraisal should be completed by a professional appraiser or experienced dealer. Currently, these responsibilities are listed as the duties of the Library/Archival Chairman (see Appendix D).

exhibition to have access to the building. The result is a stronger presence in the neighborhood, and the Plastic Club will be more visible to the community.

As the Club has adapted to a new generation of artists, the most successful activities and events should be continued and expanded. Club members believe it is important to “change with the times,” and the Club should be open to change and adaptation. While lectures and pageants are no longer popular forms of entertainment, more creative activities and parties, such as the Instant Art Show and a variety of workshops, are successful and well-attended. Eventually, older traditions might be revisited in a new form, such as themed dinners, Wednesday luncheons, or flea markets. The creative minds of the members and the demands of the artistic community no doubt can produce relevant, well-attended programming.

These recommendations are given to encourage the Plastic Club to fully recognize the cultural significance of their building and home. The organizational management of the Club should attempt to incorporate the cultural values, stated in Chapter 4, into planning and future management decisions. Overall, the Plastic Club should remain focused on its original mission and intent while embracing its history and legacy. As the organization changes over time, it should be careful not to make changes that are too drastic too quickly. We can learn from the Sketch Club to be wary of altering the structure and character of the Club by relying too heavily on receiving grants. If the Club’s modest, open, and inviting atmosphere is one of its most prized qualities, it should not strive to become too prominent an art institution in the city, which may garner fame but generate political tension. In all, one of the most important strengths of and

opportunities for the Plastic Club is its enthusiastic members who are motivated to see the Club continue and carry on its mission. Without this enthusiasm and the loyalty of members who give their time and energy to the Club, it will once again be in danger of becoming obsolete through disinterest. It is hoped that this study will be a starting point for the management of the Plastic Club to plan for its sustainable future, and through the use of this values-based approach, the significance of the Club will be considered and preserved.

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Appendix A. Historic Images and Photographs

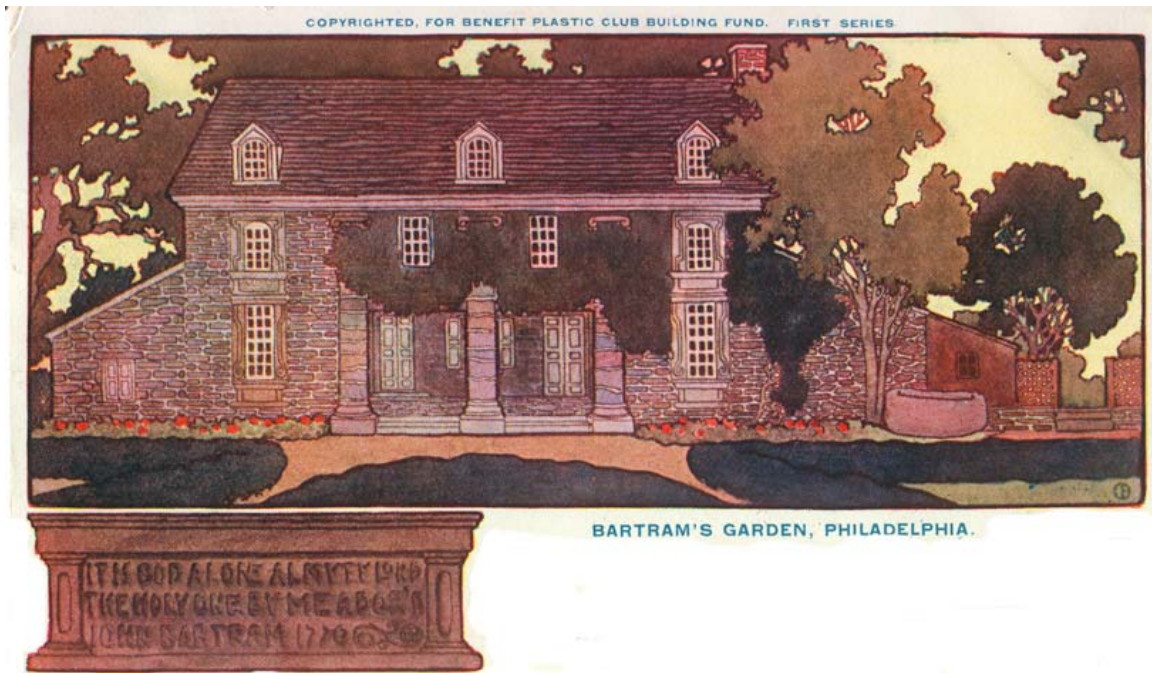


Figure A1. Postcard of John Bartram's House, designed by Mary E. Bonsall for the Plastic Club's Building Fund, 1903. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)



Figure A2. Postcard of the Chestnut Street Bridge, designed by Ellen W. Ahrens for the Plastic Club's Building Fund, 1903. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)

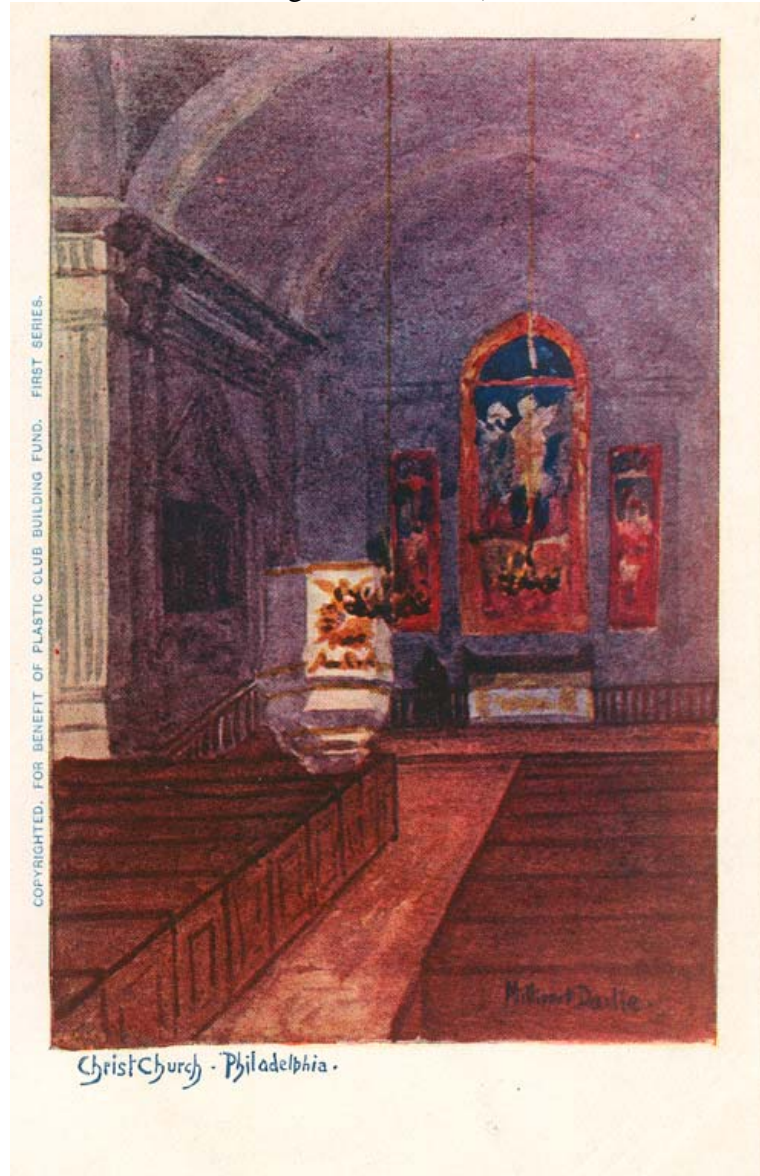


Figure A3. Postcard of the interior of Christ Church, designed by Millicent Drake for the Plastic Club's Building Fund, 1903. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)

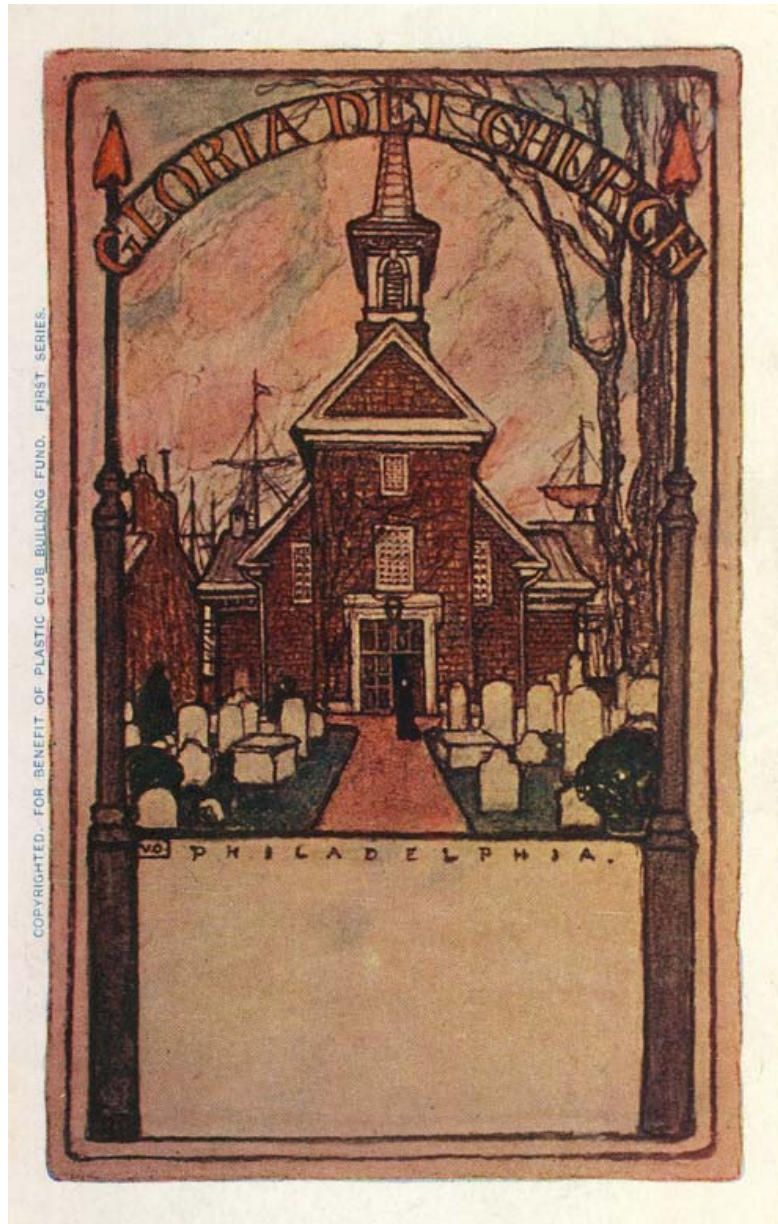


Figure A4. Postcard of Gloria Dei Church, designed by Violet Oakley for the Plastic Club's Building Fund, 1903. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)

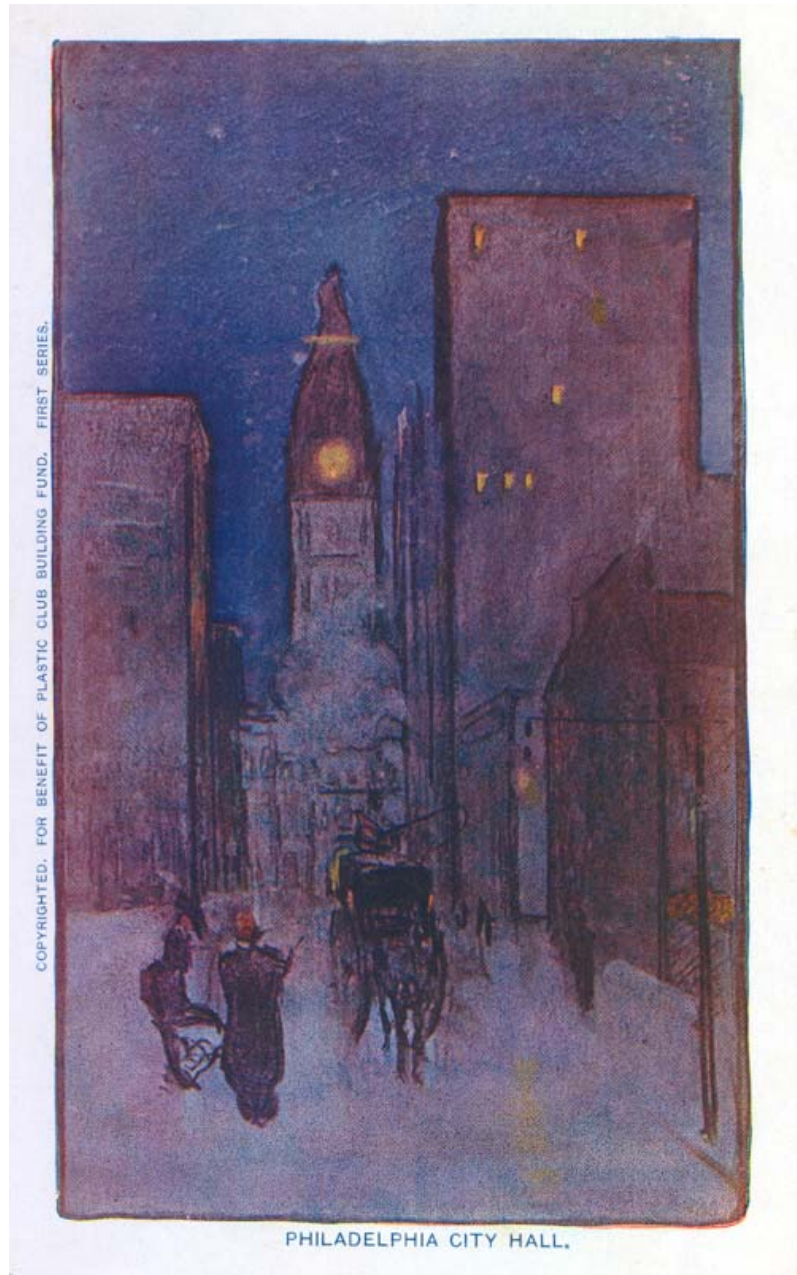


Figure A5. Postcard of Philadelphia City Hall, designed by Paula Himmelsbach for the Plastic Club's Building Fund, 1903. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)

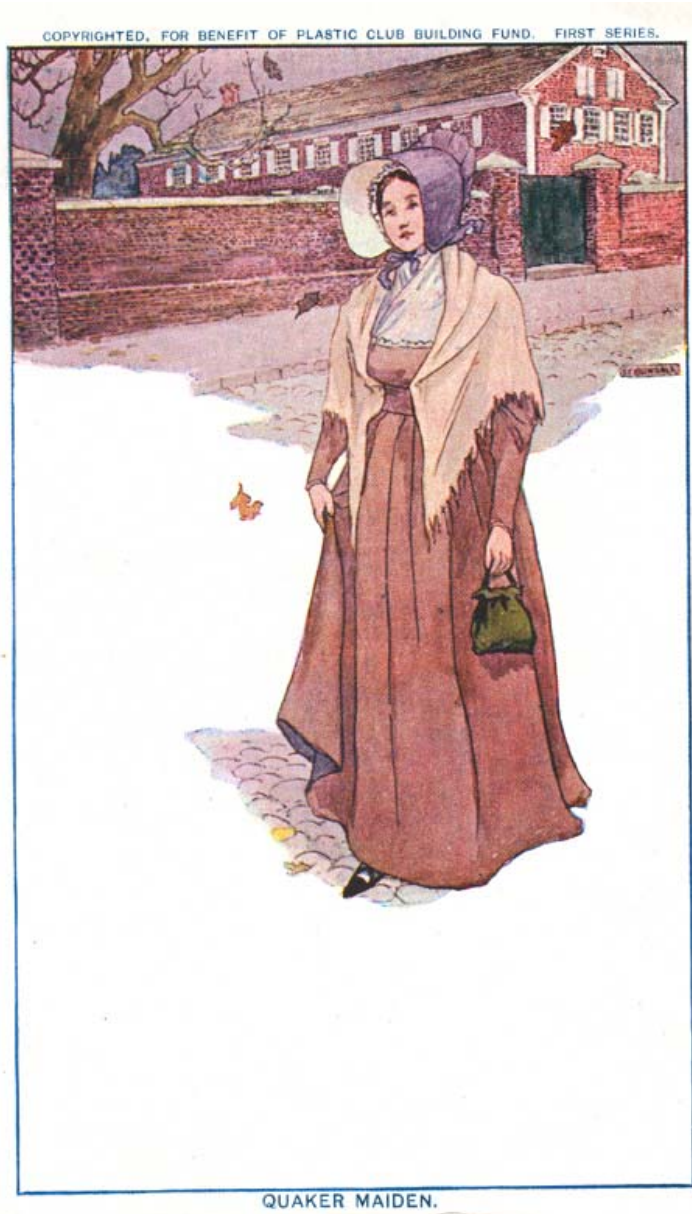


Figure A6. Postcard of a “Quakress and Meeting House” designed by Elizabeth Bonsall for the Plastic Club’s Building Fund, 1903. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)

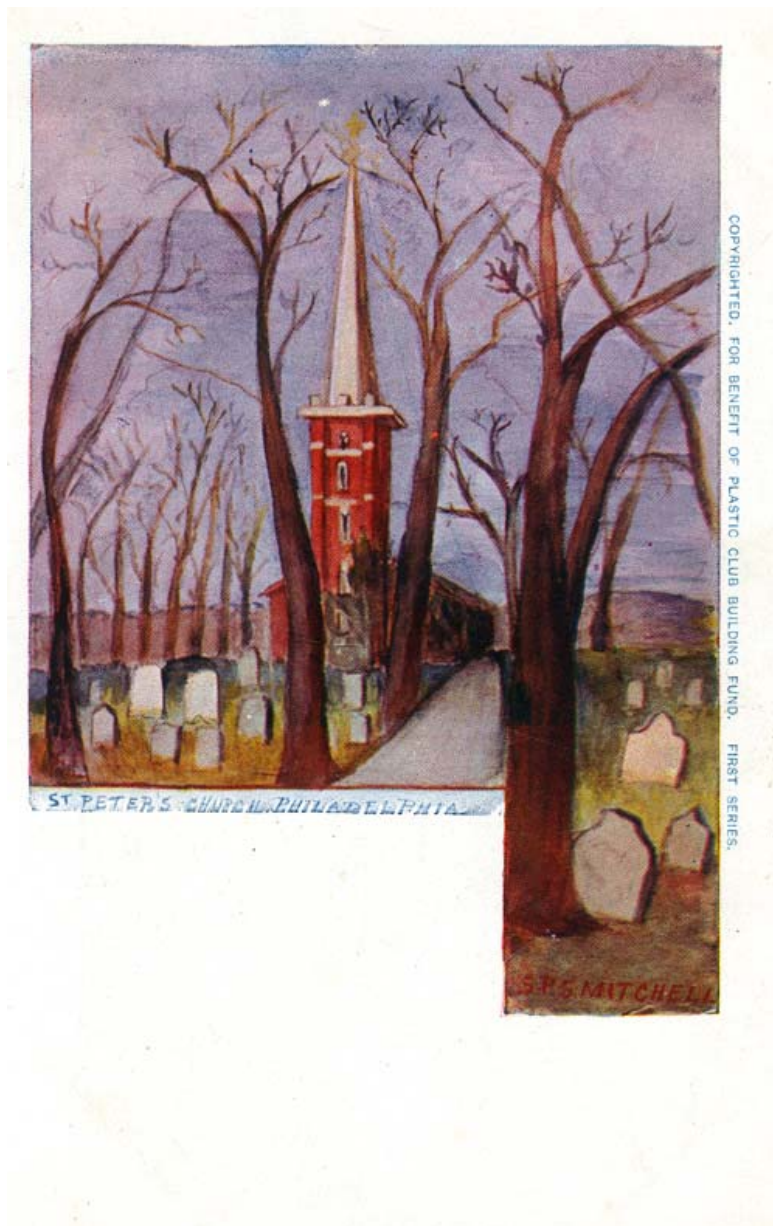


Figure A7. Postcard of St. Peter's Church, designed by Sara Patterson Snowden Mitchell for the Plastic Club's Building Fund, 1903. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)

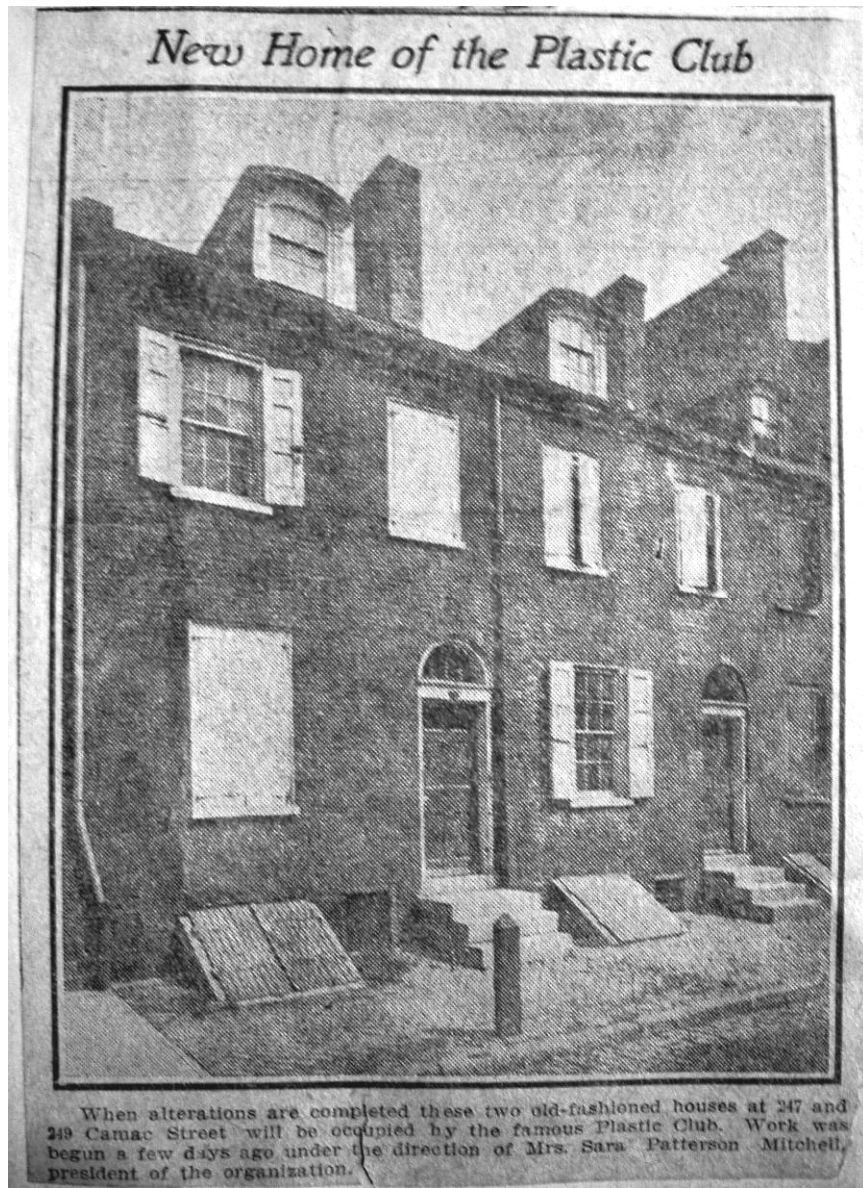


Figure A8. Newspaper clipping showing a photograph of 247 and 249 S. Camac Street, c.1909, before the alterations by the Plastic Club were begun (Source: Plastic Club Scrapbook 1910-1918).



Figure A9. Photograph of the Plastic Club shortly after renovations and alterations were completed, c. 1910. Note that the second floor windows are open, indicating that the gallery was not yet complete at the time of this photograph. (Source: Plastic Club Scrapbook, 1910-1918, p. 2)



Figure A10. Photograph of the interior of the Plastic Club, first floor, looking northeast, c. 1910. (Source: Annual Report of the Plastic Club, 1910.)

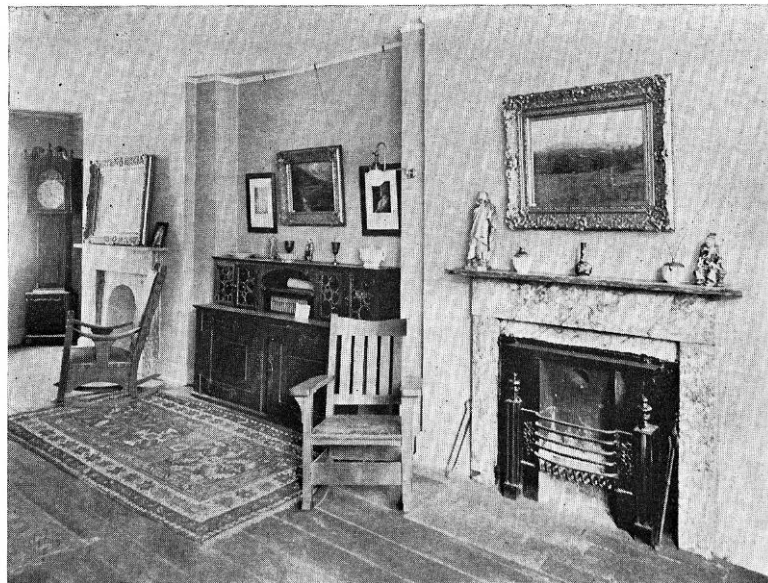


Figure A11. Photograph of the interior of the Plastic Club, first floor, looking northwest, c. 1910. Note the standing clock and the cabinet, the lower section of which is currently in the basement tea room. (Source: Annual Report of the Plastic Club, 1910.)



Figure A12. Photograph of the interior of the Plastic club, second floor studio and gallery, looking northeast, c. 1910. Note the original wood floors. (Source: Annual Report of the Plastic Club, 1910.)



Figure A13. Photograph of the interior of the Plastic Club, second floor studio and gallery, looking northwest, c. 1910. Note the lighting system and the west wall covering the windows. (Source: Annual Report of the Plastic Club, 1910.)



Figure A14. Photograph of the interior of the Plastic Club, second floor studio and gallery, looking southwest, c. 1910. Note the radiator along the wall. (Source: Annual Report of the Plastic Club, 1910.)



Figure A15. Newspaper clipping of a photograph from the 1909 Rabbit themed “The Houseboat on the Styx.” (Source: Plastic Club Scrapbook, 1910-1918.)



Figure A16. Photographs from a Rabbit themed “Twelfth-Night Party”, c. 1917, with Sarah P. Snowden-Mitchell, Lydia Mount, Mary D. Ritchie, and Mary Carnell. (Source: Plastic Club Scrapbook, 1910-1918, p. 53)



Figure A17. Photograph from a Rabbit, undated. Note the dark walls and the color contrasts of the stairs. (Source: Plastic Club Scrapbook, 1910-1918, p. 128)

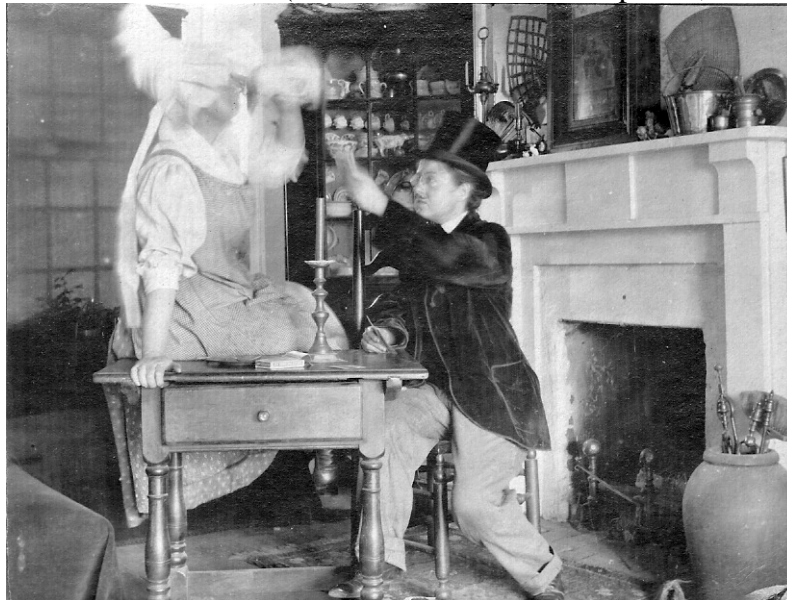


Figure A18. Photograph from a Rabbit, undated, in the board room. Note the various items on the mantle and the full set of china in the cupboard behind. (Source: Plastic Club Archives.)

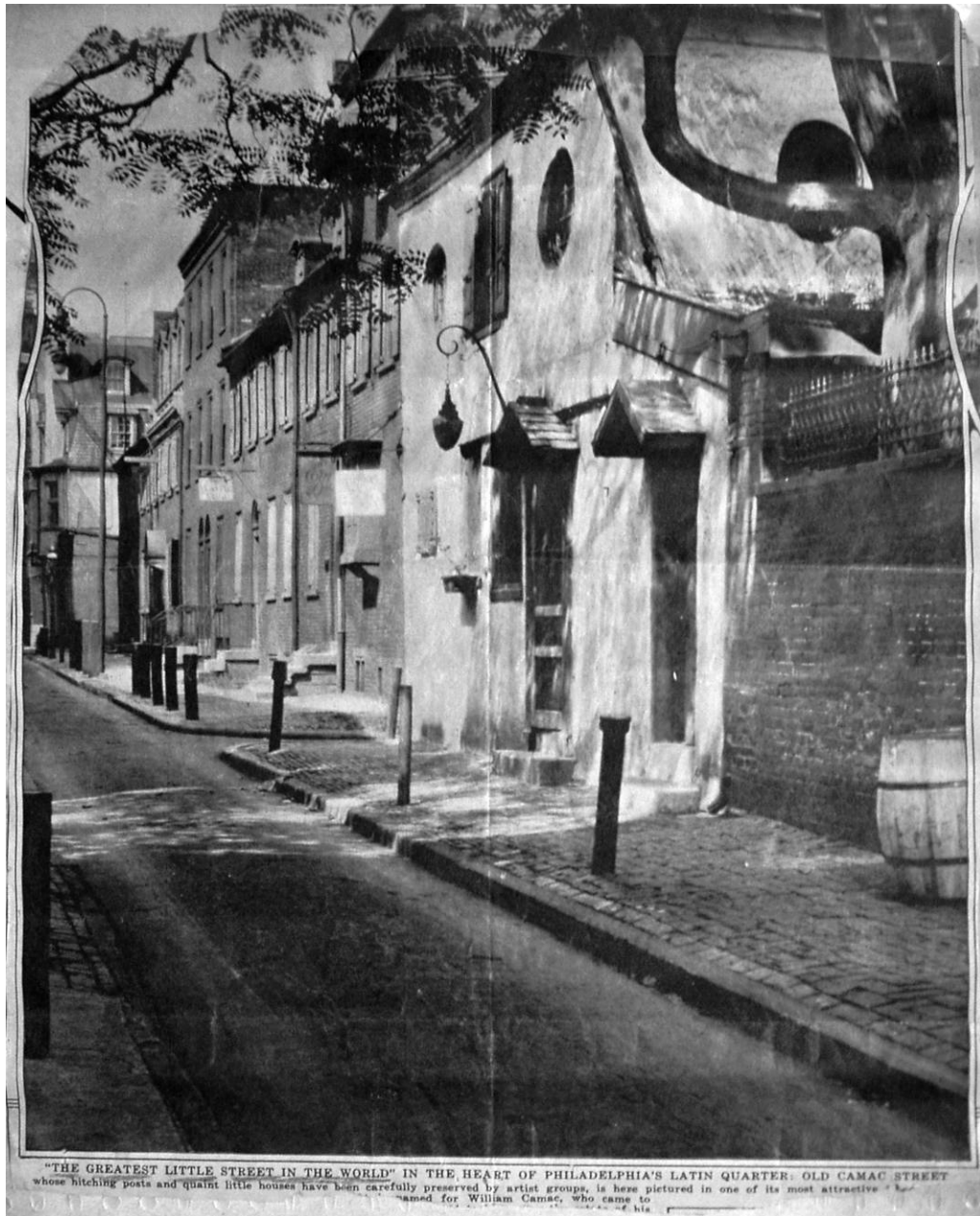


Figure A19. Newspaper clipping showing a photograph of Camac Street, looking northeast, with the Plastic Club in the background, c. 1935-1940. (Source: Plastic Club Scrapbook, 1930s)

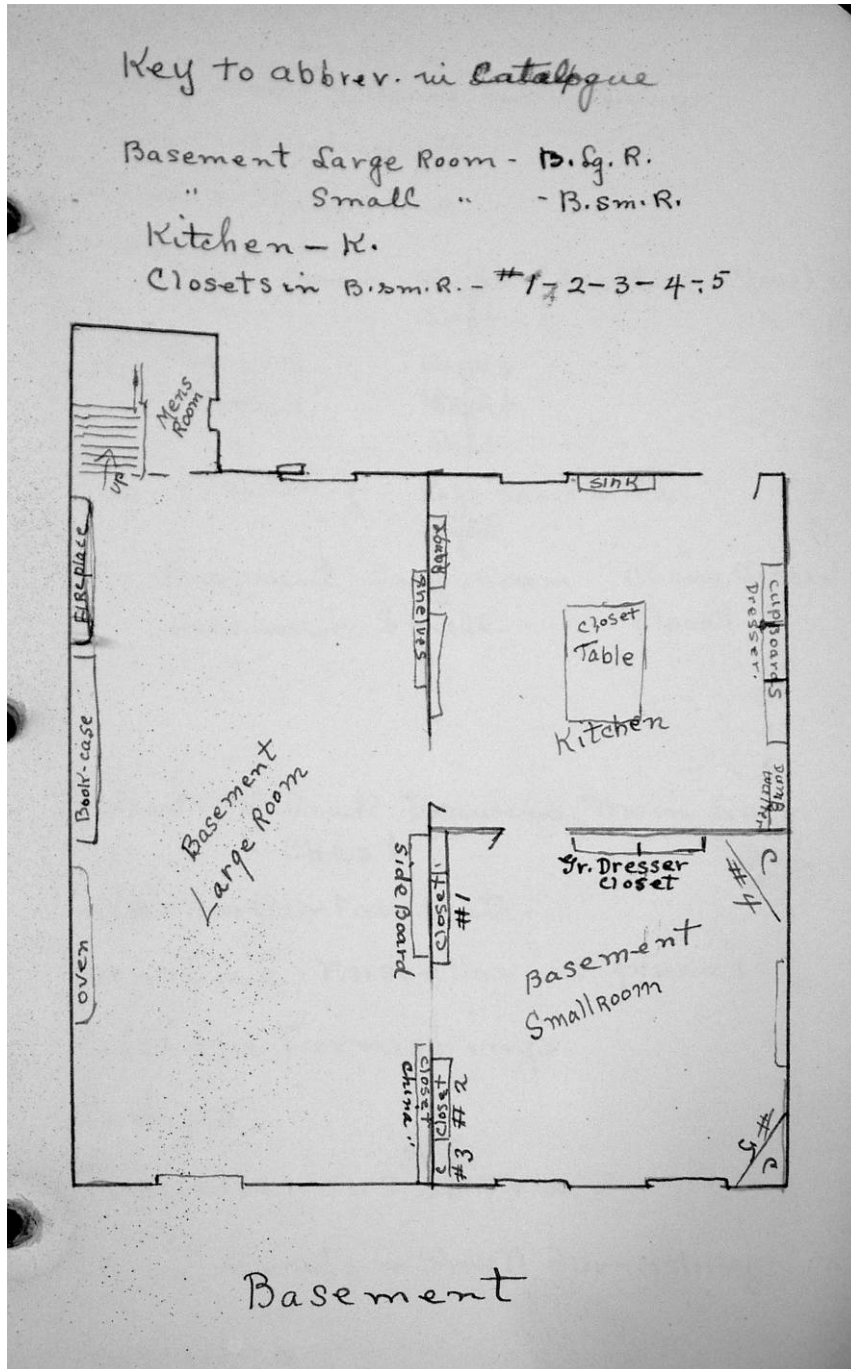


Figure A20. Page from the 1942 inventory of the Club House furnishings.
 (Source: Plastic Club Archives)

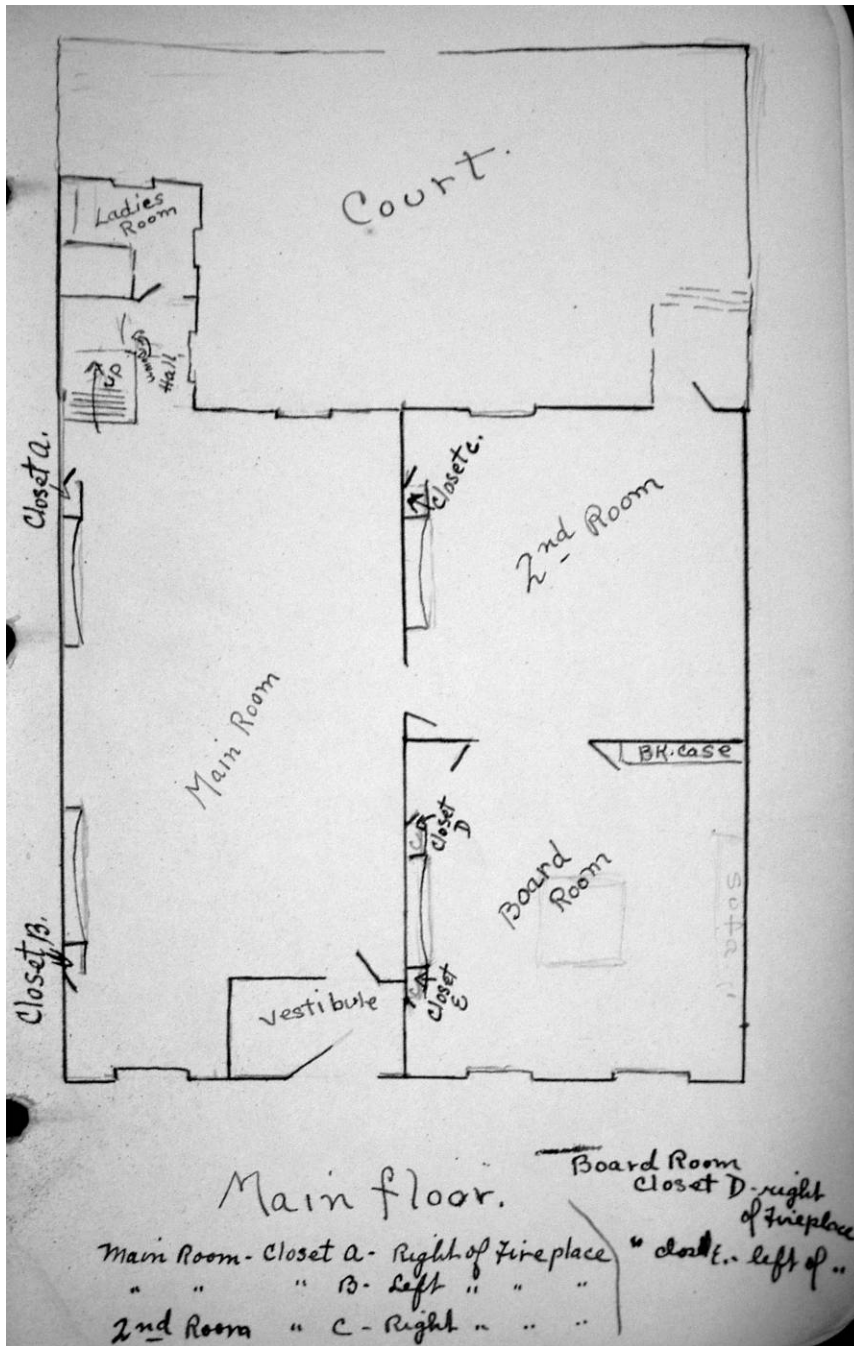


Figure A21. Page from the 1942 inventory of the Club House furnishings.
 (Source: Plastic Club Archives)

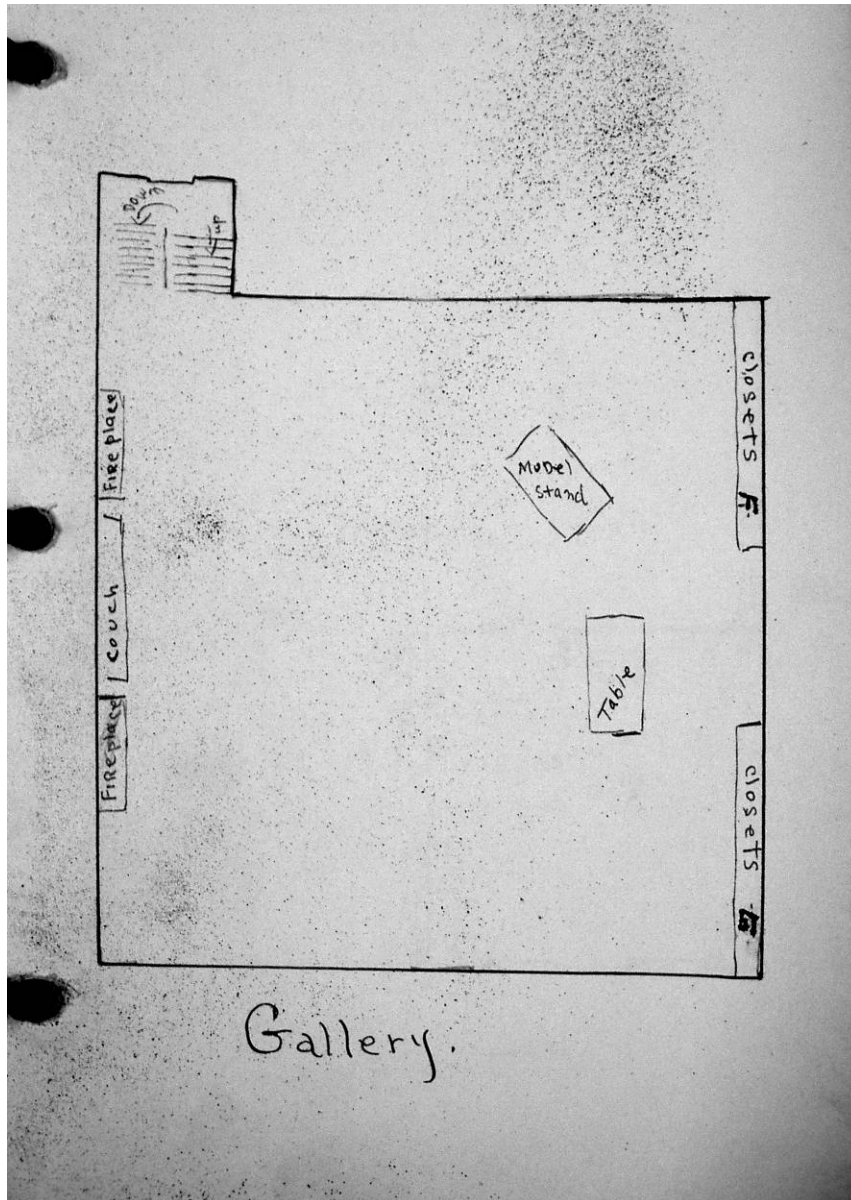


Figure A22. Page from the 1942 inventory of the Club House furnishings.
(Source: Plastic Club Archives)



Figure A23. Photograph of the Plastic Club, 1959. Note the dark color of the exterior woodwork, the sunken lightwells at the basement level, and the closed shutters at the second floor. (Source: Plastic Club Archives)



Figure A24. Undated photograph of the studio, after the installation of the pegboard in 1962. Note the florescent lights and the shades over the dormer windows. (Source: Plastic Club Archives)



Figure A25. 1966 photograph of club members having tea in the first floor tea room. Note the absence of pegboard and the glass rear door. (Source: Plastic Club Archives)

Appendix B. Current Plans and Photographs¹⁰⁴

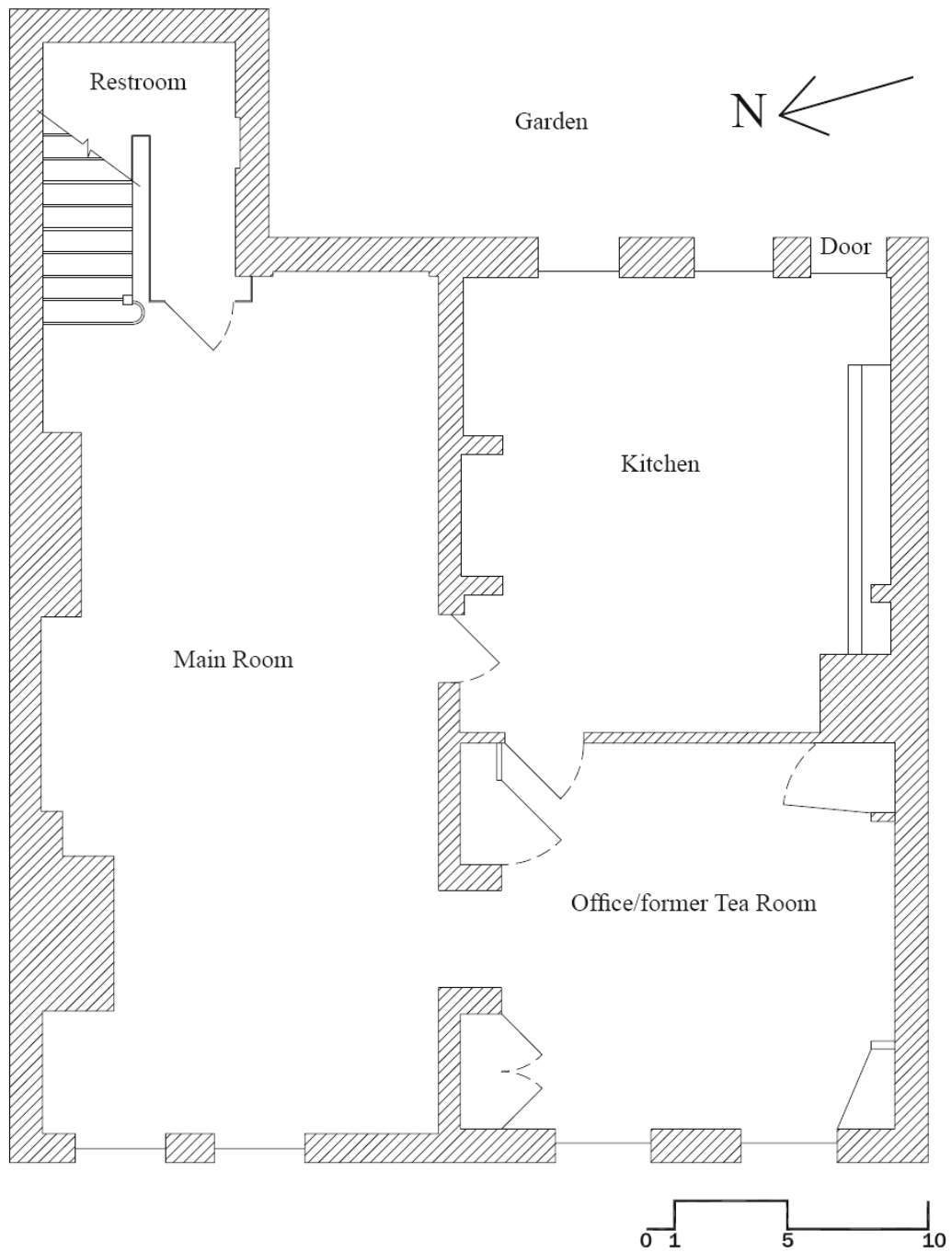


Figure B1. Floorplan of the basement of the Plastic Club.

¹⁰⁴ All drawings and photographs by the author unless otherwise noted.

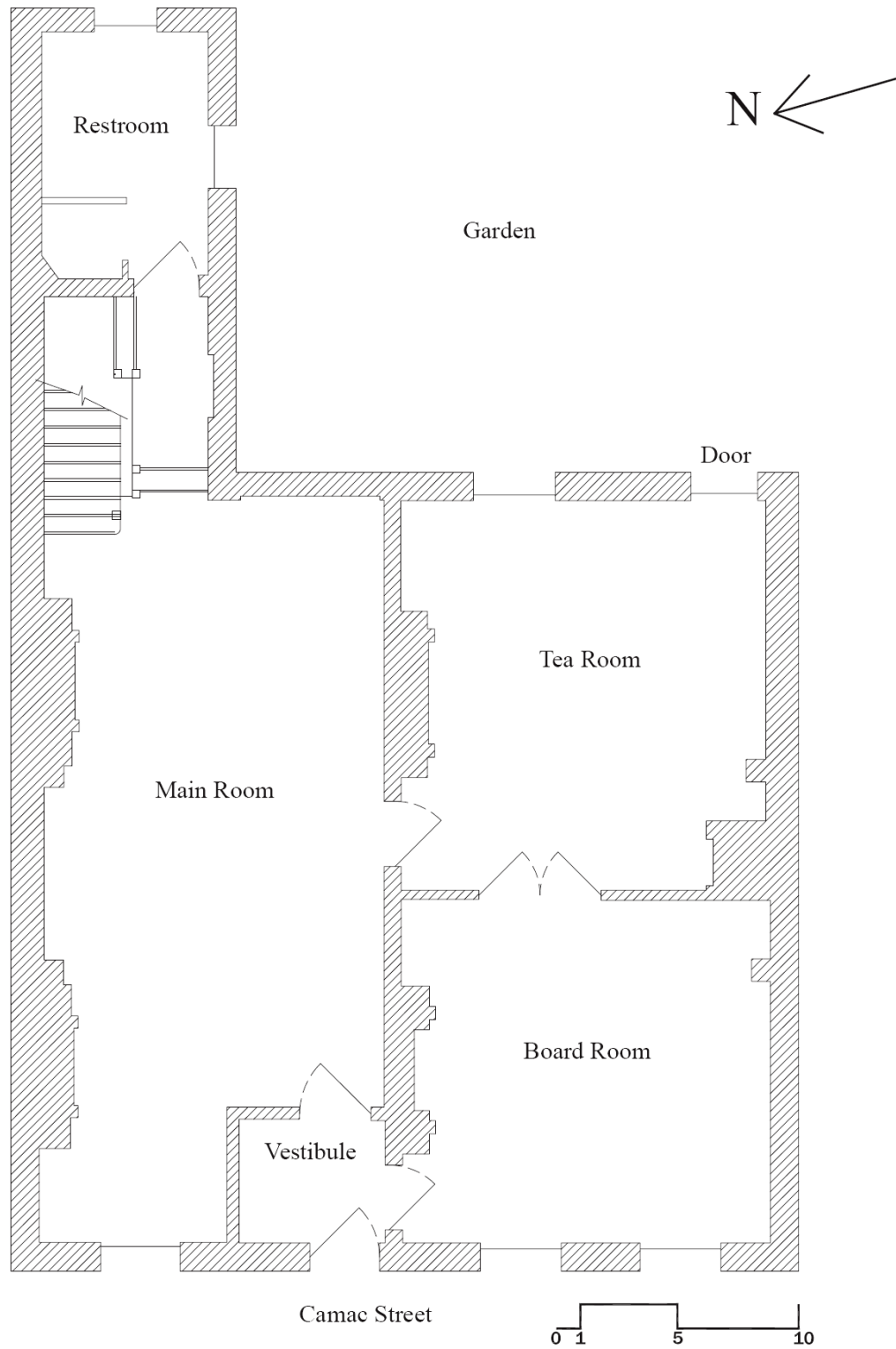


Figure B2. Floorplan of the first floor of the Plastic Club.

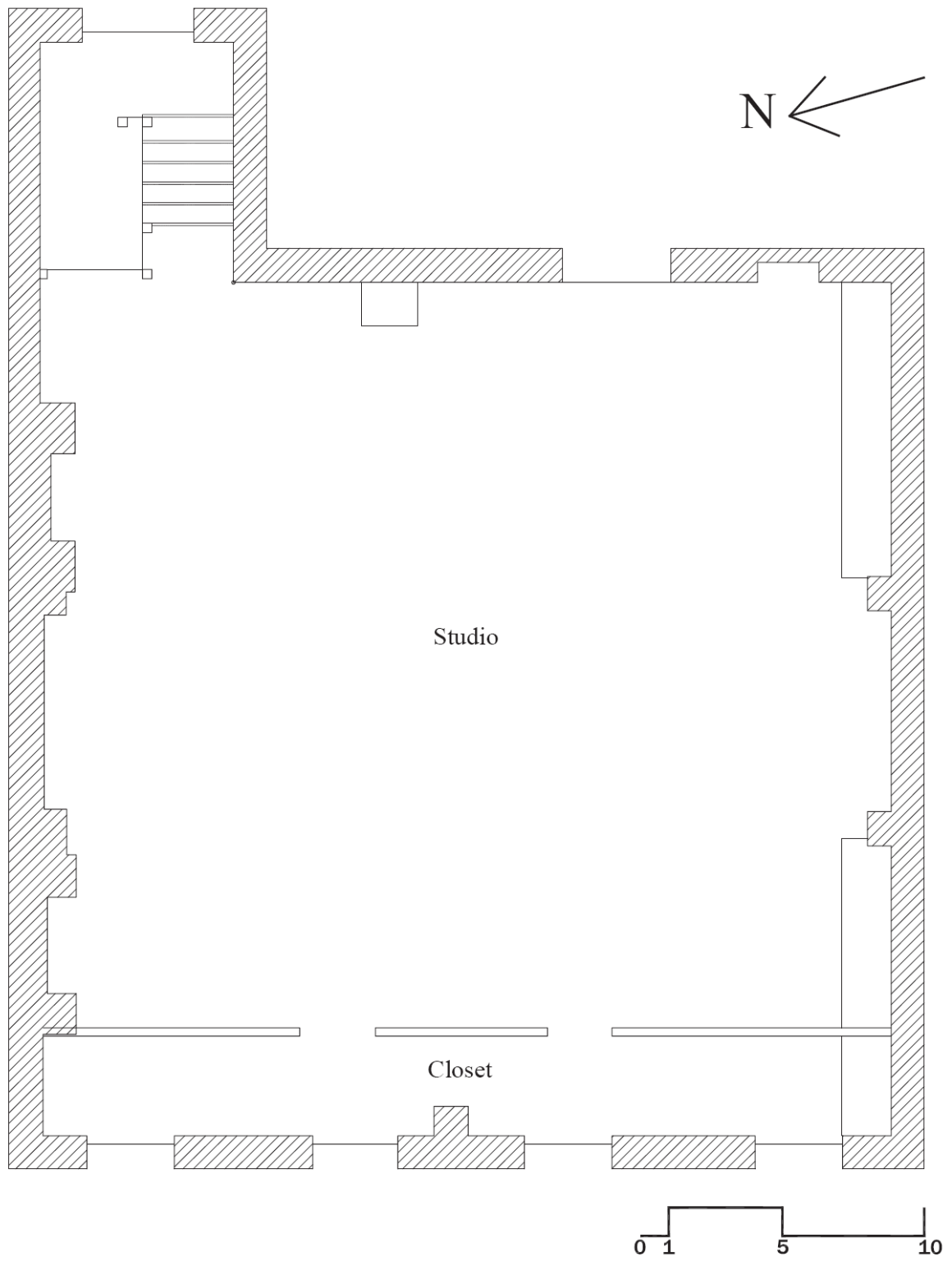


Figure B3. Floorplan of the second floor of the Plastic Club.



Figure B4. Exterior façade of 247 S. Camac Street, looking southeast.



Figure B5. Exterior façade of 247 S. Camac Street, looking northeast.



Figure B6. Exterior façade of 247 S. Camac Street, front door.



Figure B7. Exterior façade of 247 S. Camac Street, southern half (former 249 S. Camac Street). Note slight discoloration in the mortar on the right side, where the front door of 249 S. Camac Street was removed.



Figure B8. Exterior façade of 247 S. Camac Street, second story. Note the efflorescence on the brick between the middle windows.



Figure B9. Exterior façade of 247 S. Camac Street, detail of the cornice and efflorescence on the brick.



Figure B10. Exterior façade of 247 S. Camac Street, north corner. Note the ghost of the historic fire insurance marker that was stolen in 1931.



Figure B11. Rear façade, southern half. Note the poor condition of the dormer window.



Figure B12. Rear façade, southern half. Note the rust stains on the brick below the fire escape and the peeling paint on the lower part of the wall.



Figure B13. Rear façade, southern end showing the iron fire escape. (Michael Guinn included in the photograph.)



Figure B14. Rear façade, north end, showing the rear stairwell and restroom extension.



Figure B15. Rear façade, southern face of the rear stairwell extension on the north end. Note the areas of mortar loss on the wall.



Figure B16. Rear façade, northern end and rear stairwell extension.



Figure B17. Rear façade of the stairwell extension, window of the landing at mid-level. Note the peeling paint and areas of decay on the wood window frame.



Figure B18. Rear (east-facing) window of the restroom extension. Note the paint loss and wood deterioration on the window frame.



Figure B19. Rear façade, basement level passageway, looking north. Note the window to the basement restroom filled with concrete and the green biogrowth on the brick walls and concrete floor.



Figure B20. Rear façade, basement level passageway. Note the peeling paint and closed windows at the basement level.



Figure B21. Rear façade, southernmost basement window. Note the peeling paint on the shutters and the green biogrowth growing at the bottom of the wall.



Figure B22. Rear garden retaining wall, northern vaulted storage area. Note the white staining and green biogrowth.



Figure B23. Rear garden retaining wall, northern vaulted storage area. Note the shelf brackets along the wall.



Figure B24. Rear garden retaining wall, northern vaulted storage area. Note the opening in the ceiling.



Figure B25. View of the garden from the first floor rear door, looking northeast.



Figure B26. Rear door of the garden wall, fronting on Fawn Street.



Figure B27. Basement main room, looking northeast to the stairs and the restroom. Note the green panel of sheetrock patching at the lower portion of the wall to the right.

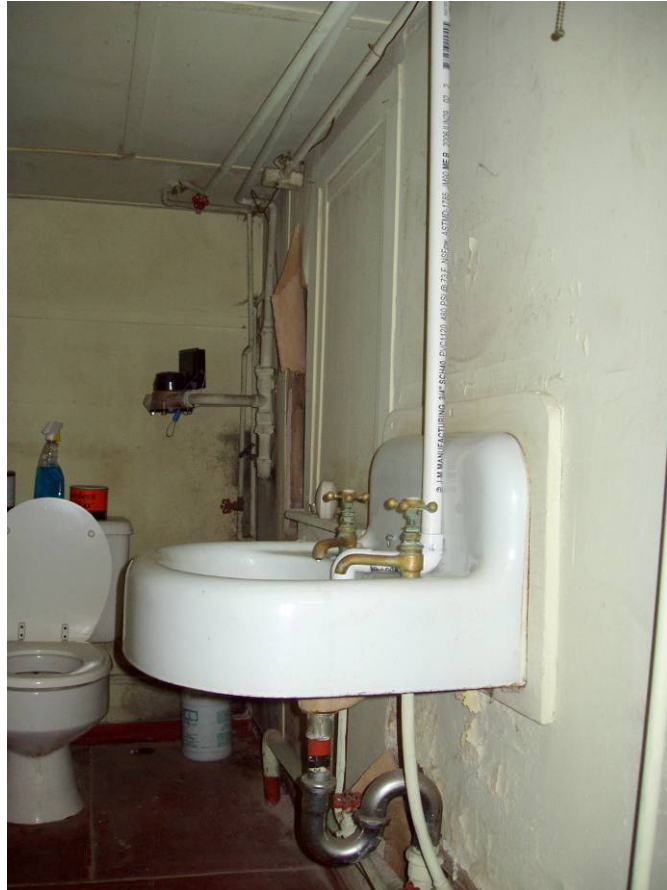


Figure B28. Basement restroom. Note the boarded up window and water damage on the wall below the sink.



Figure B29. Basement restroom, southeast corner. Note the sever water damage on the walls.



Figure B30. Basement restroom, northeast corner underneath the stairs. Note the water damage on the walls and ceiling.



Figure B31. Basement main room, looking southwest.



Figure B32. Basement main room, north wall. Note the original gas wall fixtures, updated for electricity.



Figure B33. Basement main room, fireplace. Note the gas-burning space heater installed in the fireplace.



Figure B34. Basement main room, south wall. Note the original gas wall fixtures, updated for electricity.



Figure B35. Basement main room, ceiling with water pipes and electrical wires. Note the framed opening where the original stairs were located.



Figure B36. Basement main room, looking south into the office.



Figure B37. Basement office, former tea room, southwest corner.



Figure B38. Basement office, former tea room, looking south. Note the water damage and peeling paint on the brick wall below the table.



Figure B39. Basement office, former tea room, east wall with the bookshelf.



Figure B40. Basement office, former tea room, northeast corner.



Figure B41. Basement office, former tea room, northeast corner. Note the framed brick support above the archway, indicating a support for a fireplace above. It is probable that a fireplace below this was removed for the addition of this arch.



Figure B42. Basement, kitchen fireplace. Note the sheetrock patch at the lower left on the wall.



Figure B43. Basement kitchen, looking southeast. Note the pegboard covering the original windows behind the sink.



Figure B44. Basement kitchen, looking south. These cabinets were reconstructed in 1940 using the original materials.



Figure B45. Basement kitchen, southwest corner, showing dumbwaiter.

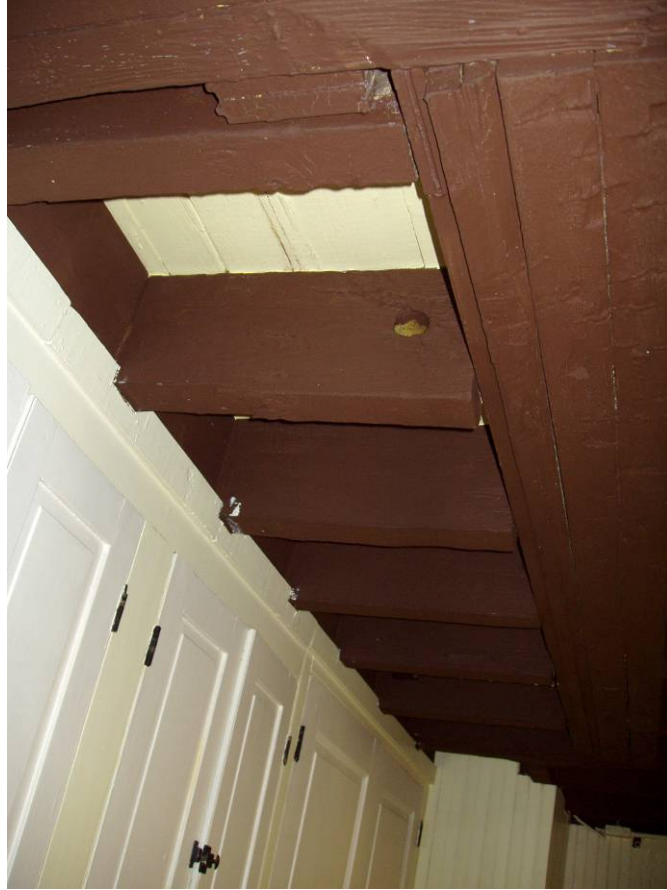


Figure B46. Basement kitchen, framed opening along southern wall where original stairs were located.



Figure B47. Basement kitchen, northeast corner.



Figure B48. Basement kitchen, looking northwest. Note the water pipes and electrical lines running along and through the ceiling beams, also the green sheetrock patch along the lower portion of the wall.



Figure B49. First floor main room, looking southwest.



Figure B50. First floor main room, looking southeast.



Figure B51. First floor main room, original floors with paint and matting residue.



Figure B52. First floor main room, northeast corner. King of Prussia marble mantle dates to 1840s with original coal stove.



Figure B53. First floor main room, northwest corner. Matching King of Prussia marble mantle, but the stove has been removed and the interior filled.



Figure B54. First floor main room, northeast fireplace. Note the original cabinet along the side of the fireplace extension.



Figure B55. First floor main room, northwest window and vent in the ceiling.



Figure B56. First floor main room, view from the restroom looking west.



Figure B57. Window in the first floor rear stairwell extension, south wall.

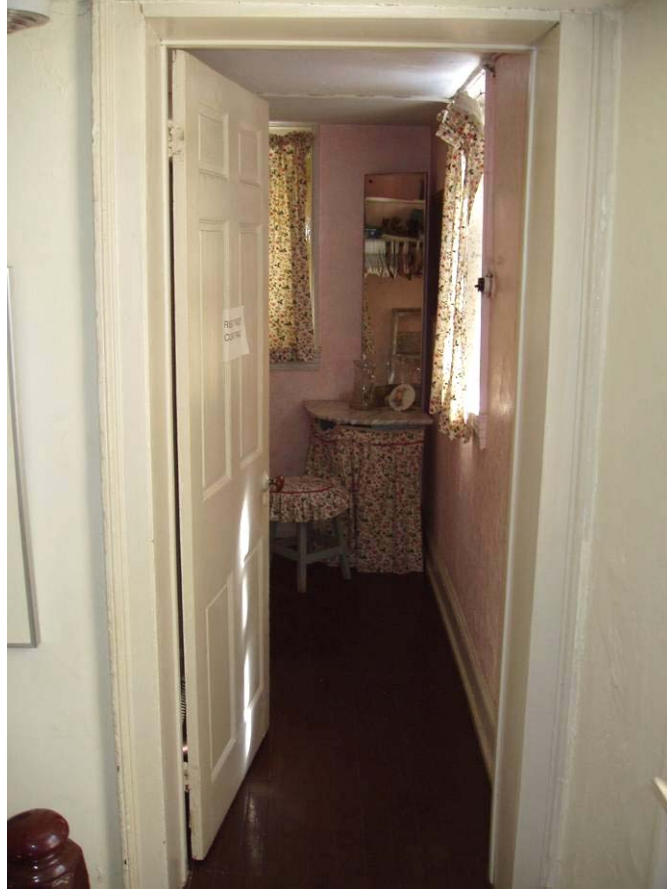


Figure B58. First floor restroom in rear extension, looking west.



Figure B59. First floor restroom in rear extension, ceiling and electrical wiring.



Figure B60. First floor restroom, vanity in southeast corner.



Figure B61. First floor restroom, south wall. Notice the cracks in the wall plaster.



Figure B62. First floor restroom, northwest corner, original sink and toilet enclosure.



Figure B63. First floor Board Room, looking southwest. Note the historic linoleum carpet.



Figure B64. First floor Board Room, looking northeast.

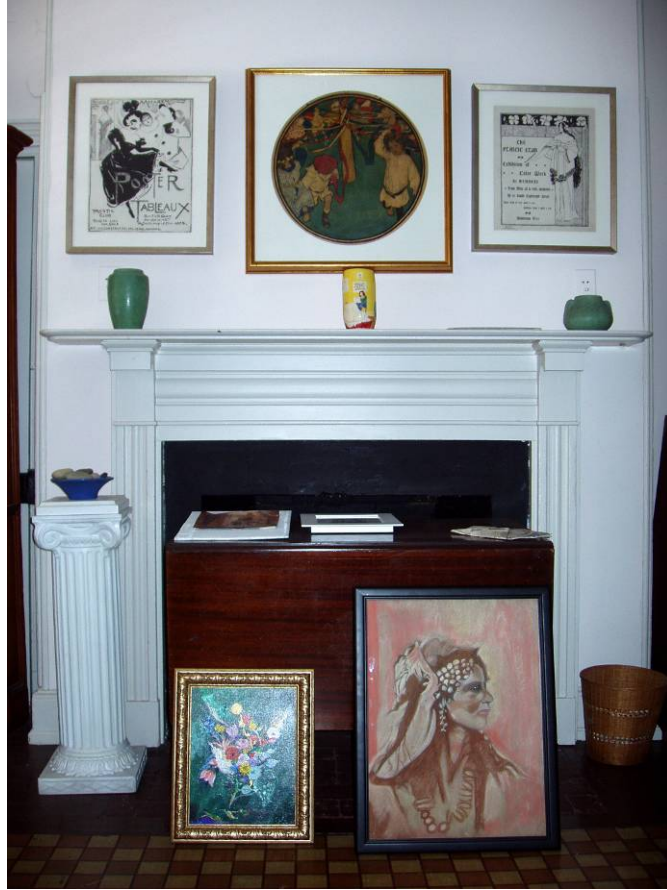


Figure B65. First floor Board Room, original fireplace on north wall. The central piece of artwork above the mantle is an illustration by Jesse Wilcox Smith.



Figure B66. First floor Board room, south wall with bookcase. Note the framed posters from early exhibitions at the Plastic Club and the framed lists of gold and silver medal winners from previous Medals Shows.



Figure B67. First floor Board Room, southeast corner.



Figure B68. First floor Board Room, lower portion of the center of the west wall, showing heat damage from the original radiators.



Figure B69. First floor Board Room, northwest window with vent in the ceiling.



Figure B70. First floor tea room, looking west into the Board Room.



Figure B71. First floor tea room looking northeast, showing original mantle and large mirror donated by a Miss Burt in 1915. Note the gas-burning space heater installed in the fireplace.

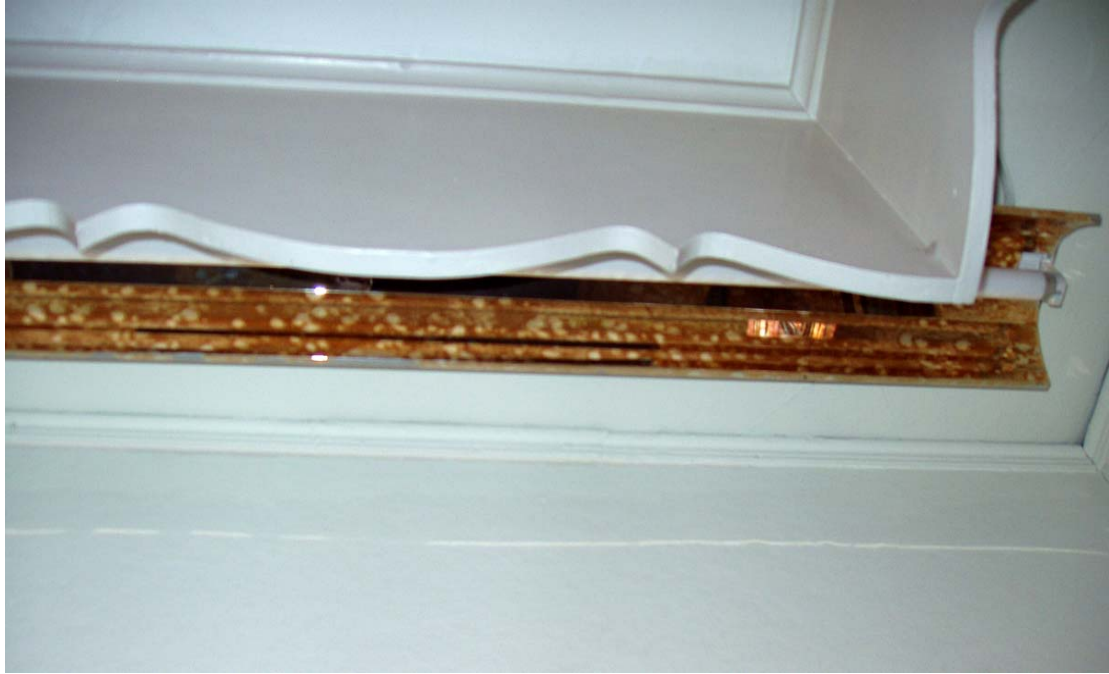


Figure B72. First floor tea room, northeast corner ceiling light and decorative panel.



Figure B73. First floor tea room, southeast corner. Note metal security door and bulls-eye glass in transom above.

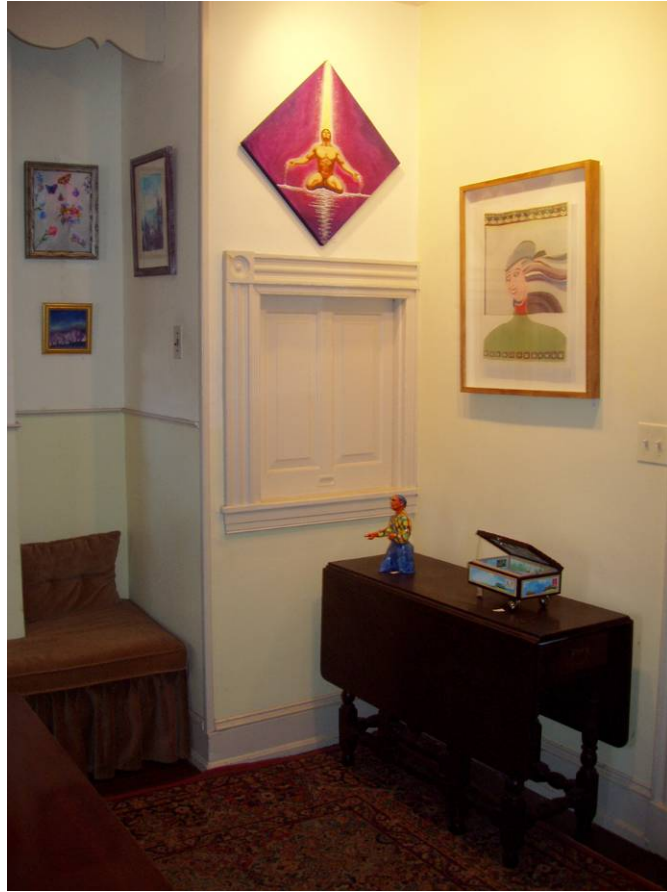


Figure B74. First floor tea room, southwest corner and dumbwaiter.



Figure B75. First floor tea room, southwest corner ceiling showing damage and fallen plaster.



Figure B76. First floor entrance vestibule, looking southwest. Note the door between the two houses inserted at the left, but seemingly never used.



Figure B77. First floor entrance vestibule, second entry door, looking east.



Figure B78. First floor entrance vestibule, northwest corner. The board to the right is where membership applications are posted.

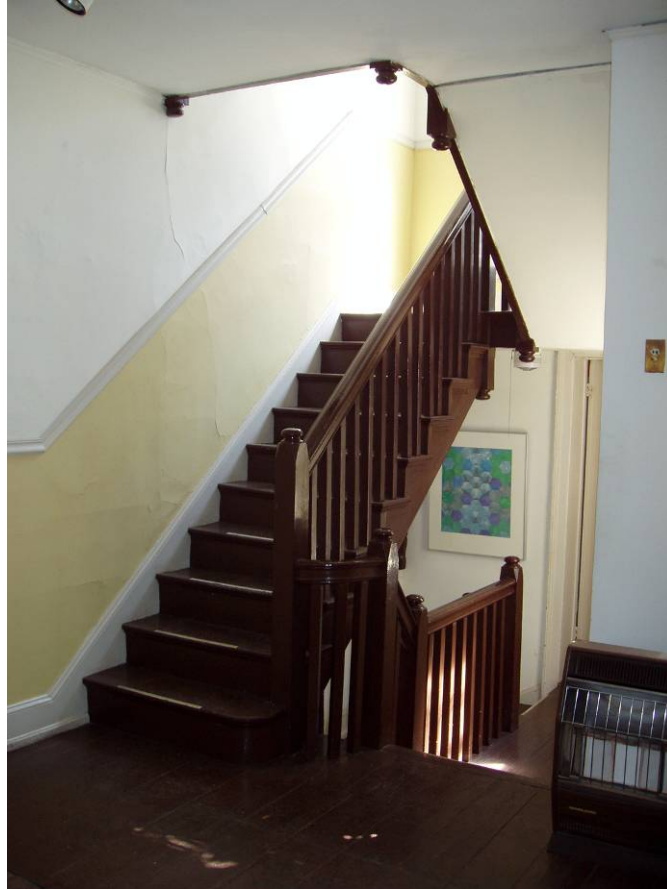


Figure B79. First floor stairway, looking northeast. Note the cracking in the wall plaster.



Figure B80. Stairway and landing window.



Figure B81. Window at stairway landing. Note the HVAC chiller on the roof of the first floor restroom just outside the window.



Figure B82. Second floor studio, looking southwest. Note the new aluminum duct running above the closet along the wall.



Figure B83. Second floor studio, northwest corner. Note the original fireplaces boarded up.



Figure B84. Second floor studio exit door, southeast corner.



Figure B85. Second floor studio, northeast fireplace with gas-burning space heater. This unit is to be removed after the installation of the HVAC unit.



Figure B86. Second floor studio skylight. Note the blackout shade at the bottom of the window and the draw cord hanging from the top, the paint peeling from the upper portion of the window.



Figure B87. Second floor studio skylight, north section. Note the severe water damage in the ceiling from the leak in the skylight, also the HVAC pipes coming into the room from the ceiling.



Figure B88. Second floor studio ceiling and skylight, south section. Note more water damage in the ceiling and along the top of the south wall.



Figure B89. Second floor studio, southeast wall showing cracking and water damage.



Figure B90. Second floor studio, front window inside the closet. These windows have only recently been opened, and the woodwork has not be repaired or repainted.

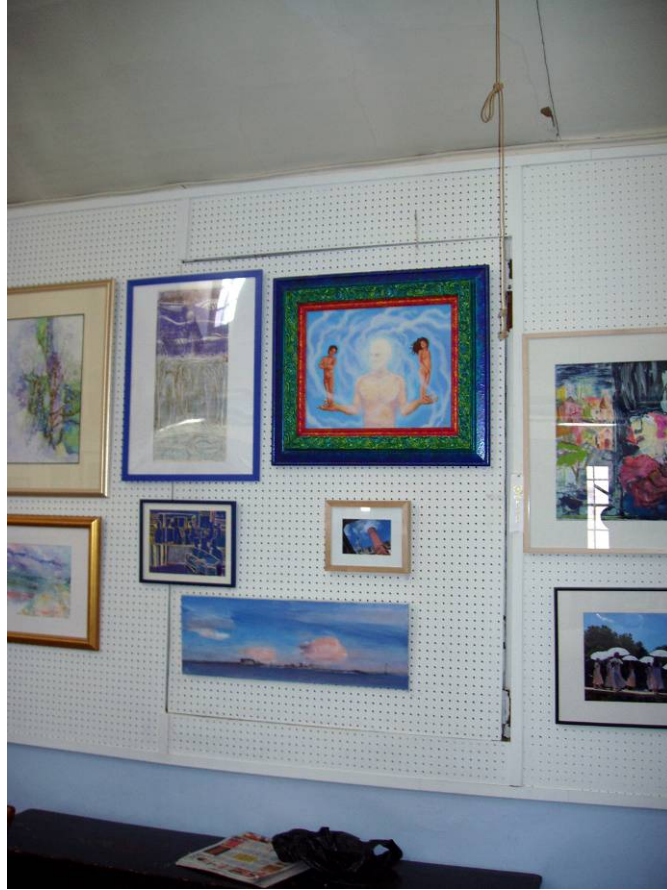


Figure B91. Second floor studio, east wall with window opening. Note the outline in the pegboard where the window is covered and the hinges along the right side.



Figure B92. Second floor studio, lower portion at the eastern wall at the south, showing early monks' cloth under the layers of paint.



Figure B93. Second floor studio, upper portion of the south wall at the west, showing the early monks' cloth under layers of paint.



Figure B94. Second floor studio rear southern dormer window. Note the cracking and flaking in the wall plaster around the window.



Figure B95. Second floor studio front north dormer window. Note the water damage and peeling on the plaster walls, also the piping into the HVAC unit at the right.



Figure B96. Second floor studio closet, area between pegboard partition and the front wall, looking south.



Figure B97. Second floor studio, newly installed HVAC unit in the northwest corner in the closet.



Figure B98. Second floor studio, electrical control panel and newly installed thermostat on the north wall.



Figure B99. Roof and party wall, looking north. Note the areas on the brick wall showing mortar and brick loss.



Figure B100. Roof and north party wall. Note the outline of the original roof of the building and the opening in the roof for the HVAC pipes.



Figure B101. Skylight exterior, western corner. Note the variety of materials surrounding the window panes.



Figure B102. Skylight exterior, eastern corner. Note the buildup of tar in the attempt to fix the leak, but the flashing is incomplete.



Figure B103. Back of the skylight, looking north.



Figure B104. Chairs in the Board Room. The two “Fancy Chairs” (first and third from the left) are 19th-century period pieces, but the Greek Revival chairs (second and fourth) are 20th-century reproductions (Dating assessment courtesy of Gail Caskey Winkler).



Figure B105. Painted “Fancy Chair” in the Board Room dating the 1830s. (Dating assessment courtesy of Gail Caskey Winkler).



Figure B106. English Windsor chair, early 19th century, in the basement (Dating assessment courtesy of Gail Caskey Winkler).



Figure B107. Slant-front secretary desk in the Board Room dating to the 1830s, possibly made of Tigerwood or Mahogany (Dating assessment courtesy of Gail Caskey Winkler).



Figure B108. Tall corner bookcase in the Board Room donated by Francis Tipton Hunter in 1957.



Figure B109. Tall case clock dating to the early 19th century in the first floor main room (Dating assessment courtesy of Gail Caskey Winkler).



Figure B110. Glass display case, supposedly from John Wanamaker's store, dating to the late 19th century, in the first floor main room.



Figure B111. Classical Revival sofa dating to the 1830s or 1840s in the first floor main room.



Figure B112. European wood chest dating to the early 17th century in the second floor studio (Dating assessment courtesy of Gail Caskey Winkler).



Figure B113. Gold and silver medals for the 95th Medals Show at the Plastic Club in 2007.

**Appendix C: Franklin Fire Insurance Survey for 247 S. Camac Street, 1890¹⁰⁵
(Transcription)**

Perpetual Survey No. 69508
Made March 7th, 1890 for Bradbury Bedell
And Reported to the Franklin Fire Insurance Co. of Philadelphia

A two and a half story brick dwelling house situate on the east side of Dean St. No. 247 beginning 185 ft north from Spruce St in the Seventh ward of the City of Philadelphia. Dimensions 15ft front by 32 ft deep. Marble steps and platform to front, outside cellar doors in front with marble cheeks and sill. Cased window frames front and back outside panel shutters to them, sash single hung Hemlock joist yellow pine flooring in first story white pine flooring in second story and attic and building plastered.

The first story is in two rooms entry and close stairs to second story with basement steps under off the side. A circular head front doorframe with a transom sash and panel front door. A plain dooframe back and panel door. A 12 light 10x13 window front, a 16 light do back a plain marble mantel and jamb closets in each room, molding finish, 6 in molded washboard. 6/4 double faced folding doors 5/4 double faced passage and single do basement door. Story 9 ft.

The second story is in two rooms with entry and close winding stairs to attic between them. 2-12 light 9x12 windows front and one back. A plain marble mantel and two closets in front room a plain wood mantel and two closets in back room. A 3 light transom over entry doors, molding finish, 5 in beaded washboard and 5/4 and 4/4 single faced doors. Story 9 ft.

The attic is in two rooms box entry and stairway between them. A 12 light 9x11 circular top dormer window front and a pediment top do back. Modling finish, 5 in beaded washboard and 5/4 single faced doors. Story 7 ft under the collar beams and a double pitch tin roof to the front and back and brick eave and tin conductor front and back also.

The basement under back room is fitted up as a kitchen and has a doorframe and panel door back a twin window in 24 lights of 8x10 sash, molding finish, 5 in beaded washboard, a do under basement steps, 4/4 single faced passage and closet doors. A dresser with panel doors. A wood mantel shelf and an open fireplace. Story 7ft 6 in. An open shed on the rear 10 ft wide having a tin roof and tin conductor.

Samuel Hillman Surveyor.

¹⁰⁵ Franklin Fire Insurance Company Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

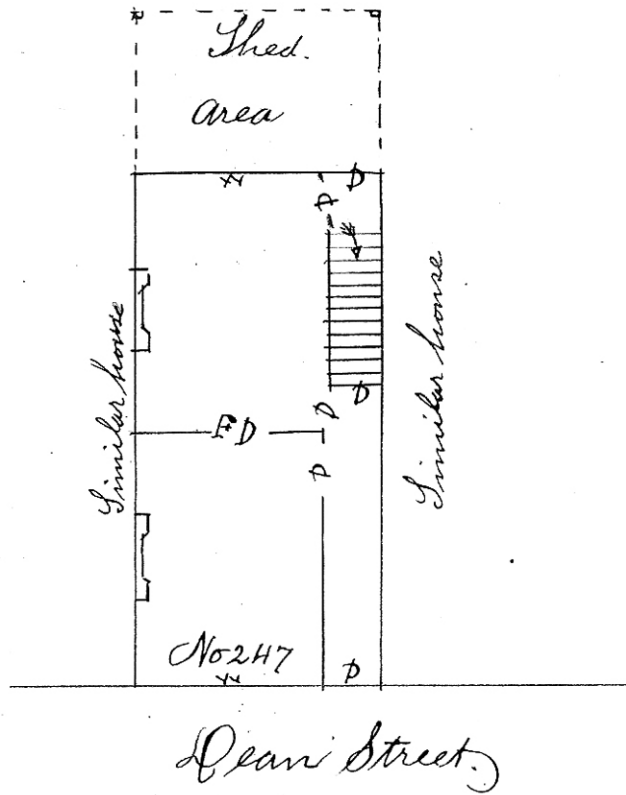


Figure C1. Sketch of the plan of 247 S. Camac Street from the Franklin Fire Insurance Survey.

Appendix D: Plastic Club Constitution and By-Laws (Revised 1982)

Constitution

Article I

Name

The Name of this club shall be The Plastic Club-Art Club.

Article II

Object

The object of this club shall be to promote a wider knowledge of Art and to advance its interests by means of social intercourse among artists.

Article III

Membership

The Members of the Club are engaged in the practice of Art in any of its branches; Associate members, are interested in the arts.

Article IV

Officers

The Officers of the Club shall be a President, a First, Second and Third Vice President, a Recording and a Corresponding Secretary, and a Treasurer, who shall be elected biennially by the members of the Club for the term of two years. Their powers and duties be such as are prescribed by the By-Laws.

Article V

Directors

The Club shall have a Board of Directors, a majority of whom shall constitute a quorum, consisting of the Officers and the Chairmen of the Standing Committees, who shall hold office for two years, and have control and management of the property, funds and affairs of the Club, pursuant to the Laws and in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws.

Article VI

Chairmen of Standing Committees

The chairmen of the Standing Committees shall be elected biennially at the same meeting at which the Officers are elected.

Article VII

Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a regular meeting of the Club, provided that notice of the proposed amendment shall have been given in writing at the monthly meeting immediately preceding that at which proposed amendment is to be acted upon and due notice shall have been sent to each member at least ten days prior to the meeting at which amendments are to be considered. The quorum necessary for the amendment shall consist of not less than twenty members.

By-Laws

Article I

Powers and Duties of Officers

President

Section 1. The President of the Club shall preside over all the meetings of the Club and the Board of Directors, and shall be ex-officio a member of all committees.

Section 2. The President shall appoint all committees not otherwise provided for in the constitution.

Section 3. The President shall announce the names of all newly elected members at the first regular monthly meeting immediately following their election.

Section 4. The President shall give an annual report of the general work of the club.

Section 5. The President shall neither propose nor endorse any applicant for membership.

Vice Presidents

Section 6. The Vice-Presidents, in their order, shall preside in the case of absence, resignation or death of the President, and shall exercise the powers and perform the duties of the said President.

Recording Secretary

Section 7. The Recording Secretary shall record the proceedings and votes of all meetings, regular and special, of the Board of Directors and of the Club. She shall make a report at the Annual Meeting of all important actions taken by the Club or Board during the preceding year.

Corresponding Secretary

Section 8. The Corresponding Secretary shall conduct the correspondence of the Club and of the Board of Directors. She shall take charge of the Club Seal.

Treasurer

Section 9. The Treasurer shall collect and under the direction of the Board of Directors, disburse the funds of the Club. She shall report at each monthly meeting and the annual meeting of the Club on the condition of the treasury. Her accounts shall be audited yearly by the Finance Chairman and her Committee, excepting the Treasurer (transferred to a professional auditor). She shall keep the funds of the Club in a separate bank account to the credit of the Plastic Club and giving her signature as Treasurer.

Article II

Board of Directors

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall direct and supervise the affairs of the Club, subject to such restrictions and provisions as are to be found in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Board of Directors.

Section 3. Appointments for any vacancy caused by the resignation, removal or death of an Officer of the Club or any member of an elective committee, the filling of which is not

otherwise provided for, shall be made for the unexpired term by the Board of Directors and the Membership at Large.

Article III

Chairmen of Standing Committees

Section 1. The Chairmen of all Standing Committees shall select their own committees in such numbers as needed.

Section 2. The Chairman of a Standing Committee shall transact all executive business of the committee.

Section 3. No unusual expenses shall be incurred by the Chairman of a Standing Committee without the sanction of the Board of Directors.

Section 4. The Chairmen of Standing Committees shall be required to give a detailed report each month to the Board of Directors and to the Club.

Section 5. The chairman or any member of any Committee absent without sufficient excuse may be removed from said Committee and the office filled by another member subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

Section 6. The President shall be duly notified in advance of all meetings by the Chairmen of Standing Committees.

Section 7. The use of the Club's name is positively prohibited in any individual or public action of Committees or members without the sanction of the Board.

Article IV

Elective Standing Committees

Membership Committee

Section 1. Supervised by 1st Vice President, who will keep an accurate list of members, with their addresses, for the use of all Club members.

Committee on Exhibitions

Section 2. The Exhibition Chairman shall select a committee in such numbers as needed. If the need arises, she may obtain paid outside help.

Section 3. The Exhibition Chairman shall arrange exhibits during the year with Board approval to include members only All Media Exhibition, plus at least 2 open All Media exhibits. Other exhibits may be restricted to media or paid for by an exhibitor or a group all to be approved by the board.

Section 4. The Chairman shall collect 20% of the sale price of all work sold.

Section 5. The Exhibition Committee is empowered to invite Club members to give individual exhibitions and to make rules governing these exhibitions, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. Rules and regulations are to be stated in writing to the individual exhibitor before the exhibition.

Section 6. Exhibitors who are not members of the Plastic Club shall pay a fee determined by the Board, the regular fee for the use of the gallery, and all expenses, unless especially invited by the Exhibition Committee with the approval of the Board of Directors. The Exhibition Committee shall see to hanging, cataloging, labeling and choosing a juror and meeting with the juror or jury.

Library/Archival Chairman

Section 7. The Library/Archival Chairman and Assistant shall take charge of all books and periodicals belonging to the Plastic Club, and keep a correct list of the same. They shall receive and decide upon gifts of books and periodicals. They shall attach the Book Plate in all books. This committee shall maintain and preserve all records and historical documents pertaining to the Club, shall maintain a current inventory and record of the antique and other furnishings belonging to or loaned to the Club.

House Committee

Section 8. The House Chairman and her Committee shall manage the house and its maintenance, garden and rentals subject to the approval of the Board and shall decide upon gifts offered to the Club.

Reception Committee

Section 9. The Reception Chairman and her Committee shall attend to invitations and receptions, and shall receive guests whenever the Club is open to visitors; and shall provide refreshments for the exhibition openings.

Workshop Committee

Section 10. The Workshop Chairman shall take charge of each workshop arranging for models and collecting fees agreed upon by the Board. Any surplus monies shall be paid to the Treasurer.

Committee on Designs

Section 11. The Designs Committee Chairman shall provide designs for advertising exhibitions and other Club activities. The Chairman will consult with the Exhibition Committee and with the Board of Directors when necessary.

Publicity Committee

Section 12. The Publicity Chair shall be responsible for publishing and advertising all activities of the Club.

Duties

Section 13. All Committee Chairmen shall receive a detailed list of duties, said duties to be determined by the Board Additional copies shall be available in the Club files.

Article V

Members

Section 1. No person shall be entitled to membership unless she shall have been duly elected, and shall have paid, within thirty days after notification of her election, the entrance fee and dues for the current year.

Section 2. There may be the following classes of members:

- Active Members
- Associate Members
- Non-Resident Members
- Honorary Members

Section 3. Active members shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of the Club and its property, and shall be subject to the dues hereinafter provided.

Section 4. Associate members may be elected at the discretion of the Board of Directors. Associate members are entitled to all of the privileges of the Club with the exception of exhibiting in regular member exhibitions.

Section 5. Anyone who resides outside of a radius of 50 miles of Philadelphia may become a Non-Resident member of the Club by conforming to the requirements of admission. Members not delivering work by hand will be charged a fee for handling.

Section 6. Any active member who shall remove to a distance beyond a radius of 50 miles from Philadelphia, shall, after having notified the Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer of her removal, be considered a Non-Resident member. She shall be entitled to all notices and other Club literature issued during such absence. Any Non-Resident moving within the above radius shall pay the Treasurer the dues of the current year as prescribed for Active members, thereupon becoming an Active member.

Section 7. Non-Resident members shall have all the privileges of Active members.

Section 8. The Board of Directors may elect a member whose work redounds to the honor of the Club to Honorary Membership; such a member shall be exempt for payment of the annual dues.

Article VI **Meetings**

Section 1. The Annual Meeting and the Biennial Meeting of the Club for the election of Officers and other business shall be held at the Club at the beginning of the Club year, during the Month of May. Newly elected Officers shall be formally inducted at the luncheon meeting of the Club. Newly elected officers shall make the following promise, "I promise and agree to abide by the By-Laws of the Plastic Club."

Section 2. The Board of Directors meeting shall be held once a month.

Section 3. The regular general meeting shall be held once a year.

Section 4. The order of business shall be:

- Reading of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- Report of the Club Treasurer
- Report of Corresponding Secretary
- Reports of Standing Committees
- Reports of Special Committees
- Unfinished Business
- New Business
- Adjournment

Section 5. A quorum for the transaction of ordinary Club business at the General Meeting shall consist of members present, and for the election of Officers, etc. (The amendment and suspension of the By-Laws), the quorum shall consist of 15 members.

Section 6. The order of business at the Annual Meeting shall be:

- Reading of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- Report of the Club Treasurer
- Report of the Finance Committee
- Reports of all other Committees

Annual Report of the President

Submission of the above written reports for the Club files.

Section 7. The order of business at the Biennial Meetings shall be the same as the order of business at the Annual Meetings with the addition of Election of Officers, Board of Directors and Committee Chairmen.

Section 8. Special Meetings may be called by the President or Board of Directors at any time, and shall be called by the President on the written request of six members.

Article VII

Nominations

Section 1. All member nominations shall be made by a Committee consisting of two members who shall be named by the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall prepare a list of members in good standing to be handed to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. Section 2. It shall be the duty of such Nominating Committee to nominate a ticket for President, First, Second, and Third Vice Presidents, Corresponding Secretary, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, the entire Committee on Admissions, the entire Finance Committee, and Chairmen for the following committees: Membership, Reception, Design, Workshops, House, Library and Archives, Exhibition and Publicity.

Section 3. It shall be the duty of the Nominating Committee to mail to each member in good standing a copy of the ticket three weeks prior to the date of election. No person shall be placed in nomination without having previously consented to serve in case of election without the consent of a majority of the Nominating Committee.

Section 4. The proceedings of this Committee shall be confidential.

Article VII

Elections

Section 1. The election of Officers, elective Standing Committee and Chairmen of Standing Committees shall be by ballot. A majority vote shall be necessary to elect to any office. Section 2. The Election shall be conducted by two Tellers and a Clerk, to be appointed by the Chair.

Section 3. A copy of the section or the By-Laws covering election must be printed on the ballots.

Section 4. In case of tie, the Board of Directors shall decide the election at the next regular Board Meeting of the Club.

Article IX

Notices

Section 1. All notices shall be sent to such address as shall be left with the Corresponding Secretary. If no address is so given, such notice shall be sufficient if addressed to the member's last known residence.

Article X

Dues.

Section 1. Dues are payable in May of each year. The cost of dues is determined by the Board of Directors.

Regulations.

Section 2. Any member may withdraw from the Club by paying dues and giving written notice to the Corresponding Secretary and the Treasurer on or before the first Wednesday of May. No resignations shall be accepted until all dues are paid.

Re-instatement.

Section 3. Any member who has officially tendered a resignation, may, at a future date be re-instated with the approval of the Board of Directors and payment of dues.

Dismissal.

Section 4. According to Roberts' Rules.

Article XI

Amendments.

Section 1. Any of these By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the membership, notice of said amendment having been given in writing at a regular meeting at least one month before action and posted on the bulletin board ten days before the meeting when said amendment is to be considered.

Section 2. Any of these By-Laws may be suspended for a special purpose by nine-tenths vote of the members present at any regular meeting, provided that the Corresponding Secretary shall have given notice of such suspension in the announcement for said meeting, quoting in full the By-Laws to be suspended.

Section 3. In any questions of debate the Club shall be governed by "Roberts' Revised Rules of Order."

Section 4. A copy of this Constitution and By-Laws shall be handed to each member and a copy shall be available at all times at the Club.

Section 5. A provision will be made in the in the By-Laws in the event the Club finds it necessary in the future to dissolve that no individual member will profit from said dissolution nor will any be responsible for any debts accrued by the dissolving Club.

DISSOLUTION CLAUSE

In the event of dissolution of The Plastic Club-Art Club, all property, monies and assets of The Plastic Club, of whatsoever kind and where-so-ever situation at the time of dissolution, shall be distributed to MOORE COLLEGE OF ART, 20th and Race Streets, Philadelphia, Pa. Should Moore College of Art choose not to accept such distribution, then and in that event all property, monies and assets of The Plastic Club, of whatsoever kind and where-so-ever situation at the time of dissolution, shall be distributed to the PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF ART, Broad and Pine Streets, Philadelphia, Pa.

**Amended April 11, 1984
Re-printed April, 2004**

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