Special May 19th General Membership Meeting

Mother Bethel Church, 419 South 6th St.
7:30 PM Meet Your Neighbors
8:00 PM Program
(For information about Mother Bethel AME Church, see page 12.)

Protecting Your Piece of History
Homeowners Insurance from Chubb

If you are passionate about your historic home, you should know how your insurance company would respond in the event that your home is ever damaged. Will your insurance company recognize the craftsmanship and materials that are needed to repair or replace your home? Will your insurer pay for you to use these materials or to hire a specific contractor specializing in historic homes? If you have not asked your insurance company how they will answer these questions, you should consider doing so.

Homeowners’ coverage can often differ dramatically from insurer to insurer. For example, some major insurance companies cap a valuable coverage called “guaranteed replacement cost.” This coverage is designed to pay for the full cost of replacing your home in the event of a total loss, even if the cost to do so exceeds the amount of insurance on your policy.

A Masterpiece Homeowners’ Policy from Chubb, now available to Society Hill Civic Association members (as well as all other of Chubb’s products),

Continued on next page

Auto Rates for SHCA Members: Nationwide Agents Deanna & Chris Coyne

It’s great to be back! After growing up in Queen Village and attending St. Peter’s School for nine years it was a wonderful homecoming when my wife Deanna, two year old daughter Emma and I moved to Society Hill and opened an office in August of 1997.

The Gannon-Coyne Agency is the third Nationwide office to open under the Gannon Group of Agencies. We have two locations in Northeast Philadelphia and currently service over 7,000 clients. With more than 30 years affiliation with Nationwide and 24 employees we are excited about our entrance into the Center City marketplace. We are even more excited about the Group Auto Insurance Program that the Society Hill Civic Association was able to negotiate on behalf of its members.

With the help of Howard Lander I received the declaration pages for both home and auto insurance from about ten members of the Association. I quickly ran comparable quotes on the policies and the results were dramatic. With our already strong homeowners rate and using Nationwide’s Group Auto Program, we were able to save all ten.

Continued on next page

Welcome America!

Philly Reads:
Become a volunteer to help children

The following article was written by Marcene Mattleman, Executive Director of Philadelphia Reads. Ms. Mattleman will be a speaker at the SHCA May 19 Membership Meeting.

Approximately 45% of the children in Philadelphia public schools are not reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. If students don’t read well by the end of 3rd grade, chances for later success are greatly diminished and the likelihood of dropping out of school, displaying anti-social behavior and delinquency increase. Recognizing this problem, Mayor Rendell established Philadelphia Reads as a collaborative effort with the School District and the Free Library. The initiative is part of the national America Reads challenge to assure that all public school children read well and independently by the end of 3rd grade.

We are now mobilizing a campaign to involve the Greater Philadelphia

Continued on next page

Welcome America! Celebration: July 4th Extravaganza • New Initiatives

Susan Segal will be a guest speaker at the May 19 meeting, Ms. Segal is the Executive Director of Welcome America, Inc., the non-profit organization responsible for the City of Philadelphia’s “Welcome America!” celebration, which includes the July 4th extravaganza. The festival attracts approximately two and a half million visitors from the region and nation.

New initiatives undertaken by Ms. Segal include murals, neighborhood festivals and patriotic programs. She has over seventeen years of experience in the hospitality, event management and fundraising fields.

Ms. Segal is an active board member of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Philadelphia chapter of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai Brith, and the Rendell Administration’s Hospitality Cabinet. She was recognized by The Philadelphia Business Journal 1997 “Forty Under Forty” and Inside Magazine 1998 “18 People to Watch” for her pro-
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Sally & Arthur Smith  
Babe & Harvey Snyder  
Norma Snyder  
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Society Hill Synagogue  
Society Hill Towers Owners Assoc.  
Society Hill Veterinary Hospital, Inc.  
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Robert & Joan Speck, Jr.  
Larry & Ann Specter  
St. Mary Interparochial School  
St. Mary's Convent  
William Stamps  
Donna & Allan Starr  
Phil & Joan Steel  
Pat & Michael Steele  
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Rosenmarie Weinberg  
Keri & Matthew White  
William White  
Dorothy Mann  
Kristene Whitmore, MD  
Perry Whyte  
Michael Czerodarczuk  
Henry & Selma Wieder, Jr., M.D.  
Barry & Madeleine Wiksten  
Alec & Debbie Wilder  
Ann & Douglas Wilkerson  
Venice L. Williams  
John & Dolphine Wilson  
Wallace Wing  
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Charles Flood  
Susan Zeitz  
Sybille Zeldin  
Alfred & Judith Zenk  
Joseph Zielinski  
Louis & Nina Zimmer  
Mark Zwanger  
Malcolm Kram
Special May 19th General Membership Meeting

Philadelphia Reads: Become a volunteer to help children community to provide volunteer time, materials, books and other resources for in-school, after-school and summer programs.

Philadelphia Reads provides a meaningful way for every citizen to participate through reading with a child, organizing a book drive, donating a computer or adopting a class and providing books. Each of these activities may be done individually or with a group.

Come to the General membership meeting on May 19th to learn more about the many ways you can help do something to improve the lives of our city’s children.


Homeowners Insurance from Chubb

products and services), provides guaranteed replacement without a cap. In addition, Chubb offers a complimentary appraisal service on most homes.

Chubb’s personal insurance program for the Society Hill Civic Association can provide you with important insurance information and unique products and services. If you would like to learn more about the program, please join us at the SHCA general membership meeting on Wednesday.

Welcome America! Celebrations

fessional accomplishments. Come hear her speak to us about what to expect from this year’s “Welcome America” celebration.

Auto Rates for SHCA Members: Nationwide

members money. Savings ranged from $284 to more than $1,345 annually on the combination of both the home and auto policies.

Nationwide’s Group Auto Program rates run about 10 to 12 percent below those rates available to the general public. The typical clients are the scope and size of Merck and Federal Express, so to convince Nationwide that the SHCA membership represented a good risk pool was no small feat. I congratulate the Board of Directors and applaud their creative and continuing efforts to find innovative ways to support and improve the quality of life for Association members.

Please come see us at the general meeting on May 19th.

Thank you, Bohemian!

A special thanks to Bohemian, the hip and happenin’ new restaurant at 5th and Bainbridge, for hosting a wine and hors d’oeuvres party for SHCA members.

Visit their roof deck or enjoy their beautifully decorated interior. (P.S.—we loved the calamari!)

Civic Association Elections At May Membership Meeting

The following are nominees for the 1999 SHCA Board of Directors:

OFFICERS

President ...................... Norman Tissian
Vice President ............... William Hawkins
Vice President ............... Mary Sturdivant
Secretary ..................... Mark Keener
Treasurer ..................... Perry Whyte

HI-RISE DIRECTORS

Hopkinson House ........ George Compton
Independence Place ........ Herb Lipton
Society Hill Towers ....... Marc Bonavitacona

Portia Bonavitacona (2001)**
Crel Magen (2002)*

Matt DeJulio (2001)
Frank Hoban (2002)*

Southeast .......... Deborah Robinson (2000)
Barbara Gelman (2001)
Elizabeth Armstrong (2002)*

Marsha Levine (2001)
Joan Rollins Tropp (2002)*

* Candidate being elected to fill a full term
** Candidate currently filling an uncompleted term

VOTE

Society Hill Reporter

May 1999
It’s Official! Society Hill Is an Historic District

On March 10, 1999, at the third of three public hearings on the subject of whether Society Hill would become a city-certified historic district, the Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) voted unanimously to make this dream a reality!

The official name of our district is "Society Hill (and Pennsylvania Hospital of Washington Square West) Historic District." Quite a mouthful, but because Pennsylvania Hospital straddles both communities, the name incorporates the wishes of our Washington Square West neighbors.

There are about 1,200 properties included in the district which is roughly bounded by Front Street on the east, Naudain, Gaskill and Lombard Streets on the south, 8th Street on the west, and Walnut Street on the north.

Society Hill is notable not only for its concentration of 18th- and 19th-century structures and for its original 1682 grid plan, but also for its successful urban renewal projects of the 1950s and ’60s.

The community has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1971. All properties will now be protected from inappropriate demolitions, unsympathetic new construction and insensitive alterations to the exterior of any building within its boundaries.

The movement for local designation as a form of community protection began about a dozen years ago. Penny Batcheler, then the preservation architect at Independence National Historical Park, brought her concerns to the Society Hill Civic Association.

The Association’s Historic Preservation Committee has actively supported becoming a historic district under the city’s ordinance. Designation would not have been accomplished without the work of the PHC, which authored the nomination of the district and inventoried and documented each structure within it.

We thank the PHC’s dedicated staff led by Dr. Richard Tyler, and we are grateful to the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, a nonprofit organization that “promotes the appreciation, protection and appropriate use and development of the region’s historic buildings, communities and landscapes.”

Thanks also to "For Society Hill Historic District Designation Now!", an ad-hoc group of residents and property owners whose collective voices contributed to the effort.

—Bernice Hamel

---

Save These Dates:

Wednesday, May 19
General Membership Meeting
Mother Bethel
African Methodist Episcopal Church
419 South 6th St.
6:00 PM Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 PM Meet Your Neighbors
8:00 PM Program

May 9 to 15
Preservation Week

Sunday, May 16
Dickens Curiosity Shop, 417 S. 2nd St.
Benefit: 25th Anniversary of Ronald McDonald House
Beanie Baby-Millennium Bear Raffle

Beginning May 18, from 2 PM to 7 PM
Passyunk Ave. just south of South St.
Farmers Market Opens for the Summer
Every Tuesday at 2:00 PM

Thursday, May 20, 7:00 PM
Society Hill Towers Community Room
Public Safety Meeting

May 29, 30 & 31
Memorial Day Weekend
12 noon until evening
• Jam on the River
• Headhouse Square
2nd and Pine Sts.
Creative Collective Crafts
& Fine Arts Fair
See the photo on page 15

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BUSINESS AND ADVERTISING
William Hawkins

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOMED
Next Editorial Deadline: June 16, 1999
Mail contributions to above address.

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Citykids: Summer Fun!

Summer's almost here, and it's time to think about how your little ones will spend the balmy days ahead. Three Bears Park and Rita's Water Ice are great destinations when the weather warms up, but you'll need more to get you through the summer. Luckily, there's no shortage of summer programs for children in the Philadelphia area.

Programs Open to the Younger Set: Ages 2 and older

Many programs open to even the youngest tykes are camp-style sessions that include components of arts and crafts, music and nature. For example, Beginnings (215-627-3668) offers full or half-day summer programs for children 2 to 8 years of age, while the Gershman Y (215-446-3023) which will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily and features swimming, accepts 3 to 12 year olds. If you'd prefer to stay in the neighborhood, St. Peter's School (215-925-3963) offers a well-rounded camp for children ages 3-13 that runs from 8 to 4 daily.

Special interest programs are also available. For a wild experience, the Philadelphia Zoo (215-243-5247) offers various half and full-day summer programs for 4 to 15 year olds. Want your four year old to greet you with a hearty "bon soir" when you come home from work? The French Communication Institute (215-568-7765) offers a summer program for ages 4 to 16 that runs from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The longer day gives campers plenty of time for fencing, aikido, French cooking and dance parties! Aspiring dancers ages 4 and older will enjoy the Rock School's (215-551-7010) summer session which includes classes in ballet, jazz and tap. The Settlement Music School (215-336-0400 x25) caters to musically inspired 4 to 7 year olds in its half-day camp held during the month of July.

Programs for Kids Ages 5 & Up

For slightly older campers, Old Pine Community Center's (215-627-2493) summer program runs from 9 to 3 daily for children ages 5 to 13. If you don't mind crossing the river, the New Jersey State Aquarium in Camden offers a chance for 6 to 12 year olds to study marine life from mid-July through mid-August in its all-day camp. The all day program at The Franklin Institute Discovery Camp (215-448-2195) is a great place for budding scientists ages 6 to 13 to explore the museum and planetarium. If your kids are set on a sports-filled summer, consider tennis at the University of Pennsylvania's Levy Tennis Pavilion (215-898-4741). This program, which runs from 9 to 3 daily, is designed for ages 6 to 16. University of Pennsylvania Gymnastics (215-898-5316) offers a full-day program for children ages 5 to 12 in June and July.

The Big Kids: Over 8

More mature city kids who are curious about history will enjoy the Atwater Kent Museum's (215-922-3031) all-day summer session for ages 8 to 13 that focuses on colonial, Victorian and modern Philadelphia. Junior thespians ages 8 to 18 will enjoy the Walnut Street Theatre's (215-574-3550 x510) camp, which will give them the chance to work on acting, voice, and dance in either half or full day sessions. The Actor's Center (215-925-7060) in Old City also offers 9 to 17 year olds the chance to refine their performing arts skills. And if your pre-teen is dying to go camping — really camping — the Academy of Natural Sciences (215-299-1060) summer session may be just the thing. This full-day program for kids ages 9 to 12 focuses on the study of nature and includes camping trips at local state parks.

As you can see, our fair city offers so many wonderful programs for children, it's enough to make us wish we had the summer off, too.

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Liquor Control

There are two applications for licenses. Both will transfer from other locations and both are for the block of South 2nd Street between Pine and Lombard. One is for CAFCINO TOO and the other is for XANDO. We have responded negatively to both applications (our usual negotiating position). We are working closely with Gray Smith, Chair for Liquor Control and Zoning of South Street Neighbors.

Library Coalition

A "I" may have to be crossed and maybe an "I" or two dotted, but negotiations between the City and the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies have progressed to the point where both institutions are saying we have a site for the new East Philadelphia Branch of the Free Library.

The funding for renovations to the site will be available July 1st of this year, and the new branch should open in January, 2000. Interested in supporting the new branch? Look for news about fundraising events in future issues of The Reporter.

Neighborhood Pride

Spring is here and that signals the time to survey our homes for needed repairs and painting. When choosing contractors to work on your house, it is important to find those who have a good track record for reliability, workmanship, and rates. For that reason, we have prepared a list of preferred contractors, all of whom have worked for and been highly recommended by Society Hill neighbors. Most of these contractors have worked on a number of area houses and many specialize in older/historic homes.

Neighborhood Pride has been providing this free list since March 1998, and over time it has grown to several pages. Because the list requires much effort and time on the part of volunteers who compile, update and distribute it, we urge you to become a member of SHCA and show support for this and other invaluable services.

For a copy of the list, please call Martha Levine at 215-629-0727.

Welcome Committee

Houses in Society Hill are selling like hotcakes! There are simply not enough houses to meet the demand. One house reportedly sold after a single day on the market. To date, over 50 beautiful Welcome Baskets filled with bread, coffee, bagels, chocolates, apples, cookies, candles and information, have been delivered to new Society Hill homeowners. The program extends a hearty welcome to newcomers with the hope that they will join the Civic Association and support our efforts. If you have received a basket and have not yet joined, please don't delay. Membership is only $40 a year and the benefits far exceed the dues! If you moved to Society Hill in 1999 and have not received a Welcome Basket, please call Martha Levine at 215-629-0727.

Our sincerest thanks to following local merchants who have so generously provided food and services for our Welcome Baskets: Zeke's Deli, Baker Street, Super Fresh, Chef's Market, Old City Coffee, Riff's Cleaners, Dickens Curiosity Shop, Starbucks, and Koffmeyer's Cookies

Police Radio Advisory Board (911)

The Police Radio Advisory Board (PRAB) was established to present an independent view of the emergency radio system on the recommendation of the Mayor's 911 Committee. The Board is made up of civilian representatives from Philadelphia neighborhoods together with members of the Police Communications Division.

One of the first steps the PRAB took was the development of a city-wide education program geared to all communities. Specifically, the Board created guidelines to help people use the emergency system more effectively. With the help of Drexel University, PRAB is developing a variety of communications materials for the city's schoolchildren, in addition to a videotape aimed at all residents. The video is narrated (and donated) by TV news anchor Larry Kane and produced with the help of the College for Performing Arts.

The PRAB is raising funds to cover the production of the above items and provide a recognition program for dispatchers and call-takers. The 911 system has come under a great deal of scrutiny in recent years. It is hoped that with the opening of the new state-of-the-art radio and dispatch rooms earlier this year, and through the efforts of all residents, we can make our city's system a model for others.

For more information on PRAB, or to participate in the 911 recognition program, contact William Hawkins, PRAB Board member at 215-592-8734.

Timer Installations Approaching 200th House!

To date, 185 households have participated in the Lighting Project by having one or more timers installed to automatically turn on front and/or back door lights after dark.

Every Thursday, Archer Electric sends an electrician to install timers for about a dozen interested households. To participate, call Martha Levine at 215-629-0727. (She will arrange installation at your convenience.) New or replacement light fixtures can be installed at the same time.

The 200th household will receive a free timer and installation as well as a gift certificate for $50 at Harry Horn's Electrical Supplies. Harry Horn sells light fixtures and other electrical supplies. Talk to your neighbors and help light up your block! ☼

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[Image of ALGA LAMP SHADES advertisement]

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MAY 1999

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER
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What Have You Done For Me Lately?

The past few months have been both exciting and fulfilling because of the many successes the Society Hill Civic Association has had in serving our community. As you read the list, please recognize the time and effort that was invested by board members of the Civic Association.

Auto/Home/Contents Insurance For Members

The Society Hill Civic Association has been designated a "group" by both Chubb and Nationwide. Members of SHCA will be offered significantly lower rates on insurance for auto, home, home contents, second home, art, antiques and more. We will work with the insurance companies through our neighbors Mather & Co. with Chubb and Gannon Coyne with Nationwide.

Full details will be introduced at our next members’ meeting on May 19th at the Mother Bethel AME Church. More information is available in this issue.

Neon Exterior Signs At First Union Bank

Neighbors complained to us. We identified and contacted the proper bank officials. They were terrific! The signs were removed in less than a week. We were promised that future signage would first be submitted to the SHCA for approval.

Mayoral Candidates Forum

All six candidates came at the time assigned. Each spoke and answered questions for about 20 minutes. About 250 neighbors attended. The SHCA was solely responsible for arranging this meeting. Reaction from those who attended has been excellent. We’ll do it again in the fall.

Dump Trucks on Pine & Spruce Streets

The Performing Arts Center at Broad & Spruce Streets begins with a hole. Over 100 huge dump trucks used Pine and Spruce Streets to move dirt to Columbus Blvd. We acted. No more dump trucks are going through Society Hill.

Zoning/Development Issues

New developments that are in our community (36-story apartment building at 7th & Walnut) or that will impact our community (Penn’s Landing Entertainment Center) have recognized that they must deal with our Civic Association on issues of concern. We have two great, very active zoning co-chairpersons.

Historic Designation

This is our biggest success! Months of meetings, discussions, phone calls, letters and newsletters have resulted in Historic Designation for Society Hill. The integrity of the community will be protected for years to come. Many residents worked to make this happen. At all times, however, the Civic Association was the focal point in this detailed process.

Improved Street Lighting

It has taken months of effort! At last the 200 block of Spruce Street is the test block. Wattage in the Franklin lamps has been increased from 50 Watts to 70 Watts. Come look! Tell us what you think!

I’ve covered only some of our activities. There are dozens more that are ongoing — new restaurants and liquor license issues, Greater Media Cable rewiring our community, even social events. Are we working for you and our community! Tell us what you approve of and what you dislike.

Lastly

Are you a member of the Society Hill Civic Association?

Call us at 215-629-1288 or better yet, email us at shcivica@aol.com or fax us at 215-625-9914.

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513 S. 9th St: 5 unit apartment bldg, 2 studios, 2 car parking. 2 one bdrm, 2 two bdrm, $279,900
328 S. Juniper St: Restored triplex 1 studio, 1 two bdrm, 1 one bdrm, laundry, parking $269,900
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A Dim View of Lighting Project

I moved to Society Hill five years ago. I enjoy living in this community and walking its quaint streets. Being reasonably cautious, I feel safe here, day and night.

Lighting is critical to any neighborhood's ambiance; it can invite or repel. It also can enhance security. I applaud the use of timers to make a vacant home look occupied and the pruning of tree overgrowth to maintain the efficiency of our Franklin Lamps. I welcome candles or other period lighting in windows, as well as appropriate front door lights. However, I believe the current Franklin Lamp wattage is more than adequate.

I also feel that it is unnecessary and environmentally irresponsible to burn house lights form "dusk to dawn" where reasonable street lighting exits. Shouldn't we instead promote energy conservation? More troubling are the high intensity lights springing up here and there (which are starting to give some of our streets the atmosphere of a gas station) and those awful motion-sensor floodlights. These devices are hostile and intimidating to friend OR foe, and are not in keeping with our community's historic character. Like the bars that have been installed in the windows and doorways of otherwise beautiful homes, these high tech novelties proclaim emphatically, "Beware! High crime area!" Such warnings, unfortunately, tend to become self-fulfilling. As the streets become less inviting to casual strollers, they become more deserted. Who feels at ease walking under glaring floodlights or triggering sensors which startle the unsuspecting victim? As neighbors and tourists retreat from the scene, the criminal element is free to move in.

I say, take back our streets! Invite a neighbor or walk the dog but get out often! Each of us can serve as the eyes and ears of the community. Be alert and report suspicious activity to the police. True security comes about when we use and enjoy our neighborhood, not when we hide behind bars or floodlights shining on empty streets.

— Jerry M. Belew

Why We Need Better Lighting

The main goal of the Lighting Project is to increase Society Hill lighting in an effort to keep our sidewalks and homes safe for all of us. We are aiming to improve lighting in two ways:
1. To encourage homeowners to turn on their front and back door lights after dark
2. To upgrade our Franklin Lights from 50 watts to 70 watts throughout our neighborhood

The Department of Street Lighting has concluded that Society Hill street lighting is below national standards for an urban neighborhood. We have a continuous flow of outsiders passing through our streets daily, some of whom may have an undesirable agenda. It is foolish to assume that our neighborhood is immune to crime. Experts on security unanimously agree that adequate lighting is the number one measure to prevent crime — and it's totally under our control. We can have more or less lighting. Which seems the better choice?

Homeowners need to protect the fronts and backs of their homes by using door lights after dark. Here is why:
- Well lit doorways and sidewalks give intruders a reason to move on
- Door lights give the perception that someone is at home
- Door lights add light to our sidewalks making them more comfortable for evening strollers.

Worried about wasting electricity? Light bulbs use a tiny fraction of energy compared to the use of television, computers, air conditioning, home appliances and hairdryers. The cost is pennies a day.

We live in a beautiful, historic neighborhood. Let's also make it a safe one.

— Martha Levine

Franklin Light Test Block Completed!

The 200 block of Spruce Street has been upgraded with newly installed, 70 watt high-pressure sodium Franklin Lights. This is the culmination of months of diligent work by the Lighting Committee and the Philadelphia Department of Streets.

Please take an evening walk to view the newly lighted block and give us your comments by calling the Civic Association at 215.629.1288, faxing us at 215.625.9914 or e-mailing us at shcivica@aol.com.

Witty, Literate Volunteers Wanted

The Friends of the Free Library need help sorting mountains of books in preparation for a gigantic April 2000 BOOK SALE!

WHAT: Volunteer to sort books into established categories such as poetry, history, biography and (you will see why witty is a requirement), examine books for unique qualities such as first editions or authors' signatures, and mark books with color-coded stickers for pricing.

WHERE: Friends of The Free Library Book Shop, 20th and Wood Streets, (behind the Central Library)

WHEN: Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM

THANK YOU! Volunteers receive a 10% discount at The Bookshop, as well as advance notice of all Free Library events, lectures, films, concerts and discussion groups.

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Mother Bethel AME Hosts SHCA Meeting

The May 19th SHCA General Membership meeting will be hosted by Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, located on the northeast corner of Sixth and Addison Streets.

This late 19th Century Romanesque façade with impressive stained glass windows sits on the site of the original structure, an important stop on the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War. The basement museum houses its political history and will be open to the public before the meeting.

Founder, Richard Allen

Its founder, Richard Allen, had purchased his freedom in 1780. Profoundly moved by Methodism, he preached to both white and black congregations at St. George's on North Fourth Street.

But when St. George's built a special gallery for black parishioners, he led the movement to form the African Methodist Episcopal congregation. With Absalom Jones, he formed the Free African Society, a mutual benefit society, to help raise money to build a church for the fledgling group.

Contributors to the building fund

Many prominent civic leaders, like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Dr. Benjamin Rush, were very grateful to the black community for their generous and voluntary assistance during the terrible yellow fever epidemic of 1793 and therefore contributed to the building fund.

Today, Mother Bethel is a national shrine for African American religious and political history and the mother church of the AME denomination, as well as an active community house of worship.

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And You Thought “Dream Garden” Was Safe!

Walk into the Independence Square entrance to the Curtis Building and you will notice a red demolition sign perched atop a stand to the left of Maxfield Parrish’s “Dream Garden” mural.

The four-ton, forty-nine foot glass mosaic mural, produced by the studio of Louis Tiffany in 1916, still could be taken from Philadelphia. Despite the official designation as an “historic object” from The Philadelphia Historical Commission, the fate of the mural remains uncertain, thanks to the Merriam estate, which wants to override the designation and have the option to sell the work to an outside buyer.

Leading the fight to keep the mural in Philadelphia, preferably at its current location in the Curtis Building, is the Coalition for Philadelphia Art, the group that put the spotlight on the intended sale of the mural to casino tycoon, Steve Wynn. The Coalition’s weekly pickets and press coverage have helped hundreds of Philadelphians understand that the mural could be up for grabs.

While we are not suggesting protection for every art object and historical item in the city, there are some items that are recognized as being an important part of Philadelphia culture and heritage. The Dream Garden, with its 260 beautiful color tones, is part of the fabric of Philadelphia and that is where it should remain.

Who to contact: To help keep the mural’s historic designation, write to Wayne Spilove, The Philadelphia Historical Commission, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Send copies of your correspondence to Diane Dalto, Deputy City Representative (City Hall, Philadelphia, PA 19107), and Richard Tyler, Historical Preservation Officer (same address as Mr. Spilove). It is also important to let Mayor Rendell know that you support the mural.

For more information on The Coalition for Philadelphia Art, contact Thom Nickels at 2110 Pine Street, Philadelphia 19103; telephone (215) 546-6924.

P.S. Not even the Liberty Bell or Wanamaker Eagle are protected!

— William Hawkins

It has been twelve months since work began in William Penn’s “Southeast Park,” one of the five original city squares. At this newsletter’s press date, the brickwork on the east and south sides of the perimeter are complete and work has begun on the west and north sides. A substantial amount of repaving within the Square also has been completed. Few historical remains were uncovered during the process.

Still to be done is rebuilding the wall, which will require some cornerstone reconstruction, and the corner entrances/ exits. It is possible that the work could be completed by this Fall.

A section of the Square has been left open for residents of the community to enjoy “their park,” a concession for which the community fought vigorously. We are working with the Fairmount Park Commission in an attempt to open another section of the Square now that spring is here.

Martha Aikens, Superintendent of Independence National Historic Park, which will assume responsibility for Washington Square upon its renovation, has been asked by local residents to ensure that the Square remains a “people’s” park. More than any other green space, the Square is an important part of the lives of residents from Society Hill, Washington Square West, and other communities. Park benches and even trees have been donated by neighbors over the years.

For more information on the renovations, contact SHCA board member William Hawkins at (215) 592-8734.

— William Hawkins

LET’S TALK REAL ESTATE

By Lolly Crowther LaGreca

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MAY 1999

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER
Perry Whyte

If you handle all the money for an organization, pay the bills, file the tax returns, deal with the bank, balance the books and don’t see any remuneration yourself, you know that the organization is a volunteer one.

In fact, being the treasurer of the Society Hill Civic Association is a labor of love. It has to be. But more than that, says Perry Whyte, who has filled that role for the past two years, it has to do with community and commitment. If you want to bring about change, he says, “don’t shout from the sidelines; get into the fray.”

Aside from keeping the Association’s finances tidy, Whyte is motivated by aesthetic considerations such as getting involved in Cleanup Day, working with Walk Philadelphia to place directional and historical signs, and planting trees, including the one in front of the house on the sixth block of Spruce Street that he shares with his companion of 16 years, Michael Czeredarczuk. “We like to make wherever we live beautiful,” he says.

What he likes about the city is its architecture, its history, its diversity, and its style.

“When I walk by Independence Hall,” he says, “and I hear the carriage drivers offering tours of historical Philadelphia, I realize that I live that history every day; and that’s a privilege.”

Being on the SHCA board and living within its membership area afforded him the opportunity to meet a wide variety of people, something he values highly. When Whyte lived on Rittenhouse Square, he was led to believe that the denizens of Society Hill were “snitty,” something that he adamantly says has not turned out to be the case.

Perry Whyte’s day job takes him each day to Wilmington, where for the past two years he has been supervisor of document management at Anderson Consulting.

Before Anderson, Whyte spent 23 years with DuPont in the same city. When Perry isn’t dealing with documents in Delaware, balancing the SHCA’s books, and voting on such Association issues as zoning, the hotel project on Penn’s Landing or the proposed condominium building on Washington Square, he collects model trains, plays the piano, and bike rides and roller blades in the summer.

And he’s a seasoned traveler having been to England, France, Venezuela and Egypt in recent times. Asked why anyone would spend a quarter century working in Wilmington while continuing to live in Philadelphia, Whyte says simply: “Because Wilmington isn’t Philadelphia.”

— David Woods
VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT
http://www.wnwr.com/shca

Pang Xiong Therasak, Hmong artist and
craftswoman, exhibits in the Creative Collective
Crafts and Fine Arts Fair beginning Memorial Day
Weekend and continuing every weekend through
September. Pang will be the featured teacher on
Sunday May 30th, as she conducts a free children’s
art workshop from 1:00 to 3:00 where soft
sculptured animals will be made.

Hours for the Fair on Memorial Day Weekend are
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Monday 12 noon until 6 PM. For more information
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>200-220 Locust Street</strong></td>
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<td>One bedroom, sunset city view, 725 sq. ft. - $95,000</td>
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Make a wise investment TODAY by renewing or initiating your membership in the Society Hill Civic Association.

**WHY?** Because caring for your neighborhood is in your very best self-interest. A strong and vibrant association makes our streets safer and cleaner by giving you a unified voice in speaking to government, legislators, businesses, and others who impact our area of town. A unified group of neighbors is the surest way to keep your investment in Philadelphia viable for many years to come.

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Household Membership: $40  Business Membership: $80

*Additional Contributions: $ ____________________________

* earmarked for:  [ ] Project Sweep Stakes
[ ] Town Watch  [ ] Street Trees/Tenders

I/we would like to work on the following committees:

___ Clean-Up Day  ___ Historic Preservation
___ Library  ___ Liquor Control
___ Society Hill Reporter  ___ Street Trees/Tree Tenders
___ Town Watch  ___ Zoning/Development

Please make your check payable to:
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Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105

Questions? Call 215-629-1288 • FAX 215-592-4239
email shcivic@aol.com