

ADDRESS: 1533-39 N 7TH ST

Name of Resource: Trinity Reformed Church

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: 99 Real Estate LLC

Nominator: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Meredith Keller, meredith.keller@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1533-39 N 7th Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the former Trinity Reformed Church satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, and J. Under Criterion D, the nomination argues that the church exemplifies the “inexpensive, but expressive” form of Gothic ecclesiastical architecture. Under Criterion E, the nomination contends that the church was designed by influential Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan, who included an illustration of the building in his 1868 publication of *The Architectural Review and American Builders’ Journal*. The nomination further argues that the modest but expressive design reflects the cultural, economic, and social heritage of Philadelphia’s working-to-middle-class residents.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1533-39 N 7th Street satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, and J.



NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 1533-39 N. 7th Street

Postal code: 19122-3604 Councilmanic District: _____

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Trinity (German) Reformed Church (Later known as the Ohev-Zedek Synagogue)

Current/Common Name: 99 Adult Daycare II

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building Structure Site Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: 99 Adult Daycare II

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1869 to 1872

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1869-72

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Samuel Sloan, Architect

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Unknown

Original owner: Trinity (German) Reformed Church

Other significant persons: Unknown

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. NOMINATOR

Organization The Keeping Society of Philadelphia Date 29 April 2019

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian Email Keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 717.602.5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 4/29/2019

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: May 16, 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: May 17, 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: 99 Real Estate LLC

Address: 1019 Cherry Street, RM B/R

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19107

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. Looking south at the primary (west) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

TRINITY (GERMAN) REFORMED CHURCH **BUILT 1869–72** **1533–39 N. 7TH STREET** **PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19122**

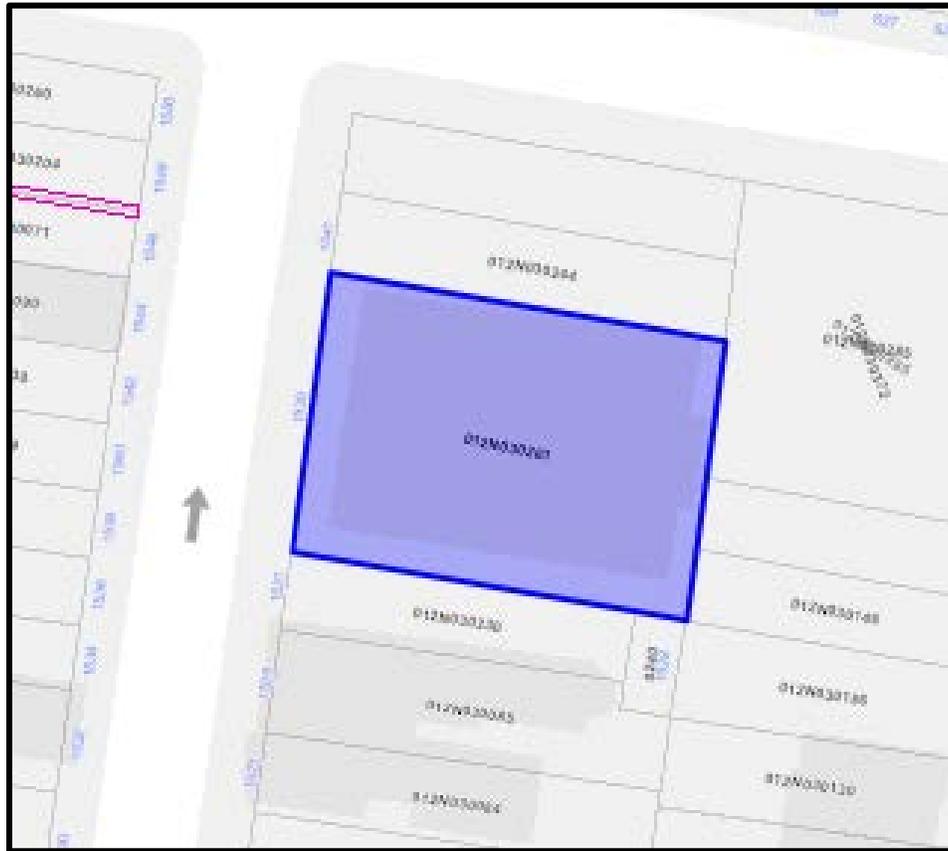


Figure 2. The boundary for the subject designation is delineated above in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

7. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected on the East side of North Seventh Street at the distance of 40 feet Southward from the South side of Oxford Street,

CONTAINING in front or breath on the said North Seventh Street 70 feet and extending in length or depth Eastward 100 feet.

OPA Property No. 201141600

Philadelphia Deed Registry No. 012N02-0261

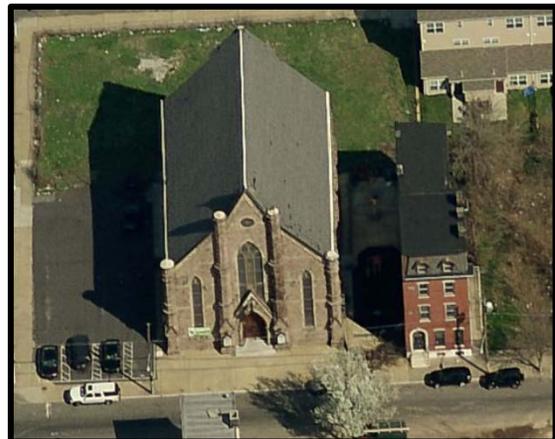


Figure 3. Above: The primary (west) elevation of the subject property. Source: Google. Figure 4. Below right: Looking east at the primary (west) elevation of the subject property. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2018.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Facing west immediately upon N. 7th Street in North Philadelphia, Trinity Reformed Church is a small- to medium-sized house of worship, standing two-and-one-half stories, built of Trenton brownstone with stone trimmings from Cleveland, Ohio.

Dominated by a gable front, the three-bay-wide primary (west) elevation is clad in a brownstone ashlar laid in a random pattern and set off by lightly colored stone trimmings. The bays are delineated by distinctive brownstone towers that project from the façade in the form of octagonal cantons and pilasters. The cantons and pilasters are supported by gable-fronted buttresses at the base that feature colonettes at each corner and brownstone coping along the tops of the gables. The columns are of the same lightly-colored stone, while the capitols are in brownstone. The first and second stages of the building are delineated by sets of brownstone coursing in the cantons, a



feature reduced to a single strand in the pilasters. The central bay features the primary entryway that is set within a low gable-front projection, which features a tall opening defined by a pointed arch. This central pointed aperture is further delineated by lightly-colored stone colonettes and matching coping within the archway. While the stone details are original and in fair condition, the doors and transom have been infilled with a modern unit. Rising above the central entrance, a tall window spans the second stage of the façade, which is defined by a pointed arch and a lightly-colored stone architrave. While somewhat obscured by opaque storm windows, the windows within appears to be an early replacement, if not original, featuring Gothic details. The third, half story of the central bay features an oculus that is defined by a lightly-colored stone architrave and connected to the pilasters by stone coursing.

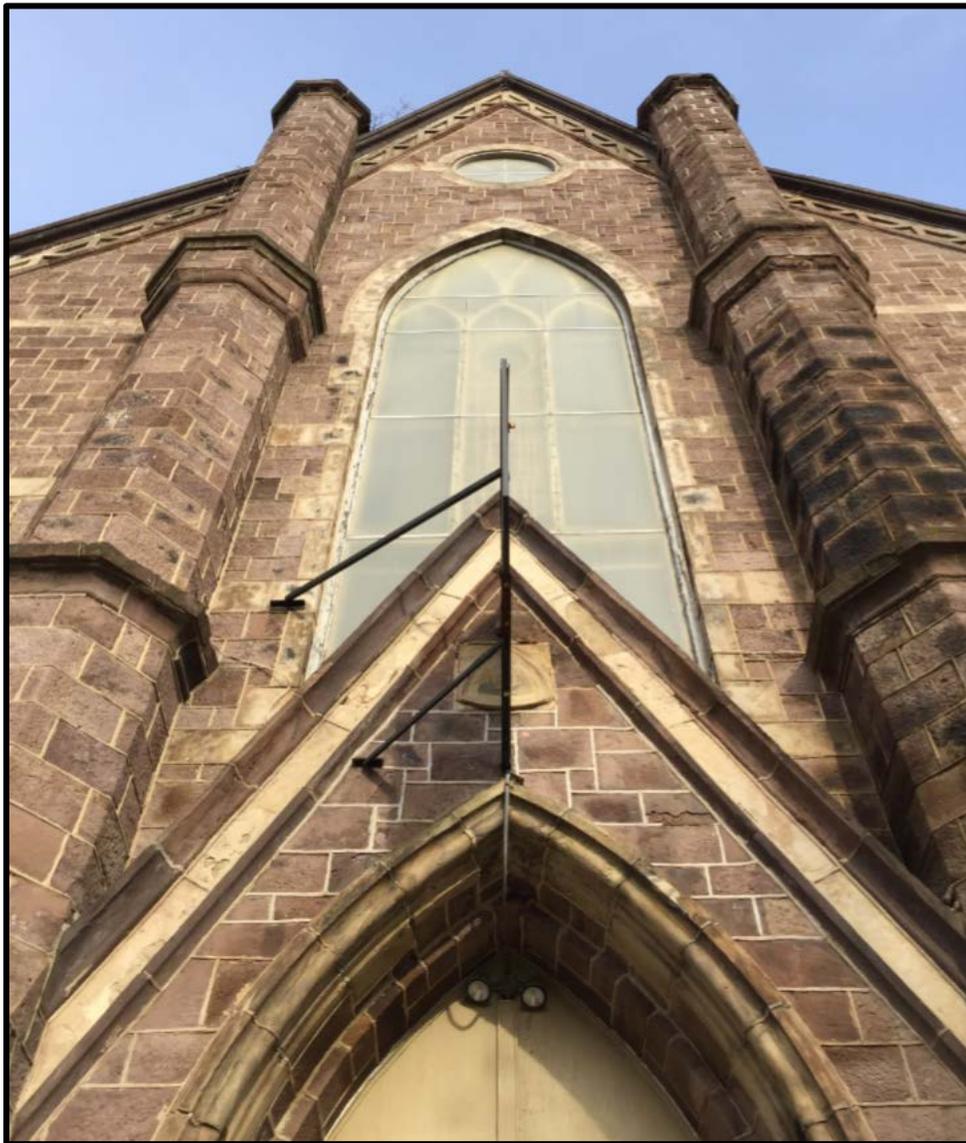


Figure 5. The central bay of the primary (west) elevation, showing the entrance porch, at the center of which is a datestone inscribed “1859,” and the primary window of above. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.



Figure 6. Left: Looking south at the north elevation of the subject property. Figure 7. Center: Looking west at the east elevation of the subject property. Figure 8. Right: Looking north at the south elevation of the subject property. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2018.

Flanking the central bay are tall and narrow windows of equal size, which are defined by pointed arches and delineated by lightly-colored stone tracery. Two stages of lightly-colored stone coping connect the windows to the cantons and pilasters. The gable front features a continuous cornice of lightly-colored stone with simple, geometric details.



Figure 9. The side (north) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

The north and south elevations span six bays in width, each of which is defined by one aperture per floor and set within the continuous Trenton brownstone facade. The bays are further delineated by brownstone buttresses that rise near the termination of the second floor. The first floor is further defined by a greater projection of the buttress at the ground floor. The buttresses feature brownstone coping. The first floor features narrow, rectangular windows and the second floor features taller, narrow windows defined by pointed arches. The windows are delineated by brownstone architraves and sills.



Figure 10. The rear (east) and side (north) elevations of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.



Figure 11. The design elevation for Trinity (German) Reformed Church, the subject property, as published in the *Architectural Review and American Builders' Journal (ARABJ)* by Samuel Sloan in 1869.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A distinctive example of a small urban church in the Gothic Revival style and an important representative type of the work of the eminent Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan, Trinity (German) Reformed Church at 1533–39 N. 7th Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14–1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

Period of significance: 1869–72.

Criteria D, E, and J

With its distinctive, yet relatively modest façade of Trenton brownstone and lightly-colored stone trimmings, the former Trinity (German) Reformed Church at 1533–39 N. 7th Street, built between 1869 and 1872, is a small house of worship with distinguishing characteristics of the Gothic Revival style in a design by the eminent architect, Samuel Sloan (1815–1884), for a budding congregation of limited economic means.

Organized in a hall, “on Frankford road,” at Master Street, “by a few earnest young men,” the congregation that built the subject building was established in 1860 as a Sunday School that

would eventually be called the “Trinity [German] Reformed Sunday School” and later the Trinity (German) Reformed Church.¹ After its founding, the Sunday School met at the American Mechanic’s Hall at Fourth and George Streets, where a well-known minister of the (German) Reformed Church, Rev. Dr. D.E. Klopp, began preaching to the group in the spring of 1867. On May 19, 1867, the congregation was officially organized by the Philadelphia Classis of the (German) Reformed Church.² The following September the congregation removed to a hall that once stood at Sixth Street and Girard Avenue.³ During this time the young congregation began a campaign for a permanent building, which required selecting and purchasing a lot, as well as commissioning an architect or builder to furnish plans for a new house of worship.

During the period in which the congregation was planning for its new church edifice, Samuel Sloan began publishing *The Architectural Review and American Builders’ Journal* (hereafter *ARABJ*) in July 1868, which began serving as the chief and primary organ for the American Institute of Architects (AIA). In the first issue of the *ARABJ*, Sloan, the de facto editor of the journal, opens with an article titled “An American Style,” which began “a series of essays on the state of architecture in America.” Sloan used the *ARABJ* to sell the AIA, tacitly and sometimes blatantly representing his own ideals, often deriding Philadelphia’s architectural status.⁴ Among the didactic essays published by Sloan in the *ARABJ*, several discussed the subject of good design for all classes, including both working- and middle-class people. Sloan was part of a larger discussion that largely was charged during the Jacksonian era about an American architectural style; providing public architecture for Americans; and, most relevant, economical, but tasteful options for people of modest means.

Expressive of the cultural, economic, and social heritage of Philadelphia’s working- to middle-class people of the period, the discussion of architecture in terms of equity for the entire community is one that goes back far beyond the founding of the United States. The discussion in the New World was definitely a topic of interest in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. While largely focusing on country house architecture, even tastemakers like Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852) provided patterns for small houses and cottages, as well as renovation schemes for small buildings. There were several articles in his publication, *The Horticulturist: Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste* that were meant to influence working- and middle-class taste. John Notman (1810–1865), another eminent Philadelphia architect and contemporary of Sloan, also designed a few buildings for people of modest means. One example was the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Messiah, which was designed by Notman and constructed between 1847 and 1848, at 2646 East Huntingdon Street in the Port Richmond neighborhood of Philadelphia—demolished in 2015 for a townhouse development. When Notman’s design was fully executed in the finished church, the building was said to be “beautiful, convenient, and cheap.”⁵ The Church of the Messiah was a mission congregation established by the Episcopal diocese, and it, like other buildings of the period, were designed

¹ “Trinity Reformed Sunday School,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 May 1872, 2.

² “Trinity Reformed Church,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 April 1871, 2.

³ “Trinity Reformed Sunday School,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 May 1872, 2.

⁴ Harold N. Cooledge, Jr., *Samuel Sloan, Architect of Philadelphia, 1815–1884* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 88.

⁵ Oscar Beisert and Rachel Hildebrandt, “Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: P.E. Church of the Messiah, 2640–42 and 2644–58 E. Huntingdon Street,” 2015, 22–24.

with limited funds for people of fixed means. Striving for appropriate and tasteful architectural works for working- to middle-class people was a trend and ideal continued into the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

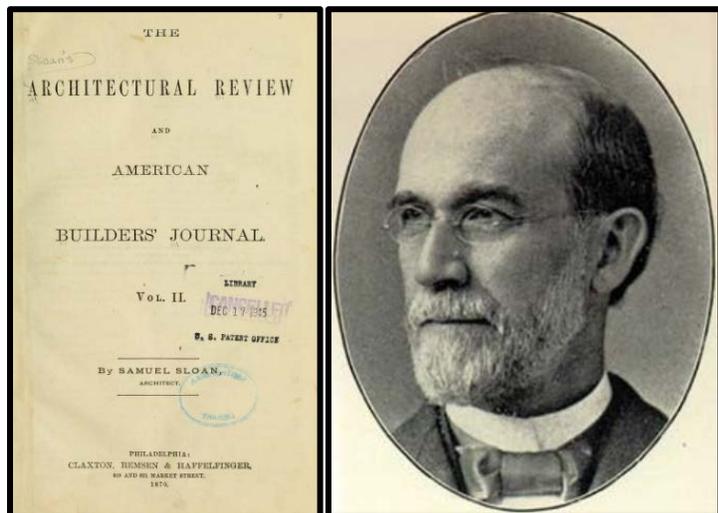


Figure 12. Left: The title page of the *ARABJ* 7 (1870). Figure 13. Right: A portrait of Samuel Sloan. Source: King, Moses, *Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians* (New York: Moses King Publisher, 1901).

In August 1869, Sloan published “Designs for Small Churches” in *ARABJ*. The article included designs for congregations of modest means, including separate elevation and floorplan drawings of Trinity (German) Reformed Church. The purpose of this article was to continue to direct this discussion of the economic considerations and social benefits of tasteful designs for Americans of limited economic means. In this article Sloan stated the following about the need for congregations of limited means:

The illustrated works on Ecclesiastical Architecture, which come from the press, usually treat of a class of edifices altogether beyond the reach of the congregations whose means are limited—very limited. In a serial like the *Architectural Review* there is an opportunity presented to give, from time to time, sketches and instructions, by which the wants of the bodies we allude to may be met. The pastor in the backwoods, and the minister on the prairie, as well as the servant of God who teaches the poor in our crowded cities will each and all be benefited by the information given, and a truly good work will thus be done.⁶

Sloan provided illustrations of both Calvary Presbyterian Church, formerly on the 1500 block of Locust Street (demolished), and the subject property. Providing a more comprehensive description of the former, both churches were “Gothic in style,” being “inexpensive yet expressive.”⁷

⁶ Samuel Sloan, “Designs for Small Churches,” *The Architectural Review and American Builders’ Journal* (hereafter *ARABJ*) 3 (1870): 75–77.

⁷ Sloan, *ARABJ* 3 (1870): 76.

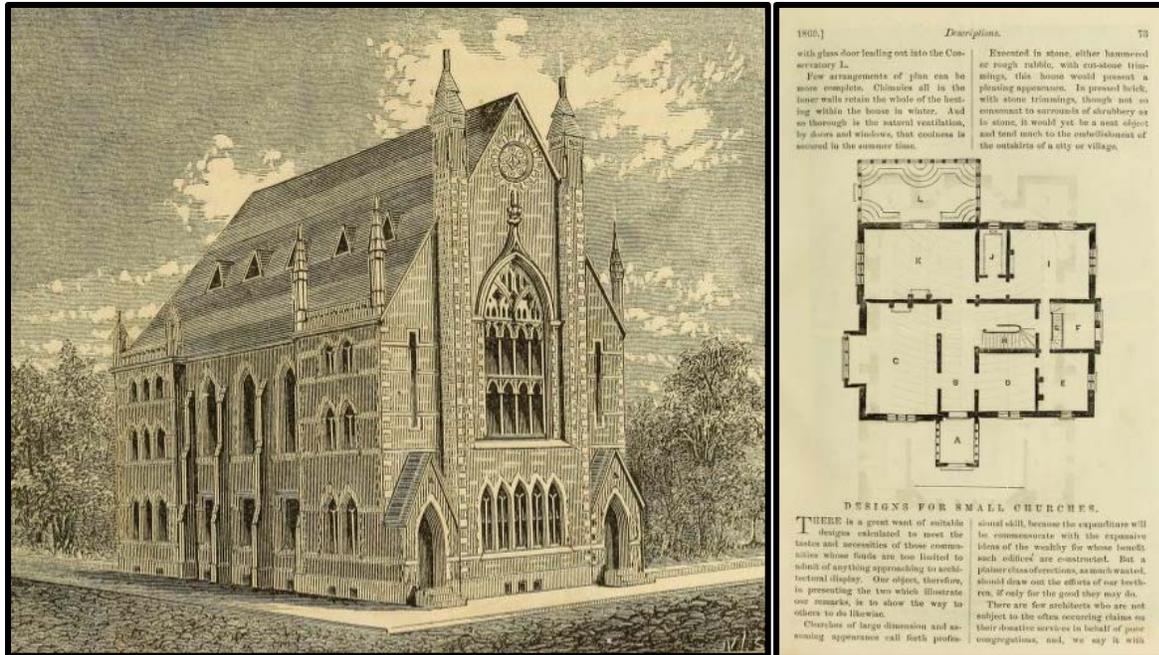
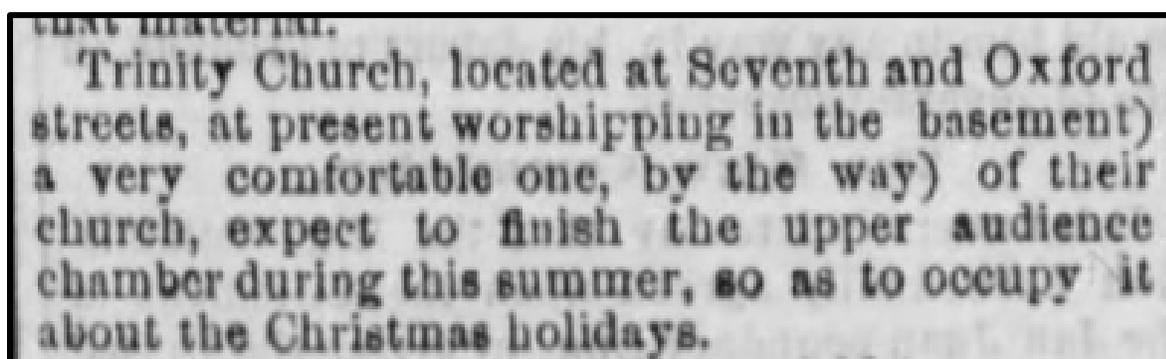


Figure 14. The design for Calvary Presbyterian Church in idealized setting at the northeast corner of Locust and Sydenham Streets. Source: Samuel Sloan and Charles J. Lukens, *ARABJ* (1869): 76. Figure 15. A page from Sloan's *ARABJ*, 1869, showing the title page of the article featuring the subject property.

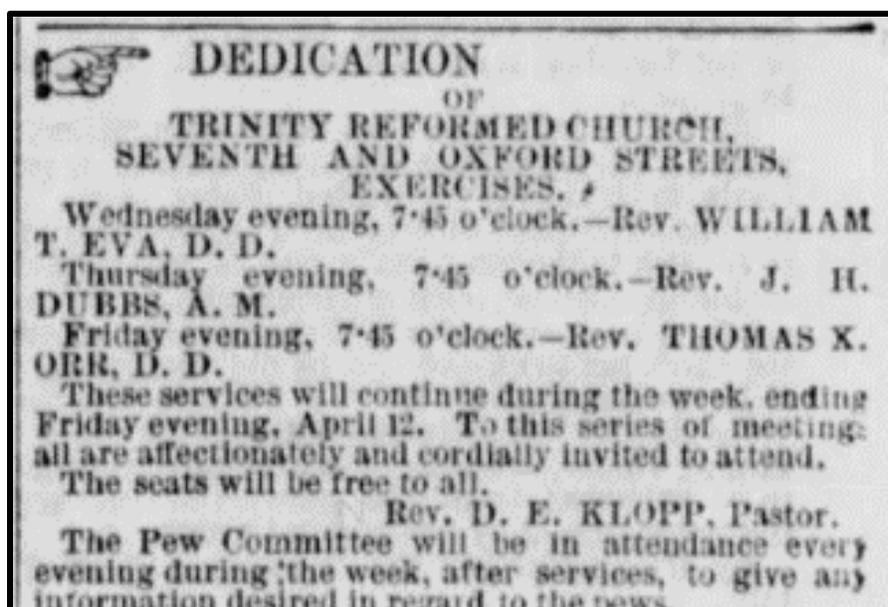


Figure 16. St. John German Evangelical Church located at 516 Wharton Street, designed by Samuel Sloan and constructed in 1873. Source: Cyclomedia, 2018.

As it turns out, Sloan was commissioned to design the subject building in May 1869, soon after which the congregation laid the cornerstone on June 26, 1869 in the presence of (German) Reformed Revs. Dr. Gans, Dr. Bomberger, Dr. Geissy.⁸ Construction took place in the summer and fall of 1869 to sufficiently complete the basement and foundation of the building, allowing space for classrooms and a lecture room. By April 1871, the congregation was still “worshipping in the basement (a very comfortable one, by the way),” projecting that construction of the “upper audience chamber” would resume that summer to ensure completion by the Christmas holidays.⁹ After nearly two years of fundraising, the congregation would go on to finish the building; however, it is clear that the limited means of the congregants was a consideration that led to the staggered completion of the property, providing a perspective on the cultural, economic, and social heritage of the (German) Reformed Church and the people it served as part of the Trinity (German) Reformed congregation during the third quarter of the nineteenth century in Philadelphia.



Trinity Church, located at Seventh and Oxford streets, at present worshipping in the basement) a very comfortable one, by the way) of their church, expect to finish the upper audience chamber during this summer, so as to occupy it about the Christmas holidays.



DEDICATION
OF
TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH,
SEVENTH AND OXFORD STREETS,
EXERCISES.

Wednesday evening, 7:45 o'clock.—Rev. WILLIAM T. EVA, D. D.
Thursday evening, 7:45 o'clock.—Rev. J. H. DUBBS, A. M.
Friday evening, 7:45 o'clock.—Rev. THOMAS K. ORR, D. D.

These services will continue during the week, ending Friday evening, April 12. To this series of meetings all are affectionately and cordially invited to attend. The seats will be free to all.

Rev. D. E. KLOPP, Pastor.

The Pew Committee will be in attendance every evening during the week, after services, to give any information desired in regard to the news.

Figure 17. Top: The Philadelphia Inquirer, 22 April 1871, 2. Figure 18. Bottom: “Dedication of Trinity Reformed Church, Seventh and Oxford Streets, Exercises.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 April 1872, 4.

⁸ Cooledge, *Samuel Sloan*, 224.; and “Corner-stone Laying.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 June 1869, 2.

⁹ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 April 1871, 2.



Figure 19. The primary (west) elevation of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

Economic constraints considered, Sloan designed the Trinity Reformed Church as specimen of the Gothic Revival style, an “inexpensive, but expressive” building that continues to possess distinguishing characteristics of that style to this day:

1. Four gable-fronted buttresses within the primary (west) elevation;¹⁰
2. Four towers delineating the bays of the primary (west) elevation, including two octagonal cantons and two octagonal pilasters;¹¹
3. Three large windows defined by pointed arches within the primary (west) elevation;¹²
4. A central entrance set within a gable-fronted entrance porch with a doorway defined by a pointed arch;¹³

¹⁰ Cyril M. Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 78.

¹¹ Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 404 and 413.

¹² Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 425.

¹³ Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 428.

5. Several pairs of colonettes in both the arches and the buttresses within the primary (west) elevation;¹⁴
6. An oculus within the gable-front of the primary elevation;
7. Six buttresses extending two-stories within both the north and south elevations;¹⁵ and
8. Five tall, narrow windows defined by pointed arches.¹⁶

In addition to the characteristics, Trinity Reformed Church is also built of rubble stone with a Trenton brownstone façade, which was a common stone type used for Gothic Revival style churches of the period, as was the simple, gable-front building form.¹⁷



Figure 20. Left: A detail shot of the buttress at the base of the octagonal turret at the northwest corner of the building, showing its gable-front supported by colonettes. Figure 21. Right: The primary (west) elevation of the subject property, showing the northern most bay with a pointed arch window, a window hood, an octagonal tower and pilaster, and the Gothic-inspired cornice. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

This design was commissioned in the final years of Sloan's prolific work in Philadelphia, making it a late specimen of his Gothic Revival style buildings.¹⁸ More importantly, this work exemplifies the work of one of Philadelphia's great Victorian-era architects in a limited and

¹⁴ Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 125.

¹⁵ Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 78.

¹⁶ Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 425.

¹⁷ Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 254–62.

¹⁸ Cooledge, *Samuel Sloan*, 224.

specific sector of his oeuvre that focused on economy and public good for the (German) Reformed congregation. Being an architect that significantly influenced the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Nation, Samuel Sloan's design of the subject building is an important representative specimen of his work.

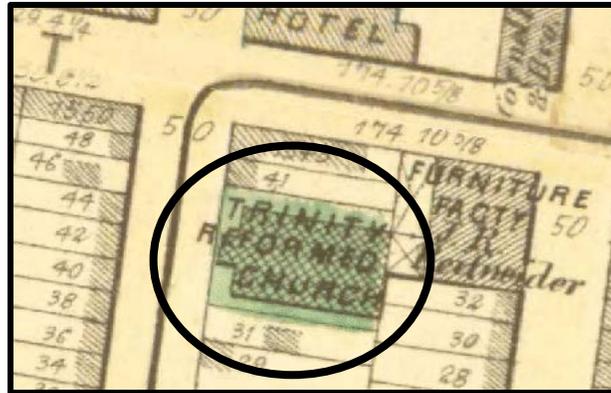


Figure 22. 1875 Philadelphia Atlas by G.M. Hopkins. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

After the formal dedication in 1872, the congregation operated in the building from that time through its removal in 1910. At that time the subject building was sold to the congregation of Ohev-Zedek Synagogue that served the Hungarian Jewish community.¹⁹ The building was the congregation's second home and the first they owned.²⁰

¹⁹ Cooledge, *Samuel Sloan*, 224; Deed: Trinity Reformed Church of Philadelphia to Chevra Ohev Zedek, a body corporate, 13 July 1910, Philadelphia Deed Book W.S.V., No. 1314, p. 448, City Archives of Philadelphia.

²⁰ "The Ohev Zedek Synagogue Dedicated: Hungarian Jewish Chevra Now Has Large Synagogue," *The Jewish Exponent*, 30 September 1910, p. 12. This article states that the congregation held services in a rented space in a hall near N. Second Street and Fairmount Avenue for about twenty years. The congregation sold the subject building in 1960 and moved to East Mount Airy (Deed: Chevra Ohev Zedek to Bruce Madison Oakley and Irene Oakley, his wife, 31 May 1960, Philadelphia Deed Book C.A.B, No. 1383, p. 574, CAP).

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

The nomination was completed by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist as the primary author with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network
Newspapers.com
Proquest Historical Newspapers
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Major Bibliographic References

- Beisert, Oscar and Rachel Hildebrandt. "Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination: P.E. Church of the Messiah, 2640–42 and 2644–58 E. Huntingdon Street," 2015.
- Coolidge, Jr., Harold N. *Samuel Sloan, Architect of Philadelphia, 1815–1884*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.
- "Corner-stone Laying." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 June 1869, 2.
- Deed: Trinity Reformed Church of Philadelphia to Chevra Ohev Zedek, a body corporate, 13 July 1910, Philadelphia Deed Book W.S.V., No. 1314, p. 448, City Archives of Philadelphia.
- Harris, Cyril M. *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977.
- Samuel Sloan, "Designs for Small Churches," *The Architectural Review and American Builders' Journal* (hereafter *ARABJ*) 3 (1870).
- "The Ohev Zedek Synagogue Dedicated: Hungarian Jewish Chevra Now Has Large Synagogue," *The Jewish Exponent*, 30 September 1910, 1.
- "Trinity Reformed Church," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 April 1871, 2.
- "Trinity Reformed Sunday School," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 May 1872, 2.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**19 JUNE 2019, 9:30 A.M.
1515 ARCH STREET, ROOM 18-029
EMILY COOPERMAN, CHAIR**

CALL TO ORDER

START TIME IN AUDIO RECORDING: 00:00:00

Acting chair Doug Mooney called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. The following Committee members joined him:

Committee Member	Present	Absent	Comment
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., chair		X	
Jeff Cohen, Ph.D.	X		
Bruce Laverty		X	
Elizabeth Milroy, Ph.D.	X		
Douglas Mooney	X		

The following staff members were present:

- Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director
- Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Laura DiPasquale, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Meredith Keller, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Megan Schmitt, Historic Preservation Planner I

The following persons were present:

- William Martin, Esq.
- Tom Becker, Jefferson University
- Celeste Morello
- David S. Traub, Save Our Sites
- Patrick Grossi, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
- Gabor Antalics
- Andy Wade
- Paul Steinke, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
- J.M. Duffin, Keeping Society
- Nancy Pontone, Tudor East Falls
- Yi Liu, 99 Adc
- Simon Liu, 99 Adc
- Amanda Stevens
- Alex Balloon, Tacony CDC
- Ben Leech, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

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Name of Resource: Trinity Reformed Church

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Property Owner: 99 Real Estate LLC

Nominator: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Meredith Keller, meredith.keller@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1533-39 N 7th Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the former Trinity Reformed Church satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, and J. Under Criterion D, the nomination argues that the church exemplifies the “inexpensive, but expressive” form of Gothic ecclesiastical architecture. Under Criterion E, the nomination contends that the church was designed by influential Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan, who included an illustration of the building in his 1868 publication of *The Architectural Review and American Builders’ Journal*. The nomination further argues that the modest but expressive design reflects the cultural, economic, and social heritage of Philadelphia’s working-to-middle-class residents.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 1533-39 N 7th Street satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, and J.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN AUDIO RECORDING: 00:06:10

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Keller presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Yi Liu and Simon Liu represented the property owner.
- Jim Duffin represented the nomination.

DISCUSSION:

- Ms. Liu introduced herself as the daughter of Simon Liu, who is the property owner. She added that she will translate for her father. She explained that her father opposes designation, because the construction of an adjacent building has undermined the foundation of their building. She noted that there are cracks in the foundation.
- Mr. Cohen asked whether the owner felt the cracks affected the building’s historic value.
 - Ms. Liu answered that the cracks need to be sealed, and added that she did not know what would be required of her if the building is designated as historic.
 - Mr. Cohen responded that this part of the process is to determine whether the building is historically significant and that it does not address questions arising from damage due to a neighboring property.
- Ms. Liu reiterated that her father does not want the property to be designated, because of the cost of repairing the structure due to the damage caused by the adjacent new construction. She added that she does not know whether designation would mean more money would be necessary to restore the building.
 - Mr. Farnham clarified that if the Historical Commission were to designate the building as historic, it would not require the owner to undertake any work to the building and would only have the authority to review building permit applications in the future for work to the building proposed by the owner. The Historical Commission, he elaborated, cannot require an owner to undertake

construction at a building and only has the authority to review a construction projects proposed by the owner. He added that it is his hope that a designation of the building as historic would have a limited impact on the property owner.

- Ms. Liu again stated that her father does not want the property to be designated as historic.
- Mr. Farnham clarified that the Committee on Historic Designation is a technical advisory committee and is considering the nomination to determine whether the building has historical significance. The Historical Commission itself, he continued, will meet in July to make the decision about whether or not the property will be designated as historic and then subject to the Historical Commission's review. The goal today, he added, is to decide whether the building is historically significant. He welcomed the property owner's opinions on that matter.
- Ms. Liu asked whether the nomination can be withdrawn.
 - Mr. Farnham answered that the Historical Commission would be informed of the owner's opposition to designation with the record of this meeting and if the owner chooses to participate in the Historical Commission's meeting. The withdrawal discussed earlier, he clarified, was from the individual who nominated the property. He elaborated that the Historical Commission can consider a withdrawal from the person who nominated a property, and an owner can ask the Commission not to designate. He explained that because Ms. Liu is not the nominator, she cannot request that the nomination be withdrawn, although her opposition will certainly be taken into account.
- Mr. Cohen stated that he is glad the building was nominated and that it is worthy of being listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. He added that the building tells the story of the evolution of the neighborhood. He commented that it is striking the way the nave is pinched by the octagonal buttresses, which suggests either a narrow nave and wide side aisles or a love of verticality. He noted that the pitch breaks in the central section, which makes the design appear as a rocket ship. He wondered whether the floor plan reflects the distribution of the buttresses across the front façade, or if it was an aesthetic impulse to make the building appear more vertical. He observed that the distribution of spaces differs between Sloan's church designs. He questioned whether the building was constructed in the time of Samuel Sloan and Addison Hutton's partnership, so that this would be the authorship of Sloan and Hutton. Mr. Cohen then suggested a few edits and noted that the portrait labeled Sloan in the nomination is, in fact, a portrait of Hutton. He concluded that the nomination is well-researched and that the building is worthy of designation.
- Ms. Milroy stated that it would be interesting to see a photograph of the interior to answer some of the questions Mr. Cohen raised about the relationship of the nave to the side aisles.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Celeste Morello stated that about two years ago the Committee on Historic Designation and Historical Commission approved the designation of an almost identical church at 516 Wharton Street. She added that it was built by a small sect that separated itself from the main German Lutheran synod in the mid- to late-1800s. She suggested that the congregation at this church followed a similar path, since the building is almost a replica of the Wharton Street building. Mr. Cohen noted that the church Ms. Morello is referencing is included in the nomination. Ms. Morello continued that the masonry, buttresses, and entryway are nearly identical. She

remarked that after two years of designation, positive changes have occurred at the Wharton Street church. The nominated church, she added, is on N. 7th Street in a quickly developing area and the church needs to remain to remind the neighborhood of its heritage.

- Paul Steinke of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia supported the nomination, stating that the building is well-suited for adaptive reuse in a rapidly developing part of the city. He added that it is worth pointing out that another virtual twin to this building was lost in 2013 at the intersection of 40th and Sansom Streets. He commented that it was another brownstone church designed by Samuel Sloan and constructed in the 1870s. He showed the Committee an image of the building on his iPad. He noted that the building was unfortunately not designated and was lost.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The structural concerns raised by the property owner do not impact the building’s historical significance.
- The building demonstrates a curious aesthetic in which the octagonal buttresses at the front façade pinch the nave.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The building exemplifies the architect’s “inexpensive but expressive” Gothic style of architecture, satisfying Criterion D.
- Noted Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan designed this church and several other nearly identical churches located throughout the city, satisfying Criterion E.
- The modest design reflects the evolution of the neighborhood, satisfying Criterion J.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that 1533-39 N. 7th Street satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, and J, and that the property should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

ITEM: 1533-39 N 7TH ST					
MOTION: Recommendation to designate, Criteria D, E, and J					
MOVED BY: Cohen					
SECONDED BY: Milroy					
VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, chair					x
Jeff Cohen	x				
Bruce Lavery					x
Elizabeth Milroy	x				
Douglas Mooney	x				
Total	3				2

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee on Historic Designation adjourned at 11:58 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Minutes of the Committee on Historic Designation are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the audio recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

§14-1004. Designation.

(1) Criteria for Designation.

A building, complex of buildings, structure, site, object, or district may be designated for preservation if it:

- (a) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or nation;
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant innovation;
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park, or other distinctive area that should be preserved according to a historic, cultural, or architectural motif;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.