

Society Hill REPORTER

...Working Together
For a Better Place To Live

May 1998

Newsletter of The Society Hill Civic Association

Between a Slate Slab and a Hard Place...

Residents are looking forward to the removal of the hazardous mess that remains of the slate slabs in Washington Square. As we go to press, the City and Fairmount Park Commission are threatening to close the entire Square for at least two years to carry out landscaping and bluestone paving activities.

At the March 18 SHCA meeting held at the Athenaeum, the community let Council members DiCicco and Kenney know that their preference (through a unanimous show of hands) was to keep the Square open during the renovations. Opinion was divided when a specific timetable for the project was discussed, based on doing the work in sections versus working on the entire Square at one time.

Councilman DiCicco has asked the



Fairmount Park Commission, which has current administrative responsibility for Washington Square, to explain why the work cannot be done in sections. The budget estimate for the renovations and the lowest contractor bid apparently were far apart. At this time, we do not know why. We have recently heard that the City will somehow make up the nearly half million dollar shortfall.

We have also learned that concerned residents have formed an alliance to demand an equal voice in the process. To voice your opinion, contact Mayor Rendell, Councilman Frank DiCicco, and Fairmount Park Commissioner William Mifflin, and also let us know of your concerns.

Mark Your Calendar

Four Major Events You Won't Want to Miss!

Meeting on Penn's Landing Family Entertainment Center

Wednesday, May 13, 7:30 p.m.

Pennsylvania Hospital, Main Auditorium

Speakers include:

Councilman Frank DiCicco

Philadelphia City Planning Commissioner Barbara Kaplan

G. Craig Schelter, Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation

Dominic Sabatini and James Cuorato, Penn's Landing Corporation

Kathleen Shields and Russell Thompson, Simon DeBartolo Group, Inc.

This is your chance to hear about and discuss this major project proposed for Penn's Landing.

See page 10 for details about the project.

Clean-Up Day

Saturday, May 16, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

This is the SHCA's annual neighborhood Clean-Up event. Stop by Super Fresh for brooms and bags, and if you're not yet a member, look for the tables outside to sign up!

See page 2 for more details.

General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 20, 8:00 p.m.

Society Hill Sheraton

Annual SHCA elections will be held; additional agenda items to be announced.

Come vote for your new SHCA president and officers!

See page 6 for nominees.

South Street Headhouse District

Public Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 10, 7:30 p.m.

Old Pine Community Center.

This is the first time the District's board will meet at night to make it easier for neighbors to attend.

See page 10 for report.

Like our new look?
See page 14 for details.

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Join Us for Clean-Up Day — Saturday, May 16

Get your brooms and shovels ready! Our Spring Clean-Up Day is Saturday, May 16. Society Hill will look only as good as we make it! For this Clean-Up Day, we are encouraging you to do the following three things:

- Sweep your front sidewalk and curb areas (and bag the debris)
- Plant flowers in window boxes, around trees and in hanging baskets on Franklin Lamps (we hope you bought some at the Physick House Plant Sale in April!)
- Join your neighbors at the Civic Association Fair by the Super Fresh on 5th Street between 10:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

To help with the sweeping, brooms and trash bags will be available at Super Fresh at 8:30 a.m. The Clean-Up Day Flyer will list specific drop-off corners for filled bags.

Thanks to the many people who have already planted flowers. If you haven't planted yours yet, now is the time! The Clean-Up Day Flyer, soon to be delivered to your home, will help you determine which flowers do well in sun, in shade, around trees, and in hanging baskets.

This year, the activity for Clean-Up Day is the SHCA Fair outside the Super Fresh. There you'll meet representatives from the Society Hill Civic Association committees. You can talk to them about current projects, ask questions, offer suggestions and sign up to work on projects that interest you. You can also pick up some reading material at the committee tables to learn more about Society Hill. Again, the Fair will run from 10:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Please note — there will be NO street cleaning on May 16, so there will not be alternate side of the street parking.

All those participating in Clean-Up Day are invited to the traditional lunch at Pennsylvania Hospital from 12:30 until 1:30. Clean-Up Day is jointly sponsored by the Society Hill Civic Association and the Washington Square West Civic Association. So mark the date, Saturday, May 16, and plan to share a great day for Society Hill.

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AN INVITATION TO ALL NEIGHBORS

If you have a special interest in one of the many issues that the SHCA deals with and you want to know if your issue will be on the agenda for the next Board of Directors Meeting or General Membership Meeting, leave a message at 629-1288. We will get back to you before the meeting to let you know if that topic will be discussed in the near future.

Message from the President



This is my final offering for *The Reporter* as President of the Civic Association. It is hard to believe that three years have gone so quickly.

The annual elections of Civic Association officers come at the most optimistic time of the year. It is May, Clean-Up day will spruce up the neighborhood. Flowering plants are in, and in Jerome Kern's lovely phrase, "The trees are dressed for spring." It is a time for feeling good

about living in this beautiful community and about its future.

That future seems bright. I will mention a few of the highlights. There has been an influx of new residents into Society Hill. *The Inquirer* has reported that 254 properties changed hands in 1997 alone! I understand that the pace is continuing. Along with that, our membership has increased about 30%; and we have many new people who are active in community work. The long-awaited renovation of Washington Square has begun (or is about to do so). Whether it takes two years or less, or whether the Square is partly or completely closed, in the end the park will be renewed and its stewardship by the National Park Service will add additional maintenance and security forces in the community.

We can also look forward to a Free Library branch. It has been promised by January 2000, and the East Philadelphia Coalition will keep after the City to get on with the job.

And the City in general seems on the right track. Employment has increased, hotels and other buildings are actually under construction, and the place just looks good. We can be proud to be part of it.

However, problems of crime, noise and other "quality of life" issues no doubt will remain for some time. We all hope that our new Police Commissioner will be able to solve many of them. But I assure my successor that he will have plenty to occupy him in his time as President.

On a personal note, I am very glad that I undertook the job of Civic Association President. There were, of course, times when I wished I could have spent my time on other things; but, on balance, it has been a most worthwhile experience. I have learned a great deal about the City and our community; and, most and best of all, I have learned a lot about the many wonderful people who live here. I thank you for the opportunity. And I wish Norm Tissian, my successor, an equally good experience.

— Mel Buckman

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

published by
The Society Hill Civic Association
P.O. Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105
Phone (215) 629-1288 • Fax (215) 592-4239

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Historic Designation Coming Soon

When you see your house being photographed, do not assume the photographer is a tourist with good taste. It may well be someone from the Philadelphia Historical Commission working on the inventory for the proposed Society Hill Historic District — a brief description and a photograph of every property in the district will be included.

Once a historic district is established, any change to the exterior of buildings in the district must be approved by the Historic Commission. Having such an inventory on record will make the processing of building applications far more efficient.

As part of the process of creating the district, public hearings will be held. Dr. Richard Tyler, head of the Historical Commission, explained that 60 days before the hearings begin on the district, legal notice will be posted on each block within the district, published in the local newspapers, and mailed to property owners at the address of the property and at their home, if the addresses differ.

Hearings will continue as needed until everyone interested in testifying has had the opportunity to speak. In addition to daytime hearings, one evening meeting will be held within the proposed district. Following these hearings and meetings, the Commission will vote on whether to grant the designation.

Society Hill neighbor Catherine Apothaker has been a key proponent, among others, of the historic designation. Local activists like Mrs. Apothaker support the designation of Society Hill as a historic district because they believe that preserving the past is essential to Society Hill's future.

Studies in other cities have shown that local historic districts contribute to the stabilization of property values, the retention of an area's fabric and the fostering of community pride. In addition, owners of income-producing buildings in a Philadelphia Historic district may be eligible for federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation projects, and community-based organizations may qualify for some grant programs.

For all these reasons, neighbors should be pleased to know that Dr. Tyler predicts that work on Society Hill's designation will be completed before the end of 1998.

Proposed Boundary

The proposed boundary for the new district starts at Walnut Street and Dock Street. The line goes west on Walnut to 6th Street, north on 6th to Chestnut Street, west on Chestnut to 7th Street, south on 7th to the rear of the properties on the north side of Walnut then west to 8th Street, south on 8th to Spruce Street, west on Spruce to 9th Street, south on 9th to Pine Street, east to 8th, then south to Lombard Street, east on Lombard to midway in the 400 block where the boundary goes south to include the properties backing on the rear of the South Street properties.

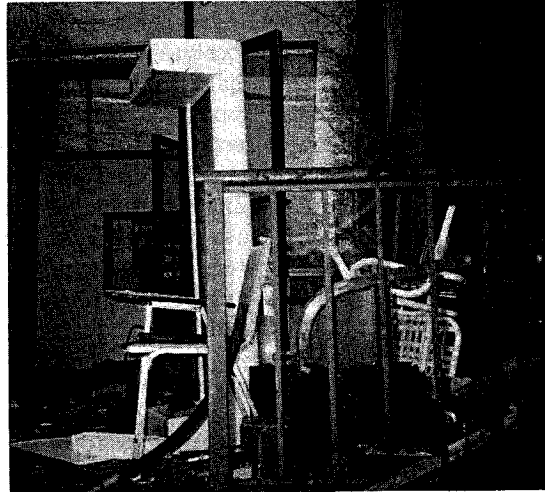
The line continues east to 3rd Street then north to Lombard, east to 2nd Street, then north on 2nd until Dock and then along Dock to Walnut. The Abbott Dairy Building and the Sheraton Hotel are not included in the district.

To request an informative booklet that explains why historic designation will be of direct benefit to our community, please call SHCA office at 629-1288. Leave your name & address.

— Cirel Magen

Town Sports International Comes to Society Hill

This dilapidated mess on 5th Street is finally going in for a face-lift!



The proviso regarding garage parking was added after TSI Director of Development Ray Dewhirst described a goal of more than 3,000 club memberships and the already acute lack of parking in the neighborhood was outlined to ZBA Board members. The proviso concerning fencing was added after the ZBA accepted information that the cyclone and barbed wire fencing on the south side of club property is illegal under City Code and that the permits for this fencing were revoked by L & I in 1990.

According to Hal Wheeler, TSI has a 15-year lease on the property. Although Mr. Dewhirst declined at this time to have an architect's plan for the club published in *The Reporter*, he did indicate his organization's policy of cooperating with neighborhood groups such as the SHCA. For example, Mr. Dewhirst indicated that he intends to work with the community to identify security alternatives after the fencing mentioned above is removed.

(Readers interested in seeing the floor plan can, however, stop by the club's on-site management office which is open and offering discounted memberships.)

Even though questions remain and there is a certain amount of monitoring ahead, the neighborhood is unanimously euphoric about the restoration of this site. In fact, SHCA board members are lobbying to secure a discount for all SHCA members. So if you don't already belong to the Association, here's another excellent reason to join us. Just use the membership coupon on page 15 to sign up. See you at the gym!

— Nancy Frenze

Town Sports International (TSI) plans to open a new health club at 250 South 5th Street, the site of the former Society Hill Club. The new health club may be in operation as early as the fall of this year, according to an announcement made at the March SHCA General Membership Meeting.

Located immediately behind Independence Place Towers, the new health club was the subject of a Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) hearing on November 13, 1997. Variances requested by property owner Hal Wheeler were granted, subject to several conditions, including the following:

- ◆ All trash must be stored inside the property
- ◆ The facility must use commercial trash pick-up
- ◆ The applicant must negotiate with the garage operator near-by for discounted fees for club members
- ◆ Any fencing will comply with City Code or will be removed.

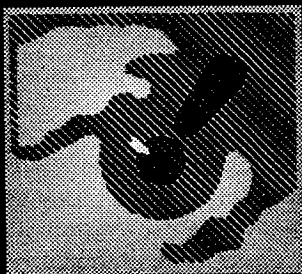


DARTS & LAURELS

Society Hillbilly Dart to the neighbors who left discarded appliances in front of their homes for several days. If you have bulk trash for removal, call 685-1770 to schedule a pickup. And don't put it outside before the day the Streets Department says it will pick it up. We know you don't want to live with it in the meantime, but neither do we!

Magnolia Laurels to the wonderful neighbors in the 600 and 700 blocks of Pine Street who feted the Tree Tenders last summer with designer label water, iced tea, lemonade and wine (from a neighbor who works at LaBuca) when they came out on successive Monday nights to prune the street trees. Who could imagine — Southern hospitality just south of Spruce Street!

While on the subject of Southern hospitality, cousins from Charlotte, NC, inform us that the banking execs working up here on the CoreStates merger don't want to go home. Noshing at the Striped Bass, they speculated it was the food. Puh-leeze, we can be so charming when we want to be. It's the people, honey!



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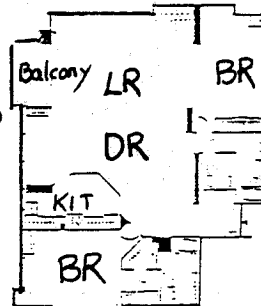
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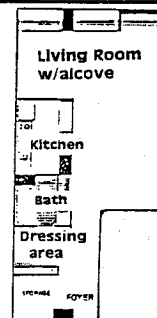
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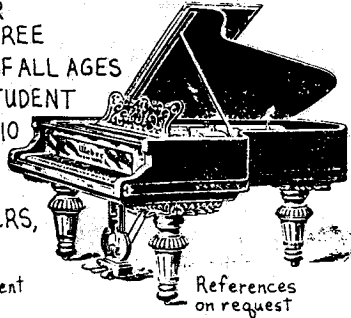
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Elections To Be Held at May Membership Meeting

The following are nominees for the 1998 SHCA Board of Directors election, to be held at the May 20th General Membership Meeting:

Officers:

President	Norman Tissian
Vice-president	Howard Lander
Vice-president	Mary Sturdivant
Vice-president	Janet Cooke
Secretary	Mark Keener
Treasurer	Perry Whyte

Northeast Quadrant:

William Sells	1999
Rhoda Haber	2000**
Jaqueline Hokanson	2001

Northwest Quadrant:

Bill Hawkins	1999
Jane Stevenson	2000
Matt DeJulio	2001

Southwest Quadrant:

Joel Eichen	1999**
Richard Bost	2000
Martha Levine	2001*

Southeast Quadrant:

Liza Seltzer	1999
Deborah Robinson	2000
Barbara Gelman	2001*

**Denotes a candidate who will be filling an uncompleted term.

*Denotes a candidate who is being elected to fill a full three-year term

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Tree Tenders To Stage "The Big Bust"

Over 120 new trees have been planted in Society Hill since the inception of Project Street Trees in 1993. Three elements continue to threaten both the new and old trees: damage from cars, trucks and other vandalism; drought; and stress from inadequate tree pits.

Pruning low branches that hang over the street helps eliminate damage caused by passing trucks snagging those branches. The damaged branches allow insects and disease-causing elements to enter the tree. Bollards set into the pavement between trees and curbs deflect carelessly flung open car doors. The car gets damaged, not the tree trunk. Teaching children to respect the trees and not swing from branches that cannot support them yet also helps. Curbing dogs to prevent them from urinating on trees or in the pits is really important.

During the hot summer months, trees need a good soaking of two gallons of water a week at least. Immature trees need even more water at more frequent intervals.

But the biggest problem in this neighborhood seems to be that the pits the trees were planted in — sometimes 30 to 50 years ago — are totally inadequate for the mature trees of today. The trees' stress as the roots seek water and nourishment can be seen in heaved bricks on the sidewalk and roots girdling the trunks. When contractors bricked over the sidewalks, they often installed the brick over the existing concrete. Rain cannot seep into the soil through the bricks.

The Tree Tenders are a group of volunteer neighbors trained by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society that sometimes act more like masons and bricklayers than arborists. Often removing the bricks around tree pit does no real benefit to the tree because the underlying concrete is still in place. Tree Tenders urge homeowners to examine their pits with the following questions in mind:

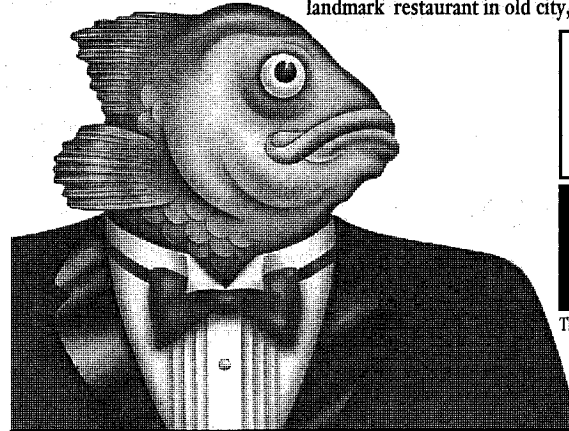
1. Does your tree have 12 to 16 square feet of space (a 3 x 4' minimum pit)?
2. Is the soil compacted?

Get a trowel out and aerate immediately and consider a groundcover like pachysandra if necessary. Avoid ivy because it competes too ferociously for the same water and nutrients. Or mulch, but do not pack the mulch up against the trunk. Make a well instead. Some ornamental stones add too much acid for a tree. While those Belgian blocks may look nice, they may be doing more harm than good.

3. Who waters the tree? God and Mother

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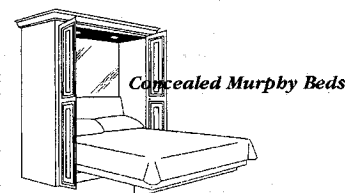


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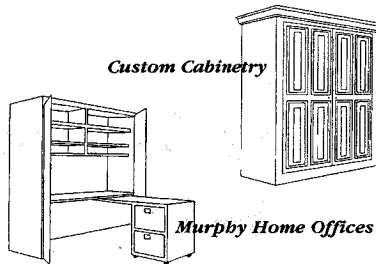
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Nature are not considered correct answers. Those two need *your* help.

So after you examine your pit, realize it is too small (and most in this neighborhood are!), and want to enlarge it but have concrete underneath (and most in this neighborhood do!), the Tree Tenders would like you to register your pit for "The Big Bust."

The Tree Tenders know from personal experience that trying to break up concrete and remove it can be more than just hard labor. But hiring a jack hammer for just an hour's job can be prohibitively expensive and very time con-

suming, even if you knew where to start. The Tree Tenders plan to hire a jack hammer and break up the concrete over a period of a day or a few days, depending on the interest.

To get on the list, please call Cherry Bombeck at 627-1356 and leave your name, address (so they know what pit is yours) and phone number. They will call you to tell you when you are scheduled so you can be present or absent depending on your auditory preference. Let's support this initiative and make it a Big Success.

— Mary Sturdivant

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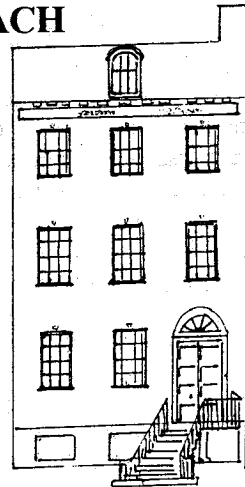
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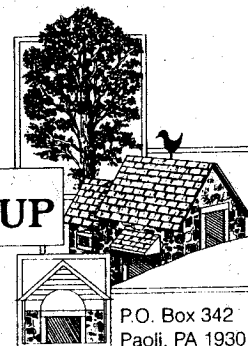
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UPDATE

Community Advisory Council of South Street Headhouse District

The recently established Community Advisory Council of the South Street Headhouse District represents all of the following neighborhoods: Society Hill, Queen Village, Washington Square West, South Street Neighbors, Bella Vista and Hawthorne. In many ways, the collective voices of these communities (and the number of votes they represent!) can be potentially more effective than the single voice of the District, which represents only the businesses and merchants of the South Street corridor.

Many "quality of life" issues that impact and frustrate equally both residents and businesses are now being actively dealt with. Major areas of concern include: providing toilet facilities to accommodate the warm-weather crowds of South Street; a more aggressive "clean-up campaign" with frequent emptying of sidewalk litter baskets throughout all the neighborhoods; and improved policing practices of not just South Street but all the impacted neighborhoods, particularly late nights and on weekends. The list of issues goes on and on. But working together, there is some reason to be optimistic.

The "official voice" of the Community Advisory Council (represented by Bernice Hamel's one District Board seat) has influenced the District in specific ways. For example, to deal with potential problems as the summer heats up, a special, strategic meeting has been scheduled with new Police Chief John Timoney to brief him on the unique area that we live, work and play in. Attending will be Councilman Frank DiCicco, the District's President, Steve Kujolic, Executive Director, Dick Ostrander and Bernice Hamel.

Another positive response to community input is the District's willingness to conduct evening board meetings twice a year. These meetings, which are theoretically open to all neighbors, will now be realistically accessible to all interested residents. Instead of holding its 12 monthly board meetings at 8 a.m., which few neighbors can ever attend, the District will now conduct its first evening meeting this June. Interested? Attend the first of these more public meetings on Wednesday, June 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the Old Pine Community Center, at 4th and Lombard Streets.

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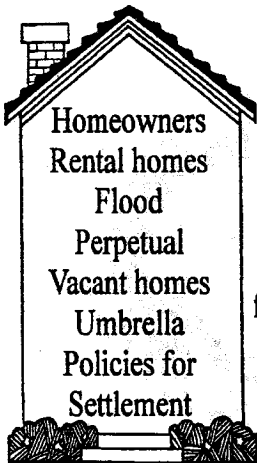
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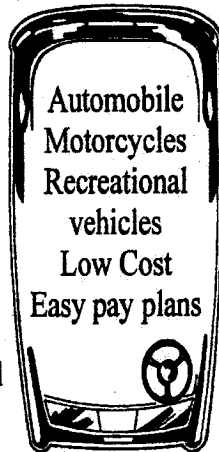
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Thoughts on Penn's Landing Entertainment Complex

Much has been said and written about the development of Penn's Landing over the last two decades. Major plans have been announced but, for a variety of reasons have not gone forward, probably for the best. These plans were characterized by dense, primarily traditional, commercial development.

However, with the Rendell Administration's recognition of hospitality and tourism as being the key to the success of the City's economic development efforts, the direction and theme of the development of Penn's Landing changed dramatically in the early 90's.

The selection of the Simon DeBartolo Group (SDG) as the developer of a Family Entertainment Center (FEC) at Penn's Landing represented the culmination of a three-year process of research, interviews and data gathering.

SDG is the largest publicly-held development company in North America; they are also pioneers and the undisputed leaders in the development of FEC's. FEC's are relatively new projects which integrate entertainment, retail and dining. They are clearly distinguishable from traditional shopping malls: whereas malls are anchored by department stores, FEC's are anchored by large entertainment/retail attractions such as NikeTown and FAO Schwarz where shopping becomes a fun and interactive activity.

The Penn's Landing project will consist of approximately 500,000 square feet of commercial space; a new enhanced outdoor amphitheater in a park-like setting on the center's top level; approximately 2,400 parking spaces; and two rooftop ice rinks. It will feature an interactive American history-based attraction; a 24-screen state-of-the art megaplex; exciting special effects; and tenants heretofore unseen in Philadelphia.

The size of the project — less than one million square feet and ranging from two to six levels — is substantially smaller than the prior approved Master Plan for Penn's Landing, which called for nearly three million square feet and several high-rise structures.

As important as this project is to our future, the impact on our surrounding neighborhoods is equally important. With that in mind, particular attention has been paid to the design of the project, the provision of public space, enhanced access to the waterfront, and minimizing the effects on traffic and parking.

Continued on the next page

Penn's Landing Entertainment Complex

This has been demonstrated through a continuing series of community meetings sponsored by Councilman Frank DiCicco. As an example, a comprehensive traffic and parking analysis has been completed, and Penn's Landing Corporation is committed to implementing its recommendations.

In retrospect, perhaps we are fortunate that prior plans for Penn's Landing did not proceed. We can now go forward with a project that will make all Philadelphians proud: this truly is the right project for Penn's Landing, the City of Philadelphia, and the region!

— James Cuorato
Executive Vice President, Penn's Landing Corporation

Editor's note: Please be sure to attend the community meeting about the proposed entertainment complex at Pennsylvania Hospital on Wednesday, May 13, at 7:30 p.m.

Society Hill Towers Pool Parties

We're grateful to the management of Society Hill Towers for alerting us to their summer 1998 events. As in previous summers, the Towers pool, at 2nd and Spruce Streets, will be conducting special parties for their members. Often, these parties can be heard (but not enjoyed) throughout neighborhood until 10 or 11 p.m.

For nearby residents, we are listing the dates so that you can be forewarned to keep your windows closed — or leave town.

Mon., May 25	Sat., July 25
Thur., June 18	Sat., Aug. 15
Sat., July 4	Mon., Sept. 7



"S. American Street", watercolor, 1997

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Celebration of The Spirit Follows Desecration of Synagogue & Historic Burial Ground

On a Sunday afternoon, April 5, 1998, one week before Pesach (Passover, the Jewish holiday that celebrates religious freedom), I attended along with many neighbors a special event at B'nai Abraham, one of Philadelphia's most beautiful historic synagogues, a few blocks from my home in Society Hill.

Participating in a Community Unity Concert and Family Celebration, we joined together in a positive spirit following the synagogue's desecration of Saturday, March 28, when vandals painted a black swastika on the building and deposited a frozen pig's head that dripped blood on the wall outside its door. (Pork is forbidden food for observant Jews.)

This criminal act was tragic and ironic for many reasons — not the least of which is that it occurred just blocks away from Independence Hall where the Declaration of Independence was written in 1776. Yet even before that great document launched the world's first modern democracy, William Penn had created in the year 1701 a unique colony — our community — which specifically welcomed all people regardless of their religious preferences or places of origin.

B'nai Abraham is an Orthodox shul (synagogue) that was established in the 1870s by Russian Jews who had come to America seeking religious and personal freedom from pogroms. On this Sunday afternoon the large temple was filled with people of different religions and races, as well as several public officials. Rabbi Shraga Sherman welcomed us all, shaking hands with Mayor Rendell, Councilmen Frank DiCicco and James Kenney.

The celebration was joyous as the Baal Shem Tov Band led a rousing, "rock" version of "Oseh Shalom," a song that says "Make Peace." We all clapped and tried to sing along. Kevin Vaughan, an African-American from Philadelphia's Human Relations Commission, joined one of the circles that spontaneously began to dance the traditional hora.

Mayor Rendell said that this was a "very special day of celebration" because "Jews who have been oppressed for thousands of years do not need four walls to contain their spirit." Although, he said, "it is desirable to have a marvelous sanctuary as this, no amount of swastikas can damage the Jewish religion or the Jewish people."

Rabbi Sherman announced that a fund has been established offering a reward that would lead to the arrest and conviction of the vandals. Bob Brady, Chairman of Philadelphia's Democratic Party, promised to contribute \$500 toward the fund so that the persons responsible "will end up surrounded by four walls of a different kind."

The day of celebration was particularly poignant for Councilmen Frank DiCicco and James Kenney, as this day was Palm Sunday and they had just returned from church. Both expressed having personally experienced religious intolerance at the hands of ignorant people because of their Roman Catholic faith. They pledged \$500 each to contribute to the fund that may locate the vandals and send them to justice. Councilman DiCicco said that Pennsylvania State Senator Vincent Fumo would also be adding his \$500 to the pot so that the perpetrators of this hate crime would be caught.

Another site that was desecrated with a swastika on that Sabbath day of March 28 was Mikvah Israel Cemetery, one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries on American soil. A National Historic Landmark, this is where Haym Solomon, who financed the American Revolution, is buried along with other Mikveh Israel congregants who fought in the Revolution.

Continued on the next page

Celebration of The Spirit

(continued)

Rabbi Albert Gabbai, Mikveh Israel's current rabbi, spoke at the B'nai Abraham celebration and offered moving words about the crime that occurred so close to the time of Pesach. "Hatred has no address," he said. He reminded the "congregation" that at Pesach Jews rid their homes of "chometz," or bread made of yeast, because "chometz" means "arrogance." He said that Pesach is a time to remember, to rid ourselves of inflated or "puffed up" bread (arrogance) and cleanse ourselves to a state of humility, even as we remember how it was when Jews were slaves in Egypt.

Rabbi Sherman and Associate Rabbi Aryeh Wuensch praised the community's collective efforts to undo the racist acts of the previous week. "This vandalism has touched the superficial edifice, yet our inner spirit continues to shine bright," said Rabbi Sherman. "B'nai Abraham symbolizes religious freedom, which is what we celebrate today and what we remember at Pesach." Shalom!

— Bernice T. Hamel

Fascinating Historical Note

Taken verbatim from a series of reminiscences, written in 1937, by Rabbi C. David Matt

To what extent B'nai Abraham was the center of and pace-setter for all of downtown Jewish life is illustrated by the reaction to the Kishineff Massacre in 1903. A day of fasting was proclaimed; the stores on South Street were voluntarily closed; in the middle of the week-day the community flocked to the synagogue and filled it to overflowing. It was a warm day, and in the crowded synagogue the overheated air condensed on the stone walls...it seemed as if the very stones were weeping, for, like big tear-drops, the moisture rolled down the walls....If Judaism in Philadelphia is rich in communal effort and has numerous elements of strength, at least some of the credit is due to B'nai Abraham.

For Two-Cents Plain!

Twilight Tours of Historic Synagogues: June 11, 6-8 pm

Preserving historic buildings in our neighborhood is, to a large extent, what Society Hill is all about. That there are religious buildings in need of restoration in our community is one of the reasons we profiled two historic synagogues in the previous issue of *The Reporter*.

We had learned that many community members were curious about Vilna Shul (at 509 Pine Street) and B'nai Abraham (at 521-527 Lombard Street) because unlike other sacred places nearby, few of us had ever visited them and few of us know anything about their distinctly different histories or know the members of their congregations.

Ironically, shortly after the March Reporter was issued, a vandal act of ignorance and hatred publicized B'nai Abraham throughout the region. As a result, several Society Hill residents and citywide neighbors attended a special event at B'nai Abraham on April 5th and saw for themselves and for the first time the sanctuary's great beauty.

In the March issue of this newsletter we summarized the history of these two fascinating houses of worship and their current needs for basic repairs and restoration. We received very positive responses from the community, and so we hope the article has whetted your appetite to learn more. We'll quench your thirst with "two cents plain," otherwise known as seltzer-water. Together with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, we are designing a unique walking tour and reception that will showcase these two architectural and spiritual gems in our midst. Anyone interested in learning about these two sites that are the repository of so much history, as well as places of active religious and community life, are urged to attend.

As we said in the March article: You don't have to be Orthodox (or Jewish, for that matter!) to appreciate the cultural legacies of these syna-

gogues, as they reflect the heritage of many of our neighbors that resonate in our greater American culture.

You can help support these buildings by joining with us for a very special tour and reception on Thursday, June 11, from 6-8 p.m. Jot the date on your calendar now. A modest \$10 donation per person is requested. To reserve your place, please fill out the coupon below, and if anyone else you know might be interested in learning about these sites, please let us know.

NOTE: You may be wondering about the Lombard Street synagogue, across the street from the Old Pine Community Center at 4th Street, which has scaffolding all across its facade. Keshet Israel is a Conservative synagogue that is well over a hundred years old. Some time in the near future, we plan to follow up our June Twilight Tour with a special tour of historic Keshet Israel — to showcase its fascinating history (the structure was built originally to house a Unitarian Church) and the remarkable restoration process that is currently happening.



INSPIRED?

Yes, I (we) wish to attend the twilight tour featuring Society Hill's historic synagogues on Thursday, June 11, from 6-8 pm.

Mail or fax this coupon to: Bernice Hamel, 302 S. 2nd Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19106. (FAX: 925-0877). Questions? Call 925-3285.

Name _____

Address _____

Day Phone _____ Eve Phone _____

Please send information about this tour to the following people (names, addresses or fax numbers):

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Think Property Value

Recently we were in front of our house and a visitor who was interested in renting and then perhaps buying a house in the area asked us about the neighborhood. One of the things that she liked was the lack of trash. This gave us the opportunity to tout the Civic Association's once-a week sidewalk sweep project. We have always looked at this program as something that makes us feel better about our neighborhood, but this lady's comment made us realize that it also helps raise our property values.

Every new proposal that comes before the Civic Association is evaluated in terms of "what will this do to property values?" Yet many of us can walk right by a beer bottle or piece of trash on the sidewalk and not see it as detrimental to property value.

Part of your membership dues pays for the crew that cleans up the mess after trash day. But free newspapers and advertising flyers start appearing immediately. It doesn't take much effort (and it's good for the waistline!) to lean over and pick up that trash for deposit in the nearest corner trash can. If all of us resolved to dispose of one piece of trash per day, this neighborhood would be spotless.

Library Coalition Update

The Library Coalition continues its search for 10,000 square feet on or near Washington Square that could be donated to the City for use as the new East Philadelphia Branch of the Free Library of East Philadelphia. Please call Liza Seltzer at 625-2897 if you have any leads.

Town Watch Update

Society Hill Town Watch had a number of successful walks during the winter months. District Attorney Lynn Abraham joined us on two of those walks. Exciting changes are taking place:

- ▶ Beginning in May, SHTW will walk every Thursday at 8:00 p.m.
- ▶ All walkers will be given their own "Town Watch" cap
- ▶ We are exploring the idea of using walkie-talkies in addition to cell phones
- ▶ We will have an organizational meeting on Thursday, May 28, 8:00 p.m., Penn's Landing Square Community Room. Photo identifications will be taken and refreshments will be served.

Please join us under the Shambles at 2nd and Spruce at 8:00 p.m. for the Thursday walks: April 30, May 7, May 14, May 21 and for the May 28 meeting in the PLS Community Room at 2nd and Spruce in lieu of walking.

Homeless Update

The committee for Homeless Intervention has decided its work is done. Having researched organizations that operate in our area, members decided that there are enough to provide adequate services.

The committee felt it would be most effective to support existing programs such as Hall Mercer Outreach (829-3461) and project H.O.M.E. (232-7272). Any SHCA members who may have questions or ideas for the committee may call Joan Less at 625-9849.

Historic Preservation: Coming This Month: New Signs At Head House

At last! Thanks to the Head House Conservancy and after more than a year and a half of work, new colorful and informative signs at Head House Square will be installed by the end of May or early June. These new, long-lasting signs will replace the 20-year-old, graffiti-stained signs originally given to the City by "Philadelphia '76," the Bicentennial Corporation which no longer exists.

The new signs will be free-standing, two-sided panels facing east and west on 2nd Street — one at Pine Street in front of the Head House, and the other at Lombard Street. At both the Pine and Lombard locations, the west-facing panel will describe in text and graphics the history of Head House and the Old Second Street Market. The panel facing east will welcome visitors to Society Hill (at Pine Street) or Queen Village (at Lombard Street) and also provide fascinating information about these historical communities.

The signs were funded by the Head House Conservancy, which received donations for the project from both the Society Hill Civic Association and Queen Village Neighborhood Association. The Conservancy, wishing to inform the public about the remarkable story of Head House Square and add beauty to the community's streetscape, has "piggy-backed" the ambitious signage program coordinated by Old Philadelphia Congregations (OPC).

So that there will be visual harmony among the area's many historical sites, the Head House signs have been designed by the same graphic arts company as were the 18 new signs for OPC's historic churches and synagogues. (Not all local religious sites, however, are members of OPC.)

Each of these visitor information signs tells its own different and unique story, and all OPC and Head House signs are identical in design format. They will all be installed at about the same time, and a "celebration" is scheduled to be held on Sunday, June 7th at the Friends Meeting House, 4th and Arch Street, 1-3 p.m.

For this May 1998 issue we inaugurate a new look for the SOCIETY HILL REPORTER. After several years of using SHCA's original logo, designed by Pamela Sinkler Todd some eight or nine years ago, we decided that it was time to freshen up her beautiful artwork by giving the banner a more distinctive look. Thanks again to Pamela for helping us come up with the new design, and thanks to Norman Kline, our graphic designer, who worked with us. You'll soon notice that we have also updated our stationery with a brighter version of the SHCA logo.... Here's looking at you, kid!

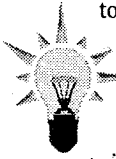
— Bernice Hamel & Liza Seltzer

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Security Recommendations from Project Neighborhood Pride

Shed a little light on our neighborhood streets to discourage would-be intruders, car break-ins and to create a more secure place for us to take evening walks. "How?" you ask.



Our beautiful Franklin lamps, quaint as they are, give insufficient light for good security. Check your own block and notice how few houses have facade lights turned on, or any light fixture at all. Recently we observed only one or two in use per block on Spruce and Pine Streets.

If each house had a front exterior lantern, left on from dusk to dawn with an automatic timer, our neighborhood would take on a glow that could pay off. You will sleep better knowing that a well-lit setting does deter crime. If you don't have a light fixture on the facade of your home, we strongly suggest you consider having one installed. It's a low-cost installation, and all-night lighting will add little to your monthly bill. Do use a 60-100 watt bulb.

For additional home protection, we also recommend the use of motion detectors for rear entry areas and alleyways. If your garden door can be easily accessed by someone up to no good, think about this solution. For a one-time, low-installation cost, this device will deter any would-be thief, since its blasting bright light activates only by an unwelcome visitor. If you want to enjoy your garden in the evening without activating the detector, you just turn off the switch from inside your house. It's a cost-efficient setup, as the light beam goes on only if there's an intruder.

Project Neighborhood Pride has a list of reliable electrical contractors who we are happy to recommend for installation of these security facade lanterns or backyard motion detectors. For more information or our list of reliable contractors of every sort, call Martha Levine at 629-0727.

PS: Thanks to the more than 40 neighbors who called to get names of contractors in response to our recent letter/checklist that asked neighbors to look over their properties and make repairs wherever needed. A very enthusiastic response!

PLEASE ACT NOW

Make a wise investment TODAY by renewing or initiating your membership in the Society Hill Civic Association.

WHY? Because caring for your neighborhood is in your very best self-interest. A strong and vibrant association makes our streets safer and cleaner by giving you a unified voice in speaking to government, legislators, businesses, and others who impact our area of town. A unified group of neighbors is the surest way to keep your investment in Philadelphia viable for many years to come.

Name (s): _____

Address: _____ Zip _____

Phone: Work _____ Home _____

New Membership Renewal

Household Membership: \$40 Business Membership: \$80

*Additional Contributions: \$ _____

*Earmarked for: Project Sweep Stakes

Town Watch

Street Trees/Tenders

I/We would like to work on the following committees:

Clean-Up Day Liquor Control Town Watch
 Historic Preservation Society Hill Reporter Zoning/Development
 Library Street Trees/Tree Tenders

Please make your check payable to:

Society Hill Civic Association Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105

Questions? Call 215-629-1288 • FAX 215-592-4239

Membership Plateaus

We're still 157 members short of our goal of 800.

If you are one of the over one hundred 1997 members who have not renewed or if you are new to our community, please fill out the form above and send it with your check for \$40 (only 11 cents a day!).

SHCA is working for you every day in many visible and not so visible ways. For example, the Mayor's commitment to a library in East Philadelphia would not be possible without SHCA's initiative.

If we miss our goal of 800 members, Project Sweep Stakes (the program that cleans your sidewalk once a week) may be shut down. Do you really want to see that trash on the street again? If you already are a member, have you checked with your immediate neighbors on your block to see if they have joined? We need all of your support. Please don't let us down!

Thanks!

Since the last issue of *The Reporter*, the following neighbors have renewed their memberships and added an extra contribution for projects like sidewalk cleaning, tree planting and Clean-Up day. As of April 14:

Fahnya & Donald Bean	Helen & Francis Galashan	Alison & Nicholas Moore
Elsie & Ken Cundy	Elizabeth Haines	Valerie O'Donnell
Margaret Dickerson	Karen & Don Kaufman	Perry White & Michael Czeredarczuk



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630 Pine St- 4 unit apartment bldg with 4 car parking! All sep mtrs. Good condition! **\$369,900**

430 Pine St- New listing! Federal period home with 5 bdrm, 3.5 baths, 2 car parking! **\$369,900**

SOLD!

530 Pine St- Historically certified, beautifully restored 4 unit apt bldg with garage **\$365,000**

203 Delancey- Beautiful 3 bdrm, 2.5 bath, den, new kitchen, deeded parking, garden **\$349,500**

119 Elfreths Alley- Impeccable! 3 bdrm, 3.5 bath, 8 f/p! Historical beauty & street! **\$315,000**

SOLD!

514 Cypress St- Beautiful front! 3 bdrm, 2.5 bath, den, f/p, skylight, garden! **\$189,900**

SOLD!

812 Lombard- Lovely courtyard home. 3 bdrm, 3 baths, deck, 2 f/p, c/a, parking available **\$154,000**

1231 Waverly- Contemporary 2 bedroom, 2.5 bath, office, deck, fireplace, C/A. Reduced **\$139,900**

1134 1-R Waverly- New listing! Courtyard home, garden. Wash. West Location! **\$109,900**

SOLD!

1227 Panama- Charming 2 bdrm, 1.5 bath home, 2 f/p, tree-lined cobblestone street! **\$95,900**

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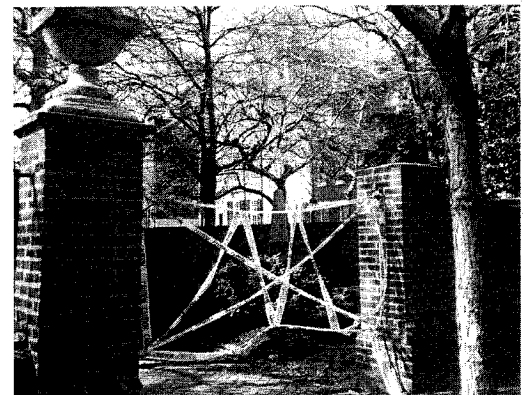
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On February 25, the Gates of St. Peter's were stolen from their 200-plus year quarters at Third and Pine. Fortunately, some prompt and intense police work recovered them and they are now back where they belong.

Could other similar gates, such as those in front of Pennsylvania Hospital suffer a similar fate? It is sad, but perhaps true, that our hallowed churches and institutions need to install some 24-hour video surveillance units.



St. Peter's



Pennsylvania Hospital

For Those Too New To Remember And Those Starting To Forget

The second in a series of brief glances back at Society Hill's beginnings based on reminiscences and conversations with two neighbors: Charles E. Peterson, FAIA, first staff architect at Independence Hall and resident since 1952 and Leona ("Lee") Griswold, who moved into the "Hail, Columbia" house on Spruce Street on her wedding night in 1959.

As well as Charlie remembers, the first neighborhood organization was started in the late fifties.

"It consisted mainly of Isador Ostroff, a little red-haired Jewish lad originally from Camden. Izzie had been a state representative. A lively little guy that lived on Fourth Street. He worked off and on with Judge Lewis as a sort of hatchet man. Then there was the Reverend Allan Evans at St. Peter's Church — a big guy from a celebrated Philadelphia family. I always remember his fingers stained bright yellow from chain smoking. He was president of the thing. Dewey Lee Curtis — up from Williamsburg, Virginia — was into the act. And George Kearney, an eccentric retired newspaper editor, then a tenant in the Physick House. Miss May Gloster born on Fourth Street says they had a little publication called The Independence Messenger...

The new group got to be in charge of the Head House on Pine Street and its shambles. The whole thing was enclosed then on all sides. There was a heating plant in it to keep the water from freezing. Dewey forgot to do something and the whole thing froze one night. It was the biggest flood ever seen on Society Hill. The association got kicked out and it expired soon after that."

That inglorious end also closed the chapter on the

first effort of the neighborhood to rescue the Head House Shambles. Nor has the association had a permanent office since.

Memories are blurred on dates. But it seems one of these early groups was adamant that their concerns as re-settlers and restorers of this area were different from the existing renters. They organized a group and excluded residents who were not home owners. Even so, it was a pretty mixed bag of people, backgrounds, skills, interests, and incomes. Some remember it as the Home Owners Association. After people like Gus Griswold prevailed and everyone — homeowners and renters alike — were included, the name was changed to HORA, Home Owners and Residents Association.

The organization next became the Society Hill Area Residents Association as the name Society Hill was being more widely used to designate this area. Maureen Murdoch assumed the first presidency, followed by Phoebe Patterson. Phoebe became a victim of a purse snatching — a rarity then because, according to Charlie, there just weren't that many purses worth stealing earlier. So in a way, things were looking up, but it was just the calm before the storm.

(To be continued — The Brick Battles)

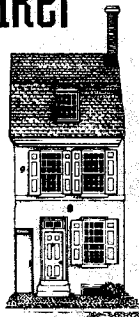


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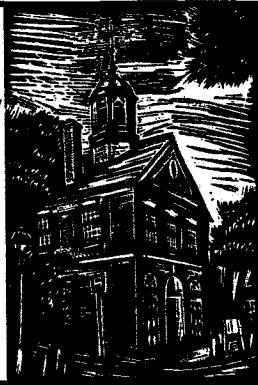
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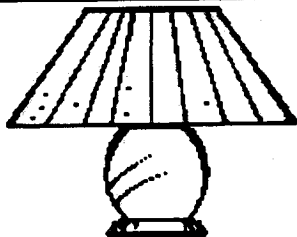
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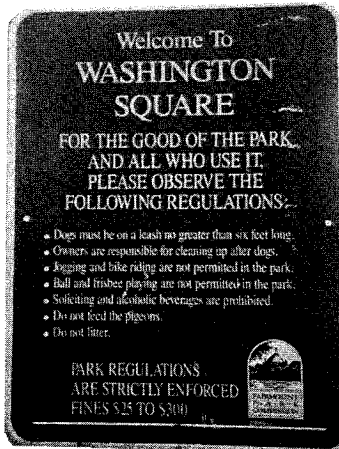
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In early March, a tiny dog was mauled by a large Rottweiler off his leash in Washington Square. For as long as the Park remains open, park officials have vowed to enforce the regulations, which are clearly posted. When the Park re-opens, we can expect laws and regulations to be even more strenuously upheld since it



will be supervised by the National Park Service. Remember, friends and neighbors, Washington Square is an urban park and not a playground, nor suburban backyard. Dogs off their leashes frighten some older residents and young children, as well as each other!

Thursday May 14, 1998

The Annual Garden Bazaar

Pennsylvania Hospital, 8th & Spruce
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.



**Come for a homemade luncheon
and buy your spring plants.
Browse through the white elephant
items.**

All profits go to patient care & equipment

Society Hill and Washington Square's Premier Condominiums

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Society Hill Towers
200-220 Locust Street

Studio, high floor, bridge & river views, 528 sq.ft.....\$69,900

One bedroom, river view, high floor, 725 sq. ft.....\$89,900

New! Corner one bedroom, town-house view, S/E corner.....\$99,900

Two bedroom + one bedroom on a high floor can be combined to form a three bedroom and den, panoramic river views!.....\$350,000

Hopkinson House
604-36 S. Washington Square

One bedroom, balcony, south view, 778 sq.ft.....\$82,500

One bedroom, high floor, balcony, park view.....\$85,000

New! Deluxe one bedroom, park view, 1063 sq. ft.....\$97,500

Two bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, terrace southeast view\$149,900

Independence Place
233-241 S. 6th Street

One bedroom, low floor, eat-in-kitchen, west view\$84,900

New! One bedroom, lower floor, south view.....\$105,000

Two bedroom, 2 bath, lower floor, sunny southwest exposure, balcony, eat-in-kitchen, 1387 sq.ft.....\$169,900

Three bedroom, panoramic view southeast corner, high floor, in excellent condition.....\$169,900

Pier 5
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Two bedroom/den, fireplace, roof top deck, panoramic bridge and river views, 1 car parking included, 2,229 sq. ft.....\$257,500

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Society Hill
REPORTER

Newsletter of the Society Hill Civic Association

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