

# Society Hill REPORTER

...Working Together  
For a Better Place To Live

March 2000

Newsletter of The Society Hill Civic Association

## General Membership Meeting: March 15

### 3 Major Developments To Be Unveiled

Three major developments now underway will strongly impact the community. Representatives of each will address the General Membership meeting on Wednesday, March 15, at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 3rd and Pine Streets.

#### Fresh Fields/Whole Foods Markets

Joel Danick, regional vice president for Fresh Fields/Whole Foods Markets — a nationwide, highly respected, retail food supplier — will bring a large blow-up of the store currently under construction, and he will address what the company will bring to the area.

The long-awaited market will replace the failed retail space at Ninth and South Streets and will join seven other Fresh Fields in the Philadelphia area. This is a very exciting development for our community!

#### W Hotel Group

Another long-anticipated project is the redevelopment of the derelict NewMarket space on Front Street between Pine and Lombard Streets.

Roger J. Zampell, Vice President of Development for Portman Holdings (the builder for the W Hotel Group), will present architectural plans for the luxury hotel, spa, restaurants, and condominium apartment complex designed for the location.

For months, owners' representatives have been negotiating with immediate neighbors of the project to arrive at feasible design compromises to ensure a successful development. View the resulting agreed-upon plans, an example of creative problem-solving negotiations among neighbors and developers.

#### Penn's Landing Light & Sound Shows

More controversial are plans by the Delaware River Port Authority to provide a hundred nights of summertime light and sound shows, lighted river trams, and entertainment at Penn's Landing.

Sound monitoring tests are currently being conducted throughout the neighborhood to anticipate and head off any problems for residents. David G. Murphy, director of regional development, will discuss the plans for the shows and trams.

Attend SHCA's General Membership Meeting and get the straight scoop from all these planners. Here's your chance to find out if the rumor is true that the condominiums at NewMarket will be priced at \$1 million plus. Share your excitement or trepidation.

## Save These Dates

Wednesday, March 15

### General Membership Meeting

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 3rd and Pine Streets  
7:30 pm Tour of the Church • 8:00 pm Program

Tuesday, April 4

### Presidential Primary Election

Polls open 7:00 am to 8:00 pm

Thursday, April 27 – Sunday, May 21

### Philadelphia Open House Tours Throughout Philadelphia Metro Region

For brochure & information:  
Friends of Independence National Historical Park  
215-928-1188

Monday, May 1, 6-10

### South Street Headhouse District 8th Annual Dinner & Fashion Show

Society Hill Sheraton • \$65 per person

Sunday, May 7, 1-5

### Society Hill Open House Tour

Self-guided Walking Tour • \$35 per person

Friday, May 5 – Sunday, May 7

### Physick House Plant Sale

Physick House Garden

Entrance: Cypress St. between 3rd & 4th

May 5: Noon - 7 • May 6: 10 - 5 • May 7: Noon - 5

## SHCA Approves \$7,000 for NID Study

### Volunteers Needed for Steering Committee

On Wednesday, February 16, the SHCA board of directors unanimously approved \$7,000 to conduct the first phase of a study exploring the feasibility of a Neighborhood Improvement District (NID) for Society Hill. Lawrence O. Houston, Jr. and Patrick J. Henry, principals of the Atlantic Group — urban development consultants — have been retained to work with a community steering committee as they examine the legal issues, collect data and conduct the needs analysis, right up to the presentation at the first community meeting.

Jim Moss, a lawyer, SHCA board member and member of the owners management council for Society Hill Towers, has volunteered to head the steering committee. Jim is looking for neighbors who may be in favor or opposed to a NID based on current

*Continued on the next page*

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT <http://www.wnwr.com/shca>

*Volunteers Needed for Steering Committee, continued*

knowledge, but who, most importantly, make up a representative cross-section of the entire community.

Whether or not to form a NID is probably the most significant initiative ever undertaken by the SHCA. As outlined by Larry Houstoun, three phases over the next several months will be required just to determine whether or not to proceed.

The SHCA can elect to halt the process at any point if that seems the consensus. If all hurdles are passed, the SHCA will ask our City Council representative, Frank DiCicco, to draft a bill enabling the formation of the NID. Each year the NID must present a budget and goals for approval, and the state legislation has a vehicle to sunset the NID if the community feels it is no longer meeting its needs.

NIDs may assess property owners up to 5% of their real estate taxes, which can be used to fund extra street cleaning, street-tree pruning, private security patrols, trash cans or whatever our community determines it needs, wants or can most benefit from. If you are wondering how much Society Hill property owners currently provide in real estate taxes to the city, the number is over \$150 million.

The cost to engage the Atlantic Group for the entire study totals \$19,000 — an initial commitment of \$1,000, and \$6,000 for each of the three phases. Senator Vincent Fumo, who orchestrated the Senate bill to establish NIDs, has promised an unrestricted grant of \$10,000 to be received by May, 2000. Councilman Frank DiCicco has earmarked \$5,000 to help the effort. SHCA will have to contribute the remaining \$4,000 from the treasury if the entire study is completed.

## Letter from PECO to Norman Tissian

Dear Mr. Tissian,

Please be advised that PECO Energy Company will be removing the two poles and transformers from the northeast corner of 4th and Lombard Streets. The design work has begun and the construction will be completed by March 15, 2000.

We have installed the necessary capacity to meet the latest electric demands of the neighborhood and will not be adding any more poles. I will commit on behalf of PECO Energy that if in the years to come we find a need to add capacity in this area we will meet with the leadership of the Society Hill Civic Association, the South Street Headhouse District and the First District City Councilperson prior to beginning any work.

If I can be of assistance to you please contact me at my office or on my portable telephone (215-519-2000).

Thank you again for your consideration.

— Edward McBride

Jim Moss is recruiting volunteers to serve on the steering committee to work with the Atlantic Group in determining whether a Neighborhood Improvement District would benefit Society Hill.

If you are interested or want more information, contact Jim Moss through the SHCA office: 215-629-1288. You do not need to be a member of the Association to volunteer (but we would be delighted to have you join).

Copies of the legislation establishing NIDs are available from Senator Vincent Fumo's office: 215-468-3866.

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## Does The Society Hill Civic Association Work For You? You Bet We Do! Read On!

The next time you are out walking in our beautiful neighborhood, look up!

Look up anywhere, but especially at street corners. There are no overhead wires, be they phone, cable or electric in Society Hill. There are no metal or wood poles implanted at intersections.

Without question, this lack of poles and wires adds to our neighborhood's beauty and I had always assumed that there were laws in place to insure that this tradition would always continue.

I was *wrong!*

A few weeks ago, I began to receive calls from neighbors. PECO Energy Company had installed a huge wood pole with two large transformers at the top, as well as another large support pole, at the northeast corner of 4th and Lombard Streets. Wires were strung across Lombard Street. The poles and transformers were next to a playground for St. Peter's School and trees had been uprooted for the poles.

I began making phone calls and discovered that, in fact, there is no law in place to protect our streetscape. Searches made in the City Solicitors Office could find no such law.

PECO installed the poles with a license to do so from L&I and the Streets Department. PECO ignored the process of applying for approval from the Historic Commission.

*PECO must have known that even if what they were doing might be "legal", they definitely were violating the existing landscape and long-standing tradition in Society Hill. They didn't care!*

The poles and wires were up and they were going to stay. I'm sure PECO chose the simple solution of using poles and wires because this is cheaper than going underground. As to the future, the company sent me a meaningless letter promising to talk to us, when and if new poles became necessary.

The Civic Association's Board of Directors agreed that this was not a satisfactory answer.

Our community, led by SHCA, began to mobilize. Meetings were held!

Volunteer attorneys checked the city issued licenses that PECO had used and felt there was enough "in question" that legal action was warranted. Legal services were offered for free and SHCA agreed to underwrite expenses.

A detailed plan began to develop where we would seek to have residents change their electric supplier away from PECO and/or Exelon, a PECO subsidiary. Discussions were held with high rises as well as homeowners and the reaction was positive enough that we believed we could make an impact in PECO's customer base in Society Hill.

We spoke to neighborhood churches, schools and other Center City community organizations about joining us in our legal action. Reaction was positive.

An aggressive letter writing and telephone calling campaign was also to begin, both to PECO management and the media.

All these meetings, took place over one weekend.

The following Monday, Councilman Frank DiCicco himself got involved, and with his strong support PECO agreed to remove the poles and wires at 4th and Lombard Streets. DiCicco promised that trees would be replanted in the holes left by removing the poles.

### **We won this battle, but the war is not over!**

Working with other Center City community groups we now need City Council to enact a law assuring us this will not happen again in the future – by any utility!

Our volunteer attorneys are drawing up suggested legislation and we will aggressively lobby our representatives and at-large representatives in City Council.

The Society Hill Civic Association organized and led this entire effort. I believe this to be one of our most important neighborhood protection efforts of the past years.

If the Society Hill Civic Association didn't exist, if we didn't care, if we failed to be aggressive when a situation calls for action, I'm sure PECO and other utilities would move ahead with poles and overhead wires in Society Hill!

So if you are not yet a member of our pro-active community organization, don't you think it is time to speak up with us and join the Society Hill Civic Association? Now is the time. Fill out the coupon on this page and mail it to us as soon as possible. Make your voice heard!

— Norman R. Tissian

### **Join SHCA Now!**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Work ( \_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home ( \_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

New Membership  Renewal

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

\*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

\_\_\_ Historic Preservation/Zoning/Development

\_\_\_ Library

\_\_\_ Liquor Control

\_\_\_ Society Hill Reporter

\_\_\_ Street Trees/Tree Tenders

\_\_\_ Town Watch

Please make your check payable to:

Society Hill Civic Association

Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105

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

## Civic Association VP Bill Hawkins Steps Down From Board

Shortly after moving to Society Hill, Bill Hawkins read a call for help in THE REPORTER. He responded by becoming the paper's business manager and an occasional correspondent. He then became an active member of the SHCA board, and was involved in a variety of community issues, including problems associated with the city's horse carriage trade.

Bill took on the battle to keep Washington Square partially open during the recent renovations to the park. With the Civic Association as a forum, he helped build a coalition of residents that successfully influenced the Fairmount Park bureaucracy.

William Hawkins was born in Malvern, England. He was 15 when he first visited Philadelphia, when he came to meet his pen pal, Jeanie. Some years later, the pair met again in London and this time it was wedding bells. Attracted by the residential and historical Society Hill mix, Bill and Jeanie moved to Independence Place on Washington Square ten years ago.

Now Bill wants more time for distance running. He will remain active in the community as he continues to build his marketing and communications consultant business. We wish him well and hope that Bill's wit and wisdom will soon grace these pages again.

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## Thank you, Welcome Basket donors

For the last few years the Society Hill Civic Association has had a Welcome Committee that meets and greets new neighbors. If you know of a new neighbor who has not been welcomed by the committee, please contact the Committee Chair, Martha Levine, at 215-629-0727. The Welcome Committee would like to extend its sincerest thanks to all who have donated the goods and services that make our Welcome Baskets so wonderful. They are:

Arden Theatre Company, 40 North 2nd Street  
 Chef's Market, 231 South Street  
 Dickens Old Curiosity Shop, 417 South 2nd Street  
 Homemade Goodies by Roz, 510 South 5th Street  
 Italia Ristorante, 318 South 3rd Street  
 Metropolitan Bakery, 1114 Pine Street  
 Mums and Pops Confectionery, 932 Locust Street  
 Old City Coffee, 221 Church Street  
 & Reading Terminal Market  
 Philadelphia Chamber Ensemble, Old Pine Church,  
 400 Pine Street  
 Philadelphia Sports Clubs, 220-250 South 5th Street  
 Riff Cleaners, 314 South 5th Street  
 Sfizzio Restaurant, Society Hill Towers,  
 237 St. James Place  
 Soapbox, 1216 Locust Street  
 Starbuck's Coffee, 347 South Street  
 Society Hill Playhouse, 507 South 8th Street  
 Super Fresh Food Markets, 5th and Pine Streets  
 Wilma Theatre, 265 South Broad Street  
 Zeke's Deli, 318 South 5th Street

— Martha Levine 215-629-0727  
 Welcome Committee Chair

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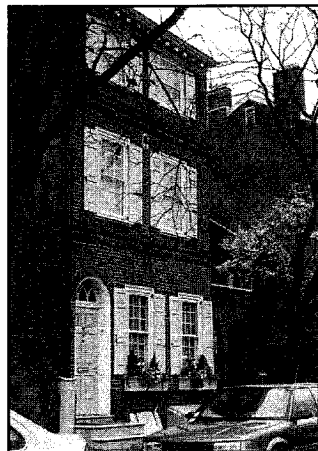
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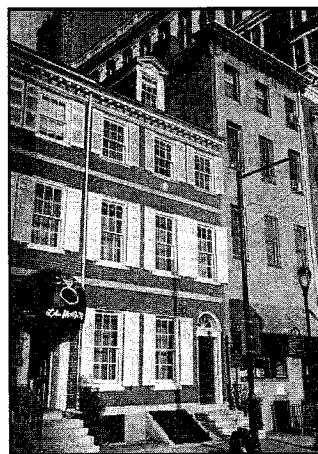
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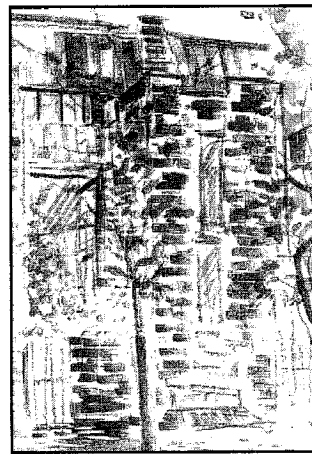
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Members can call Deanna or Chris at the Gannon-Coyne Agency to find out more about the program.

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## Restaurant Review: Buddakan

*by David Ludwig*

Anyone who thinks that Stephen Starr doesn't know a good idea when he sees one has never been to Buddakan. Patterned after Buddha Bar in Paris's chic 8th Arrondissement (by design or coincidence) right down to the giant gold-painted Buddha, Buddakan could probably succeed on its décor alone.

In fact, the interior space has so many interesting details (the gauze backdrop behind the bar, imbedded with tiny lights, is a real hoot as is the under-lit golden onyx communal table), it's a credit to the design skills of Starr and collaborators Chris Smith and Owen Kamihara that the overall effect is harmonious rather than cacophonous. Speaking of the bar, it is the place to see and be seen in Old City.

### Starters

If you are going to Buddakan for the food, I am pleased to report that it and the service are much better than they have to be. For starters, the Thai lobster crepes with shitake mushrooms and cognac-curry sauce (MP) are rich and elegant and not overly hot (the kitchen is more concerned with interesting flavor combinations than with excessive heat) and the tempura jumbo lump crab sushi roll (\$14.50) is packed with sweet crabmeat.

Other offered starters include pan-seared diver (dry) scallops with caramelized mango and Asian pear sauce (\$11), panko-crusted oysters with madras curry aioli (\$12) and Pacific prawns wrapped in a crisp noodle blanket with spicy tomato salsa (\$16).

### Main plates

Main plates also succeed due to interesting flavor combinations rather than excessive heat. Though described as the hottest item on the menu by our server, the Asian barbecue pork with cheddar cheese cornbread (\$19) proved to be hearty, not hot.

The special of the evening, seared diver scallops (\$26), consisted of perfectly cooked crisp-outside, moist-inside scallops over tasty Asian noodles and tender tiger shrimp. Alternatively, you might sample Wabash crusted filet mignon with sweet potato mash (\$28), sesame crusted tuna with ginger lemongrass vegetable salad (\$26), duck breast with roast garlic and five-spice jus (\$22) or Indonesian jumbo shrimp with potato latka and wasabi apple sauce (\$24).

### Desserts

My picks from the offered desserts are the coconut creme brulee with banana chocolate fritter and passion fruit sorbet (\$8.50) and malt bombe, a frozen custard with rum truffle and warm butter-scotch apples (\$9). Buddakan's wine list is international in scope with over a dozen labels for \$40 and under as well some interesting wines by the glass.

*Buddakan, 325 Chestnut Street, 215-574-9440*

*Lunch: Mon.-Fri. 11:30 - 1:30*

*Dinner: Mon.-Thur. 5:30 - 10:30; Fri. & Sat. 5 - 11; Sun. 5 - 10:30*

*Reservations - a very good idea*

## Fall Clean-Up Day – A Great Success!

As most neighbors know, the Society Hill Civic Association sponsors a community-wide Clean-Up Day in the spring and the fall. Mark Valentine, committee chairman, and Frank Hoban, co-chairman, would like to thank those who helped make the fall 1999 Clean-Up Day a huge success.

Block captains' flyers were distributed on time, and posters were in place on time, as evidenced by the near total compliance with parking restrictions.

A big thank you to volunteers Mary Sturdivant, Jim Covello, David Stevens, Linda Percival, Liza Seltzer, Ann Eiswerth, Liz Linton, Wally Wing and Sherry Shamansky, Perry White and Michael Czeredarczuk, Cynthia Eiseman, Larry Meehan, Travis Poe, David Stevens and Assistant Co-Chair, Marie Hoban.

### Bags & Brooms

Thanks to Ruth Valentine, Jim & Janice Hays, Bill Hawkins and Herb Lipton.

### Banners

Thanks to Barbara Rittenhouse, Coordinator. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Barbara and the rest of the committee, the poles to suspend the 5th Street banner had been removed by SEPTA and the nearest poles were near South Street. Suggestions for a new place to hang the banner for the upcoming spring Clean-Up Day are welcome.

### City Services

All City Service vehicles and personnel were on time and ready to go. Streets and Sanitation Supervisor Steve Pankey did a marvelous job of resolving a few problems and keeping everything moving until he and his workers joined us all for lunch.

### Lunch at Pennsylvania Hospital

Thanks to Alan & Donna Stiteler, coordinators. As usual, the community was provided with a superb lunch, this year's being the best ever. Thank you, Alan & Donna and volunteers Ron Meliment, Mark, Claire and Karen Skafte-Keenen, Susan and Fred Denenberg, Esther and Katherine Bernard and Harvey Young.

Those of us who had the opportunity to partake of the delicious donated food will certainly patronize the following establishments:

Bridget Foy's, Chef's Market, Dairy Queen, Famous Deli, Jack Downey's, Monserrat, Philadelphia Deli, Pietro's, Pink Rose, Pizzeria Uno, Pomodoro Pizzeria, South Street Philly Bagels, Auntie Ann's, Jon's Bar & Grill, Crepe Bistro, Jim's Steaks and Wawa.

### Spring 2000 Clean-Up Day

The date for the spring 2000 Clean-Up Day has not yet been determined. It will be coordinated with the city-wide clean-up, which will be held closer to summer to prepare for upcoming events including the Republican National Convention. Society Hill neighbors will receive flyers with information in time to prepare for the spring Clean-Up Day.



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929 Clinton- 7 unit apartment bldg, elegant block! 2 car pkg, separate electric. Hurry! \$595,000

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716 Pine- 5 unit apartment bldg, 1 car garage, garden, separate electric, won't last! \$575,000

11-15 Strawberry- Olde City tri-level office plus bi-level residence. Sep meters, 6 car pkg \$495,000

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## Red, White & Blue, and Green, Too SHCA Philadelphia 2000 Summer Plans

Society Hill's neighborhood subcommittee for Philadelphia 2000 met January 26 at Independence Place. Julie Snell, project coordinator of Philadelphia Green for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, attended the meeting to discuss plans for getting the neighborhood ready for the Republican National Convention, which begins on July 31.

In addition, the committee considered possible ways to have a coordinated program to promote Welcome America's "Show Us Your Red White and Blue" campaign, which kicks off on Flag Day, June 14, and runs through the July 4th holiday period.

Under the guidance of chairs Cherry Bombeck and Mary Sturdivant, the committee is exploring ways to have flowering hanging baskets on the more than 311 Franklin lampposts on Spruce, Pine, Delancey and Lombard Streets and Second, Third, Fourth and Seventh Streets.

Flags would be placed in each basket from Flag Day through the end of the July 4th holiday and replenished again for the Republican convention.

Watering the baskets is a major concern and various methods are being explored. Another possibility is to have a community-wide effort to have flag holders installed and flags available for purchase at a volume discount for the neighborhood.

If you would like to join the committee or have suggestions, please call Mary Sturdivant at 215-928-1203.

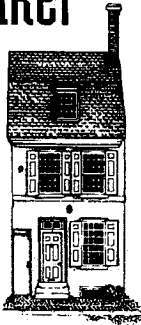


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## McCall School Parking Fence Update

Last summer, an unsightly, illegal 10-foot-high hurricane fence was erected around a portion of the play yard at McCall School, Delancey Street between 6th and 7th. It was learned that the school had submitted plans to permanently use the fenced-in portion of the play yard — an area of approximately 5,400 square feet (60 feet by 90 feet) — for teacher parking.

Neighbors in the vicinity of McCall and the Society Hill Civic Association have asked for the removal of the illegal fence and have suggested placement of "moveable fences," a/k/a pedestrian barriers similar to those used during City parades for traffic and crowd control (and seen every morning on the Today Show to contain crowds outside the NBC building). These moveable fences would provide a confined space for a teachers' parking area during school hours yet would not be a permanent part of the school landscape. (They could be moved up against the perimeter fencing when school is not in session.)

The play space would thus be open again for neighborhood children to ride bikes, skate and play basketball, just as it always was. Shortly before the Christmas holidays, the cluster leader, Arthur Rubin, was given a brochure featuring these fences which he was supposed to show to the School District facilities people. We have not, to date, received a response from him.

The Licenses and Inspections Department did cite McCall School and the School District for putting up the fence and a violation notice was filed. However, no enforcement efforts have been made.

When it snowed this winter, the school did not clear Cypress Street or the original teachers parking lot. Instead, the school allowed the teachers to park in what remains of the children's play yard. This led to oil spills from the cars on the macadam, and forced children to weave their way through moving cars. In addition, the cars stayed parked in the children's play yard, particularly in the basketball court area, after the snow was gone. Neighborhood children could not use the basketball court.

Recently, patients and visitors of Pennsylvania Hospital have begun to use the stockade for parking on weekends and after school hours. Neighbors also reported that leaves, trash and debris were not cleared from around the perimeter of the stockade, creating an unsightly appearance. We will continue to work to have the illegal fence removed and to regain the play area meant for the children.



### New Post Office in Our Neighborhood!

After many requests, the US Postal Service has opened a branch in our neighborhood, on the northeast corner of 4th and Bainbridge. Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm; Saturday: 8:30 am to 2:00 pm. Note: If we don't use this Post Office we will lose it!

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In Society Hill  
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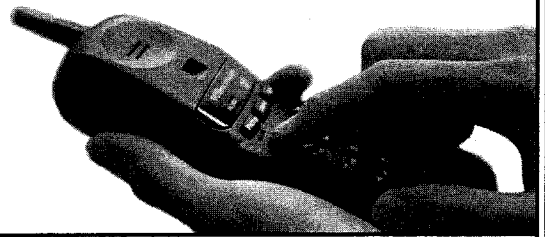
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133 Pine Street	220 Delancey Street
214 Pine Street	729 Bradford Walk
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## Welcoming a New Museum in Our Neighborhood

The National Liberty Museum, dedicated to combating violence and bigotry by celebrating America's heritage of freedom, formally opened its doors on January 12, 2000. The city's newest museum is located at 321 Chestnut St., just three blocks east of Independence Hall in the heart of Philadelphia's most historic square mile.

Using computer interactives, videos and thought-provoking exhibits, the museum honors more than 350 people who have achieved extraordinary accomplishments by standing up to inequity and injustice and reaching out to help others. Each of the museum's seven galleries is enhanced with fine art, including over 90 paintings, bronzes and contemporary glass sculptures that are used as a metaphor for the fragile nature of liberty.

The museum maintains an education center that provides re-

source materials for teachers and features several exhibits geared toward young people. "This museum is intended for visitors of all ages, but is designed to speak especially to young people," said Irvin Borowsky, the museum's founder and chairman and a Society Hill neighbor. "We want them to know that heroism isn't a rare quality that only a limited few possess, but rather something we can all achieve if we support our country's principle of freedom and participate in the betterment of our society."

The nonprofit National Liberty Museum is now open to the public Tuesdays through Sundays, from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and \$3 for students. Group rates and evening hours are available. For more information, call 215-925-2800 or visit the museum's Web site at: [www.libertymuseum.org](http://www.libertymuseum.org).

## Philadelphia Open House Tours 2000: Society Hill Always a Favorite

Now in its 22nd consecutive year, the first Philadelphia Open House Tour program, coordinated by the Friends of Independence National Historical Park, began right here in Society Hill. From its inception these walking tours of Society Hill have allowed people to look behind usually closed doors of selected homes, gardens and notable places. The program was a great success, and it has spawned what is now one of the most recognized tour programs nationally.

This year the series of tours throughout the Philadelphia region begins on April 27th and continues through May 21st. If you are interested in joining any of 39 different tours — some of which are guided motorcoach excursions and others which are simply self-guided walking tours — call the office of the Friends of Independence to receive a descriptive brochure in the mail: 215-928-1188. Remember to register early to guarantee a place on the tour(s) of your choice, because space is limited on all tours.

Along with several newly created tours that promise surprising directions, the most popular and "old favorite" tour is, of course, the tour of Society Hill. Scheduled for Sunday, May 7th from 1 - 5 pm, this season's selection of homes includes historic townhouses, as well as contemporary homes designed by renowned architects.

Behind the pristine, harmonious streetscape of our beloved neighborhood, visitors on this self-guided walking tour will have the opportunity to see a dazzling variety of furnishings, art and antiques and delightful gardens. The price per person is \$35, and this includes a break for refreshments. Interested in seeing what your neighbors' houses are like? Call 215-928-1188 to register.

By the way, if you would like to show off your home for the benefit of both Independence Park, as well as the Society Hill Civic Association, please phone our local coordinator, Linda Skale, at 215-922-6352. (Showing off your home is a great incentive to attack any of those unfinished projects you've been meaning to do.)

Last year our community's generosity yielded a \$5,000 profit

for the Civic Association. Another benefit is that showcasing our neighborhood is an incentive to spiff up the streetscape with flower baskets and other decorative items. We hope you can join us as either a tour-goer, a host or hostess at a home site, or as one willing to open the doors to your home for a good cause.

## Department of Home Care Watch Out For Ice!

Did you have ice forming on the outside of your downspout during the recent cold spell?

If so, your downspout and the drain into which it leads are probably clogged. Leaves and other debris from your roof, if not removed each spring and fall, can collect in the pipes, thereby preventing the water from your roof from flowing smoothly through.

Overflowing water not only freezes in the winter forming icicles, but also freezes within the downspout where the ice can expand and split the pipe seams. Overflowing water can damage brick walls, wood cornices and even the interior plaster walls and ceilings of

your home.

If clogging seems to be a problem, clean the accumulated debris out of your gutters. If you need the name of a reliable contractor, the Society Hill Civic Association maintains a list of contractors who have satisfactorily worked for Society Hill neighbors. If you would like a copy of the list of contractors, contact Martha Levine: 215-629-0727.

**Check  
Your  
Downspout**

## Neighbors & Businesses United: South Street Headhouse District Celebrates

The South Street Headhouse District has scheduled its 8th Annual Dinner for Monday, May 1, at the Sheraton Society Hill. The theme is "Neighbors & Businesses United" and the entertainment will be a South Street Fashion Show that will knock your socks off! We hope that this season's dinner will again bring merchants and nearby communities together for this celebratory, get-to-know your neighbors experience. Price per dinner and entertainment is \$65 per person. Call the District office for tickets or more information: 215-413-3713.

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## 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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# Independence Library Branch Slated for Fall 2000 Opening!

The Independence Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia, located in 9,000 square feet of first-floor space at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, 18 South 7th Street, is on schedule to open this fall. A fund-raising committee has been formed to ensure its collection of materials is world class.

When the library opens, it will feature six-day-a-week service during the school year, 12 networked computers, a special area for teens and a preschool center with a magic garden theme designed to capture the diversity of the community. A new meeting room, containing audiovisual equipment, will also be available. In addition, the branch will be the first to feature self-checkout technology.

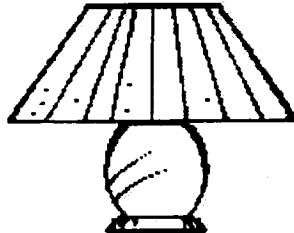
"This library will be a showcase branch," said Liza Seltzer, Society Hill Civic Association member and chair of the East Philadelphia Coalition for a Free Library Branch. "We want the collection to be as exceptional. Our goal is to raise \$230,000 to augment collections that take into account the area demographics. For instance, we would like to enhance the Library's Asian, children, and gay and lesbian collections. So much happened in this area of Philadelphia, special emphasis on an American history collection would be great."

Businesses and individuals in the communities surrounding the new Independence Branch who would like to contribute can contact Liza at 215-625-7995.

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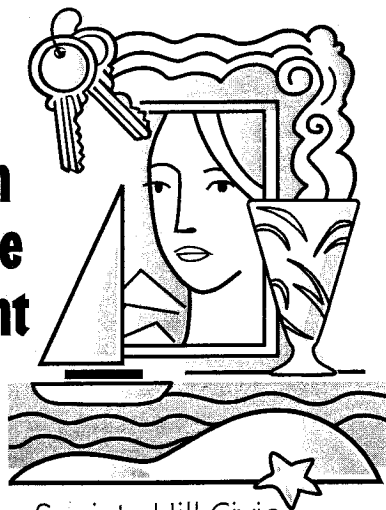
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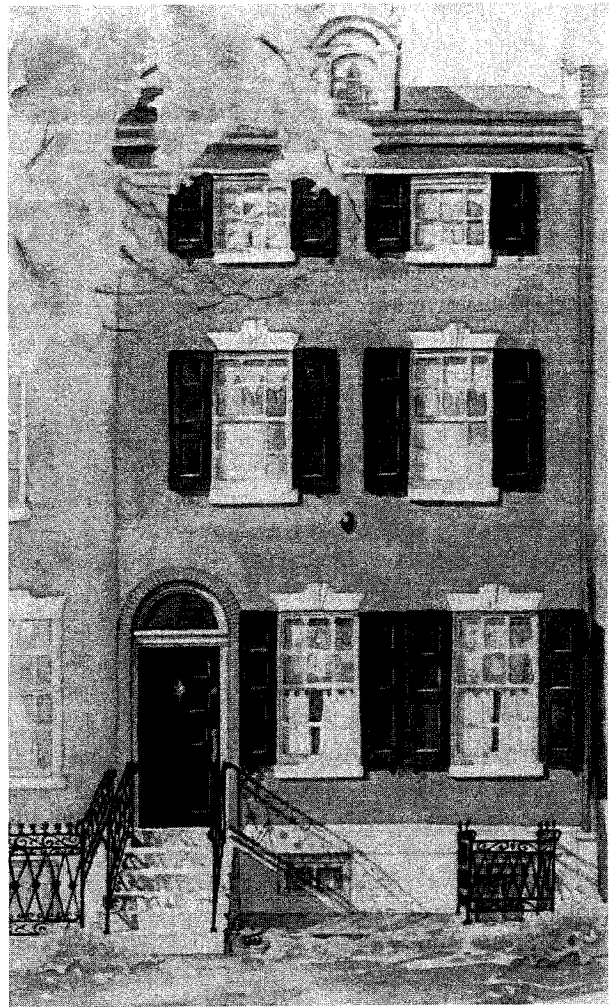
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# Society Hill: From a Local Developer's Perspective

By Mark Wade

Just 13 short years ago, upon my arrival to Philadelphia, I came to discover Society Hill. Having never seen a "row" home before, I was intrigued by the attraction that many seem to have for this historic neighborhood of houses which lacked amenities that I had always taken for granted: driveways, front lawns and new construction.

As a new resident in Philadelphia I began making my living selling real estate, which I continued to do for eight years. I then turned my knowledge of local real estate into development, since I saw an opportunity to create new living spaces out of the available stock of wonderful older, but often deteriorating homes in Center City. Soon I began to focus on my favorite part of town, Society Hill. I have invested millions in the Society Hill area, and will continue to do so because the market for this neighborhood remains strong. Here is what I see happening ...

It seemed that in Society Hill's revival during the 1960s, many single-family homes were converted into multi-family dwellings, as the rental market presented itself as the "highest and best" use for these buildings. I don't see this as being the case any longer. Personally, I have been responsible for taking houses with a total of 16 rental units and converting them back to five single-family homes. The other homes I had purchased in the neighborhood were already existing single-family dwellings. Thus, "highest and best" use for many Society Hill homes in "A" locations is for single families. I see that trend continuing for a long time to come. This trend is fueled by a number of factors.

First of all, the 2000 census predicts Center City to be the only community in Philadelphia that will increase its population over the next ten years. There's simply more demand for housing in town! The next reason is the improvements we have seen everywhere in the past decade.

Just look at the progress: our bond rating is high, the Republican National Convention is coming, the streets are clean, the hotel industry is booming, and tourism is a central focus of local government. Big cities as a whole are now more favorable in the eyes of buyers nationwide, and livability of our fair city is perceptually at a high. Time can't erase the headway that we have made - not easily anyway!

But demographics is what I see as the biggest factor that will continue to escalate the value of Society Hill for now and for the next several years! After World War II, families abandoned city life for the greener pastures—that is, the suburbs—as though they were leaving a sinking ship. And come hell or high water, they weren't coming back!

These Baby Boomers are now Empty Nesters. And, unlike their parents, they don't hold anti-city sentiments or prejudices. Besides being more open to city life, (remember: we're talking about the groovy, mid-60s, young adult "mod" set here), these folks see their suburban (empty nesting) friends make the move back to where the action is — Center City Philadelphia. And, now that their kids are grown and gone from home, they don't need those five-bedroom ranchers in Bala.

These are the folks who are fueling the demand for Center City living. Generally they are more affluent than their parents, and they look to spend their new-found freedom where perceptually, and realistically, things are happening! It is now the "in" thing to do...thus, the demand for single-family, upscale housing is strong.

Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the market was soft, the \$200,000 and under homes moved at a slow but steady pace. Young doctors and lawyers working in town were the core of this buying population at that time—as everybody needs a roof over their head. But the upper level homes—primarily in Society Hill—didn't attract these upwardly mobile home buyers, because who the heck wanted to live in town in those days? Only the rare individual. Which means that houses in the \$500,000 price range were dead. You couldn't give away a home of that kind at that time!

But now, with the city being on the move as it is, with Baby Boomers now becoming Empty Nesters, the idea of city living has become fashionable. The demand for the \$500,000 house is now the strongest segment of our market here — with multiple offers for a single residence, and buyers paying above the asking price. This is now more the norm than the exception!

Today, the latest trend is that perspective home buyers are even purchasing multi-unit buildings and converting them back to single-family dwellings. This trend is occurring not only among developers seeking profits, but also by people who need homes to live in - the benchmark of a strong real estate market.

Today the hottest ticket in town seems to be the high-end market. During the period of 1988 through 1996, not a home in Society Hill sold for more than \$1 million (to my knowledge). But in the past few years we have seen almost a dozen of these high-end properties passing hands.

And guess who is buying them? That's right! Suburban Empty Nesters as well as—here you may be somewhat surprised—the 20 to 30 something set. Another group which we have seen increasingly here is the transferee set. No longer do these corporate transferees automatically move to the suburbs. They don't want to spend hours of every day driving on the expressway for the amenities found in Center City—fine restaurants and shops, the orchestra & theater, etc. Therefore, Center City is now their first and usually their only stop. They find our town to be clean, safe, appealing and livable, which they did not perceive as few as ten years ago.

Do we have a reason to be optimistic? You bet we do!...Incidentally, my current restoration project will transform a historic house at 264 S. 3rd Street into a wonderful home. Interested? Call me at 215-546-8228.

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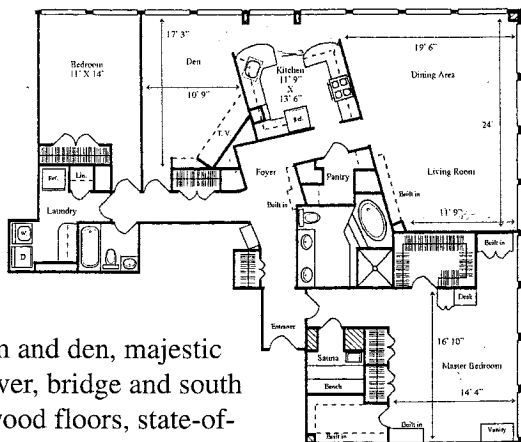
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