

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

Newsletter of the Society Hill Civic Association
Issued September 8, 1995

Message from the President

Should the WAMs be Whammed?



"If you want to see more grants come to the community, I urge you to write to your representative in Harrisburg and to the governor requesting that the grants be reinstated in the 1995-1996 state budget."

For many years, the Pennsylvania Legislature has been providing legislative initiative grants to fund local needs which the State budgets do not adequately address. These grants have been especially useful in Society Hill. Unfortunately, because these are discretionary grants bequeathed by individual state legislators to their constituents, the press has dubbed them "Walking Around Money" — often abbreviated to "WAMs" — giving the impression that they are state funds which politicians can dispense at their whim.

That impression is exactly the opposite of our experience in Society Hill. Over the years, the SHCA has had the moral support and counsel of our State Senator, **Vincent Fumo** and his staff. He has also helped us get State grants. But these are not the result of a politician's whims. They are grants that we have applied for on State-provided forms, and in accordance with detailed instructions from Harrisburg.

These grants have provided funds for neighborhood street tree planting and to cover the costs we run up for cleanup day activities. Over \$85,000 was given in WAMs to help restore the rotting Head House. They have also paid for bleachers, fencing and shrubbery at Starr Garden playground. And these benefits have been put into place economically and quickly.

To insure that taxpayers don't get whammed by the money we have received, each grant is monitored by an appropriate State department, approved by the State legal counsel, reviewed by the Attorney General and examined by the Auditor General. We must spend every dollar in accordance with the terms of the grant and provide a detailed accounting to the state.

When Governor **Tom Ridge** was Candidate Ridge he promised to reduce State spending. One of his targets was the Legislative Initiative Grant program, aka Walking Around Money. Although the total program represented a sizable sum, it was a paltry part of a multi-billion-dollar State budget. Obviously, the reason it was such an attractive cost-cutting target was not so much the amount but the nickname. Sure enough, the Governor has carried out his promise by eliminat-

ing Legislative Initiative Grants from his 1995-96 State budget.

However, the program may be far from dead. On April 20th, former SHCA prexy **Dick Ostrander** wrote to the governor and members of the legislature about the need for legislative grants by this community. **Robert Greenwood**, deputy budget secretary, replied for the governor that "...I will keep your support for the program in mind during the budget negotiations with the General Assembly." He also got an encouraging answer from the Senate majority leader, **F. Joseph Loeper**.

If you want to see more grants come to the community, I urge you to write to your representative in Harrisburg and to the governor requesting that the grants be reinstated in the 1995-6 state budget.

We can see all the 80-plus trees, the gleaming, restored Head House and the improvements at Starr Garden. What else can you see from your tax dollars? Our state representatives, depending where you live, are **W. Curtis Thomas** (he can be reached at 1348 W. Girard Ave. Philadelphia 19123) and **Marie Lederer** (326 E. Girard Ave., Philadelphia 19125.) Our State Senator, Vincent Fumo (1208 Tasker, Philadelphia 19148) is already in favor of continuing the grants. Governor Ridge's address: 225 Main Capitol, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

by Mel Buckman

Important general membership meeting coming up!

Wednesday, September 20
Pennsylvania Hospital,
8th St. entrance

6:30 pm: Board meeting
7:00 pm: Refreshments, coffee and
socializing

7:30 pm: Meeting starts

Details on page 2.

WE ARE NOT A CLUB! SO WHY JOIN SHCA?

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I (We) would like to work on the following committees:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean-Up Day | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Town Watch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Riverboat Gambling | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Tenders |
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Society Hill Civic Association
P.O. Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105

Mark Ye Olde Calendar Books!

SHCA General Membership Meeting: At Pennsylvania Hospital, 8th St. entrance. Wednesday, September 20th. Refreshments, coffee and socializing at 7:00 pm, meeting starts at 7:30 pm. (Board of Directors meet at 6:30.)

You may ask: What's going on with the curb cuts at almost every corner in Society Hill? Or what's with the proposed hotel on Penn's Landing and the law suit to block it? Come to this meeting and find out! But the main subject of the meeting is **historical preservation** — that intangible benefit that keeps your property values from tumbling.

First: From Independence National Historical Park, from the horse's mouth — **Assistant Park Superintendant Dennis Reidenback** — you can learn about the Park's new Master Plan and how it will impact this neighborhood. Learn what's on the drawing board and provide some input.

Second: Many Society Hill residents are often confused by the city's disparate preservation organizations. We've asked **Randy Cotton**, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation (PHPC) to tell us what they're up to.

Third: **Jennifer Goodman**, executive director of The Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and **Milton Marks**, deputy executive director of the Coalition and also a Society Hill resident, will give us an overview of how the Coalition has led the effort to nominate districts to become a part of the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Learn the problems and rewards of being named a historic district — and how it will affect you and your house.

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Grapevine

Goodbye. Hello: We recently learned that **Peter Whitehouse**, the executive director of the South Street/Head House District has resigned and is heading for graduate school. The quasi-public agency occupies the top floor of the Head House. The job of heading the District will be taken over by **Dick Ostrander**, the hyperconscientious former president of the SHCA. We understand it is a well-paying position — all the Jim's Steaks he can eat and all the boom box music he can stand — plus a free piercing in any designated body part. Seriously, South Street/Head House is indeed lucky to get Dick Ostrander to see that the area is kept clean, safe and visitor-friendly.

And Now the Bad News: Unfortunately, South Street's gain is *The SHCA Reporter's* loss. Dick was business manager of this newsletter and volunteered to solicit the advertising — which pays part of the cost of printing and distributing this rag. So...we need to replace him pronto. If you are a go-getting guy or gal with a pleasant demeanor and would enjoy asking neighborhood merchants and professionals for ads — about four hours a month and a dozen phone calls, Dick estimates — with no pay and fewer fringe benefits, give **Bernice Hamel** a call (925-4363). Remember, no pay means no withholding taxes! In addition, it's a great excuse to hang out on South Street.

Bang the Drum Slowly: In case you missed the obit in *The Inquirer*, the sad news is that former *Society Hill Reporter* writer-editor, oceanographer and good neighbor **Ruth Dugan** died last month at the age of 74. Mrs. Dugan collaborated with her late

husband and **Jacques Cousteau** on several books and films and was managing editor of "The Ocean World of Jacques Cousteau," a 20-volume encyclopedia of the briny deep. She also served as treasurer and secretary of this Association and was active in historical preservation in the neighborhood. Ruth is greatly missed by all her friends. A memorial service will be held some time in November. We'll try to keep you posted when an exact date is picked, or call the SHCA office in early November.

Letter to the Editor

Valet Parking Unraveled

It was with some concern that I read your editor's note on page 8 of the July issue. In it, you suggest that St. Peter's School is using its play yard for South Street's valet parking. The space you refer to has always been a parking lot and is owned by St. Peter's Church, not the school.

A few years ago the school asked the church if they could rope off a portion of the parking lot for activity during school hours and the church agreed. The remaining portion continues to be used as a parking lot and at all other times the whole area is normally used for parking. The decision to allow South Street valet parking was made by the rector and the vestry of St. Peter's Church after consulting with the school. The money raised from this arrangement is being used to maintain the churchyard and to improve security in that valuable and beautiful resource for the whole community.

— *Wendel W. Meyer, rector, St. Peter's Church*

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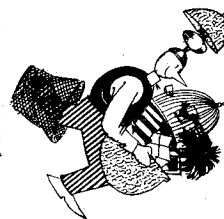
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Waterfront Hotel Update

The July issue of *The Reporter* featured an article on the pros and cons of constructing a high-rise Hyatt-managed hotel at Penn's Landing. The luxury hotel will be located due east of the Society Hill Towers on Columbus Boulevard and just south of the recently opened Independence Seaport Museum.

While some community groups are in favor of the project — for example, the Old City Civic Organization and the Penn's Landing Square Condominiums — opposition to the development comes from the Society Hill Towers Owners' Association.

On June 30th, the Towers Owners' Association filed a law suit in U.S. District Court to prevent the hotel's construction. Represented by attorney **M. Melvin Shralow**, the suit contends that the hotel will be wrongfully utilizing \$10 million of public funds to develop Penn's Landing (HUD Urban Development Action grant).

Plaintiffs in this suit are the Towers Owners' Association, a few individual members of the Association's Council, and two home owners on South 4th Street (no nearer ones approached would join in the suit). The defendants are the City of Philadelphia, **Mayor Rendell**, HUD and HUD Secretary **Henry Cisneros**.

At the July 19th SCHCA Board meeting, Mr. Shralow presented the Towers' rationale for the suit. He claimed that the Towers' primary concern is not that this 25-story structure will block apartment river views, but that the hotel fails to meet a neighborhood impact study as required by federal law.

The suit contends that its development will undermine the park-like and historic character of Penn's Landing and will encroach on the Landing's pedestrian accessway. Mr. Shralow stated that the Penn's Landing Corporation and the hotel's developers have denied the community input into the nature and design of the development.

In its recent newsletter, the Towers' Council acknowledges that the price-tag of this law suit is significant (some estimates place it at \$300,000), but the Council believes that "the cost is outweighed by the potential loss in property value if the high-rise project is allowed to proceed." The Towers' Association sought the support of the SHCA board in its opposition to the hotel as now proposed.

Stanhope Browne, Chairman of the Penn's Landing Corporation, attended the board meeting and promised that community input on design decisions for the hotel and the Penn's Landing master plan would not only be welcome but would be taken seriously. He cautioned, however, that a dialogue would be less probable if the SHCA agreed to support the Towers' suit.

Alively discussion and question-and-answer period commenced. Several Towers' owners spoke on behalf of their position pointing out that the Sheraton successfully changed its design from high rise to low rise. Other community members expressed enthusiasm for the project declaring it would add security to the neighborhood with round-the-clock doormen and provide an additional waterfront restaurant.

SHCA Board member **Scott Denham** said that our community has two options: either to voice opposition to the project or to remain neutral with a "look-see approach which will open a dialogue with the developers and the Penn's Landing Corporation."

He then made a motion to take the second option, stressing the opportunity to participate in a dialogue with the developers regarding design matters, such as: the façade and appearance of the hotel, its configuration on the chosen site, plans for vehicular and pedestrian access to the hotel, as well as pedestrian access to the waterfront and Penn's Landing. The motion to remain neutral was passed with five abstentions and no opposing votes.

— *Bernice Hamel*

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

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Deadline for October issue: September 15
Mail contributions to above address
or Fax to (215) 925-1376
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Historic Preservation

The Unkindest Curb Cuts

Almost every corner in Society Hill has been marked for access ramp modification to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. At the time of this writing, many street corners have been converted into gaping holes where once there were curbs.

Yet when workers finally fill them in, they present visual gaps in the street scene. Instead of replacing brick with brick and granite with granite, as the contractors are required to do, they've been taking cheap shortcuts and have substituted concrete in several locations, such as at 6th and Delancey Streets, 5th and Walnut Streets, and three of the four corners at 8th and Pine Streets.

This is unacceptable, especially since we were assured that the carefully crafted historic ambience of Society Hill would be maintained by the use of like materials. We've communicated these gaffes to Dr. Richard Tyler at the Philadelphia Historical Commission, and he assures us that he will assist us in seeing that these sloppy alterations will not be the beginning of a long slide down to historic preservation oblivion.

Meanwhile, we ask you to keep an eye out for other locations that are not being properly replaced. Call the office at 629-1288 to report these sites. Complain to the Streets Department. Call City Hall. Tell them it's bricks or Rocks.



Darts & Laurels



Laurel: To Pennsylvania Hospital for their sponsorship of a security bicycle patrol in the area. And a...

Dart: To Pennsylvania Hospital for mismanaging several wonderful Greek revival mansions (now apartment complexes) on the north side of the 700 block of Pine. Case in point: Allowing mountains of trash to be stacked up on Pine Street when it could just as easily be collected from Delancey where the houses back up — away from the view of out-of-towners. — *M. DeJ.*

Laurel: To WWFM at 107.9 on the FM dial. Retransmitters for this Rutgers public radio, good music station sit atop the Society Hill Towers, making reception crystal-clear in this neighborhood. It's a pleasure to be able to hear the strains of Mozart, Brahms, Hindemith, et al, without being subjected to annoying commercials.

Dart: For animal and human abuse — to the Camden aquarium for making a family visit as pricy as dinner at Bookbinders, as noisy as South Street on a Saturday night and, to top it all off, downright abusive to fish: The captive sharks are kid-handled almost to death.

Dart: To "America's mayor," Ed Rendell, for his intense behind-

the-scenes pressure to turn the waterfront into Atlantic City West (or is it Las Vegas East?). If he keeps trying to jam gambling down our throats he may end up as "America's ex-mayor."

Laurel: To the Traffic Division of the Philadelphia Police Department for finally taking the traffic by the horns in the eastern end of Society Hill during the Independence Day fireworks display and posting enough officers to keep it all moving smoothly — even during the biggest bangs.

Dart/Laurel Combination Platter: If Jesse Helms can sound off like an art expert, so can we. Our laurel for public art goes to the sculpture "Stroll" by William King, which stands like a colossus astride the South Street Bridge. It may be a little too Venturi-ish for many tastes, but we think it is both appropriate for its place and perfect in scale.

Our dart for public art goes to "Virgo," by, we believe, Judy Pfaff, which has just been hung from the ceiling of the reconstructed Reading Railroad train shed in the Convention Center. Hanging is too good for it: It's pure, unadulterated (and probably outrageously expensive) junk. But the space is marvelous. To experience it, go to the Marriott at 12th and Market, take the escalator to the third floor and walk across the glass bridge to the Convention Center. The vast room will knock your socks off! — *A.H.*

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Our Man in Crime Central

Editor's Note:

The SCHA dispatched Matt DeJulio, a board member, to attend a panel discussion on neighborhood crime at the SocHill Sheraton.

Here is his report:

Nearly 100 people turned out on the steamy Tuesday evening of August 1st to hear a six-member panel of local activists discussing the local crime situation. Society Hill was one of thousands of communities across the nation to participate in this 12th annual "Night Out Against Crime."

Panel members were **Herb Vederman**, the city's Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and a resident of the area; Abbott Square's **Eric Blumenfeld**, a director of the South Street District, proprietor of TGIF and a neighbor; **Steve Corrado**, substituting for Dom Sabatini of the Penn's Landing Corp.; SCHA director **Barbara Bagileo**, representing the Penn's Landing Condo Association; **Captain Joseph O'Donnell** of the Sixth Police District (which

covers Vine to South, Broad to the Delaware); and **Mel Buckman**, the newly-elected president of the SHCA. Moderator was **Steve Skale**, attorney, community activist and a past veep of the SHCA.

Highlight of the evening was the presence of over a dozen handsomely-uniformed young roller-bladers — all volunteers and all equipped with helmets and cellular phones. They represented Town Watch and, working with the police, have maintained speedy, effective nighttime patrols across center city.

Also represented were one of four uniformed bicyclists, sponsored by **Pennsylvania Hospital** who regularly patrol from 5th to 9th, Walnut to Lombard.

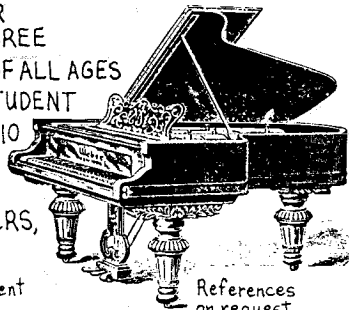
During the course of the meeting, several neighbors started a heated discussion with Eric Blumenfeld on the safety and cleanliness of blocks immediately adjacent to South St, challenging Eric's assertion of a decrease of crime and litter in the area. Hard feelings seemed to have softened by evening's end, particularly after one of the local foot patrol police officers in

attendance reported having issued over three hundred \$100 fines to boom-box offenders since the beginning of the year.

Captain O'Donnell further noted that Philadelphia is still the safest of the 10 largest U.S. cities, adding that crimes of all types have been down in our district this year, except for auto break-ins. Residents are reminded to keep their valuables (even lesser ones) out of sight when they lock their cars. Most of the break-ins are done by the homeless, according to Captain O'Donnell.

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References on request

Those Were ye Days

A clipping from Ben Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* of February 10th, 1730, unearthed by his only surviving contemporary, historian Charles Peterson:

Philadelphia, Feb 10. Saturday laft, about nine o'Clock in the Morning two young Hibernian Gentlemen met on Society Hill and fought a gallant duel before a Number of Spectators not very ufual on such Occafions. The cause of their Quarrel is, it feems unknown; and they were parted without much Difficulty. Neither of them received any confiderable Hurt. It is generally looked upon to be only a Piece of Theatrical Representation.

The fame day an unhappy Man, one Stugis, upon fome difference with his Wife, determined to drown himfelf in the River; and fhe, (kind Wife) went with him, it feems, to fee it faithfully performed, and accordingly ftood by filent and unconcerned during the whole tranfaction: He jump'd in near Carpenter's Wharf, but was timely taken out again, fo that they were both obliged to return home as they came, and put up for that Time with the Difappointment. The River has been clear of Ice thefe feveral Days paft.



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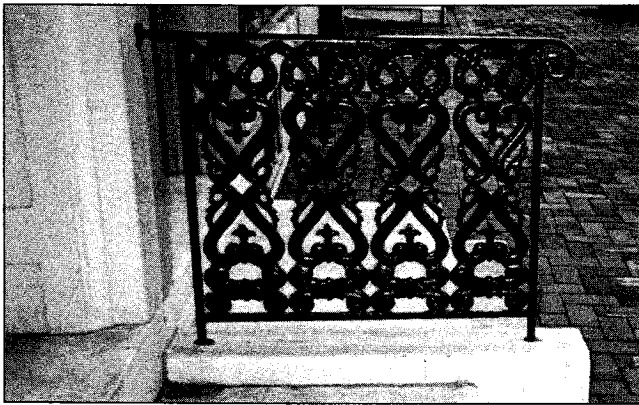
A member reported in mid-August there are 700 cleaned, old bricks sitting in said member's alley and yours for the asking. They were left over from a renovation. If you can use them, telephone 238-9947 and ask for the brick benefactor.

Danny Kaye once said an oboe is an ill woodwind that nobody blows good. Anyway, Old Pine Street Church reports it will launch a series of Classical Vespers on Sunday, October 1, at 5 p.m., featuring a woodwind quintet from Settlement Music School. Talented youngsters are at the reed to play and sing at subsequent services the first Sunday of each month. Refreshments follow the service. Admission free.

Attention, Party Animals!: The Preservation Coalition is planning a 40th Anniversary Party to commemorate Philadelphia's Preservation Ordinance. Without this ordinance, Society Hill's 18th and 19th century structures and the neighborhood as we know it today might not exist. This party, celebrating our historic legacy, will be held at Carpenter's Hall on Thursday, October 19th, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Call the Coalition at 568-8225 for details.

— Bernice Hamel

Iron Age Artifacts



This unique railing graces the front of 626 Spruce Street, the home of SCHA members and avid preservationists, Eleanor and Daniel Gesensway. The sturdy iron structure, which has withstood decades of the elements, serves to remind us that Philadelphia was at one time the nation's most important manufacturing center, particularly of iron.

Few people know that the warship "Old Ironsides," was built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1832, right here, at 4th and Walnut Streets, prior to the company's move to Broad and Spring Garden Streets.

Probably even fewer know that the Robert Wood & Company Ironworks, at 12th and Ridge Streets, founded in 1839, was responsible not only for much of the ironwork in Philadelphia, but also for the ironwork in New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama.

— Photo and text by Matt DeJulio

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