



SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

A newsletter of the Society Hill Civic Association

Issued March 1, 1995

VICTORY FOR HISTORIC DESIGNATION

On the morning of February 8, 1995, in a majestic room at City Hall, an audience sat at the edge of their seats at a surprising drama. Around a vast mahogany table, members of Philadelphia's Historical Commission were about to determine the outcome of the nomination for historic district status for Rittenhouse-Fitler Square.

For additional information about what historic designation does and does not do, call the Preservation Coalition at (215) 568-8225 and request the free booklet "Philadelphia Historic Districts."

But to the displeasure and bewilderment of everyone in that room, the commission's chairman, Wayne Spilove, attempted to table the vote.

The Center City Residents Association (CCRA), which had worked for eight years to acquire this layer of protection for its remarkable array of 19th century architecture, had expected a vote by the commission. The community had done all its homework. As the first and, therefore, the model for six other neighborhoods seeking historic designation, all the "i's" were dotted and "t's," crossed. Public hearings before the commission had taken place in November. Property owners indicated 76% approval, with 12% opposed, and 12% neutral.

Bobbie Burke, CCRA's former president and Board member of the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia (PCGP) gave an ardent speech, stating that "a positive vote for historic designation would be the culmination of years of effort." Lorna Katz Lawson, SHCA's Zoning chair, made an impromptu but passionate plea to proceed with the vote, because she said "until this is accomplished, Society Hill's nomination and the others will be stalled."

It was a tense hour of touch-and-go as commission members wrestled out loud with their political and ethical consciences while Mr. Spilove cited "boundary considerations" and gave vague reasons for urging a delay. But worn down at last, he recused himself. The commission then voted unanimously (and courageously!) to approve.

Our hats go off to them for stepping out on a limb against what was surely political pressure.

What's next for Society Hill?

Since the 1985 passage of the city ordinance that allows for the designation of local districts,

Continued on page 5



This York Row house fanlight will be restored and preserved.

Elegant Solution for Walnut Street

PSFS BUILDING SAVED; YORK ROW HOUSES WIN REPRIEVE

The Renaissance Revival style PSFS building at 7th and Walnut (built in three sections between 1868-1919), which serves as a visual anchor for Washington Square, and the adjacent three-story brick facades of the magnificent York Row townhouses (712-716 Walnut Street, of 1808 vintage) could survive in a new incarnation to tell the Philadelphia story to future generations.

Two weeks after York Row was featured in the January issue of this newsletter, the *Inquirer* reported that a local real estate developer planned to revitalize the decade-long decay of the properties (being sold by the late Sam Rappaport's estate) in order to erect a new complex that would include a 32-story luxury condominium tower on the western side of the PSFS building—at Walnut near 8th Street, with an attractive entrance court from St. James Street. The developer's original design would have demolished York Row.

At a meeting with city-wide preservationists, the developer, Peter Shaw, of P. & A. Associates, and his architect, Gerald Cope of Cope/Linder Architects, revealed the details of the project. Partici-

Continued on page 2

PSFS BUILDING SAVED; YORK ROW WINS REPRIEVE

Continued from page 1
*Mark February
7 as a day when
the voice of
preservation
won a small but
significant
victory!*

pants included Society Hill neighbors Milton Marks, deputy executive director of the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia; Becky Stoloff, former president of SHCA, representing the Foundation For Architecture; and Bernice Hamel, chair of SHCA's Historic Preservation committee.

The group was favorably impressed with the overall concept and quality of the design, and agreed to support the project—contingent on rescuing and restoring the facades of York Row. They cited the successful model of the “dummy buildings” of 700-714 Spruce Street that serve as the front to the Duncan Building for Pennsylvania Hospital. These Greek Revival mansions appear to be intact, but this was a compromise solution to preserving Philadelphia's streetscape—the result of a heated battle to save the structures by an ad hoc committee of SHCA in the mid-1970s!

A significant detail of the group's negotiation with the developer—which is also supported by the Architectural Review Committee of the Historical Commission—is that there will be no demolition and construction until all the financial, demolition and construction contracts are signed.

Presentation to Our Community

Later that evening, Mr. Shaw presented P. & A.'s design plans to a joint community meeting of about 75 people, sponsored by Washington West's

Government Affairs Committee and SHCA's Historical Preservation and Zoning Committees.

It was quite a surprising and welcome presentation, because within hours of the day's earlier meeting, the original scheme had been altered to preserve the beautiful York Row facades. In the project's new configuration, these buildings—displaying some of the finest brickwork in the city—will appear intact and occupied. They will provide a screen for the tower's garage.

The group of residents gave their unanimous support for the complete project, hoping that it will bring new vitality to the neighborhood with its upscale apartments, restaurant and shops.

Approved by Historical Commission

The Architectural Committee of the city's Historical Commission held its meeting to review the plans just two days later, on February 10, and voted to allow the project to proceed in the form recommended by the community.

Penny Batcheler, a Society Hill neighbor and renowned preservation architect, sits on this Committee. As the project's design schemes modify and become finalized, the Committee will have a continuing dialogue with the developer's architect so as to retain the spirit and texture of the historical buildings, even as they are altered and a high-rise tower is constructed.

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

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Deadline for May issue:
April 15
Mail to above address
or fax to: (215) 925-0877

DESKTOP PUBLISHING
Norman Kline

SHCA Calendar

Wednesday, March 15

General Membership Meeting
McCall School, 6th & Delancey
6:30 pm: Board Meeting
7 pm: Refreshments
7:30 pm: Guest Speakers & Nominating Committee Report

Wednesday, April 19

Board Meeting
Old Pine Community Center, 4th & Lombard Sts.

Wednesday, May 17

General Membership Meeting
Old Pine Community Center, 4th & Lombard Sts.
6:30 pm: Board Meeting
7 pm: Refreshments
7:30 pm: Election of Board and Officers
Lecture-Slide Presentation: *40 Years of Society Hill*
Presented by Charles E. Peterson, F.A.I.A.

Saturday, May 6

SPRING CLEAN UP DAY! WATCH FOR DETAILS.

Notes from SHCA President

DICK OSTRANDER

Good News



We have good news. February was a great month for preservation! Rit-Fit (The Rittenhouse-Fitler Residential District) has been approved and is now officially a Historic District!

Society Hill is coming up next... hopefully to be completed by next fall. See the article on page 1 describing the dramatic events leading to this historic decision and learn what it means for our community. Contact SHCA's Historic Preservation Committee for information or to offer your help.


More favorable news: The developer of the proposed high-rise building on west Washington Square, including the 700 block of Walnut, has brought back a plan which incorporates the York Row facades and saves most of the PSFS bank building. See the story on page 1. The plans will be presented at a future SHCA meeting.

And finally, the March General Membership Meeting will be held at the McCall School, on Wednesday, March 15th, when Principal Janet Samuels will host the Association for the first time in several years. Come for coffee, soda and snacks at 7 pm and interesting guest presentations at 7:30:

- Karen Butler, from the Mayor's Action Council For Visitors, will outline plans for Historic Philadelphia Inc.'s second year of operation and discuss how Society Hill can be involved.
- Gigi Felsner, from Chubb Insurance, will describe an exciting new program that will benefit the Society Hill Fund and provide an appraisal and evaluation service of homes and condos.
- Joe Doyle, lighting engineer from the Streets Department, will be back to give us the latest information on our Franklin Lamps. He is quite optimistic about having good news for us!

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Q: WHAT ADVANTAGES DOES AN HISTORIC DISTRICT BRING?

A: An historic district does not create a museum or place where nothing changes. Rather, designation affords a mechanism to maintain the basic physical and visual character of a district. In addition, the owners of income-producing buildings in historic districts may be eligible for federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation projects, and community organizations may qualify for some grant programs.

Q: HOW IS A PHILADELPHIA HISTORIC DISTRICT CREATED?

A: This is a complex process. In summary, an evaluative inventory of every property in a nominated district is required—with maps and photographs. The Historic Commission then schedules public hearings to allow property owners to testify in favor or to oppose. Every owner is sent written notification at least 60 days before these hearings.

Q: HOW DOES DESIGNATION PROTECT THE DISTRICT?

A: L & I refers all building and demolition permit applications for historic properties to the Historical Commission for review. It will not issue a permit without the Commission's approval. The Commission regulates **only the exterior appearance** of a building.

Q: WHAT GUIDELINES DOES THE COMMISSION USE?

A: The Commission uses the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*.

Q: CAN THE COMMISSION REQUIRE THE RESTORATION OF A BUILDING?

A: No. The Commission's review extends only to the scope of work an owner chooses to perform..

Q: CAN AN OWNER APPEAL THE COMMISSION'S DECISION?

A: Yes.

Q: DOES THE COMMISSION REGULATE THE USE OF A BUILDING?

A: No. The regulation of uses is a function of Zoning, not Historic Preservation.

Q: DOES HISTORIC DESIGNATION AFFECT TAX ASSESSMENT?

A: No, historic designation will not result in higher taxes.

Copies of Philadelphia's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Commission's Rules & Regulations, and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards* may be obtained by phoning the Commission: 686-4543.

SHCA BULLETIN BOARD

DESPERATELY SEEKING: ENVIRONMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR SHCA

We need a Society Hill neighbor who is versed in environmental/health issues to act as our area's representative for a diverse coalition of community-based organizations who share common concerns about health, environmental, safety and emergency response issues.

Please step forward and become a member of The Community/Labor Refineries Tracking Committee (C/LRTC) if qualified and interested.

Basic objectives are to educate and represent communities about issues pertaining to refinery operations and to engage in cooperative dialogue with oil refinery management in South/Southwest Philadelphia— e.g. propose specific solutions to address these concerns. C/LRTC hopes to establish an enforceable "Good Neighbor Agreement," particularly with Sun Company, to address these issues. If you're a health or science professional, please CALL SHCA (629-1288) to volunteer for this valuable community service.

ARE YOU A BIRDER?

If so, the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club (DVOC) wants you! Bernice J. Koplin, long-time Society Hill resident and SHCA member, reports that a bird census is being conducted in our area. Its goal is to provide a birding checklist for visitors to Independence National Historical Park. Interested birders should contact her: Day (215) 981-0630; Eve (215) 922-7803; Fax (215) 981-0652.


ART AT CHEZ MAJI

A group of women artists, The Creative Collective, will begin a month-long exhibit and sale at a local coffee bar and bakery, Chez Maji, which is located in Independence Place, South 6th Street at Washington Square. The Collective's range of work includes silver, mixed-media, jewelry; one-of-a-kind adornments; photographs; stained glass; and note cards. Opening reception is Saturday, March 25, from 5 to 9 pm.

Chez Maji's hours are from 7-7, Monday through Friday, and 8-5 on weekends. This cozy and friendly shop is a wonderful addition to our neighborhood — and it features breads from the Metropolitan Bakery, one of the best bakeries in town!

The Artful Dodger
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400-402 South 2nd Street
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HEAD START ON SPRING CLEANING

If you have household items or kitchen supplies you no longer need, tell Ute Simons, a long-time Society Hill resident. She will pick up your contribution and donate it in your name to a remarkable pre-school in West Philadelphia — the Philadelphia Community School.

Get a "head start" on your spring cleaning by phoning Ute Simons at 922-2247— and get a tax deduction as well.

MAY 15TH IS NATIONAL PRESERVATION WEEK

One event being planned is a slide and lecture program called "Forty Years of Society Hill" given by octogenarian and architectural historian, Charles E. Peterson (Society Hill's most lovable curmudgeon).

This will be featured—with "before and after" pictures of our neighborhood—at SHCA's General Membership Meeting on May 17. And we may ask you to bring your own "before and after" photos in a kind of "photo show and tell."

CHUBB PROGRAM TO BENEFIT SOCIETY HILL FUND

An innovative new program initiated and sponsored by SHCA's Historic Preservation Committee, in collaboration with the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, will benefit both the Society Hill Fund and individual home and condominium owners.

Chubb is offering a "no-obligation" appraisal to evaluate and videotape your home or condominium, as well as provide an up-to-date security analysis. **The cost: you will be asked to make a minimum suggested donation of \$75 to the Society Hill Fund.**

The Society Hill Fund is a nonprofit fund that directly benefits our community in several ways. For example, as we now begin the process of becoming a city certified historic district, much procedural and clerical work will be needed to update the inventory of every building in the district.

This task will require meticulous and tedious labor. If we can't accomplish this with volunteers, we must hire qualified workers. The Society Hill Fund will help us pay for this with the proceeds of the program.

A professional will provide you with a complete and up-to-date appraisal and an evaluation of your home, and will also provide a videotape to keep in your safe deposit box. You will be asked to make your donation directly to:

The Society Hill Fund
c/o Mr. David Stevens, Treasurer
116 Delancey St.
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Upon receipt of the donation, Mr. Stevens will forward your name and relay that directly to Chubb, who will then schedule an appointment at a date and time of your convenience.

A full presentation of this win-win program will be made at the March 15th General Membership Meeting (7:30 pm, at the McCall School, 6th and Delancey). The program will be offered throughout the year 1995.

PHILADELPHIA OPEN HOUSE 1995

Following 16 years of tradition, the coming of spring brings to Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley a legendary series of house and garden tours.

The 17th Annual PHILADELPHIA OPEN HOUSE program will begin on April 27, and, for a two-week period, we are invited to look behind the usually closed doors of private homes and gardens throughout our region's diverse communities.

From city to suburb to country, favorite tours include Rittenhouse Square, the Main Line, Chestnut Hill, Princeton, and Bucks County. Some are all-day guided events with delightful luncheon stops, while others are self-guided walking tours.

Several innovations have been added this year, such as:

- "FrancoPhiladelphia," a guided tour that focuses on France's influence on local architecture and interior design.
- A new historical and architectural "Cruise Along the Schuylkill River."
- A walking tour of homes and work spaces of artists—"In the Art Museum's Shadow" — including a rare visit to the Founder's Museum at Girard College, where Stephen Girard's personal collection of art and Federal furniture is on display.
- Ever-popular tours include our own Society Hill, as well as nearby neighborhoods of Washington Square and Queen Village.

This program is coordinated by The Friends of Independence National Historical Park, and proceeds help support its co-sponsoring organizations.

Call for a brochure and more information about POH's 29 different tours: (215) 928-1188. Don't delay. Reservations are required, since space for all tours is limited.

Continued from page 1

VICTORY FOR HISTORIC DESIGNATION

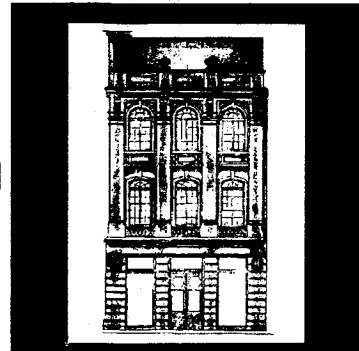
Society Hill has been organized to acquire this means of preserving our neighborhood's character. Soon a team from SHCA's Historical Preservation Committee will begin the task of updating the 1989 inventory of all buildings in the district. A series of procedural and clerical tasks will be required, such as indicating all changes to properties between then and now.

There are no downsides to this designation! The commission will not tell you what color paint to use on your door. Its review process applies *only to the exterior* of properties, not interiors. SHCA (629-1288) has a Q & A sheet which summarizes the concerns that you might have.

Our Civic Association appreciates the help of PCGP. They'll be working with us, as they have with Rittenhouse-Fitler. They deserve your support. Call (215) 568-8225 for membership information.

—Bernice T. Hamel

Join Us for the Grand Opening Of Our Grand Venetian Room



"Venetian Taste"

Tutto Misto presents "Venetian Taste" by America's top restaurant designer Adam A. Tihany, New York's great Venetian chef Francesco Antonucci & New York Times food guru Florence Fabricant. Dine in Tutto Misto's grand new Venetian room on Wednesday, March 22. (\$75 with great Antinori wines.) Call (215) 923-7220

The BOOK & The COOK

Cafe Nola presents "Food Fusion Cookbook" by Hugh Carpenter and food photographer Teri Sandison. The adventurous California author blends Cajun, Southwest, Pacific and Mediterranean flavors with delicious results. Thursday Dinner (\$60 with California wines) March 23 & Friday Lunch (\$40) March 24. Call (215) 627-2590

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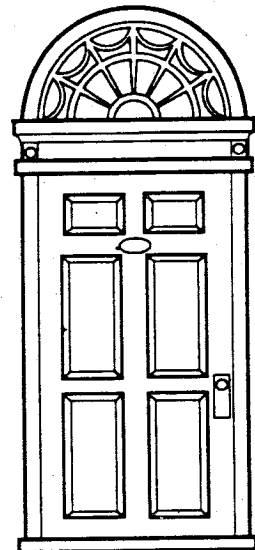
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HOTEL AT PENN'S LANDING OPPOSED BY S.H. TOWERS

Reprinted here are excerpts from a letter to 44 persons involved in the development of the Delaware waterfront, including the Mayor, members of City Council, the Governor, members of the Pennsylvania legislature, both U.S. senators, all local Congressional representatives and heads of civic associations.

The SHCA Board resolved to support a comprehensive plan for the waterfront that supports the position of the Towers' Owners.



We are writing to you as the Board of Directors of Society Hill Towers Owners Association. The Association represents the 2,000 residents and owners of the 700-unit condominium complex at 2nd and Locust Streets. We are gravely concerned and disappointed at the events now taking place at Penn's Landing.

We recently read in the local papers that plans are well underway for a new 22-story hotel south of the Walnut Street Bridge, in the vicinity of the Maritime Museum, directly in the line of sight between the Towers and the river.

Throughout the 1980s, our Board and the Owners' Association have participated in meetings and discussions regarding area developments. All plans presented to us recognized the importance of maintaining a low-rise zone of development between Market Street and Pine Street. These plans called for this zone to be a people-oriented area for the enjoyment of all city residents and visitors, containing only low-rise retail development similar to the Baltimore Inner Harbor. All mid-rise and high-rise parking, hotel, office and residential development was to be to the north and south of this zone.

Our Board is unanimous in its opposition to the current hotel plan, since it violates all of the sound planning which came before it. We are currently planning our next steps in this matter, but are committed to see that this development as now constituted does not proceed.

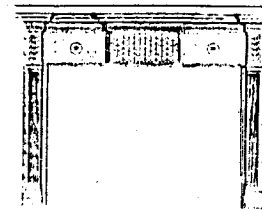
We believe thoughtful development of the waterfront is important to both the City and the Towers. We are prepared to support sound development as we have done in the past. We are equally prepared, however, to resist development which is inconsistent with previous commitments and directions. Since we have so much at stake in the outcome of this issue, we must now inject ourselves into the process.

We would greatly value your support and counsel in this matter.

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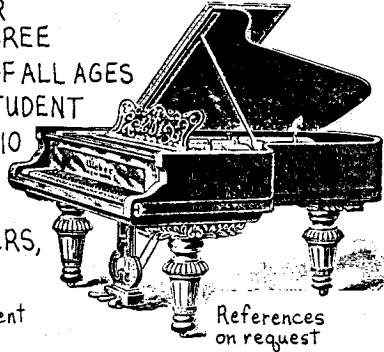
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SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE JOINED SHCA FOR 1995
If you are new to the neighborhood or have just joined for the first time: Welcome! We especially appreciate your participation.

Thanks also for all renewal memberships. Your support makes a difference in protecting our neighborhood.

SHCA is entirely a volunteer organization, comprised of Society Hill residents and organizations — schools, churches and synagogues, businesses — whose members have one common interest — a heartfelt desire to maintain the high quality of life we have established here.

The Association represents all who live and work within our boundaries: between Front and 8th Streets and Walnut and Lombard Streets.

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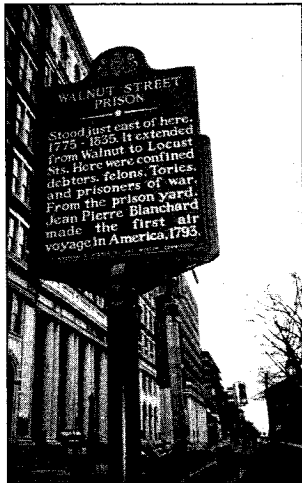
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Historical markers in our neighborhood: Tell where they are and win a prize!

Promptly return your response with your name, address, and phone number to
Matt DeJulio, 709 Pine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

On each line, print the letter that corresponds to the location:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| _____ Francis Johnson (1792-1844) | A. NOT IN SOCIETY HILL |
| _____ Thaddeus Kosciuszko (1797-1798) | B. 3RD BETWEEN WALNUT & LOCUST |
| _____ Walnut Street Prison (1775-1835) | C. 6TH & WALNUT |
| _____ Rickett's Circus (1793) | D. 5TH BETWEEN WALNUT & LOCUST |
| _____ St. Thomas African Episcopal Church (1792) | E. 6TH BETWEEN LOMBARD & PINE |
| _____ Common Sense (1776) | F. 4TH BETWEEN WALNUT & LOCUST |
| _____ Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church (1787) | G. 3RD AND PINE |
| _____ Philadelphia Contributionship (1752) | H. 6TH AND PINE |

Were you aware that there are seven markers in our neighborhood placed by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission?

The first person to respond who correctly identifies the location of each will win a free copy of the book Old Philadelphia Houses on Society Hill, 1750-1840, which is now on sale at Barnes and Noble in town.

Runners-up will each receive copies of Chilton's pocket-sized Guide To Historic Society Hill.

One marker listed is not in our neighborhood. Can you identify it?

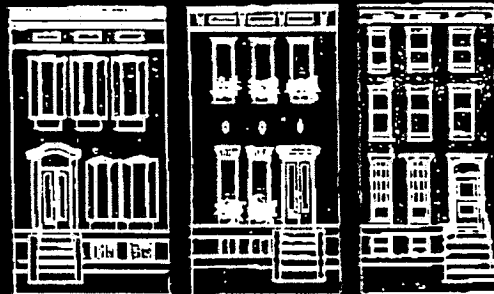
**The first person who identifies the location of each wins a copy of
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Note: Only the first received correct response wins the first prize.

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Liquor Control Zoning

Society Hill Reporter

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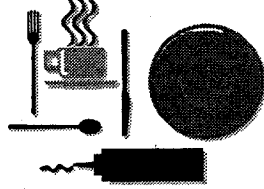
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Treats Near South Street

More good restaurant news



Along with new bright lights, the restaurant scene on South Street appears to be shining again. Last issue we extolled the virtues of Cafe Nola and anticipated the opening of Tutto Misto (603-605 S. 3rd Street).

I have since tried Tutto Misto and was quite impressed with the bistro, supper/bar atmosphere. And, if you have joined us there for SHCA's annual February "meet & greet social," which was graciously hosted by owners Bill Curry and Judy DeVicaris, I'm sure you agree.

But there is even more good restaurant news! Just two blocks away, some revitalized competition has created a buzz among local gourmets and gourmands.

Over the holidays, Tiramisu, at 528 South 5th Street, which has been serving very fine "Roman Jewish" cuisine for several years, expanded into the building to its south and opened a piano bar/restaurant.

I dined there recently and was extremely pleased with the meal, service, and wine selections—but most especially, the outstanding entertainment by Michael Margarite—a young, virtuoso pianist/vocalist who specializes in Gershwin and Cole Porter, as well as hokey tunes like "Volare."

I had one of the best dinners in years at Tiramisu: superb antipasto, Jerusalem artichokes and lobster, etc.

Keep this restaurant in mind, because you didn't see it mentioned in the January 1995 Restaurant Annual from *Philadelphia Magazine*, which apparently lists only those restaurants that advertise.

My goodness, and I'm a paid subscriber. Even us folks in the trade magazine business, who send publications out free, have more editorial integrity than that!

—Matthew DeJulio

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