



SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

Newsletter of the Society Hill Civic Association
Issued November 8, 1996

Message from the President

Voting With Our Feet

This will be the last issue of *The Reporter* in 1996. It has been a busy and contentious year. The City government functions badly. We are constantly under pressure from developers of hotels, supermarkets (see page 4), cafés (see page 14) and what-have-you which threaten to overcrowd and overload our neighborhood. Streets are opened and repaved on an almost daily basis. Quality-of-life laws are rarely enforced. But, with all that, we have almost 350 new people who have registered to vote in Society Hill in just the last two years. So why are we all here?

It is time to turn positive about city living in general — and Society Hill in particular. Here's what I think keeps us here and brings new people in:

First, the sheer convenience of living in town. Unlike New York and Chicago and just about every other major American city, almost every amenity in center city is close to where we live and accessible.

We are blessed with the ability to walk to just about everything — to stores and restaurants, to the office, to meetings, to the MAC machine, to



theaters and schools and concerts, to worship, to visit friends. Quite a difference from the suburbs where even the smallest errand requires a car.

Also, in our neighborhood people are everywhere. Now this may not appeal to everyone — and we know suburbs and resort communities where "privacy" (*i.e.* freedom from other people) is a major selling point. But isn't it grand to be close to one's friends, to relatives, to lots of interesting people, to see them on the street, to be able to call on them by walking only a few feet and knocking on a door? This is another big difference from the suburbs.

But it's not only the people we know who make the area so attractive. It's all the other people one encounters in a city neighborhood — of

different backgrounds and races, who make the urban experience so rich and varied. (Of course, there are some people we wish would never come near Society Hill. But nothing is perfect.)

Finally, the sheer beauty of the neighborhood attracts and keeps its residents. Where else is there another one like Society Hill? Low-rise brick residences of varied architecture predominate. A few high-rise buildings give punctuation. The riverfront is nearby. Parks are everywhere — as big as Washington Square and as small as Perth Addison — as well as charming walkways lined with homes and plantings. And we're next door to buildings and grounds that gave birth to American democracy. No one knows what William Penn would think of Philadelphia if he saw it today. But I think he would be very pleased with the portion of his Greene Countrie Towne known as Society Hill.

We all have the ability to "vote with our feet" when things get to the breaking point. These are some of the reasons we don't.

— Mel Buckman

Mark Your Calendars

**Wednesday,
November 20,
7:30 p.m.**

Board Meeting
Old Pine Community Center
4th & Lombard.
Members welcome.

**Saturday,
November 23,
9 a.m.-noon**

Fall Clean-up Day
Get out your brooms, bag the leaves on your sidewalk and deposit them on the corner for pick-up.

**Wednesday,
December 18,
7:30 p.m.**

Board meeting
Old Pine Community Center
4th & Lombard.
Members welcome.

Bulletin Board

Downbeat, Maestro: Classical music buffs with an insatiable longing for Philadelphia Orchestra virtuosi can hear quite a few of them in this month's performance by the **Philadelphia Chamber Ensemble** which opens its three-concert 1996-97 season with two performances in the acoustically-crisp Old Pine Church, at 4th and Pine.

(Society Hill is one of the few Philadelphia neighborhoods with its own chamber music ensemble.)

The November concerts (at 8 pm on Friday the 15th and repeated at 2 pm on Sunday the 17th) include cantos by Ginastera for mezzo-soprano, violin, flute, harp and percussion; a Beethoven septet for strings woodwinds and horn; four songs by Virgil Thomson for mezzo, clarinet, viola and harp; and three pieces by Max Bruch for clarinet, cello and piano.

There's a complimentary wine and cheese reception after the performance where you can chat up the musicians and your neighbors.

Tickets are \$20 (\$60 for the season). You can order them in advance by ringing up 592-7840 — or pick them up at the door ten minutes before the performance.

Light Up Your Life: Our local police and PECO Energy (the acronymic makeover of the Philadelphia Electric Co.) agree that lighting is a simple and

powerful deterrent to crime. Burglars and vandals are less likely to select a home that's well-lit, especially outside.

To discourage vandalism and theft, make sure that:

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For more information or to request a Bright Ideas security outdoor lighting catalogue, call **Roy David** at PECO Energy. His number is 215-468-4296.

—Liz Seltzer

Bah, Humbug! This is the only edition of *The Reporter* between now and Christmas, so we'll offer our season's greetings early. And remind you of a few of the holiday attractions hereabouts. His Honor, Fast Eddie, will light the Christmas tree in

City Hall Courtyard at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 29th. Bring the kids — special Muppet guests from Sesame Place will be on hand including the Councilmen Monster. Make it a night — the fun is only beginning. Everyone — including the elves — will head down newly-Christmas-lit Market Street to ceremonies at Independence Hall where the Philadelphia Boys Choir will serenade the crowd and light up the new Liberty bell tree. On the way, Santa Claus will climb into Strawbridge's and try to discover what happened to Mr. Clothier.

And don't forget to look in at the Christmas Light show at Lord & Taylor, formerly Strawbridge's, formerly Hecht's, formerly Wanamaker's — a tradition since 1956 in Philadelphia, formerly Penn's Green Countrie Towne, formerly Lenape City.

Most of the neighborhood's churches will also held Christmas services, celebrations and concerts during December, so be sure to check them out.

Boardroom Buzz: At recent meetings your Board voted to recommend to City Hall to rescind the Turn on Red policy which permits motorists to turn on red lights and endangers pedestrians. The Board also approved a motion to encourage residents to leave exterior lights burning all night as a neighborhood safety measure.

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER
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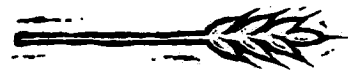
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 Tom and Tim Ivory



Supermarket Alert!!!!

A proposed mega-supermarket at Second and Pine could drastically clog neighborhood streets and affect both property values and quality of life.

NewMarket — the shopping mall that never made it — is once again making waves in the neighborhood by proposing to position an enormous Delaware Avenue-type mega-supermarket on the residential streets of Society Hill.

NewMarket, on a tract originally proposed for garden apartments in the 1960's Urban Renewal Plan, was instead developed as a tourist mall. The area is sandwiched in between rows of residential houses on Pine and Lombard Streets and extends from Front to Second Street.

Because of a number of factors — including poor location and lack of free parking — the project turned out to be a massive retailing failure which subsequently cost a series of developers millions of dollars, seen merchant after merchant fail or be driven into bankruptcy and become a largely vacant ghost mall.

Current NewMarket owner Michael DiPaolo has been looking for a profitable new use or new owner for the property. Recently, DiPaolo optioned the property to developer Hal Wheeler of Wheeler Equities, who proposed converting most of the mall area, which is bordered by residences on its north and south sides, into a mega-supermarket — a mammoth 35,000 square-foot SuperFresh.

SuperFresh now has two outlets in Center City — a 9,000 square-foot facility near Fifth and Pine and a 22,000 square-foot facility at 10th and South. The proposed 35,000 square-foot new store is significantly larger than both these outlets combined. It's three times the size of the supermarket Wheeler Equities proposed putting on Rittenhouse Square until it was routed by irate residents of that neighborhood.

What's wrong with a large supermarket?

Nothing, if it were located on Delaware Avenue like other large merchandisers such as Home Depot, Staples and Wall-Mart. Non-residential Delaware Avenue can handle large delivery trucks and has plenty of room for parking.

Unfortunately, the proposed location — just to the east of the Head House shambles and bordered by the narrow residential streets of Society Hill and Queen Village and heavily-trafficked South Street — cannot take the intolerable parade of tractor-trailer delivery trucks, dumpsters and automobile traffic that a supermarket of this size demands.

The Parking Problem

The 5th Street SuperFresh has facilities for parking 25 cars. A parking building attached to the 10th Street SuperFresh has facilities for parking over 300 cars.

The proposal for the mega-SuperFresh at NewMarket, according to a plan submitted by Wheeler, has facilities for parking 69 cars on an open roof deck (making the lights, engine noise and car alarms a nuisance to neighbors on three sides of the deck).

Of the 69 spaces NewMarket says the plans presently call for, 22 have to be given to neighbors who now have deeded parking at the NewMarket Front Street underground garage which is scheduled to be demolished by the development. This leaves 47 spaces.

The 5th Street SuperFresh employs 85 people. The 10th Street SuperFresh employs 125. A 35,000-square-foot supermarket would probably employ over 150 people. Assuming only two-thirds of them come to work by automobile — and since there is no free street parking in the neighborhood most days and there is no plan by Wheeler for accommodating their cars — they represent a potential daily parking nightmare.

What's more, a SuperFresh official said he expected the market to attract customers from as far away as Oregon Avenue and Port Richmond. They will definitely not be arriving on foot.

According to Operating Results of Independent Supermarkets, published by the Washington-based Food Marketing Institute, a supermarket of this size must generate weekly food sales of \$8 per square foot to be profitable — a total of \$280,000 a week or \$40,000 daily — which would require at least 1,000 to 3,000 customers a day — for the 47 spaces in the lot.

As you can imagine, if your street is in a six-block range of NewMarket, empty parking spots will probably no longer be available to you between 7 a.m. and midnight — the hours the existing SuperFresh stores stay open.

The Delivery Truck Problem.

To stock the 5th Street SuperFresh about four tractor-trailers plus over a dozen smaller trucks disgorge their cargoes daily. In a 35,000-square-foot supermarket — four times the size of 5th Street — if you extrapolate the figures you would need deliveries by 16 large tractor-trailer trucks every day. These trucks — over eight feet wide, will rumble into the neighborhood starting at daybreak, supplemented by an endless parade of smaller trucks.

Current plans call for the tractor-trailer trucks to be unloaded in the shallow 17-foot-wide loading bay off Front Street which was designed about 25 years ago to accommodate the small retailers in the NewMarket development. Trucks must back into the space to access the loading dock — blocking two-way traffic on Front Street. Since the trucks are more than 8 feet wide, no more than one truck can be accommodated at a time.

In all probability some deliveries will probably be made on Second Street via the front entrance, (a street that would be tied up with shoppers' cars waiting to load their groceries).

In addition to delivery problems, there are removal problems as well.

A market of this size will probably need a daily dumpster installation-and-removal operation to carry off the daily effluvia of spoiled food, rotted produce and assorted cardboard and wooden boxes that a supermarket continuously generates.

To accommodate the trucks waiting their turn to back into the loading bay at NewMarket, parking, or even stopping, will probably no longer be permitted for passenger cars on two-way trafficked Front Street. Indeed, the parade of trucks lining up on Front Street to unload will probably cause immense traffic tie-ups lasting from daybreak to early evening.

The Developer Problem

Wheeler Equities has come to Society Hill after running into problems across town. Its proposal for a Rittenhouse Square SuperFresh on Walnut Street was vehemently opposed by both that neighborhood and its Civic Associations. It also earned the

opposition of the area's councilman, John Street.

It is not easy to put a supermarket into a neighborhood that actively opposes it. A proposal for a supermarket in the Fishtown area a few years back was successfully stopped by the community.

The Historic District Problem with the Location

The supermarket is proposed in the midst of an historic neighborhood that has become a visitors' Mecca — bringing valuable tourist dollars to city businesses. The area is already overburdened both with South Street traffic and sightseeing busses. Street parking is almost non-existent on weekends. Its houses have the highest assessment of any neighborhood in the city. The introduction of this supermarket would sharply curtail the quality of life — and hence the desirability — of the neighborhood to tax-paying homeowners.

What Is Being Done?

About 30 neighbors held a meeting on September 11th to discuss the impact of the proposed mega-market on their lives. An executive committee was formed including four attorneys and an architect who live in the neighborhood to investigate the zoning implications and other legal implication for the project. Experienced legal counsel will be engaged to fight the project.

The subject of the mega-market will be brought to the attention of all the civic associations in the affected neighborhoods and the support of their zoning committees will be requested in stopping the project. The Society Hill Civic Association board voted unanimously on September 18th to oppose the project

Management of SuperFresh, which presently enjoys neighborhood good will, will be informed of the effects of this development on their core patrons. The committee will bring the matter up with A&P management in Flemington, New Jersey, who are the corporate parent of the SuperFresh operation. The corporate parent of A&P is a large German food operation.

A community meeting with the developer is being arranged by Robin Shatz from District Councilman Frank DiCicco's office. It will be scheduled shortly.

Please Move Your Car (Or it will be towed!!)

Clean-up Day is Saturday, November 23rd. In order for city trucks to sweep both sides of the street, car owners are asked to park their car on the opposite side of the street beginning 6 p.m., Friday, November 22. It can be put back where it always goes beginning 1:30 p.m., Saturday — and must be back on the usual side by 3 p.m., Saturday. Your reward: A cleaner street!!!

Don't forget: Wet leaves are as slippery as ice. Sweep or rake them up from your sidewalk Saturday morning, and bag the debris. Take the bags of leaves to your corner by noon for Saturday afternoon pick-up. Do not put our household or bulk trash.

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Horse Sense

by William Hawkins

*Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And Hope without an object cannot live.*

Each time I see a carriage horse pulling a load of tourists through a steaming-hot Society Hill street or a bitter-cold one I am reminded of the above lines from an 1825 poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. I love to look at the horses, but I feel sorry for them, too, and hope that they get decent treatment

In 1975, Philadelphia took a step backward in time. Carriage horses were permitted to be reintroduced to the Independence Park/Old City area, probably because City Hall felt it would be a natural connection to "The Spirit of '76," which was about to descend on the city in the form of the Bicentennial Celebration.

Now, 21 years later, the public attitude toward carriage horses is decidedly ambivalent: The sight of a big chestnut or a dapple gray (geldings are preferred because of their calmer temperament) pulling a picturesque carriage along one of the city's quaint streets seems at first to fit our desire to preserve a link with the past. And for tourists it is an easy, exciting way to see the sights. But talk to many of the residents and, in particular, motorists, and you get another picture

Blocked streets, slow-moving traffic, the odor of horse manure and urine are some of the complaints. Although the horses now are fitted with "diapers" — actually bags which collect their droppings — reportedly the idea of Ali Bastawi (owner of both **The Society Hill Carriage Company** and the **Outback Farms** companies), the presence of the horse-drawn carriage often lingers long after the carriage has turned the corner.

The owners of the other carriage companies in the city — **Mike Slocum (76 Carriage Company)** and the **Ben Franklin Carriage Company** and **Bechir Ahmed (the Philadelphia Carriage Company)** acknowledge, as does Ali, that the odor issue must be addressed.

Many cities across the country have forbidden the use of carriage horses, for a variety of reasons — some out of humane considerations, others because of logistical issues and still others for a combination of reasons. For those cities that do permit the carriage horse trade, local legislation varies. Philadelphia's ordinance, amended since its introduction in 1984,

appears fairly comprehensive but, upon examination, reveals a number of points that need to be addressed.

Carriage drivers are expected to follow prescribed routes and to adhere to regulations by L&I, the National Park Service and the Dept. of Health — as outlined in section 9-400 of The Philadelphia Code. The routes are supposed to be within an area bordered by South, Race and Front Streets and their most westerly point, West Washington Square.*

Occasionally, however, errant carriages have been spotted deep in Queen Village, or at 8th & Walnut, and other *verboten* streets. It may be the intense competitiveness between the carriage companies that causes lapses in compliance with legislation.

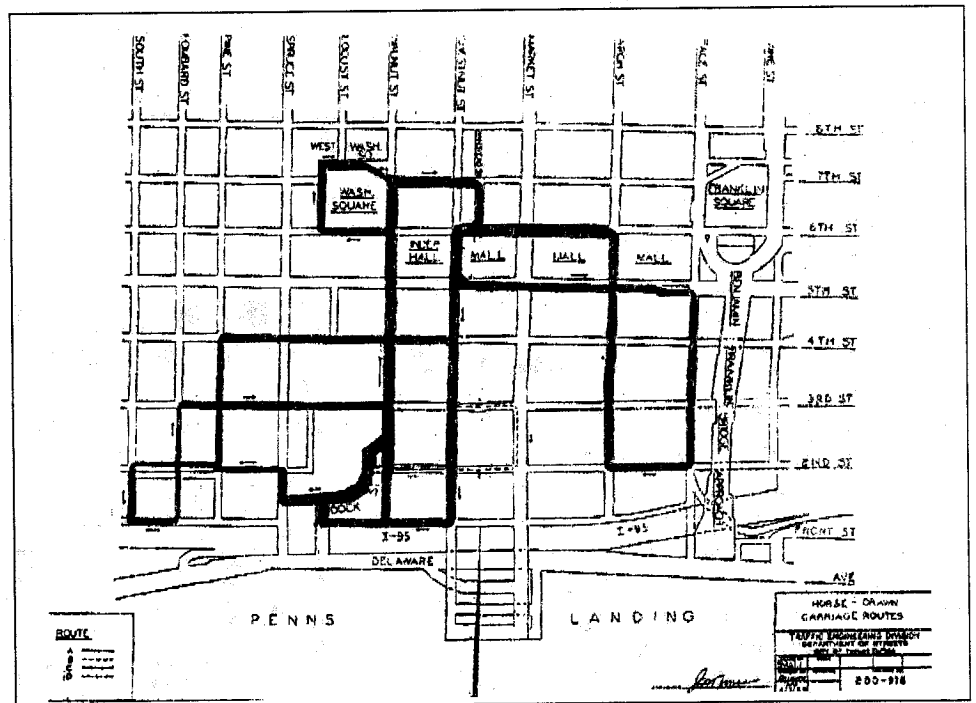
With *three* distinct carriage operations in such a small area, there is going to be fierce competition. The first operator —

on the scene in 1975 — was the Philadelphia Carriage Company. The second was the 76 Carriage Company, established by James Slocum, father of the current owner.

Located in the Northern Liberties section of the city, near 3rd and Girard, the 76 Carriage Company is a sister company to the Philadelphia Trolley Works. Compared to its competitors, it has modern, sparkling premises. The stables area looks relatively spacious, the horses are clean and there is a small paddock in which they can exercise.

Obtained from dealers as far away as Canada and California, their horses generally work until "retirement," at which point they are placed with their drivers or at another home. The future of many working horses is Fido food. "Not our

Continued on page 10



*Permitted routes in Society Hill include Walnut from 7th to Front; Spruce between Second and Mathis; Pine between Fourth and Second, Lombard between Third and Front, Fourth between Walnut and Pine, Third between Lombard and Walnut Mathis Street between Walnut and Spruce; Dock Street between Mathis and Front, Front between Locust and Walnut. If you see them anywhere else and have objections to the route, call City Hall.

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Begging Your Support

Three cheers for Councilman Jim Kenney (who's trying to pass anti-panhandling legislation). It's about time someone tackled the issue.

While it appears that the causes are not about to be addressed, the least we can do is take remedial action against the activity itself. And Jim Kenney has fired the first salvo.

This is the issue: One of those "in your face" reality checks...one sign of a healthy or unhealthy city. When we refuse to take care of the fundamentals in our society, such as being able to walk down the street without being accosted, it is a sign that we do not care very much about the *basics* of quality living.

Begging is one of those very visible "quality of life" issues. Residents hate it. Businesses hate it. Tourists hate it. And

children and older people are very much afraid of panhandlers, many of whom understand the financial value of intimidation. Many of them leave refuse and filth in their wake. The list goes on and on.

Let's support Councilman Kenney — call, write or fax him and other council members today. And let's keep the fragile threads of Philadelphia's society from fraying!

—WILLIAM HAWKINS

Say No to War

As a SHCA member with a view overlooking the Vietnam Memorial, I strongly object to the plan to put a Pearl Harbor memorial near it on Front Street. I am already disturbed that the name of historic Mathis Street was changed to "38th Parallel Place" (to commemorate the Korean War). As far as I am concerned, war activities are something to get over, not relive.

—CHARLES N. HAAS

Adjectival Onslaught

As a neighbor looking westward at the blight of an unmanaged parking lot behind the Rebecca Gratz House — off Sixth Street below Spruce, I'm struck by our continued inability to stop the tandem parking, sidewalk-blocking, trash-containers-exposed, graffiti-walled, litter-strewn and generally unneighborly demeanor of that historic gem, the former Rebecca Gratz House at Sixth and Spruce. The owner of that investment property has managed to thwart the efforts of City authorities to correct this blight.

—MARVIN NADEL

Café at headhouse

Are you aware that the proposed "Café at Headhouse" (see page 14) will require closing down 2nd Street from Pine to Lombard? Are you aware that the proposed "Café at Headhouse" plans to seat over 300 people in the "shambles"? Are you aware that the proposed "Café at Headhouse" requires extension of Liquor Licenses — a policy which the Society Hill Civic Association and the South street neighborhood Association categorically oppose?

The residents of Blackwell Place oppose the "Café". We would more directly suffer from the noise, traffic and garbage of the "Café at Headhouse" — not to mention the fact that residents of Stampers Street will

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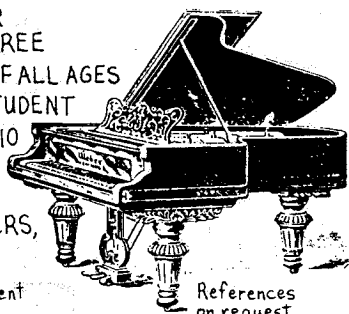
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effectively be unable to access their houses by automobile.

Others of you may not be as directly affected. Nevertheless, please think about the proposed "Café at Headhouse." As you do, ask yourself these questions:

Should the city permit blockage of residential streets to expand restaurant operations?

Will the proposed outdoor bar/café make our neighborhood safer? Or cleaner?

Will the increased traffic on Pine St., Front St., Delancey St., 3rd St., Lombard St., and Spruce St. make your summer weekends quieter?

We understand that the "Café at Headhouse," like riverboat gambling, has strong support in the Mayor's office. If you answered "no" to any of these questions, please take a minute to call Councilman Frank DiCicco at 686-3458 and let him know your feelings.

—YOUR NEIGHBORS AT BLACKWELL PLACE

"An Absurd and Dangerous Plan"

Not only are developers trying to take away our streets, Uncle Sam—in the persona of Martha Aikens, superintendent of Independence National Historic Park—received the following letter from Mel Buchman, president of the SHCA:

Dear Ms. Aikens:

Despite our earlier protests and opposition, we again find that the Park Service proposes to close Chestnut Street between 5th and 6th in connection with the renovation of Independence National Historic Park.

We repeat our opposition: The closing of Chestnut St. will severely impact the adjoining residential neighborhood by requiring all [eastbound] traffic which now uses Chestnut Street to turn south at 6th St. and proceed east on Pine. Pine Street is already an overused local street, treated by many motorists and cab drivers as a speedway. It is the site of numerous accidents with resulting personal injury and property damage.... We cannot tolerate more traffic on Pine Street.

It is highly objectionable, even outrageous, to find that our National Government continues to propose to inflict this malady upon us after being advised of the intolerable conditions that the closing of Chestnut St. will cause to the adjoining neighborhood. We appeal to you and your associates to abandon this absurd and dangerous plan. We also appeal, by copies of this letter, to our City government, our representatives in City Council, our Senators and Representatives in Harrisburg and our Congressmen and United States Senators.

I would be most pleased to learn that the Park Service has modified this proposal to avoid placing this extra burden on Pine Street or any other residential street in the area. A possible solution might be to route the traffic north on 6th to Market, then east on Market. This may involve some small rearrangement of the Park, but would save our neighborhood from the ravages of the existing plan.

— MELVIN J BUCKMAN, President, SHCA

A few days after this letter was mailed and also sent to various officials, this reply was received from City Hall:

Dear Mr. Buckman:

I have received a copy of your letter to Marsha Aikens. Remember, the City, and the City alone, decides on whether Chestnut Street closes and, at least for the next three years and three months, you can be assured it won't.

EDWARD G. RENDELL, Mayor

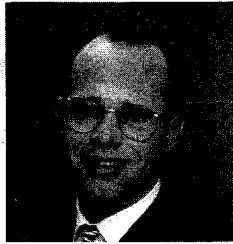
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Horse Sense

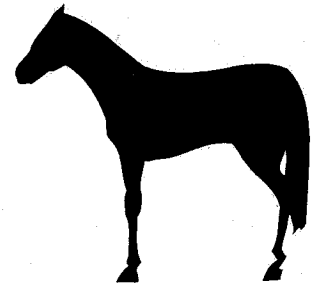
Continued from page 6

horses," emphasizes Jennifer Wilson, the company's manager. Calls and letters to Ali Bestawi and Bechir Ahmed were not returned. When I casually dropped by their respective locations, I was treated cordially but with suspicion. As Han Hee, Ahmed's secretary, explained it, news reporting generally resulted in negative press for them.

Ahmed's premises at 13th and Spring Garden were in an old, dilapidated building. Horses were being groomed on a side street adjacent to the building and a troop of dogs followed me everywhere. I saw no evidence of a paddock.

At Ali's location on Canal Street I was greeted by another group of dogs who escorted me to the office area. There were no street signs, just cobble stones and a series of run-down warehouses. No paddock was visible here, either.

I know one should not make judgments on appearances, but having grown up surrounded by farm animals, both domestic and wild, I like the idea of seeing our four-legged creatures in the city. They provide a much-needed balance. But I have to ask myself: Do carriage horses belong in a city? Can and should they be forced to co-exist with exhaust-belching Septa buses, cabbies



who often appear to be from another planet, and those hot, high-humidity summer days, and even hotter tar-macadam streets?

The current ordinance says that the horses can be permitted to work at temperatures up to and including 94 degrees, with no consideration given to the humidity. Extensive studies in preparation for the equestrian events at the recent Olympics appear to disagree with our city's definition of what is humane.

The SPCA monitors the humane conditions, yet I have seen carriages out in blistering heat after they were ordered off the streets by the SPCA. It is difficult to believe that the 94-degree threshold is considered acceptable by the city's Dept. of Health and local humane organizations, when in many other cities it is not. (The Carriage Operators of America — COA — propose an incredible 100-degrees limit!)

There are no thresholds on the cold side. You can see horses steaming on icy streets in sub-freezing temperatures. The COA suggests 0°. If you think there should be cold limits as well as hot, call the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (426-6300) and the Philadelphia Health Department (686-7679) and discuss the matter with them

Yet, despite the vicissitudes of Philadelphia living, the carriage horses seem destined to continue to share our streets with us. So, let's salute them. Let's raise our caps to cheer Billy Boy who is retiring with his driver, Roxanne. And likewise to Prince, Spirit, CJ and Trump who are headed for farms this fall. Good luck to each and every one of the cold-bloods and cross-bred horses who ply the carriage trade through Society Hill. We're pulling for you.

(Author's note: Human-propelled pedicabs have recently been sighted in Head House and Walnut Street.)

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No Pane, No Gain

Part of the fascination tourists derive from visiting Society Hill comes from gazing into the old colonial and early 19th century townhouses' first level window panes for evidence of old fireplaces, elaborate chandeliers, intriguing moldings, etc.


The fabric of life in the late 18th and early 19th century has more meaning to visitors when they know who first lived in the houses they're staring at and when they were built. The provenances of the houses posted on a handful of first-floor windows scattered throughout our neighborhood are a result of the volunteer efforts of good neighbor Faith Lemmer, long-time resident of Pine Street and current member of the Association in good standing.

Now is the time to continue the tradition she started. If you live in one of these historic gems, it is your duty to share your knowledge of the buildings history with the world of passersby. PLEASE get your pane proudly peering out on the populace.

We know it may be a pain-in-the-neck to do your homework and discover who built your house back when — and then drop us a line, but as our neighborhood saying goes, no gain without pane. Tell us as much as you know about the early history of your house and we will typeset as much as we can and print it on a clear acetate sheet we will send to you for mounting.

If Philadelphia is really going to become a visitor "must-see" on the East Coast, we all can do a little more to explain the unparalleled richness of our historic environment.

— MATT DEJULIO, Preservation Committee



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Darts & Laurels



Dart: To **Dick Ostrander**, the former head of the Society Hill Civic Association and former good guy—who now wears the black hat of paid administrator of the South Street-Headhouse District. Many feel that Ostrander has forsaken any interest in the welfare of his former constituents in favor of running interference for his new commercial constituency. He was reported to be supportive of the proposal to convert the Head House shed into a bar-restaurant, seal off the eastern end of Stamper Street and close Second Street to traffic in the process. (See story on page 14.)

Laurel: To **Brothers Bistro** — run by Society Hill's own Feurborn boys—for providing inspired French/American food at Appalachian prices. We had dinner there the other night and can't believe how good they continue to be. They are on newly gentrified Market Street—No. 222, to be precise.

Dart: to "M. DeJ." for complaining (in this column in September) about the wonderful bike racks the City has been installing, the most bicycle-friendly and overall helpful thing the City has done in years! His suggestion to fully fund SEPTA first is rather disingenuous. The money spent on these bike racks would probably not pay for one SEPTA bus. Instead I propose a **Laurel** to the city for finally doing something to encourage more bicycle riding and less car use.— **D.B.**

Dart: A neighbor from Delancey Streets (**Jo Ann Buller**) overheard a realtor extol the virtues of the neighborhood when pointing out a house that recently sold at the corner of 3rd and Delancey. Here's what the uninformed, anonymous realtor said: "The new owners of this house can convert their corner backyard from a garden to a parking spot if they want. That's what so nice about this neighborhood. If you see a house without a parking area, you can tailor it to your needs." Obviously, this realtor has not heard about what happened at the corner of Delancey and American Streets! For all realtors out there, please get your zoning facts straight.

—**Bernice Hamel**



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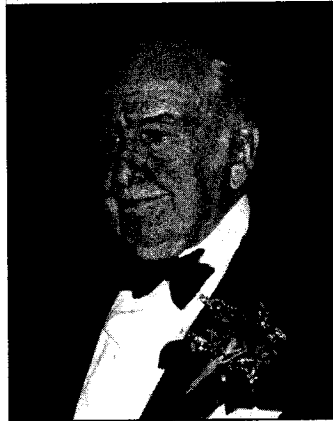
Society Hill's most eminent historian marks a landmark birthday

On September 27th 200 people from all over the country gathered at the Down Town Club in Philadelphia to celebrate the 90th birthday of Society Hill's own Charles E. Peterson, FAIA, Historian Emeritus of The Carpenters' Company, author, preservation architect and all-around terrific guy!

The party made history — with a video presentation that spanned 90 years, stories, noise-makers, reminiscences, and old-timey music. (Yes, we got to see his baby photos — you know the kind: bairn on a blanket in his birthday suit!)

The Reporter does not have enough pages to list this incredible man's accomplishments, honors and gifts to our country and our city — or, specifically, his contributions to our own little corner of the world. But, here's a wee, brief, tiny summary: Charles (also known as "Charlie," "T" or just plain "Pete") is the one we can all blame for giving us back our community's rightful name of "Society's Hill" during its redevelopment in the 1950s. (Named after the hilltop headquarters of the "Free Society of Traders." Remember William Penn? He deeded a group of 200 Quaker merchants a strip of land situated on a bluff above the Delaware between Spruce and Pine Streets.)

Here's an "Ode in the Classical Style," written for Charles



Peterson by Mr. Alvin Holm, a member of the Carpenters' Company:

"It came to pass before the construction of the great arch — the same arch that rises above the banks of the Mississippi in the city known for the Sainted Louis — that... Charles Peterson was summoned and sent forth to the City of Brotherly Love.

*Thus, Charles Peterson trekked eastward and put behind him the Westward Movement as he took upon himself the mantle of historic preservation. The days and miles passed between the gateway to the west and the cradle of Liberty. When these days of journey were completed, Charles Peterson proclaimed this new land — of the bell, book (i.e., *Building Early America*) and scandal — in great need*

and set about to correct the excesses of developers.

Charles Peterson labored long and diligently, and in the many years these labors bore many fruits. The old became old again, and the new were sent to the suburbs!

The bounty of Charles Peterson's labors continue... And to this day those who also journey to the Mecca of Miracle marvel at the deeds Charles hath wrought, and they stand in awe and admiration.

Congratulations Mr. Peterson. We love ya!

— BERNICE HAMEL

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Controversial Project for the Head House Shambles

A developer proposes turning the now-public area into a private restaurant-café and closing Second Street to car traffic to do it.

At a meeting on October 3rd on the second floor of the Head House, called by **Bernice Hamel** of the Head House Conservancy, plans were disclosed to a group of neighbors to install an outdoor restaurant/café under the arcade of the Head House, running from Pine Street to Lombard. The café would open next year, Thursdays through Sundays from May to the end of October.

The plan was introduced by **Wayne Spilove** and **Joe Torsella**. Mr. Spilove is the new owner of the Ross House, the large colonial-era brick building on the Southeast corner of Second and Pine. He is also chairman of the Philadelphia Historical Commission. Mr. Torsella works with him.

According to Mr. Torsella, the café-restaurant would have no bar or kitchen. Food and drink service would be conducted separately by four restaurants which border the Shambles — the Colonial name for the covered arcade — “like they do in Italy with different operations sharing a common service area.” The restaurants are the **Artful Dodger**, **Café Elena**, **Dickens Inn** and a new restaurant in the Ross House which will be opening soon. He also thought the **Morning Cup** and **Koffmeyer Cookies** could participate. The café would have music, but only acoustic music — non-amplified, the developers promise. He did not say how closing the streets to auto traffic would affect other operations like the new bike shop and the tailor shop.


The Head House property is owned by the City of Philadelphia and was recently restored by the Head House Conservancy, a private non-profit group. The building is occupied — and expected to be maintained — by the South Street HeadHouse District and houses the offices of its executive director, **Dick Ostrander**. Mr. Ostrander said the District would be the landlord of the café which he feels is an appropriate use of the Shambles.

The café concept, Mr. Torsella reported, was introduced by the mayor's office, specifically by Rendell deputy, **Herb Vederman**, a resident of Society Hill. From there on official participation — but not neighborhood participation — got very heavy: At subsequent meetings which included representatives of State Senator **Vince Fumo**, Councilman **Frank DiCicco**, Vederman, South Street District administrator **Dick Ostrander**, State Senator **Henry Salvatore**, and an official of the State Liquor Control Board, details of the operation were planned. Since the State Liquor Control Board will not permit the extension of a liquor license across an active street, **the cafe advocates propose to close off both east and west branches of Second St. from Pine to Lombard during the café operation with temporary bollards. The heavy southbound traffic on Second St. would be detoured down the 100 block of Pine, then over Front and back on Lombard Street to Second. Stamper St. would be completely inaccessible from Second, forcing cars that enter it from Third St. to have to back out onto Third, a very dangerous maneuver.**

Mel Buckman, the president of the Society Hill Civic Association, observed, “It's enough that the restaurants have been taking over our sidewalks. We shouldn't let them take over the streets, too.” Additional concern was voiced by **Peggy Fields** (100 block Pine), **Lorna Lawson** (a resident of Society Hill Towers) who is head of the SHCA Zoning Committee, **Alan Halpern** (100 block Pine) and **David Stevens** (100 block Delancey).

On the other hand, **Duane Perry** (American & Spruce), a former SCHA board member, liked the plan.

Halpern said that the plan was a continuation of the trend to “South Streetize” Society Hill — to transform a successful residential neighborhood into a raucous bar and commercial district. Stevens said that “he saw no benefit to residents from the plan, that there are already more than enough bars and restaurants in the neighborhood and that the Shambles would better continue to serve as a public place for festival activities, crafts fairs, performances, school bazaars, flea markets, concerts, farmer's markets and other forms of fun.” Fields said that the Artful Dodger was already a noisy operation with loud, late-night music and that the



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proposal would give its patrons the opportunity to roister in the street instead of indoors. She said it was an extension of for-profit bar operations at the expense of pedestrians and motorists.

Bernice Hamel (300 block Second St.) sees the café operation as a way to raise money for an endowment fund for the Head House Conservancy — which is dedicated to maintaining the historic Head House structure. She was neutral on the proposal. Her husband, **Bernard Hamel** — perhaps acknowledging the Law of Unintended Consequences — suggested that the café only be approved on a one-year trial basis. He also suggested looking for a way to keep the southbound half of Second Street open, and only sealing the northbound sector.

Co-developer Torsella said that the café plan of closing off Second Street would have the benefit of hampering operations of the giant 35,000-square-foot SuperFresh supermarket optioned by Hal Walker Associates for NewMarket, by making its main entrance inaccessible to shoppers' cars or delivery trucks during the café's operations. Sounds like a scenario for a battle between Godzilla and King Kong to us.

At the October 16th Board meeting of the SHCA, **Lee Truscott**, representing the Blackwell Court neighbors, made a presentation asking that the Board oppose any café use of the Shambles. She pointed out that it had proposed seating for about 350 patrons and expressed the fear that — in the form of increased traffic, parking problems, noise, public urination, and other respects — it would present a distinct quality-of-life degradation of the residential neighborhood. She also pointed out that by closing off Second Street and limiting access and egress to Stamper Street, residents would no longer have access to their houses with their automobiles.

Quadrant representative **Liza Seltzer** proposed a motion unqualifiedly opposing the café whether Second Street was closed to traffic, partially-open or open. The motion carried by an 8 to 1 vote. Blackwell Court neighbors are now contemplating hiring legal counsel to represent them in opposing the project.

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Who's Who of Who's New

A hearty welcome to these new members of the SHCA who joined since May.

- Paula Barvin/Daniel Katzenberg
- Adrian Basara/Pauline Barnes
- Cordelia F. Biddle & Steve Zettler
- Christine & Jerry Brophy
- Laura & Cedric de la Cruz
- Christopher T. Druquer
- Hulda & Robert Edelstein
- Scott Gordon
- Marguerite Lavino
- Melissa Lombardozi
- Marion McGee & Ron Reuben
- Wanda & Brian Mohr
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