Meeting a 4-Star Success!

SHARA’s First Annual Meeting got off to a delightful start with a coffee-and-dessert prelude in the ballroom of the Hill-Physick home mansion at 321 S. 4th Street, beginning at seven-thirty on the evening of April 28.

Mrs. George Diehl and her committee had not only cleaned and furnished the handsome old house until it shone but had prepared a superb cake-and-coffee-and-dessert table which was the center of attraction for the nearly 200 members and their guests who attended. The centerpiece was a handsome First Birthday Cake for SHARA, presented by Taltalbon’s Bakery, and the room was decorated with flowers presented by Lisa the Florist on South Street at Third. Serving tea and coffee and acting as hostesses were the ladies of SHARA’s Committee, including Miss Selma Levin, Mrs. Joan Powlan, Mrs. Elizabeth Schoenfeld, Miss Thresa Barranca, Mrs. Lillian Hall, Mrs. Robert Levin, Sr., Mrs. Katherine Kelly, Mrs. Edith Stern, Mrs. Henriette Silverstein, Mrs. A.J. Spause, Mrs. Isadore Rugowitz, Mrs. Florence Gansky, Mrs. Elizabeth Nicholson, Mrs. Bertha Martin, Mrs. Helen Babcock, Mrs. Florence Paquette, Mrs. Kay Rioran, Mrs. Teresa Cathcart and Mrs. John Phillips.

In the Library were displayed exhibits, photos and models of Society Hill renewal projects. It had been planned to have the Annual Meeting itself in the gardens, but because of the inclement weather this had to be moved to the auditorium of Old St. Joseph’s Church at 4th & Wiliam’s Alley.

President Sums Up

Here the meeting got underway soon after 8:30, and a brief welcoming address was made by the president, Maureen M. Marshall. Miss Murdoch reviewed the accomplishments of SHARA since its organization just a year before: four well-attended and satisfying General Meetings and two Rehabilitation Workshop sessions which proved there’s plenty of enthusiastic activity in the community, including efforts on the Society Hill. A good half of the 300 members of SHARA are active in many ways and on many committees for the greater good of all area residents. They have been helping in making a survey of community needs and desires, and have presented these to the City Planning Commission, the Redevelopment Authority and the Old Philadelphia Restoration Corporation.

The Education & Recreation Committee was instrumental in bringing the City Library’s Bookmobile into the areas on Fridays between 1 and 3 p.m., at 4th & Delancey Streets; a Great Books Discussion Group was organized by the same Committee. A Halloween Party for children was held in Lawrence Street and was attended by some 300 happy, costumed youngsters.

The Society Hill News took over from the Old Philadelphia, under the editorial guidance of George Keurney. Other Committees -- Membership, Police Cooperation, Health, Urban Renewal, Zoning and Rehabilitation have been functioning effectively to help make and keep Society Hill a safe, attractive and friendly place in which to live and work.

The President also expressed SHARA’s appreciation to the Faust-Gilbert-Berchichack American Legion Post which has provided SHARA with an office address, and to the city and planning officials present at the meeting. These included Mr. John Robin, Executive Vice President of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, Mr. Francis L. Lanahan, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia.

REDEVELOPMENT OPENS SITE OFFICES

In prompt answer to a plea made by SHARA’s executive board the Redevelopment Authority will open a temporary office at 321 4th Street, beginning with a series of weekly clinics there from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M. every Monday night.

Society Hill is so filled with unfounded rumors that the Redevelopment people were only too happy to meet SHARA’s suggestion of setting a temporary office within the area. An offer of space for such an office was made at 321 S. 4th Street which presently is owned by the Pennsylvania Hostel for the Aged.

Clarence Altar, well-versed in the Redevelopment plans and its various laws, will meet all residents with problems. If necessary, a staff member will be the office to be opened at 321 S. 4th Street and the area for study and legal matters, if alterations are to be made. Mr. Altar will talk over with residents and find out what each resident wants. But he can’t talk prices.

These sessions started on May 26th and will continue as long as necessary for June 2nd and June 9th always at the same time. In the day-time Mr. Altar, on appointments only, will be available at the general office of Redevelopment Authority, 1818 Rittenhouse Square -- Kingsley S-2206.

FLASH!

Miss Selma Levin, Chairman of Unit No. 2 Committee, reports that Redevelopment Authority officials have informed her that they are seriously considering SHARA’s recommendations concerning the McCall School Playground, as well as to a possibility of opening two or three retail stores throughout the neighborhood, with special reference to those on 5th and 6th Streets.

PENNA. HOSPITAL SALUTES SOCIETY HILL

Each June the grounds of the Pennsylvania Hospital at 8th and Spruce Streets assume the appearance of a festive fair ground. And each June the gala occasion has chosen a special theme for the day. This year the Hospital has chosen Wednesday, June 6th as the day and “Society Hill!” as the area rat

ing a big salute.

The entire theme will be carried out through using historic names of yesterday’s famous Society Hill shops, inns, stores, and homes. The gay booths that dot the grounds will bear such names as "Glammiversary", "The Abraham Petal Auction", "William Goods Bakery", and "Eugene Roussel, Perfume and Fancy Assortments". The "Peter Platter Inn" will serve luncheon on the grounds and "Clarke Inn" will serve a b

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Another attraction will be the "Clothesline Exhibit" of art work of the Philadelphia Golden Age Clubs, a "Society Hill" look-a-look of hot dogs and hamburgers around the tables of its patrons.

Wor will the children of Society Hill be neglected. There will be a good sized section laid out for fun games and rides -- with prizes to the winners. The Fashion Show to be held at three o’clock will feature not only the latest in summer costumes -- but will also present fashions seen in Society Hill in its earlier days.

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At five o’clock the crowd will gather before the steps of Old Pine Street entrance to the Hospital to watch the winners paraded, drawn from the "Don Franklin Jackpot". Who will win the little 1958 Fiat sports car, or the $100 cash, or the Philco T.V. set or the other prizes? Maybe these will find new homes in Society Hill.

Then, too, there will be SHARA’S only exhibit of community activities occupying a booth on the main grounds. And, also, the main event of the morning which is to be a tour of the newly opened "Mount Vernon" and the historic homes of Society Hill. Among the homes to be visited are those of Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Martin at 705 Spruce, the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Canaday at 241 South 4th Street, "Mount Vernon" and the Philadelphia Mutual Assurance Company of America wherein resides Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Seymour, and the Hill-Physick-Randolph-Keith Mansion at 321 South 4th Street home of Mr. George F. Kearney, The Morristown House, the Philadelphia Contributionship, and the Morris House will wind up the day’s tour.

Throughout the day -- from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. the activity will continue as Pennsylvania Hospital Day unfolds its Salute to Society Hill. Come join us for the occasion.
Advice From Ye Olde Man About Rehabilitation

From the depth of a world of experience may Ye Editor of this publication urge the good people of Society Hill to stop worrying about what is going to happen to their particular houses. Some thirty-five years of a very active newspaper career make me aware of the workings of a well-known national disease we shall call, here, Rumoritis.

Not that SHARA wants to soft-pedal any injustices; in fact she has a reputation for being instilled with what we know is wrong here in Society Hill — if, for instance, the arbitrary decision to place a mammoth central police station and jail somewhere at the edge of Society Hill near Second and Pine Street. Our wise diplomat, Miss Valentine, shown deftly convinced our city fathers that the whole idea was wrong the city council soon gave in and placed the headquarters where it belonged, near Franklin Square.

Never underestimate the power of a gentle-spoken woman, like our Maureen, to get her own way. She’s famous for it and she’s watching this situation of the redevelopment of Society Hill with her pal, Phoebe Patterson, SHARA’s new president, with eagle eyes. And Phoebe’s no man’s tool either. They gals in the right place fortunately for us.

Now permit Ye Editor to keep on wearing his white beard. We’re still looking for a villain in this Society Hill but, honest-to-goodness, we haven’t found one. A newspaperman becomes finally an expert in studying people suffering from Rumoritis. We have learned, from clinical observation that, if pampered, a victim can have a hard time of it. We have met some very fine residences who are taking these things the hard way. My advice is — wait and see. There is a fatality in life which turns most grim rumors into the best things that happen to us in life.

And if you have a problem, a good-sized rumor, drop around on Monday evenings at 321 S. 4th St., to talk things over with this gentleman’s editor. His name is Valentine. He’s an authority on just about everything in Society Hill. And we suspect you’ll see Maureen Murdoch, somewhere around taking notes like mad on all your questions and problems and the solutions of these problems never were. He’s quite a fellow and, besides, he is a dyed-in-the-wool Society Hiller and is fixing up a house down here.

The relationship between the members of SHARA and the various officials of the Redevelopment Authority has remained, in spite of the neighborhood tension, quite cordial, dignified and still below the boiling point. No one in this area has lost his temper under the greatest provocation. The people of Society Hill are willing to concede that certain changes must be made; that some people will be inconvenienced by the changes indicated in the Andrade plan.

At the neighborhood meeting last Monday night (May 26) the scene was quite heartening. Mr. Alhart, officially representing the Redevelopment Authority as the principal planner for Unit 1 area set up his office in the library of 321 S. 4th Street promptly at 7:30 P.M. He was polite, friendly, knowledgeable, sympathetic young man anxious to study the neighborhood reaction to the Andrade plan. He was assisted by two assistants plus a copy of the map of the area indicating the changes contemplated. It should be emphasized that the plans on the map are subject to changes as these conferences between the property-owners and the planners continue.

In another room the SHARA’s Rehab Clinic was in session. Here several architects, deeply immersed in the job of rehabilitating existing old houses, talked about the problem of rehabilitation over with a dozen harassed, often bewildered property owners. Much was accomplished at these down-to-earth conferences and the air atmosphere cleared considerably. Two architects, Damone Child and Frank Graham, both residents of Society Hill and intensely interested in the general problem of redevelopment, were present. They were aided by Mr. L. E. Martin, Chairman, SHARA’S Rehab Clinic and a man of wide experience in restoration of old houses. A
ANNUAL MEETING - Continued

Mr. Clarence Allart, Principal planner for the Redevelopment Authority; Rev. Joseph Calvey of St. Joseph's Church was also thanked for the hospitality extended by the Church to SHARA on many occasions.

At the conclusion of the President's talk, Mr. Robert Levins, Sr., presented the report of the Nominating Committee and the new slate of officers and members-at-large. Several members made other nominations from the floor, and after these had been considered and accepted voting proceeded on the suggested slate.

A motion was made by Dr. Benjamin Schoenfeld, chairman of the Urban Renewal Committee, that SHARA be incorporated as a non-profit organization, and this motion was seconded and passed by those present.

SHARA'S NEW OFFICERS

At this point the Election Committee returned and announced the new officers for SHARA for 1958-59, and these are as follows:

President: Mrs. Phoebe Patterson
1st Vice President: Rev. Joseph Calvey
2nd Vice President: Mr. Al Spause
Sec. (Pro Temp): Phyllis Johnson
Corren. Sec.: Leon Hall
Treasurer: Robert Levins, Sr.
MEMBERS-AT-LARGE
Miss Selma Levin
Mr. Morton Pownlen
Mr. Oscar Stern
Mrs. Philip Mandel
Mr. Ralph Ottaviano
Mr. Joseph Smith
Mrs. Pauline Johnson
Mrs. Helen Bluerkin

Chairmen: Committee: Membership — Dr. Meyer Gansky
Public Relations — Maureen Murdoch
Editor Society Hill News — George F. Kearney
Police Coop. — Leo Riordan
Health — Dr. Edw. J. Siegel
Ed. & Recreation — Mr. and Mrs. George Diehl
Streets — Isadore Ragovitz
Budget & Finance — Rev. Joseph Calvey
Urban Renewal — Mr. Robert Levins, Sr.
Zoning — Arnold Nicholson
Rehabilitation — L. E. Martin
Special Events — Kurt Winter

The retiring president then turned the meeting over to the new President, and Mrs. Patterson introduced the speaker of the evening, Mr. Preston Andrade, A.I.A., architect, for the City Planning Commission's Washington Square Development Plan.

Mr. Andrade presented his report on the Unit One Study made by his staff during the past six months, illustrating his remarks with maps and charts. Considerable discussion ensued, in which Mr. Robin and Mr. Lommen as well as Mr. Andrade took part.

The most important development to come out of the meeting was the assurance by these planners that they are willing and anxious to cooperate with SHARA in making plans for the improvement of the area residents for consideration before the plan is finally sent to the Federal Government for implementing. Suggestions were made for a formal presentation to specific groups and SHARA's Executive Board immediately arranged for a special board meeting to formulate plans.

One of the highlights of this Annual Meeting was the presentation of plaques in token of appreciation for services rendered to Miss Murdoch, retiring president, and to Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Schoenfeld, in appreciation to their contribution to the community and SHARA.

SOCIETY HILL VIGNETTES

Maybe You Remember

MRS. CHARLES P. KEITH

Very shortly the Saturday Evening Post is going to publish an article about the genial Dr. Philip Syng Physick, 'Father of American Surgery' who probably was the most famous of all the physicks of old Phila. It is written by the late Mrs. Frances Wister, founder of the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks whose arduous hobby was the raising of money to restore old houses, like the Peirce House at 244 South Third Street. This started all the lovely energy that the restoration of Colonial homes in the Society Hill area. The Hill-Physick Keith brochure was so much in demand that George Keith has given them all away and is thinking about panting a new edition.

Actually the house should be called the Wister house as a long line of Wister line have lived there. The brochure recounts the genealogy of this stately mansion which is one of the most famous homes in all America, Kearney, who is Irish and has a nimble imagination, threats, if he still has time, to write the fabulous story of the many picturesque people, from the past and present, who have talked to him in the nights of Sunday, he has lived there and slept with his third eye open. (And be sure and ask him about the mansion’s house nice who live there all night at midnight at his bedside table) Kearney’s tall tales of yesterday’s people are quite out of this world, kids love them.

Henry Hill, who built this town house in 1786 was a brilliant officer in Washington’s army, an importer of Madeira who was forced to leave on many occasions in the seven seas. He owned a number of slaves and unrelentless seamen in the cellar dungeon which still exists there. John Marshall, the first Attorney General, was operated on by Dr. Physick. Here his daughter Mary, accomplished a graduate degree with a doctorate of medicine. She entertained the Marquis de Lafayette when he came back to America in 1814 and made her wide-spread farewell tour through the country to be heard, to be heard. Perhaps the best-known visitor to the mansion was the redoubtable Dr. Benjamin Franklin, who designated Henry Hill as one of the executors of his last will. Old Seneca who also drops around to talk with Kearney about the Junto, the Gulf Stream and the fourth dimension of space and time.

But perhaps as it is picturesque house of the English residents of this house were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Penrose Keith. Mrs. Keith’s name was Elizabeth Harvey Wister, a grand dame of her day who always came back into town to entertain her guests before the Assembly Ball. These were the days of crinoline, lavender and old lace. Old-timers remember Mrs. Keith supervising her gardeners from the porch leading out from the ballroom on Delancey Street. There are a thousand and one stories about Mr. Keith, a lawyer and an historian, and Mrs. Keith who is said to have looked like a Ginsburg in her prime. Keith was the man who wrote the History of the mid-Victorian society of the city, still lies there with her glorious memories of her wonderful husband.

Across the street Mrs. Keith acquired 320 S. 4th Street, also an old manse and also (“So I’ll always have a nice view”) and here were his 1000 books while rising out of a space that is not a part of the house. Mrs. John H. Maurer, widow of the famed district attorney of this city, still lies there with his glorious memories of her wonderful husband.

And then Fourth the Pennsylvania Hospital, to whom Mrs. Keith willed the property, will stage a walking tour through Society Hill, and this hallowed house, as part of their June fest. Hopefully those who arrive at the bewitching hour of night, in hopes of seeing the house nice do their square dances, will be promptly turned into pumpkins as a punishment for being too much curious.

BOOKMOBILE POPULAR

Every Friday near noon a strange vehicle settles down on the Delancey Street sidewalk of 321 South Fourth Street. It looks for all the world like a space ship people are talking about and it is a converted bus that it blew, brought and grooved.

Then it opens up, smiles at the Society Hill neighborhood and begins handing out books on free library cards. This Bookmobile also runs out Free Library of Philadelphia which has its main headquarters on Logan Square.

Near are the books they give out to the neighborhood any old kind. They are up-and-coming fiction and informative. Moreover, if you are interested in a special subject, anything, you can ask the gracious ladies in attendance to look up your specialty in the main library and bring it down to you next week.

We’re proud of this Bookmobile, and the convenience it offers, as this was first suggested by SHARA. And you ought to see the school children crowding down to get their books. The teachers of the various schools now send an emissary to bring back the books asked for by the rest of the kids — next, ev
Houses for Rehabilitation

200 block Pine and 100 certified homes will have priority at Rehabilitation Clinic Session sponsored by SHARA. Mr. J. E. Martin, clinic chairman, urges residents Mr. Edmond Bacon’s statement “quite the place to get the proper guidance”, to begin your rehabilitation is at SHARA’S Rehab Clinic, which will meet the same night and the same place as the Redevelopment Committee - The Hill-Physick-Keith Mansion, 321 S. 4th St., service by appointment, come in and register for your free Rehab session. These clinics will be resumed in the fall.

SPRUCE STREET IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION PLANS PARTY

A wing ding of a party for central city residents will be held on Saturday, June 14th at the picturesque Mask and Wig club-house 310 Quince St., under the auspices of the Spruce Street Improvement Association. It will be something out of this world—booths, cake sale, a turkey and ham buffet, fortune telling, an array of pretty girls as attendants and the fun of visiting Mask and Wig with its many trophies and pictures. A donation of $1.50 will be asked. Tickets can be obtained at Mrs. Furman’s, 1209 Spruce Street.

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EDITORIAL - Continued

number of pertinent questions were asked by Society Hill residents and some valuable suggestions were made and studied by the residents and these friendly architects.

A third meeting on general problems in the area was in progress in the old ballroom. It was the executive board of SHARA with all its members present. This group is in the nerve center of our residents’ organization; alive to its many problems. They reiterated their opposition to the high-rise apartment set forth in the plans for what we now call the Yellow Cab parking lot at 4th and Willings Alley. They also asked for an alternate plan for the very effective playground used by the Salvation Army and sponsored by the Lions Club of Central Philadelphia.

From now on forward we will hear a great deal about this playground, strategically located for the use of the neighborhood boys and also the children of working wives who are cared for by the Salvation Army in their very human way. The Redevelopment plans call for the retaining of the old building housing the Salvation Army on the north side of Willings Alley but not this playground which the Redevelopment wants to eliminate in order to give the high-rise apartment more park area along Third Street.

On this important matter, involving matters of policy, the SHARA’s executive board is holding its breath. President Phoebe Patterson called for thoughtful consideration of this dilemma and asked for a substitute plan. The first thought, of course, was to convince the Redevelopment Authorities of the value of the playground on this particular spot. Thus, we believe, is the sore thumb of the Redevelopment plan and one which will continue to arouse public sentiment.

President Patterson appointed Ye Editor as chairman of a committee to study a substitute plan and he was asked to form a committee of the strongest element of the Society Hill community to deal with this overall problem. We have such a plan, or plans, which first must be studied from its many special angles. The committee, when formed, will welcome any suggestions. The committee is anxious to work in close co-operation with the various planning officials of the Redevelopment Authority and are reasonably hopeful that a more-than-satisfactory solution can be reached. It should take into full consideration the needs of our expanding community and, more particularly, the children of the working wives who are expected to crowd down here in houses and apartments convenient to their work.

The executive committee of SHARA was introduced to Mr. Chester Hayes, chairman of the Relocation Committee of Redevelopment and also Mr. Jerome Feinberg, chairman of the Real Estate Committee. Both men talked like officials dedicated to the human situations involved in their jobs.

So this, we feel, is democracy in action, an interesting experiment in community action which will be studied closely by the whole nation in this readjustment period. There will be many heartaches...some people may lose their tempers in those difficult situations involving their homes, their businesses and their children’s welfare. Democracy, we are told is an uncomfortable process especially in periods of transition and our only hope, and prayer, is that we can continue quietly to solve each situation with all the facts.

“Hi, Captain”

Dock your boat in the Marina and live in SOCIETY HILL; a dream coming true

See

SAMUEL P. ECKERT

REALTOR

S. E. Cor. 5th & Pine Sts.

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