



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ORDER

Before the Mayor's Agent for, and Administrator of, D.C. Regulation 73-25 (hereafter Mayor's Agent).

Application L.M. No. 79-138 of the Aaron Strauss & Lillie Strauss Foundation, Inc. for a permit to raze a building located at 901 F Street, N.W., lot 800, Square 376.

HEARING DATE: March 2, 1979

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The applicant proposes to raze the building located at 901 F Street, N.W., lot 800, Square 376.

2. The building located on this lot, the Old Masonic Temple commonly known as the Julius Lansburgh Furniture Store, is listed in the city's inventory of historic sites contained in the comprehensive statewide historic preservation survey and plan prepared pursuant to Sec. 101(a) of Public Law 89-665, and is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and Public Law 89-665 (16 U.S.C. 470a-470m).

3. In accord with D.C. Regulation 73-25, the application was referred to the Mayor's Agent, who in turn referred the application to the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital, the District of Columbia Professional Review Committee for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.

4. The Joint Committee on Landmarks advised that demolition of the building would be contrary to the public interest and should be delayed.

5. The Old Masonic Temple building, now commonly know as Julius Lansburgh's Furniture Store, was erected in 1867-69.

6. The building is four stories high, rectangular in shape with a rear ell. Construction is of masonry, largely of brick with stone foundations and polychromatic stone facing on the street facades. The roof is flat with a deeply projecting cornice supported by brackets. The subtly articulated facade composition is embellished with unusual sculptural detail. Designed by prominent Washington Architects Cluss and Kammerhueber in Second Empire style, this fraternal-commercial building of rare architectural merit is located importantly across 9th Street from the Old U.S. Patent Office. It is a unique and notable example of Reconstruction era fraternal-commercial architecture in the District of Columbia, complementing in scale and dignity its prestigious neighborhood.

7. Adolph Cluss and Joseph Wildrich von Kammerhueber achieved a national and international reputation for their innovative designs for Wallach (1892) and Franklin (1865) Schools in the District of Columbia. Concurrently with their work on the Masonic Temple they were engaged on the reconstruction of the Smithsonian Institution after the fire of 1865 and on the design and construction of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cluss was further associated with the transformation which took place in the city at this time through the design of markets and more schools and through his duties as engineer-member of the Board of Public Works. He was later architect of the U.S. National Museum and redesigned the interiors of the U.S. Patent Office after the fire of 1877.

8. Constructed by the Grand Lodge of Masons, the building is a symbol of awakening civic consciousness in Washington City during the nationalistic period following the Civil War and of the role played by the Grand Lodge of Masons in the construction of the Federal City. Masonic activity in the District of Columbia dates from about 1795. The Lodge was first organized here in January 1811. In the early years of the city the cornerstones of important buildings--notably the White House (1792), the Capitol (1793), Blodgett's Hotel (1793), the City Hall (1820), and the Washington Monument (1848)--were laid Masonically, as was the cornerstone of the Federal District off Jones Point in Alexandria (1791). Fifteen Presidents of the United States have been Masons. President James A. Garfield, while a member of the U.S. Senate, was active in the Pentalpha Lodge which met in the Old Masonic Temple at 9th and F Streets, N.W.

9. A representative of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2C testified at the hearing that the building is important architecturally, and that the ANC is in favor of an order to delay its demolition.

10. Representatives of various governmental agencies, and community organizations testified in support of the order to delay the demolition of the building and stated their willingness to negotiate with the owners of the building to try to find a means to preserve it.

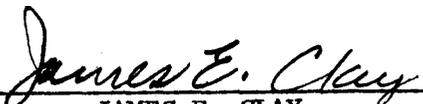
11. Representatives of the 900 G Street Limited Partnership, **now** the owner of the building, testified that they were willing to work with community organizations and the government to preserve at least the facades of the building by exploring such mechanisms as a Planned Unit Development, Urban Development Action Grants, tax relief, and historic preservation grants.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

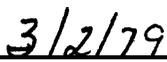
1. Based upon the above Findings of Fact, the Mayor's Agent is of the opinion that the demolition of the building should be delayed for 180 days to permit the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Professional Review Committee to negotiate with the owners of the building and civic groups, public agencies, and interested citizens to find a means of preserving the building.

2. The Mayor's Agent concludes that since the Old Masonic Temple (1) is a fraternal-commercial building of rare architectural merit designed by architects of international repute; (2) is sited importantly across from the Old U.S. Patent Office and complements the scale and dignity of its prestigious neighborhood; and (3) is a symbol of the awakening civic consciousness in Washington City during the nationalistic period following the Civil War and of the role played by the Grand Lodge of Masons in the construction of the Federal City, its demolition is contrary to the public interest and should be delayed for 180 days.

ORDERED: The issuance of a permit to raze is DELAYED for 180 days from the date of this **ORDER**.

  
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**JAMES E. CLAY**

Acting Mayor's Agent for D.C. Regulation 73-25

  
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 EFFECTIVE DATE