Elections for SHCA’s Board of Directors and Officers occur annually, in accordance with the organization’s bylaws. This year’s election will take place at our May 16th General Membership Meeting. The members will elect a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and four Directors-at-Large, all for one-year terms. We will also elect four Quadrant Directors for three-year terms, one from each of Society Hill’s quadrants. SHCA’s Nominating and Election Committee nominates persons for these positions. Additionally, others may be nominated by petition. To nominate someone (yourself included), submit a petition signed by 10 SHCA members. Nomination for Quadrant Director requires the signatures of 10 residents of that quadrant. Although not required, consider including information about the nominee. Send to SHCA’s Administrator Matt DeJulio, c/o Society Hill Civic Association, P.O. Box 63503, Philadelphia PA 19147 or to mattdejulio@aol.com. The deadline for submissions is April 1st. All nominations will be listed in the next issue of the Reporter. Visit www.societyhillcivic.org for information about our civic association, board or nominating process.

The Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) invites you to our March 21st General Membership Meeting to hear Jeff Hornstein, a First District candidate for City Council last year, present an overview of the City of Philadelphia’s proposal for citywide real estate reassessment, using the Actual Value Initiative (AVI).

AVI is meant to correct long-standing inequities in property assessments across the city. Values are currently so inconsistent or inaccurate that Mayor Nutter froze reassessments on most properties in 2011. This process, in which all properties are to be assessed at market value, will hit each property owner and neighborhood differently, with some seeing higher tax bills and some experiencing lower bills. Society Hill, with its low demand for City services and relatively high real estate values, has reason to be concerned about the 2012 reassessment.

Jeff Hornstein, former Service Employees International Union leader, lives in Queen Village and is now president of the Queen Village Neighbors Association. He’s also president of the Philadelphia Jewish Labor Committee and has worked for the American Federation of Teachers.

The General Membership Meeting, open to all neighborhood residents, will take place at 7:30 p.m. in the Zubrow Auditorium on the first floor of Pennsylvania Hospital, just inside the main entrance at 8th Street near Spruce. Prior to the General Meeting (at 6 p.m.), we will hold our monthly Board Meeting at the Hospital’s Grand Court Room. All current SHCA members are welcome to attend. We look forward to seeing you!

SHCA Board of Directors Candidates Sought

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Which Quadrant?

Are you unsure of your quadrant? Society Hill is divided into four quadrants: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest and Southwest. Fourth Street serves as the north-south dividing line between the east and west quadrants. Spruce Street is the east-west dividing line between north and south quadrants.
Liberty Tree

by Thomas Paine

A song written early in the American Revolution.

In a chariot of light from the regions of day,
The Goddess of Liberty came;
Ten thousand celestials directed the way
And hither conducted the dame.

A fair budding branch from the gardens above,
Where millions with millions agree,
She brought in her hand as a pledge of her love,
And the plant she named Liberty Tree.

The celestial exotic struck deep in the ground,
Like a native it flourished and bore;
The fame of its fruit drew the nations around,
To seek out this peaceable shore.

Unmindful of names or distinction they came,
For freemen like brothers agree;
With one spirit endued, they one friendship pursued,
And their temple was Liberty Tree.

Beneath this fair tree, like the patriarchs of old,
Their bread in contentment they ate,
Unvexed with the troubles of silver and gold,
The cares of the grand and the great.

With timber and tar they Old England supplied,
And supported her power on the sea;
Her battles they fought, without getting a groat,
For the honor of Liberty Tree.

But hear, O ye swains, 'tis a tale most profane,
How all the tyrannical powers,
Kings, Commons, and Lords, are uniting amain
To cut down this guardian of ours;

From the east to the west blow the trumpet to arms
Through the land let the sound of it flee,
Let the far and the near, all unite with a cheer,
In defence of our Liberty Tree.
We can all work together in small and large ways to make Society Hill a better place.
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‘Fix the Brix’ Has the Bucks

BY MARTHA LEVINE

Armed with a budget of $10,000 and warmer weather on the horizon, SHCA is gearing up for a new season of “Fix the Brix.”

What is ‘Fix the Brix’?
SHCA offers a reimbursement to homeowners of 40% (up to $300) for the cost of using a professional mason to level, then repair any brick or cement (front) sidewalk that is a public walkway. There may be a need for an arborist if the problem involves tree roots.

Who should get involved?
People trip and fall every day, sometimes causing serious injuries. Most homes in our neighborhood have brick sidewalks and often there is a shift in the surface due to tree roots or sinking ground. Our sidewalks are our responsibility and homeowners are liable for any injuries incurred. If your sidewalk is not level, it should be properly fixed.

How to Get Started
1. Contact SHCA for a list of suggested masons.
2. Call a mason and get several estimates.
3. Choose a mason (who should be able to tell you if you also need an arborist) to do the work.
4. After the work is completed, make certain your invoice states that the front sidewalk repair was completed. Mail the invoice (keep a copy for yourself) plus a copy of your cancelled check to: SHCA, P.O. Box 63503, Philadelphia, PA 19147.
5. Receive your check from SHCA for 40% of the cost (up to $300 maximum).

Caveat: If you have a corner property on 3rd or 4th Streets, know that the city will be installing new ramps along these two streets — so you might want to wait until that work is completed this spring.

Since these funds are limited, now is the time to take advantage of the offer. Contact Martha Levine at marthalev@msn.com or 215-629-0727, or Frank Signorello at fsignorello@gexchange.com for more information or to obtain a list of masons/arborists.

TREE TENDERS

Join the Tree Tending Team

Another year, another call for the greening of Society Hill! Tree-loving residents of the 200 & 300 blocks of Delancey Street recently took the initiative to contract with a professional arborist for the (overdue) pruning of a majority of trees in their immediate vicinity. Well done! We encourage other property owners to take the responsibility to keep our trees healthy. In doing so, you contribute to everyone’s general welfare.

The City’s TreeVitalize Program, with help from SHCA, is launching another tree planting effort in the fall of 2012, following the placement of a handful of young, bare-root trees already scheduled for the end of April. If anyone is interested in getting such trees established in front of their home, please contact us immediately so we may guide you through the necessary “red tape” — and provide you with the required application form.

The deadline for submission is March 31.

Homeowners who were beneficiaries of past TreeVitalize plantings should check to make sure that green “Gator” bags are in good condition. When spring arrives, trees planted during the last 18 to 24 months will be looking for renewed care, especially regular watering. If you see any problems — a sick or dead tree, broken branches, or the like — please let us know. We will be available to make an assessment and suggest possible remedies.

And on a final note, we extend an invitation to all Society Hill “tree huggers” to join us. We need more helping hands. New trees put smiles on faces — see photo! For more information, contact Hans Bombeck at hansbombeck@verizon.net.
Old St. Mary Church † Holy Trinity Church
252 S. 4th Street 6th & Spruce Streets

Old St. Mary's was the first Cathedral of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Philadelphia. Holy Trinity Church was established as the first National (German) Catholic Church in the United States. Celebrate your holidays and holy days with us.

Lenten Schedule
Stations of the Cross
Holy Trinity Church
Every Monday in Lent
12 noon

Holy Thursday Mass
Old St. Mary Church
April 5th, 7 p.m.

Good Friday Service
Holy Trinity Church
April 6th, 12 noon

Easter Sunday Mass
Old St. Mary Church
April 8th, 10 a.m

Mass at Old St. Mary Church is celebrated every Saturday at 4:30 p.m. and every Sunday at 10 a.m. Weekday Mass is celebrated at 7:30 a.m. in the chapel of Old St. Mary Convent/Residence at 5th and Locust Streets.

215-923-7930

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We contribute to Welcome Basket. We are located on Historic Antique Row.
We are sad to report that Rebecca T. Stoloff, a lifelong Philadelphian and one of Society Hill’s earliest and most ardent pioneers, died on January 14th at the age of 70. Many friends and neighbors have worked with Becky over the years — beginning in the early stages of our community’s renewal and preservation programs — when she and her husband, Milton, purchased and renovated a historic but deteriorating house that they transformed into a comfortable, contemporary family dwelling.

A graduate of Brandeis University who earned a Graduate Certificate in Public Policy from Stanford University, Becky worked as an administrator and management trainer for the Social Security Administration in the early stage of her professional career. Later she volunteered and directed her efforts at issues relating to historic preservation, architecture and civic affairs. Widowed since 1992, she is survived by her son, Andrew, his wife and their two children, as well as her brother, Jonathan Taylor.

Becky’s positive spirit and many years of leadership contributed greatly to the successful rebirth and vitality of Society Hill. For example, she served as President of our Society Hill Civic Association from 1989-1991, and more recently as SHCA’s Vice President from 2007-2010.

Although ailing for the past two years, Becky continued her years-long dedication and service as Vice Chair of the Reading Terminal Market Corporation and also as President of the Reading Terminal Market’s Preservation Fund. In addition, she was a Board Director of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, as well as Co-founder and Vice President of the Head House Conservancy, which restored America’s oldest surviving firehouse structure: Head House — a National Historic Landmark in our midst.

Becky also served as Membership Chair for the Friends of the Independence Branch Library.

Becky always managed to enjoy her life, as well as contribute her support and efforts to several worthy local causes. If you wish to honor Becky’s memory with a charitable donation, her family suggests that a tax-deductible contribution to either of her two most beloved nonprofit organizations would be greatly appreciated. Kindly direct your gift, in Becky’s name, to either:

- **Friends of the Independence Branch Library:** 18 S. 7th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. Indicate whether you prefer your donation to be spent to purchase books for the “Rebecca T. Stoloff Memorial Book Collection” or for an audio system in the library’s community room.

A special event celebrating Becky’s life will be held on Sunday, April 22nd at 6 p.m. — at the Reading Terminal Market (located at 12th and Arch Streets). Your participation is, of course, most welcome. For more information and to let us know that you plan to attend, please RSVP to: BeckyLifeCelebration@gmail.com.

**Joanna Durdle, 47**

We extend our condolences to the family of former neighbor Joanna Putney Durdle, who died on January 9, after a courageous two-year battle with breast cancer. Joanna was born in Boston, Massachusetts on September 3, 1964 to the late Paul W. Putney and Joan (High) Putney of Rydal, Pennsylvania, who were among the “pioneers” responsible for Society Hill’s renewal. Survived by her husband, Brian, Joanna also leaves a son and three daughters. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her name to Laurel School’s Scholarship Fund, Development Office, 1 Lyman Circle, Shaker Heights, OH 44122. Online condolences may be made to the family at masfh.com.
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Professional florist and registered horticultural therapist Cheryl Wilks will bring her tricks of the trade to the Powel House (244 St. 3rd Street), where she will present a floral workshop. Cheryl has been a guest lecturer at the Philadelphia Flower Show since 1990, entertaining audiences with her fun, educational programs.

Participants can exorcise winter blahs while exercising their creativity by making a lovely, take-home basket suitable for hanging on the door (or gifting Mom on Mother’s Day!) All ages and skills are welcome. And materials — such as flowers, ribbon, baskets, butterflies and birds’ nests — are included in the $45 fee. Proceeds will benefit the Powel House restoration fund.

Space is limited. Reserve before April 23rd by sending a check to: Powel Floral Workshop, c/o Jorja Fullerton, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, 321 S. 4th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. Please include your address, phone number and email. For more information, call Jan Stephano at 267-258-7819.
SHCA's Zoning and Historic Preservation (ZHP) Committee meets monthly to address community concerns related to both zoning and historic preservation. It helps homeowners who would like to make changes to the exteriors of their properties understand and be prepared for the process of approval by the Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC), which is required for any exterior changes, and for any zoning variance which may be needed. We urge you to submit your plans or ideas to the ZHP Committee before submitting them to PHC.

312-322 Walnut Street through to Willings Alley
Nolan Properties, LLC plans to convert this former office building into 66 market-rate residential dwelling units with commercial use on the ground floor and accessory parking. The developer and a subcommittee of near neighbors (representatives from Willings Alley Mews, Bingham Court, Old St. Joseph’s Parish and SHCA) have finally signed an agreement that will guide the design development of the project and control some of the future building operations. At the Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing in February, SHCA offered testimony of non-opposition to the variances requested and the uses of the parcels. City Councilman Mark Squilla and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) also supported the project.

Included in our agreement with the developer is an escrow fund to pay for damage that may occur during the construction period to Willings Alley, a street listed on the City’s Historic Register.

We thank SHCA Board member, Jim Moss, for his generous guidance, skill, diplomacy and diligence to help to make this happen.

341 Pine Street Rear Addition, 3rd Floor Roof Deck
The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) hearing originally set for November was continued to December, when the Board decided this should be heard as a new case rather than an issue from the court decision. The third-story bedroom addition was granted, but without the roof deck. This decision is now under appeal. SHCA has supported the application that has been modified several times by the applicant to reduce impact on near neighbors.

541 Pine Street (S.E. corner of 6th and Pine)
This application for 100% lot coverage as well as a garage and a curb cut from 6th Street was heard and approved at ZBA in January. Several friends and neighbors turned out in support of the applicant, although SHCA testified to oppose the application.

221 Pine Street
An application for two-family occupancy and significant reduction of open space was unanimously denied at ZBA and was subsequently appealed by the owner. This appeal was heard in February and the judge remanded the case back to ZBA. SHCA and PCPC are on record in opposition to the use of the property as a two-family residence. Since June, SHCA has separately pursued enforcement measures with the Philadelphia Historical Commission to stop the owner’s willful destruction of the 19th-century rear addition by the removal of windows and the entire rear wall — exposing the interior to the elements.

223-225 South 6th Street (aka Dilworth House)
State Appellate Court hearings took place in February. Meanwhile, Society Hill neighbor Nancy Frenze and the ZHP Committee have been pursuing correction of building violations that are causing the structure to fall apart — as well as affecting public safety. The city has recently established a new Licenses and Inspection group that concentrates on vacant properties. Unfortunately, the response to our complaints (already undergoing normal processing) was transferred to this body for scrutiny and action. This transfer set back the timetable for a positive outcome by either the owner or the city.

Most distressing is the possibility of more wintery weather since the building has no capability to control water running off its sizable roof. Offers to purchase the property have been declined by the owner, Turchi Properties.

200-212 Lombard Street
(Storefront at 225 South Street)
In January, ZBA granted a continuance of the application for a banquet hall. The Queen Village Neighborhood Association, the South Street/Headhouse District and SHCA are on record together to oppose this use, because of the youthful age demographic — coupled with unregulated use of alcoholic beverages. In addition, there is concern about late hours of operation, the types of entertainment that would be offered and the lack of parking, which make the use inappropriate for a location cheek-to-jowl with residential occupancies.

601-603 Lombard Street
On February 13th, the applicant presented a proposal to the ZHP Committee and nearby neighbors to subdivide this existing property — turning its open parking lot into two new lots for single-family homes with garages. The existing structure containing four rental units (built by the city’s Redevelopment Authority) would remain. The nearby neighbors and ZHP decided not to support the proposal, as it would excessively reduce open space and reduce light and air for all nearby residents. The city’s Zoning Board of Adjustment considered the proposal at the time this newsletter was being printed.
Signs of the Times

Crosstown Coalition — Zoning Code Commission
The Crosstown Coalition assisted Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) to organize a preliminary round-table discussion concerning sign controls. As background, this area of the zoning code was considered so complicated that the old code was incorporated in the adoption of the new one in December 2011 — with the idea it would be amended and ready to go into effect by August 22, 2012. Similar deliberations will occur for developers and groups representing businesses that create, build or install signs.

Advertising on City-Owned Property
The SHCA Board will send a letter to City Council and the Mayor’s office opposing the legislation introduced by Darrell Clarke, Bill No. 110922, allowing the City to lease space to advertisers — that is, unless it exempts municipal property in historic districts.

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Updated Contractors List
SHCA has updated its Society Hill List of Contractors — a current, 12-page guide to neighbor-recommended contractors of all types. This service is available to SHCA members only. If you would like a list mailed to you, please contact Martha Levine at marthalev@msn.com or 215-629-0727.

Reminder
Exterior Lighting and Cameras Need Approval
Any and all changes to building facades in the Society Hill Historic District, including outdoor lighting and cameras, must be pre-approved by the Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC).

Within the district, your home has been evaluated as either “highly significant,” “contributing” or “non-contributing” on the survey that was used to legally create the district. This information is available at the PHC office (576 City Hall). If your house is either contributing or non-contributing to the preponderant 18th/19th century architectural style, approval can be granted by the staff when you meet with them.

However, the process is more complicated if the dwelling is significant (e.g. an authentic antique, a significant historical family residence, designed by a famous architect, or a place where an important historical event occurred.) The staff must review your proposal and then make a recommendation for approval or denial, which in turn must be formally presented to PHC for approval.

Please recognize that exterior lighting fixtures were not known to 18th/19th-century residences, so when it is desirable to add lighting, it is best to handle it in a way that does not pretend to be historic. The staff of PHC will help homeowners work out the best way to integrate lighting.

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Who is John Barry?

One of my warm-weather delights is to pick up a bagel and coffee about 8 a.m., sit on a bench at the south side of Independence Hall and read the morning papers.

As a side benefit, I hope to absorb a bit of the genius and creativity our Founding Fathers displayed here during the country’s earliest and darkest days.

While sipping my coffee one fall day, I suddenly noticed a large bronze statue of a military man with just the word “Barry” on the front of it.

I don’t know how I had missed this impressive statue before. I also wondered why a military man was honored here in a place known for political decisions? What was his contribution?

Little did I know that Commodore John Barry played an extraordinary role in our country’s history. Without his heroism and leadership, we might well be swearing allegiance today to the Queen of England.

Yet, as local author Tim McGrath says in his interesting 2010 book, John Barry: An American Hero in the Age of Sail, Barry is less well known today than some of his contemporaries, like John Paul Jones — possibly because he was not a braggart. His nickname among naval historians? “Silent John.”

Barry’s remarkable accomplishments:

• Won both the first and last successful battles the Continental Navy fought with the British (plus many in between).

• Served on the ground with his sailors at the Battle of Princeton in January 1777, when the British threatened Philadelphia and the Commodore’s next ship was still under construction.

• Captured two British transports and the schooner Alert in the Delaware River in March 1778, with just a small band of men and seven barges. The move infuriated the British, who had recently taken Philadelphia.

• Helped physically drag and carry two unwilling members of the Pennsylvania State Assembly from their lodgings to the nearby State House to ensure that a quorum was present — so that Pennsylvania could ratify the U.S. Constitution. Physically imposing at 6 feet 4 inches tall, Barry was well-suited for this unique mission.

• Travelled 237 miles in a 24-hour period while piloting the Black Prince, the fastest known day of sailing in the 18th century.

• Was the first flag officer of the United States and is often considered the “Father of the American Navy.”

His statue, which dominates the middle of Independence Square, portrays Barry in uniform, defiant and aggressive.

In one arm he carries a naval spyglass, a sheathed sword by his side. With his right hand, he points strongly, possibly directing his men to fire another broadside … or gesturing south towards the Delaware River and Bay, where so many of his important victories took place (and where a bridge in his honor was opened in 1974. The Commodore Barry Bridge spans the Delaware River from Chester, Pennsylvania to Bridgeport, New Jersey.)

How do others view Barry?

James Fenimore Cooper, the popular 19th-century American writer and a navy veteran himself, wrote “Perhaps of all the [Revolutionary period] naval Captains … he was the one who possessed the greatest reputation for experience, conduct, and skill.”

So awed by Barry’s skills, President John F. Kennedy kept Barry’s sword in his office as a source of inspiration.

My advice: Walk over to Independence Square, look at the statue of John Barry, and think about the things this man did to help ensure our nation’s success. He is a genuine American hero.

Cameras galore: While today’s visitors to Independence Square may not know exactly who Commodore Barry was, the innate power of his statue still attracts hordes of photographers every day.

One friend, who lives at nearby Hopkinson House, says he can’t recall ever walking through Independence Square without seeing someone taking photos of the Barry statue. “It’s amazing,” he says.

While John Barry may not be as popular as the Rocky statue near the Art Museum — almost 230 years after he helped defeat the British, he’s still noticed. Perhaps that’s another major victory for him after all.
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The Square Affair: Before and After

Besides being a great deal of fun, the wildly successful 2010 and 2011 “Washington Square Affairs” raised funds that have improved the beauty of the park. The photos below (small “before” and large “after”) prove that the proceeds have been well spent! While continued support is needed to maintain and improve our unique oasis in Society Hill, SHCA decided not to host the “Washington Square Affair” this summer. Instead, after careful consideration, it was decided to wait for the completion of current projects before starting to plan for June 2013. If you are interested in supporting us with a contribution or in volunteering in some capacity, please contact SHCA’s Administrator Matt Dejulio via email at mattdejulio@aol.com.

Northwest corner

Eastern side

South side

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Craig LaBan, The Philadelphia Inquirer’s restaurant critic, recently awarded our favorite local eatery, Zahav, his coveted four bells accolade. Armed with this tidbit of news, we doorstepped Zahav’s chef and owner, Michael Solomonov, to quiz him about Life, Love and the Universe.

When we asked what brought him to Philadelphia from his native Israel, Chef Solomonov explained that a girlfriend from Mount Airy was the impetus for the visit, but that he went on to marry another Philadelphian (who persuaded him to stay in our fair city).

We wanted to know just how “Chef” (as he’s called in his kitchen) came to wind up perched atop a hill right next to the Society Hill Towers. Solomonov told us about the excitement he felt when the Towers management invited him to check out the space and he saw what the previous tenants left behind: “The pizzeria had its own wood-burning pizza stove, which means we could bake fresh flatbread all night.”

In fact, our interview took place in front of this same fiery furnace on a packed Saturday night. As I dripped perspiration, Chef calmly fielded my questions — simultaneously scrutinizing dishes (every single dish passes under his nose), rolling and baking flatbread (called laffa), serving mezze starters and coordinating orders between servers and sous-chefs. The speed and efficiency of the whole operation was bedazzling.

Chef Solomonov, explaining why Israel cuisine is special, said “You’ve got to remember that it is a combination of foods from many different cultures. It draws from North Africa, from Ethiopia, as well as East Africa and other Middle Eastern cultures, such as Yemen — and European food has influenced the Israeli kitchen, too.”

Chef told us that he learned to cook from his grandmother. “She was a Bulgarian Sephardic Jew who used to make Balkan pastries and beef and lamb sausage, Bulgarian-style. We had borekas, one of her signature dishes on our menu, but removed it when she passed away last year.”

Zahav’s own signature dish is fried cauliflower with labaneh (a thick yoghurt flavored with herbs, spices and lemon). This writer has tried many times to reproduce the dish at home from memory, but never managed to replicate it, or any of Zahav’s sensational mezze (small tapas-like dishes). As Chef explains: “On every street corner in Israel there is always someone selling fried cauliflower. Perhaps we fry it at a slightly hotter temperature and our labaneh may be slightly different, but essentially we’re serving that same traditional Israeli dish.”

Zahav emulates the experience of a bustling Middle Eastern market. Before opening, the entire staff flew to Jerusalem to visit an open-air food market in the chaotic hour before Sabbath — to better understand and experience its cuisine. A photo of this experience takes pride of place in the restaurant that, with its Turkish lighting, drapes and painted brickwork, is deliberately evocative of a bazaar.

The restaurant’s menu features many selections grilled over coals. Must-haves include hangar steak, kebabs and chicken shishlik with figs, almond and carrot pilaf — not to forget the spiced eggplant with Israeli couscous, mushrooms and tehina. The idea is to order a collection of small plates (these are moderately priced between $8-10 each) and then mix and match dishes to be shared around the table. If you’re not sure what to order, try one of the two recommended tasting menus at $35 or $45 per person.

Chef Solomonov continues to rack up recognition for his culinary skills. In 2011, the prestigious James Beard Foundation nominated Solomonov as their “Premier Chef in the Mid-Atlantic Region.”

So what’s up next for Chef Solomon? “One day I would love to open a restaurant in Jerusalem and earn a Michelin star,” he says.

You know what? We’d put money on his doing it.

A longer version of this review, which includes Chef Solomonov’s recipe for Fried Cauliflower with Labaneh, is posted on www.phillyfoodlovers.com
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We were fortunate to catch up with award-winning author and well-known Philadelphian, Cordelia Frances Biddle — whose family was among the city’s earliest residents. She was gracious enough to share her thoughts on today’s literary scene and some of her latest projects.

Curious about the writing life in Society Hill, we asked Cordelia what impressed her the most. She responded by extolling our neighborhood’s merits: “Society Hill is a fabulous place to set any story. History is living around us all of the time; we are bombarded with it. I ‘see’ stories on every corner.”

Biddle is currently finishing a novel that is a spinoff of her popular Martha Beale mystery series. “I titled it The Actress,” she says, “though one never knows if a title will stick through publication. It centers on the character Becky Grey, who appears in the other books. I also had a great time writing St. Peter’s Church: Faith in Action 250 Years in collaboration with Libby Brown, Alan Heavens and Charles Peitz. It is a wonderful book, with beautiful illustrations and historical photographs on every page. As a member of St. Peter’s Church, this project was especially meaningful. I am also working on a biography of St. Katherine Drexel, who is an ancestor of mine.”

When asked how it feels to be descended from a saint, the author laughed and said, “Stressful! How does one possibly measure up?”

Her primary aim for this biography is to bring Drexel to life in the correct historical context. For example, the future saint viewed Abraham Lincoln’s body when the funeral procession was brought through the city. (Note: Lincoln’s body lay in state in the east wing of Independence Hall.) Biddle explains, “Things like that are important to place her in and among actual world events. But I am also very keen to bring a novelist’s eye to nonfiction. So much of it feels like work; I don’t want to create a textbook. Stacy Schiff did a masterful job with Cleopatra: A Life. Even though it was nonfiction, it was a true page-turner; I couldn’t put it down.”

Our much-loved Society Hill novelist gave us a peek as to what’s on her bedside table. “My favorite novel is usually the one I’m currently reading,” she says. “I have been revisiting Dickens in honor of his birthday (February 7th), so right now I’m loving Bleak House.”

“Book or Kindle?” we asked. Cordelia Frances Biddle quickly responded, “Both! I was given a Kindle as a gift, and out of mere politeness I downloaded a book on it. I was hooked. But I spend an awful lot of time in Head House Books, which is an absolutely amazing bookstore (located at 619 S. 2nd Street). It is small and intimate, but the selection and quality are wonderful, and of course they can get anything you need. I go to browse, and then purchase e-books right there.”
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Alert from Captain Korn of the Sixth District: door knockers are being stolen in our area. In the past we have seen this type of theft escalate, often until an arrest is made. Be alert to any person(s) at your own or your neighbors’ doors. If you see anything suspicious, call 911. Provide the call taker with an exact location and a good physical description of the suspicious person(s).

Watch for the Cab
A cabby out there is taking your cash, announcing that he got less from you than you gave him and demanding more. One of our neighbors handed this cabby a $20 bill and was told he only gave the driver a five. The cab number is 1032 (handwritten inside) — watch out for him and be careful about handing out big bills.

Reward Fund Update:
More than 75 neighbors contributed over $17,500 to reward information leading to the arrest and conviction of the two criminals who shot Darren Rogers (see page 26). The Citizen’s Crime Commission is using the media to publicize the reward and SHCA has put up posters on South Street.

Socialize & Exercise
Join the Walkie-Talkies
Tuesdays & Thursdays @ 8:15 a.m.

Although spring has not yet officially sprung, warmer weather is definitely on the horizon. We hope these increasingly sunny skies will encourage many more local gals to join the Walkie-Talkies — our neighborhood’s free, friendly and non-stressful fitness program. Year-round, on any Tuesday and Thursday morning (when it’s not raining), several Society Hill gals enjoy one-hour walks exploring our wonderful community and enjoying each other’s company. Newcomers are especially encouraged to participate with “old-timers” on these varied strolls. Lace up your sneakers, wear a smile, and show up at Three Bears Park (Delancey Street between 2nd & 3rd Streets) a few minutes prior to 8:15 a.m., when these walks promptly begin. Any questions about this free, friendly, and fun fitness routine? Just phone Bernice at 215-925-4363.

Order this Miniature Reproduction of the Three Bears Sculpture
The sculpture of three white granite bears that gives the park at 3rd and Delancey Streets its name is a beloved part of Society Hill. Sculptor Sherl J. Winter envisioned this work as interactive, and children of all ages have embraced it since it was installed in 1966.

Recently he has reproduced the figure in miniature, giving anyone who has ever been to the park (or enjoyed playing there as a child) the opportunity to revisit it at home. The low introductory offering price is $125.

It is approximately 6” high x 7” x 5.5” and made of virtually indestructible cast stone.

To place an order or for more information please contact sculptor Sherl J. Winter at: 215 242 0978 or sjwinter00@comcast.net or visit www.winterartstudio.com.

Is the ‘Brass Bandit’ Back?

Security Cameras
Here’s what’s happening in Northern Liberties: The equipment is easy to obtain (even Costco and B.J.’s sell it) but expensive to install. Northern Liberties has it all set up and I’m exploring this model. (Apparently they are getting financial help from Sugarhouse Casino.) I also have another installation source and will compare prices. So, be patient — I’m on it and I’ll be in touch. Contact me at 215-922-2626 or harmara@verizon.net with any interest.

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A Beautiful Place for All

Old Pine Community Center (at 4th and Lombard Streets) began renovating its outdoor space in 2010. Overgrown shrubs and trees have been pruned or removed and the lawn has been reseeded. In addition, outdoor lighting and benches have been refurbished. The space is now an attractive, safe and inviting place for all neighbors to enjoy! And the new cleaning and inspection plan promises to keep it that way.

We are grateful to the pedestrians who are using the sidewalks and giving our new grass a chance to grow. Thanks to everyone for their support as we continue work on this gift to our community.

Philadelphia History Museum

With the completion of a major interior renovation and updating of its 1826 historic building, the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent (15 South 7th Street) reopened in February. This first part of a multi-phased reopening includes two exhibitions in newly installed galleries, a welcome foyer and a lobby area. The museum is open Wednesdays through Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For exhibition and program information, please visit www.philadelphiahistory.org or call 215-685-4830.

Putting the ‘Garden’ Back in Starr Garden Playground

Starr Garden, which opened in 1908 at 600 Lombard Street, is Philadelphia’s oldest playground. A new crop of youngsters has ignited an interest in revitalizing this neighborhood gem. Upcoming beautification plans include new plantings as well as repainting playground equipment and benches, sign replacement and graffiti removal. The next event will be a Pottery Painting Day for all ages on St. Patrick’s Day, Saturday, March 17th from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

To know more, become involved in these efforts or add your name to the email list, contact StarrGardenNeighbors@gmail.com.

Laurel Landau and First District Councilman Mark Squilla (above) and the Starr Garden Neighbors (below) bagged leaves, picked up trash, and more on Martin Luther King Day. Photos by Carolyn Stanish.

Society Hill

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- 240 Monroe St #2

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2012 Membership Drive Continues to Surge

By mid-February, 840 SHCA residents had already renewed their membership — still running about 10% ahead of the same time last year. If the current trend continues, we will most likely surpass our 2011 membership total of 1033. A reminder was sent in early February to the 235 members who had not yet renewed. If you are among those members, please respond at your earliest convenience, so we may avoid the cost of further follow up.

Winners of the drawing which awarded dinners to those renewing membership by the end of the year are Barbara and Tom Rittenhouse, as well as Kathleen Murphey. Congratulations to these two households and a big Thank You to all who renewed promptly.

We invite any of the 2,600+ households in Society Hill to join SHCA. Why is your membership so important? Besides providing funding for our many neighborhood improvement projects (such as graffiti control, weekly sidewalk cleaning and plantings in Washington Square), numbers speak volumes. When SHCA’s Board advocates on your behalf (e.g. zoning changes, real estate taxes, crime problems, ramp issues, trash receptacles, street lighting, bus re-routing, etc.), it makes a greater impact if we can say they speak on behalf of the majority of our residents. You’re also guaranteed a personal invitation to each of this year’s social events — the Holiday Social, the Spring Fling and the Soiree at the Shambles.

Without member dues, SHCA would cease to function. Protect your neighborhood and your real estate investment. SIGN UP TODAY!

If you have any questions or wish to comment on why you are not a member, please email SHCA Administrator at Mattdejulio@aol.com. All comments will be shared with the Board, which includes representatives from every quadrant in our unique historic neighborhood.

Good News!

The Philadelphia Foundation has recently awarded The Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks a $26,000 grant to be used for general operating support. This grant is wonderful affirmation of Landmarks’ work, which inspires people to engage with history by protecting the city’s historic sites and providing related programs.

Society Hill Civic Association

Membership Application

Name
Address Apt. #
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email (print clearly)

IMPORTANT: Today most everyone communicates via email. Please be sure that we have your current email address — so that you can receive important updates between publication of our community newsletter. All SHCA emails will be judiciously screened, and rarely will we send emails more than once a week. Nor will we share your email address with anyone else. This convenient, 21st-century system helps save our civic association postage costs, while keeping you regularly informed.

Residential Memberships
- $ 50 Basic Household Membership
- $ 40 Senior/Student/Single
- $ 100 Federal Friend
- $ 150 Georgian Grantor
- $ 300 Jefferson Benefactor
- $ 500 Washington Benefactor
- $ 1,000 Benjamin Franklin Benefactor

Business Memberships
- $ 100 Institutions — 5+ employees
- $ 60 Institutions — fewer than 5 employees

Additional Contributions
$_______ Washington Square Beautification
$_______ Franklin Lights
$_______ Sidewalk Cleaning/Graffiti Removal
$_______ Tree Tenders
$_______ Zoning and Historic Preservation
$_______ McCall School

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The following topics are of special interest to me. I welcome receipt of email updates on these topics.
- Clean-Up Day
- Washington Square
- Franklin Day
- Social Events
- Dilworth House
- Property Taxes
- Reporter
- Casino Issues
- Zoning & Historic Preservation
- Fundraising
- Local Crime
- Incidents & Alerts

Please return completed application to:
Society Hill Civic Association
P.O. Box E3503
Philadelphia, PA 19147
Darren Rogers has simple tastes. He likes rock ‘n roll, jazz, vanilla milkshakes, and walking long distances. Tragically, it was while enjoying his nightly walk through Society Hill and listening to his favorite group, Rush, on his Walkman, that he was almost killed.

It was 11:30 p.m. on November 7th and Darren was on his way to work in Old City, when two thugs accosted him, beating and then shooting him for good measure. Luckily (if there was any luck involved), James Atkins, the sexton of Old Pine Street Church at 4th and Pine, was cleaning the sidewalk when he witnessed the nearby attack and called 911. An ambulance rushed Darren to Jefferson University Hospital, where he would undergo five operations over the next six weeks to save his life.

“If it hadn’t been for Mr. Atkins, Darren would have died on the sidewalk,” says his grateful mother, Callie Rogers. “He would have been just a body lying there.” Since the tragedy that has changed this family’s life, she and her sister, Mary Miller, have driven to Philadelphia three times from their home in Indianapolis.

On their last trip, over the long Martin Luther King holiday weekend, they visited Darren at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital, where he would undergo five operations over the next six weeks to save his life.

“Why me?” Darren often asks himself. Why indeed? A quiet guy who liked his orderly life, he had found the job as concierge at the Chocolate Works apartment complex on North Third Street upon graduating from Ridley Park High School 26 years ago. Tenants liked his effervescent personality. “He never called in sick, and he only took time off for the Penn Relays,” recalls his friend and colleague Emmitt Scott, better known as Scotty. “And he was never late. You could set your watch by him.” Except for that fatal night of November 7th.

Scotty visits him often. “We developed a relationship 25 years ago,” he notes. “Darren is a dear friend and I consider him the son I never had. Prior to the accident, he had a good sense of humor. We always had bull sessions in between shifts. Sometimes we talked for hours about sports, history, and music. I would tell him about the Uptown Theater and all the famous people, like James Brown and the Jackson Five, who performed there before they were superstars. Darren was a great listener. When I go to see him now, I don’t pretend there’s no elephant in the room. Darren has to get over his anger and depression, although I can’t pretend to know what he is suffering.”

Callie agrees. “I tell Darren to use the rage within him to get stronger. Before the attack, he walked eight to ten miles a day. When he went to work, he’d catch the trolley from his studio apartment in Southeast Philadelphia to 30th Street Station. From there, he’d walk the four or five miles to Old City. It was his exercise. The doctors say he was in great shape, which helped to save his life.”

At 6 feet and 160 pounds, Darren was the perfect height and weight, concurs Scotty. “To see him now, so thin and unsmiling, breaks me up.” He explains that Darren was shot in the chest, and that during one of the procedures to remove a blood clot, his vocal cords were damaged — which is why he speaks seldom and softly. Callie is hoping that with more therapy and medication, his voice will become stronger.

In mid-February, Darren moved to AristaCare at Meadow Springs in Plymouth Meeting — a pulmonary and neurological rehab center. From there, he just wants to return to his apartment and his job. But he will need an aide as well as a great deal of financial assistance. A poster in the hallway of Magee charts the cost in dollars to the victims of gunshot wounds, with hundreds of thousands projected over a lifetime.

To raise money, Callie has established “The Darren Rogers Fund” at PNC Bank. Anyone may walk into any PNC branch, anywhere in the country, and donate. Callie says that one generous gentleman gave $10,000. Martin Luther King had a dream. And Darren Rogers has one too: “All I want to do is be independent,” he says simply. “I just want to get up and walk out of here.” Hopefully, caring and generous neighbors will help him realize his dream.
HERE SAT

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A COLONEL,
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**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

**Wednesday, March 21**
**SHCA Board Meeting**
6:00 p.m. Great Court Conference Room
**SHCA General Meeting**
7:30 p.m. Zubrow Auditorium
Pennsylvania Hospital
8th & Spruce Streets
See page 1

**Saturday, March 17, 11 a.m.**
**Pottery Painting Day**
Starr Garden Playground
600 block, Lombard Street

**Friday, March 23, 8 p.m.**
**Sunday, March 25, 2 p.m.**
**Philadelphia Chamber Ensemble**
Old Pine Street Church,
4th and Pine Streets
See page 9

**Sunday, March 25, 3 p.m.**
**Meiravi Quartet**
Amado Recital Hall,
34th and Spruce Streets
See page 9

**Sunday, April 1**
**Board Nominations Due**
See page 1

**Sunday, April 22, 6 p.m.**
**Rebecca Stoloff Memorial**
Reading Terminal Market
See page 7

**Saturday, April 28, 10:30 a.m.**
**Powel Floral Workshop**
Powel House, 244 S. 3rd Street
See page 9

**Friday-Sunday, May 4, 5 & 6**
**Physic House Plant Sale**
321 South 4th Street
See page 9

**Monday, May 7, 7:30 p.m.**
**Herbal Medicine: Does Mother Nature Always Know Best?**
Society Hill Synagogue
See page 9

**Saturday, May 12**
**SHCA Spring Clean-Up Day**

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