

Society Hill REPORTER

...Working Together
For a Better Place To Live

November 1999

Newsletter of The Society Hill Civic Association

November 17th SHCA General Membership Meeting
Spotlights Paul Levy and Senator Vincent Fumo

Neighborhood Improvement Districts: Boon or Bane?



On November 24, 1998, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed the Community and Economic Improvement Act (House Bill No. 2858), establishing neighborhood

improvement districts.

Senator Vincent J. Fumo, J.D., M.B.A., heartened by the success of the Center City District in the commercial area, spearheaded the effort in the state senate to get the same powers for residential communities through this legislation. The senator will talk about these neighborhood improvement districts at the SHCA General Membership meeting on Wednesday, November 17.

Property owners empowered

The districts empower "property owners to enjoy a safer and more attractive neigh-

borhood through the provision of increased or expanded services, including street lighting, street cleaning, street maintenance, parks, recreational equipment and facilities, open space and/or security services."

They receive funding through a special assessment fee levied and collected by the city. Participation is mandatory once the district is created. A one-percent levy on the real estate taxes of Society Hill residents would yield \$120,000 in revenue for the district per year.

The money could be used to pay for new street signs, more frequent street cleaning and trash collection, and foot patrols for safety.

The SHCA Board of Directors urges you to attend this important meeting. This initiative is brand-new in Pennsylvania, although other states have experimented with it. If you would like a copy of the legislation, call Senator Fumo's office (215-468-3866).

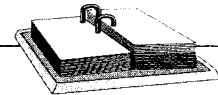
Senator Vincent J. Fumo, J.D., M.B.A., has served the First District in the Pennsylvania senate since 1978.

A native son of Philadelphia, he attended Villanova University (B.S., Biology, '64), Temple University Law School ('72), and Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania (M.B.A., '84).

He is associated in the practice of law with Dilworth, Paxson, Kalish &

Kauffman and is Chairman and CEO of the Pennsylvania Savings Bank as well as being a licensed boat captain by the United States Coast Guard.

In the senate, he serves as chair of the Appropriations Committee, and member of Communications and High Technology, Game & Fisheries, Intergovernmental Affairs, Judiciary, Rules and Executive Nominations, and Urban Affairs & Housing.



Save These Dates

General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, November 17

Society Hill Synagogue

418 Spruce Street (side entrance)

7:30 p.m. Meet Your Neighbors

8:00 p.m. Program

"Grand Plan for the Parkway"

Paul Levy, Center City Services District

"Neighborhood Improvement Districts"

Senator Vincent Fumo

Clean Up Day

Saturday, November 20

See p. 10 for details

Luncheon at 12:30 p.m.

Pennsylvania Hospital, 8th & Spruce

Don't forget to move your car!

Mix and Mingle

Café Nola, 119 South Street

Tuesday, November 23

5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Free Wine, Beer & Hors d'oeuvres

to SHCA Members

or Join at the Door

Holiday Sale

St. Peter's School, 3rd and Lombard

Friday - Sunday, December 10-12

Evening of Music & Dancing

Saturday, December 11, 8 - 11 p.m.

The Union League, 140 S. Broad Street

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Happy Thanksgiving

Happy Holidays

Happy New Year

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in the next century!

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Completing the Benjamin Franklin Parkway



The Benjamin Franklin Parkway may be the most impressive boulevard in Philadelphia but it is not pedestrian friendly. The traffic roundabouts at Logan Circle and the Eakins Oval make pedestrian entrances to the Franklin Institute or the Philadelphia Museum of Art impassable.

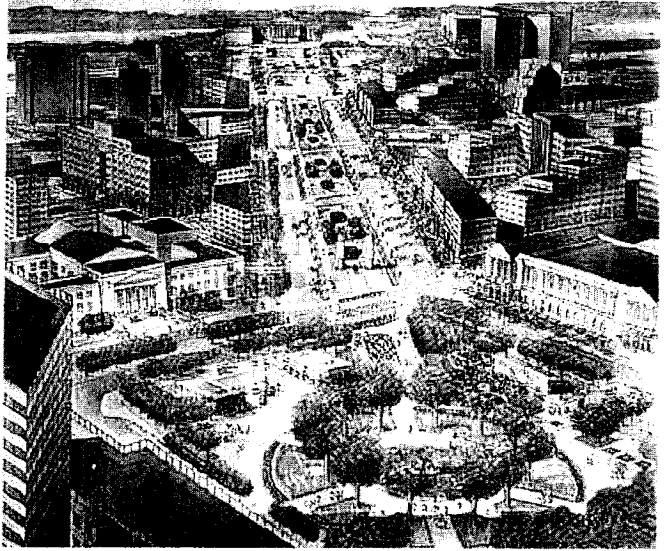
While the Parkway serves the city well for a number of summer events, it remains vastly under-utilized the rest of the year.

The Center City District, under Executive Director Paul Levy, wants to remedy this with a plan: "Completing the Benjamin Franklin Parkway."

Presentation at SHCA meeting

Mr. Levy will present this vision, the result of a major grant from the William Penn Foundation, at the SHCA General Membership meeting on November 17 (see Save These Dates on page 1 for details). He will discuss the plan to enhance the Parkway as a cultural boulevard, improve and enliven public spaces for pedestrians, encourage the creation of a new vibrant neighborhood, and provide revenues to maintain the Parkway.

Mr. Levy wants your input. Please attend this meeting, one of the more than 150 city-wide that have been held since April to garner ideas, suggestions, approvals, and directions. You may preview the plans for the Parkway at www.centercityphila.org and e-mail your comments after the meeting to parkway@centercityphila.org.



Paul R. Levy, a Mt. Airy resident, has earned respect as one of the most brilliant public administrators for his leadership of the very successful Center City District. Mr. Levy graduated from Lafayette College (A.B. History '68) and Columbia University (M.A. and Ph.D. History '69, '76). He has taught urban studies at Penn, and political science at Temple and Columbia.

In addition, Mr. Levy has worked with the Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development, the Philadelphia Parking Authority and University of Pennsylvania Department of Real Estate.

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Preaching To The Choir? Or, Maybe Not!

I'm writing this article while flying home after a two-week vacation in France. I visited Provence (first time) and Paris (many times before). An incident in Paris was the "inspiration" for what follows, but first some Paris observations.

I've always been a city walker, and thus I spent much time walking all over Paris. I discovered that my current role in our Civic Association has me looking at cities differently. Some examples:

There are few sidewalk trash cans, but the streets are very clean. People do not litter! Parisians walk their dogs everywhere, but there is no dog "poop." People pick it up!

I used an outdoor public toilet. The cost was about 35 cents. It was clean and efficient, as they are all over Paris. Our South Street neighbors have been begging the City for public toilets for years. I don't understand why we can't have them in busy commercial areas.

There are no street-level parking lots and virtually no street-level garages. Parisians do a lot of walking. I didn't see a single health club or even a sign for one. I noticed very few overweight Parisians.

Residences in Paris cannot be taller than seven stories. Most people live in apartments. These apartments are often above retail stores or restaurants. Parisians wouldn't have it any other way. Proximity to everything is one major reason for living in the city, Parisian friends tell me. Every block has at least one outdoor café. Some areas have many, many more. *

Now to the "incident."

On the "Boulevard Des Italiens," just past the Paris Opera House, I "bumped into" a couple from Society Hill. They were just starting dinner, and I joined them. We ate at an outdoor café on a street where there are dozens of them — one after another. The couple spent much time telling me about their hours of walking

about Paris the last few days. (In Philadelphia, they drive two blocks to the SuperFresh for a quart of milk.)

I couldn't help but make the comment that we were eating at an outdoor café and they were loving it, yet they were very vocal and pro-active opponents to the once planned outdoor café in the Shambles at Head House. When I reminded them of this, their comment was: "This is Paris, and that was in Philadelphia."

To me, the pleasures of city living should be the same in Philadelphia, in Society Hill as they are in Paris, in the Opera House District.

Do I dare compare Philadelphia to Paris? Why not? After all, they've had nearly a two-thousand-year head start, and with enlightened residents, we might begin to catch up.

—Norman R. Tissian
President, Society Hill Civic Association

Society Hill Socials

Café Nola

Society Hill Civic Association members are invited to the new Café Nola for cocktails and appetizers on Tuesday, November 23. (See "Save These Dates.")

Welcome back chef Bill Curry and enjoy Southern low-country food at its best! See you there!

Were "U" At "Guru"??!!

If not, you missed a fabulous and fun cocktail party at this hip Asian soul food restaurant at 222 South Street.

About 60 SHCA members sampled such delicious appetizers as veggie sushi, salmon mousse, chicken and beef satay, vegetable quesadillas and chicken drumettes, while sipping wine and mingling with their neighbors.

Many thanks to Manager Marci Oliveri and Bartender Joe Baker for their hospitality. We are also grateful for the generosity of owners Phillippe Dauphors, Albert Paris and Mustapha Royoussia.

JOIN SHCA NOW!

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Address: _____ Zip _____

Phone: Work (___) _____ Home (___) _____

New Membership Renewal

Household Membership: \$40 Business Membership: \$100

*Additional Contributions: \$ _____

*Earmarked for: Project Sweep Stakes
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I/We would like to work on the following committees:

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___ Historic Preservation/Zoning/Development
___ Library
___ Liquor Control
___ Society Hill Reporter
___ Street Trees/Tree Tenders
___ Town Watch

Please make your check payable to:
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Philadelphia, PA 19105

Questions? Call 215-629-1288 • FAX 215-625-9914

See page 12 for information about the
year 2000 membership drive.

The \$5,000 House Tour

Every spring for over 20 years, Society Hill residents have opened their homes and gardens for one of the nation's most renowned series of house and garden tours: Philadelphia Open House.

This May will be the 22nd consecutive year of sharing our community's architecture, interiors, and historic preservation achievements with interested, pre-registered tour-goers.

Philadelphia Open House Tours are conducted annually all over the region, and the program is coordinated by the Friends of Independence National Historical Park for the benefit of our cherished neighbor, Independence Park, as well as for the direct benefit of co-sponsoring communities, such as ours.

For example, last year's tour, chaired by Martha Levine, yielded a very specific and generous gift of \$5,000 to the Society Hill Civic Association!

The Society Hill tour, one of the most

popular tours in the entire three-week series, takes place on May 7, 2000. Co-chairing the event will be neighbors Linda Skale and Martha Levine, and they say that this is a wonderful opportunity to spruce up your place while sharing the beauty of your home, garden or fascinating collection of antiques or art.

Whether you live in a walk-up apartment, an aerie high-rise, a historic row-house or mansion, please consider "opening" your residence for the Society Hill 2000 tour. The program is very well organized and safe. It's great fun and a wonderful feeling to see how our neighborhood sparkles in time for this annual occasion.

Meanwhile, those who open their homes for the day get to visit all the other sites on that tour for free! Call Linda Skale at 215-238-1040 for more information and tell her you'd like to participate.

McCall School Play Yard: Parking Update

During the summer, a ten-foot high hurricane fence went up around a portion of the McCall School play yard. The purpose of the fence is to block off an additional parking area for teachers and visiting school district personnel.

The children's play space was eliminated without the knowledge or input of the School Governance Council, the Home & School Association, the neighbors, or the Society Hill Civic Association.

Concerned neighbors and parents informed the new school principal, Rita Donatucci, and Furness Cluster Leader, Arthur Rubin of their opposition to the erection of a parking stockade in the children's play yard.

Working together, parents and neighbors of McCall School developed an alternate plan, with the goal of satisfying the teachers' desire for easy, convenient and guaranteed parking without taking anything away from the students and neighborhood children who use the school yard.

The plan was presented at a meeting on September 17 at the school. In addition to Mrs. Donatucci and Mr. Rubin, the president of the School Council, the

president of Home & School, the McCall Representative for the Federation of Teachers, Mrs. Karen Biddle and Mrs. Linda Skale who are neighbors and parents, and Mr. Norman Tissian, president of the Society Hill Civic Association, were present.

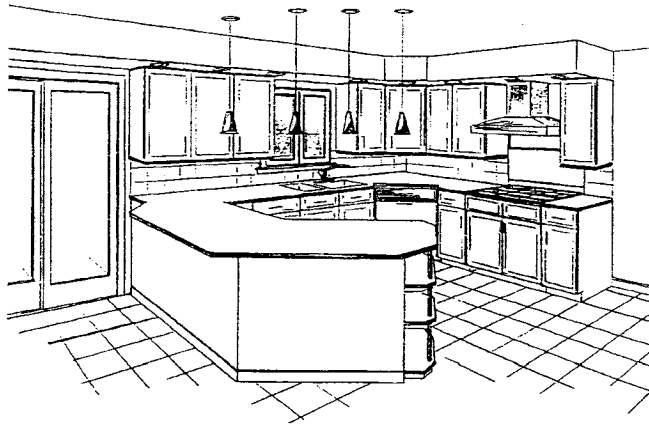
The proposal, developed by neighbors, community members and parents with approval from the Society Hill Civic Association, utilizes the current "School District Only" parking areas on Sixth and Seventh Streets (18 spaces), better organizes the present teachers' parking lot on Cypress Street to improve its operation (48 spaces), and continues the use of the principal's parking lot on Panama Street (6 spaces). The plan provides the school with a total 72 spaces, more than enough to meet the school's parking needs.

There has been strong sentiment from the neighbors, the Society Hill Civic Association and the Historical Commission to have the parking stockade immediately removed. Sentiment is equally strong from the teacher's union representatives who refuse to consider any alternatives to the fence, even though it was illegally erected.

SHCA October Board of Directors Meeting: Issues Discussed

- ▶ 450 people attended the SHCA General Membership Meeting featuring mayoral candidates Sam Katz and John Street
- ▶ The boundaries for the 6th District Police Department have been changed. The north side of Lombard has now been annexed to the 3rd District. The 3rd District Mini Station on South Street is moving to 5th Street and Passyunk at Bainbridge and the Post Office is moving to the northeast corner of 4th Street and Bainbridge.
- ▶ The hotel at Penn's Landing is moving forward. The challenge to using HUD money for the project will be decided by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The court is expected to uphold an earlier decision in favor of the development.
- ▶ The DRPA (Delaware River Port Authority) will present plans to the community for the Penn's Landing Sound and Light Show. Decibel level checks for this 17-minute light and pyrotechnic show on the waterfront must still be conducted. The show will run from April to October. Plans for the Tram scheduled for year 2002 will also be presented.
- ▶ Mary Sturdivant and Cherry Bombeck are chairing the local Clean and Green Committee which will be responsible for sprucing up the neighborhood for the Republican Convention. The Committee, sponsored by Philadelphia 2000, will plan ways to improve the appearance of the area for the convention and beyond. To volunteer, please call office the SHCA office at 215-629-1288.

Correction: On the Important Telephone Numbers List in the last issue of the Reporter, the telephone number for State Senator Vince Fumo was incorrect. The correct number is 215-468-3866.



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HOTEL "W" DESIGN RESPONDS TO NEIGHBORS' NEEDS

Plans for the proposed new boutique "W" Hotel, to be located at the defunct NewMarket site of Front and 2nd Streets, between Pine and Lombard, is moving along with excellent architectural plans that accommodate the desires of its immediate neighbors.

Representatives from SHCA's Historic Preservation and Zoning Committee recently met with the developer's architect and attorney to get a close-up look at the scale model of the new design that responded to requests by residents of the 100 blocks of Pine and Lombard Streets—the neighbors most likely impacted by the development. These immediate neighbors met separately with the developers, and we hope that they are as pleased with the plans as SHCA's representatives (President Norman Tissian, Richard Bost and Bernice Hamel).

Specifics about the Society Hill "W" Hotel: it will offer 186 rooms, a high-end spa and a destination restaurant. The design of the hotel ensures that the hotel rooms will not look out into the yards or windows of private residences. (Thus, we believe, the varied privacy, parking and security needs of immediate neighbors have been ingeniously addressed.)

The hotel will include 20 expensive condominium units, which will be built at the seven-story end of the building at Front Street. This "W" Hotel is just one in a new and upscale chain of boutique hotels that are attracting people in New York City and San Francisco, among other cities. The new and beautiful hotel will be a positive and welcome improvement to the neighborhood, replacing the vacant NewMarket structure with an attractive building that will bring people and vitality to our corner of the city.

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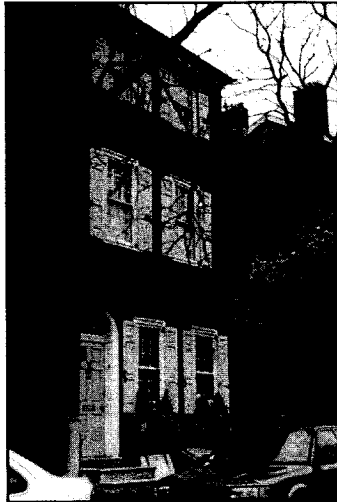
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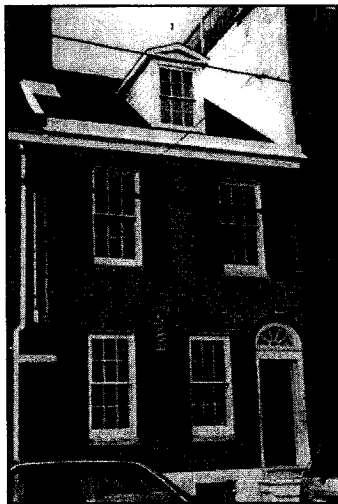
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Society Hill Playhouse Celebrates 40 Years

The Society Hill Playhouse opened 40 seasons ago on October 27th. Over the years it has presented more than 300 European or American plays and shows—from “The Threepenny Opera” to “The Fantastics” to “Schoolhouse Rock Live.”

Since its beginnings the Playhouse has developed and trained countless actors and technicians, and has led the way in community service programming for the Greater Philadelphia region.

The Society Hill Playhouse was founded by long-time Society Hill residents, Deen Kogan and her late husband, Jay Kogan. Deen continues to direct the theater, which is housed in the historic David Garrick Hall, at 507 S. 8th Street. The Playhouse features two performing spaces; the second-floor Main Stage and a first-floor Cabaret. For tickets or more information, please call: 215-923-0210. Now showing:

- Cabaret Theater through 5/21/2000: Lafferty's Wake
- Main Stage through 1/30/2000: Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?

Short Subjects

- Board Treasurer Perry Whyte is taking the lead in updating The Reporter's Web site. Please send your comments and suggestions regarding content, appearance, etc., to shcivica@aol.com.
- The South Street Headhouse District is currently interviewing for a part-time general office assistant. Computer skills are required; hours and days are negotiable. Contact Dick Ostrander at 215-413-3713.
- Correction: Chubb's Masterpiece Personal Insurance program is available not only for homeowners insurance; the program also offers automobile, valuable article and umbrella coverage. Call 888-862-4822.

The Re-opening of Washington Square

Washington Square Park is once again open to the public. Since October 30th, neighborhood residents and visitors have been able to enjoy full use of the grassy areas via the newly paved paths in the park.

Phase II, which includes repairing the wall, completion of landscaping, and the continuing effort to raise funds, will not be completed until next year. Many issues—such as types of plants, the necessary cleaning of the monument, problems of the homeless, disputes concerning the proper procedure for walking dogs—must still be addressed.

The Society Hill Civic Association hopes that all matters will be decided with the neighborhood in mind, so that the Square remains a “people's park.” Once the renovations are finally complete, the Square will be assigned to the National Park Service for day-to-day operation, maintenance and management. The Fairmount Park Commission, however, will retain ownership.

For further information, call William Hawkins at 215-592-8734.



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Society Hill REPORTER

A publication paid for by association
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THE REPORTER, call the office at
215/629-1288, leave your name and
number, and Day Murray, administrator,
will have the director return your call.

You may also write to SHCA at
P.O. Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105 or
fax to 215/625-9914
or e-mail at SHCIVICA@aol.com.

Next deadline for the Reporter:
December 20, 1999

Darts & Laurels

- ▶ **Darts to the teachers at McCall School** for refusing to consider alternatives to the 10-foot-high hurricane fence erected around a portion of the play yard to provide teachers with convenient parking.
- ▶ **Darts to the Philadelphia Licensing & Inspections Department** for refusing to take the actions necessary to have the illegal fence removed.
- ▶ **Laurels to our neighbors who provide outdoor night lighting** through the use of light fixtures, window lamps, lanterns and candles. Thank you.

NOTICE

To be included on our e-mail list for future activities, send e-mail addresses to joele@earthlink.net, or see the Society Hill Civic Association's web site: www.wnwr.com/shca.



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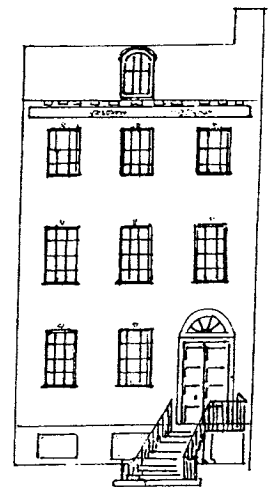
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Join Us For Clean-up Day, Saturday, November 20

It will soon be time for our fall
Neighborhood Clean-up Day.



Get your brooms and shovels ready! Our Fall Clean-Up Day is Saturday, November 20. We can all do a little more to make Society Hill the cleanest neighborhood in the City.

To help you with the clean-up, brooms and trash bags will be available at the SuperFresh on 5th Street between Pine and Spruce, beginning at 8 a.m. The Clean-Up Day flyer, which will soon be delivered to your home, will let you know where to drop off filled bags of trash.

We will again be coordinating our activity with the Washington Square West Civic Association. All those participating in Clean-Up Day are invited to the traditional luncheon at the Pennsylvania Hospital, 12:30-1:30 p.m. This is a good chance to meet your neighbors and make new acquaintances.

Society Hill Synagogue Hosts Meeting

Although the Temple at 418 Spruce St. now serves a congregation of 400 families in the Conservative tradition of Judaism, it started its life in 1829 as the Spruce Street Baptist Church.

Designed by a young member of the church, Thomas U. Walter, it reflects the Italian Revival style and originally sported two spires capping the ends of the façade. The spires were removed in a 1911 renovation when the church was converted by Rumanian Jews into a synagogue.

The rusticated granite first floor exterior and stucco façade survived. Then, in 1968, a major restoration began using the original drawings that were found in the Philadelphia Contributionship where they were stored for insurance purposes. Even without the spires, the granite stairway continues to dominate the streetscape as it leads up to the main floor where the sanctuary is located.

Later, Walter designed the dome and House and Senate wings of the United States Capitol.

Thomas U. Walter has other neighborhood buildings to his credit. Together with William Strickland, he remodeled in 1830 another local house of worship, built in 1760: the Greek Revival church at 255 S. 3rd St., which since 1904 has served as headquarters for the Episcopal Community Services of Pennsylvania. Walter also was the architect who, in 1836, designed the Greek Revival building at 212 S. 4th St. which houses The Philadelphia Contributionship, the oldest insurance company in the U.S., founded in 1752 by Benjamin Franklin. SHCA members are welcome to tour the synagogue prior to our meeting on November 17.

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Historic Preservation & Zoning Update

Preserving the integrity of our neighborhood is what SHCA's two hard-working committees—Zoning and Historic Preservation—have been all about for many years. Although our two committees have always had a common purpose, the complex process of becoming a city-certified historic district required that we keep the two committees separate—until now!

Now that Society Hill has become a city-protected historic district, we believe it is in our community's best interest to combine the committees so as to streamline communications among our neighbors, our community association and the city's various offices and bureaucracies.

Our new committee will provide direct service to property owners who plan on making alterations that involve either zoning issues or historic guidelines. We believe there is no point in planning alterations if they do not fit into zoning or historic district guidelines, or when the streetscape our community has worked so hard to maintain would be undermined.

By being a property owner's first line of information and defense, our committee can be of real help to neighbors. This early-stage of communication can save homeowners and their representatives from wasted effort and expense. This means, in some cases, being in touch with real estate agents, architects and attorneys!

To that end, we are currently restructuring our new committee, and we welcome additional members who can actively participate with us on a regular basis. This means attending committee meetings, as well as daytime hearings of the Zoning Board or Historic Commission. Working together is the only sure way to guarantee that the historic beauty of our neighborhood will be maintained today and for the future.

Meanwhile, if you plan on making any changes that will affect the exterior of your property, please contact either Becky Stoloff (215-627-4910) or Rick Bost (215-351-5336). And, if the integrity of Society Hill is important to you, please consider joining our team by giving us a call (at the numbers above). In the next issue of the Reporter, you'll hear more about our new committee and our plans.



Neighborhood Pride Committee

Over 300 copies of the Society Hill Civic Association's Preferred List of Contractors have been sent on request to Society Hill homeowners over the last 18 months. Many neighbors are happy to have this resource to assist in the selection of contractors who have a good track record.

As you may know, the list includes contractors of all kinds who have been highly recommended by other neighbors. Need a carpenter, painter, electrician, plumber or roofer? The list also includes repairmen for brick and masonry work, chimneys, HVAC, marble and tile installation, as well as maintenance for your street trees.

For your copy, please contact Martha Levine, 215-629-0727.



Lighting Committee Report

Light Up Earlier Now

Now that our clocks have been changed to Eastern Standard Time, we remind neighbors who have installed automatic timers on their front doors to reset them so that the lights will turn on at 5 or 5:30 p.m.

If your light bulb burns out, the timer will not function, and the red indicator light will be off. We recommend that you replace your light bulb with a 2000-3000 hour, 60-70 watt bulb, guaranteed to last over a year, and available at Home Depot. To reset the timer, check its directions.

Any questions about lighting in general, call Martha Levine at 215-629-0727. Remember, good lighting is the easiest and most economical way to keep our streets safe!

Membership Committee

Membership Drive Underway

By this time, 1999 members of the Society Hills Civic Association have received a dues renewal invoice in the mail. As stated in the last issue of the Reporter, there will be NO dues increase for 2000. If you have returned your invoice with a check we thank you.

If the invoice is still sitting on your desk, please mail it today so that we can avoid the expense of sending you a reminder. For those neighbors who did not join in 1999 or who have never been members, we hope to reach you shortly with our traditional brochure highlighting everything the Association does for the community. We need support from each and everyone of the approximately 3300 households and dozens of businesses in our neighborhood.

Liquor Control Committee

Artful Dodger Re-opens

The Artful Dodger at 2nd and Pine has reopened under new management. There have been no neighborhood complaints as of press time and Debbie Robinson urges our patronage.

Town Watch or Public Safety Committee

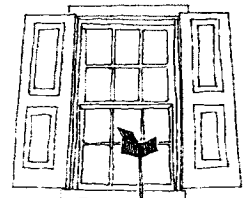
Tired of hearing raucous motorcycles speeding around our neighborhood at all hours of night?

Let it be known that the South Street Police Mini-Station has been working hard to solve the problem. Since July, they have confiscated 112 motorcycles from offending drivers who were stopped and found to be lacking either valid drivers' licenses or registration papers.

In addition, approximately 50 cars per month are being confiscated from the South Street area for the same reasons. These types of actions by the Police Mini-Station are of obvious benefit to our neighborhood.

BUSYBODIES

At second floor windows, look for "busybody" mirrors, an invention which allows household members to see from inside who is at the doorstep.



Letter To The Editor

Although I am a member of the SHCA, I was surprised to receive in the US mail today a copy of the September newsletter.

Weren't you going to stop mailing the newsletter to members who live in the big high-rise condos (as a cost savings measure) because you were distributing the publication in bulk in the various buildings?

Here in Society Hill Towers, I got the September edition left at my apartment threshold, so the mailed one I received was redundant, and cost 55¢ to mail. Got to work a bit more on that initiative!

Thanks and keep up the good work.

—Rick Dozor

Dear Mr. Dozor:

Thank you for your concern regarding what seems to be a waste of postage costs. Over the years, the SHCA Board was concerned that all members be guaranteed receipt of every issue of the Reporter. Because distribution throughout the neighborhood and in high-rises has been inconsistent, the Board recently decided that it would rather be redundant than have any member miss out on receiving a newsletter. Therefore, we are suggesting that members who receive two copies share the extra copy with a neighbor or friend.

The Editors

Holiday Sale

The Holiday Sale at St. Peter's School, 3rd and Lombard Streets, will take place Friday through Sunday, December 10, 11 and 12. The proceeds are used for scholarships for students needing financial assistance to attend the school.

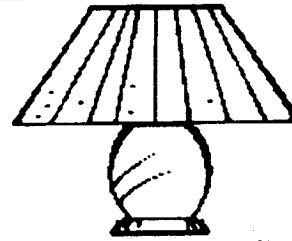
A variety of greens and holiday plants will be available—Christmas trees, wreaths, roping, door charms, mistletoe, poinsettias and more.

So mark your calendar and plan to buy your gifts and decorations at the St. Peter's School Holiday Sale.

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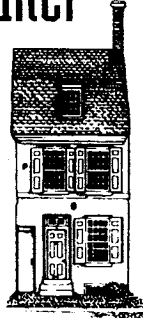


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CREATING BEAUTY SINCE 1967

Noteworthy Neighbors

Celeste and Michael Ayjian

Horse-drawn carriages that ply the streets of Society Hill often pause in front of the 200-year-old, 3-story house at Fourth and Spruce that once was the home of America's fourth president James Madison and his wife Dolley.

Occupants of the carriages see not only an historic site, but also, depending upon the time of year, the imaginative decorations that adorn the door and windows and that are the work of the present owners, Celeste and Michael Ayjian. Various, there are Christmas lights, Easter and Thanksgiving montages, Halloween ornaments and other visual delights.

Inside, the fireplaces, the spacious and elegant layout, and the wood flooring are much as the Madisons would have found them when they leased the house for 200 pounds a year in the 1790s. But James, "the master builder of the Constitution," would have been startled—or perhaps as a reformer, pleased—if he could see the 1990s habitation, with its two-car garage, air conditioning and elevator.

Celeste and Michael have lived in the house for 8 years, being accompanied along the way by Michael-Aaron, 5, who goes to nearby St. Peter's School, and Celeste Simone (Simone), 2. Celeste, who is originally from upstate New York, owned a pest control company in Houston before moving to Philadelphia to marry Michael, a Pennsylvanian who owns a dry-cleaning business in suburban Wayne.

The pair, both of whom are of Armenian descent, are active in the Armenian community. A few years ago they "adopted" a young deaf boy from Armenia for three months while having him fitted with a special type of hearing aid from Jefferson Hospital. Celeste serves on the board of the Philadelphia Opera Company, and the couple enjoy traveling when work and time permit: last year they rented a villa in Capri.

Says Celeste: "I love this area because it's homey; it's big city but it's livable and safe. And it has charm and history."

Certainly, their house has both in abundance. Impeccably furnished and decorated, it features soft colors, tasteful carpeting and appealing art — including a portrait of its illustrious former occupant. Too bad those carriage riders don't get to savor more than the outside—however attractive—of the Ayjians' residence.

— David Woods

Roswell Weidner, one of the finest and most well-known artists in the Philadelphia region, died in his Spruce Street home. Mr. Weidner was 88 years old and had been an artist and teacher for nearly 60 years at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Mr. Weidner is survived by his wife of 42 years, Marilyn Kemp Weidner, and his daughters Roslyn Nilson and Janice Scheckler. A memorial service for Mr. Weidner was held on October 30 at the Academy of Fine Arts, and a memorial exhibition of his paintings and pastels were on exhibit at the More Gallery through November 6th.

Our condolences and thoughts are with Mr. Weidner's wife and children. Donations for the Roswell Weidner Scholarship Fund may be sent to the PA Academy of the Fine Arts, 1301 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA. 19107. Att: Fred Osborne, Former Dean, PAFA School.



Residence, Summit, New Jersey, watercolor, 1999

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