

# SOCIETY HILL NEWS

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## WHAT'S NEW?

Since the announcement last month that I was the nominee to become President of the SHCA after the October special election a number of friends have asked me, "What's new?" or words to that effect. Here is part of the answer.

I plan to report to you or comment in this space each month. I think Becky Stoloff's arranging this space in the Sun for a regular report to the neighborhood is great! (I think a lot of what Becky and several other of my predecessors has done is also great and I hope to follow their examples.)

I plan to meet with every committee chair prior to the October SHCA meeting and work with them to develop a specific agenda for continued improvement of the quality of life in this area. I also plan to meet with the leaders of contiguous civic and neighborhood associations to assure continued cooperation with them for the same purpose.

Security and dirt are the two subjects which seem to concern

most people. I strongly believe that we have INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY to help in both areas!

On the subject of security we are fortunate to have an excellent ally

in 6th District Police Commander John Collins with whom we will continue to cooperate. Individually we must be the extended eyes and ears of the police and give them all the support possible.

Regarding dirt, each individual is either a plus or a minus. If you don't pick up (never mind throwing down) you're a minus! I hope to reactivate the Block Captain system to improve the appearance of each block and raise the consciousness of every resident (yup, even renters) on this subject. Volunteers for Block Captain needed! Call 629-1288.

I'll try to lead a SHCA which is helpful and responsive. But don't forget, that means you have to be a helper and a responder! Thanks in advance for your support... and please don't expect an answer after 10 PM.

—Dick Ostrander

## What's New?

## PRESERVATION RULING

### PA Supreme Court Asked to Reconsider

By Ruth Dugan

Is Philadelphia at risk? Are wrecking crews waiting in the wings to swing away at a lot of our historic buildings? It looks that way.

The threat comes from a July 10th ruling of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court that the Philadelphia historic preservation ordinance was in violation of the state constitution. The ruling was a reversal of two lower court decisions appealed by United Artists Theater Circuit, Inc., owners of the Boyd Theater (now the Sameric 4) on Chestnut near 19th Street, who challenged the landmark designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission of both the interior and exterior of the art deco theater. Justice Rolf Larsen, writing for the majority of four members of the seven-justice court, concluded:

"After review, we find that by designating the theater building as historic, over the objections of the owner, the City of Philadelphia through its Historical Commission has 'taken' the appellee's property for public use without just compensation in violation of Article I, Section 10 of the Pennsylvania Constitution and we, therefore reverse." This decision contradicts a ruling in the case of New York's Grand Central Terminal in which the U.S. Supreme Court judged that the designation and regulation of individual landmark buildings does not amount to an unlawful taking without compensation. But since the Pennsylvania Supreme Court based its decision on Pennsylvania constitutional law, and appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court is not likely.

The City of Philadelphia has asked the court to reconsider its decision. *Amicus curiae* [friend of the court] briefs in support of the city's request have been submitted by the National Trust, the American Institute of Architects, the American Planning Association, the United States Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities, the PA Historical and Museum Commission, the Attorney General of PA, Congressman Thomas M. Foglietta and members of the Congressional Arts Caucus and several Pennsylvania preservation organizations. Several responses are possible: the court could choose to rehear, it could choose not to rehear, it could rehear portions of the case, or it could issue a new opinion. It is recognized that the court does not often reconsider an opinion, and there is no deadline for its decision on reconsideration.

The Supreme Court's meaning is unclear, but it suggests that it applies only to individually desig-

nated structures, and that designation and regulation of historic districts or other comprehensive zoning devices that may protect historic properties may still be permissible. However, the Philadelphia Historical Commission voted on August 14th to stop certifying districts as well as individual buildings. Five districts (including Society Hill) have completed historic surveys and are waiting for the Commission to move on their applications. Society Hill's extensive and expensive building inventory was accepted by the Commission in 1988. Richard Tyler, executive director of the Historical Preservation Commission, has appeared unwilling to test whether a single resident could block neighborhood historic designations.

Buildings with owner's consent to historic designation appear to be safe from the ruling, even if they change hands and the new owner objects to the designation. But there are buildings at almost immediate risk: the Second Empire style Victory Building at Tenth and Chestnut Streets, the Dunbar, the Scherr and the Allen stores at 920-22, 926 and 930 Chestnut Street, fine examples of first-generation commercial architecture in mid-19th century Philadelphia, and the Jayne Estate Building at Delaware and Vine Street. Once the wreckers' ball gets going, it could strike Samuel Rappaport's PSFS Building on Washington Square and the balance of the 700 block of Walnut Street.

Since the ruling could affect more than a hundred municipalities throughout Pennsylvania which have historic districts or landmark programs, a state-wide umbrella organization of preservation and environmental groups has been formed. Called "Pennsylvania at Risk!" it is working to support a rehearing. The coalition urges everyone to write or call his State Representative and Senator (listed in "Easy Reference List Government and Other Public Services" in the Bell Yellow Pages). Ask them to make your concerns about saving important buildings known to the PA Supreme Court and to support Philadelphia's application for reargument. Send copies of your letters to the PA Supreme Court, 2801 Grant Building, 330 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

**FLASH!!!** As this issue was going to press it was announced that the state Supreme Court has agreed to rehear a portion of the case during their October session.

## SOCIETY HILL NEWS

Society Hill Civic Association

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STAFF FOR THIS ISSUE

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Bruce Anthony, Publisher

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## THE ATHENAEUM OF PHILADELPHIA Structural Conservation Begins

By Roger W. Moss,  
Executive Director

Washington Square has been a hive of construction activity this summer, giving sidewalk superintendents plenty to watch. Work at the Penn Mutual building entered its second year, and the Hopkinson House continued its carefully measured program of renovations. The most recent project is the structural conservation of the National Historic Landmark Athenaeum of Philadelphia building on the east side of the Square which will require approximately a year to complete.

The Athenaeum of Philadelphia is an independent research library with museum collections founded in 1814 to collect materials "connected with the history and antiquities of America, and the useful arts, and generally to disseminate useful knowledge." As the collection expanded over the

past 176 years, The Athenaeum has refined its objectives. Today the 1,300 members support a not-for-profit institution that concentrates on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social and cultural history, particularly architecture and interior design where the collections are nationally significant.

The library is freely open to serious investigators, and it annually attracts thousands of readers: graduate students and senior scholars, architects, interior designers, museum curators, and private owners of historic houses. While not publicly funded, The Athenaeum provides the region with a resource of first resort on matters of architecture and interior design history, particularly for the period 1800 to 1945.

Declared a National Historic Landmark in 1977, The Athenaeum building is con-

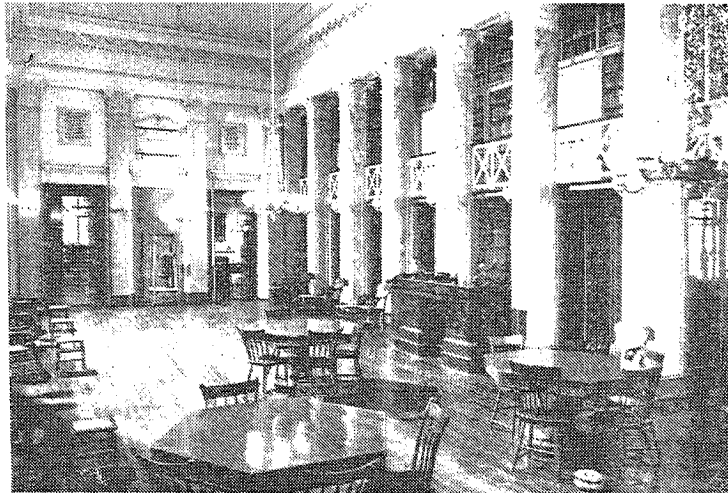
sidered one of the significant American structures of the nineteenth century. It was designed in 1845 by John Notman (1810-1865) following a celebrated architectural competition. Notman's Athenaeum gave America its first urban structure in the soon-to-be-popular Italianate Revival Style and one of the earliest in Philadelphia to be constructed of brownstone. Severely plain on the exterior and deceptive in scale. The Athenaeum contains richly-embellished reading rooms with 24-foot ceilings. In these spaces is a museum collection of American fine and decorative arts.

A structural survey sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission revealed last year that the roof framing and floor structures of the building did not meet Philadelphia codes for large

groups such as commonly gather in the building for lectures, exhibitions and concerts. Center City residents who know the extremely popular Philadelphia Chamber Ensemble concerts—for many years held at The Athenaeum—rely on the library for other

and second floors. Next spring the roof will be reinforced and given a new copper covering.

Internally the building will also be reorganized to provide, for the first time, a public exhibition gallery where temperature, humidity, and light levels can be



drawings, including the presentation drawings for the United States Capitol.) Other amenities—coatroom and book store, for example—are also being provided, and research scholars will have a much expanded reading room named for the late Henry Paul Busch,

President of the Welcome Society at the time Pennsbury was reconstructed. Because the third floor of the building can no longer be utilized for the storage of collections, thousands of pounds of books, manuscripts, and drawings are being stored off the site until additional storage space can be provided.

At the present, The Athenaeum is closed

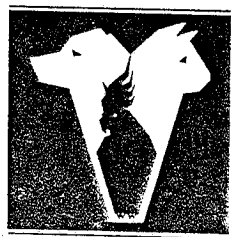
for tours and research use because of the construction. The building will reopen to the public in April.

cultural events, immediately became aware of the findings when all group uses of the building ceased. This summer and into the fall, steel I-beams are being introduced to reinforce the first

maintained at optimum levels for the display of the rich holdings of The Athenaeum, which are little known outside scholarly circles. (For example, The Athenaeum owns 130,000 architectural

### Society Hill Veterinary Hospital

Center City's only full-service veterinary hospital with AAHA certification. Services provided include complete medical and surgical facilities, Ultrasound and computer-aided diagnostics. Boarding, grooming and a full line of prescription science diets. Special interests in acupuncture and Avian medicine. Dedicated doctors who care about that special family member, we are the oldest veterinary hospital in Center City. Serving the pet community since 1969.



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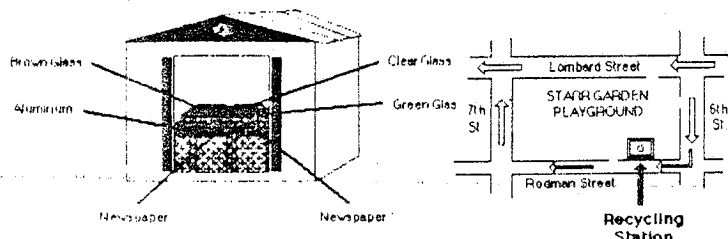
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# The Society Hill Recycling Station is located at Starr Garden Playground

Please bring CLEAN recyclables to the Starr Garden station, on Rodman at 6th Street, and sort them into the bins provided there. The station is open Monday through Saturday, from 11 AM to 8 PM. Bins are provided for newspaper, aluminum, and for brown, green and clear glass.

**NOTES:**

Bundle your newspapers. Empty and crush aluminum cans. Empty and rinse glass (you can leave labels on). Leave no plastic, cardboard, steel/tins or trash. Carry your bags and boxes away with you. Leave the station at least as clean as you find it. And, thanks for recycling. It's important.



**SWEEP**

## Meet Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith is a brown-uniformed, no-nonsense but soft-spoken officer of SWEEP. I first saw him at work about 7:30 AM on September 4th in the 400 block of South 6th Street. Mr. Smith was looking for dirt/trash/litter and the clues as to who put it there. He didn't hesitate to tell me the sidewalk where we were standing (mine) could use some cleaning up and I told him I was sorry I hadn't seen the mess the pickup crew left the night before until that very minute (and I started picking up right

away as Mr. Smith sort of looked like he'd really like to write a warning ticket or worse). All of us living on or west of 6th Street will have a chance to welcome Mr. Smith and his co-workers to the area. Their presence will mean a cleaner neighborhood . . . and if you happen to be a person who uses the street corner waste basket for your daily garbage it could mean some tickets. Glad to see you Mr. Smith! I'll be even happier when SWEEP covers the entire area!! —Dick Ostrander

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**ZONING**

Discussions being held concerning proposed additions at 317 S. American Street and 500 Pine Street.

Investigation ongoing with Queen Village and South Street neighbors about tarot card readers.

**MAINTENANCE**

Graffiti has been on the rise this summer and efforts have been made to keep our walls clean. Property owners should paint out graffiti immediately. If help is needed, call our office at 629-1288. Efforts continue to rid our door-

steps of the flyers deposited there. If you do not like the litter in our neighborhood or the security breach at your home, call the distributor [and the business sponsoring the flyer] and let them know. Our Legislative Committee is investigating a possible ordinance which would make doorstep dumping illegal.

**THANKS FOR THE FLOWERS**

Thank you to all the Society Hill green thumbs who planted flowers and hung door baskets and made our neighborhood look especially pretty this summer.

## PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

The Hospice program of Pennsylvania Hospital, 8th & Spruce, is seeking volunteers to work with terminally ill patients and families, in the home.

Hospice volunteers are an integral part of the team approach to help enhance the quality of life for the terminally ill. They might offer companionship, assist with patient management, run errands or provide transportation.

A training program, conducted by Hospice staff, will be offered in October for those who qualify for this highly selective volunteer program. In addition, there will be training offered for those people interested in giving emotional support to the bereaved family after the patient's death.

For more information, please call the Hospice Volunteer Coordinator, at 829-5335, during business hours.

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**FABULOUS AUCTION (3:00)**

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Society Hill Veterinary Hospital	Weekend boarding of pet
Bistro Romano	Dinner for two
Downey's	\$25 gift certificate
Pennsport Athletic Club	One month membership
Philadelphia Savings Fund Society	\$100 gift cert w/ new passbook account
Montserrat	\$40 gift certificate
Tower Records/Tower Classical Annex	A selection of CD's (two items)
John Romano Hairstylist	Men's hairstyling and manicure
Friday's	Brunch for two
Copabanana	Lunch for family of four+ (\$50 max)
Alouette	\$20 lunch certificate
Thrift Drugs	\$40 gift certificate
Florissant	One dozen roses
Cohen's Hardware	\$15 gift certificate
Pierre & Carlo Hair Salon	Woman's haircut by Dan AND
Always in Season	Woman's makeup by Jean

**SHCA  
CALENDAR  
(clip & save)**

September 24  
**MEET THE CANDIDATES**  
For City Council, First District, 7:15 PM, Old Pine Community Center. Sponsored by SSNA.

October 2  
**MEET THE MAYORAL CANDIDATES**  
Joe Egan, Ed Rendell at 8:30 PM, McCall School, 6th & Delancey

October 12  
**HPK HOUSE BULB SALE**  
12-4 PM, HPK House Garden, 4th & Cypress. Bulbs, paperwhites, soil, stones, pots, books.

October 16  
**SHCA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
7:30 PM Sheraton Society Hill. Look for details in the next issue of the News.

September 12  
**BLOCK REPRESENTATIVE MEETING**

Open to anyone interested in being a Block representative. 7:30 PM, Old Pine Community Center, 4th & Lombard.

September 22  
**SHCA FIRST ANNUAL BACK FROM SUMMER PICNIC**

1-5 PM, Starr Gardens, 6th & Lombard. See article for details.

**GOOD NEIGHBORS: SHERATON SOCIETY HILL**

Everyone knows what GOOD NEIGHBORS means. Those are the folks who keep the sidewalks clean, greet you cheerfully and are ready to help when you need help.

We usually think about individuals or couples as Good Neighbors. Let's think for a minute about a very good CORPORATE neighbor, the Sheraton Society Hill.

Residents with fairly long memories will recall that the Sheraton started being a good neighbor before ground was actually broken on Dock Street. Plans were brought to SHCA for review and approval and were subsequently followed even through final landscaping to give us the handsome block we now take for granted.

The Sheraton meets all the Good Neighbor criteria; they definitely keep the sidewalks clean, anyone visits or attends a meeting there is certain to be cheerfully greeted and, very often, when SHCA has needed help the Sheraton has given it generously.

For three specific examples consider these: First, the Sheraton has undertaken an innovative recycling program and is considering ways in which Society Hill neighbors can participate in it. Secondly, the hotel has adopted the park on Dock Street at Delaware Avenue and provides volunteers to clean it each Thursday afternoon. (You can join this crew by calling Paola Buckley, Sheraton, PR Director for details at 238-

6628.) Third, SHCA has been invited to schedule a full membership meeting at the Sheraton this fall. Details are being worked out and will be announced.

Finally, Ms. Buckley has offered

to host one or more of our planned meetings to salute Society Hill businesses! Gee, that's four examples isn't it... well that's typical of what really Good Neighbors do!!

—Dick Ostrander



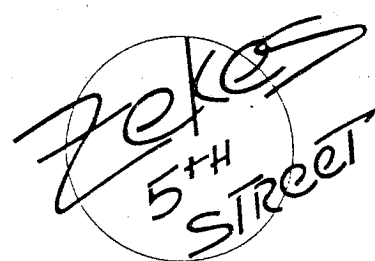
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