



SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

www.societyhillcivic.com

National Constitution Center to Open Soon



Laura Linton
Executive Vice President,
National Constitution
Center

Attendees at our civic association's General Membership Meeting on Wednesday, January 15th will be treated to an informative presentation by Laura Linton, Executive Vice President of the National Constitution Center. This world-class museum and study center—the first of its kind dedicated to the U.S. Constitution, its history and relevance in our lives—has been created with vision and innovation. Ms. Linton will give us a preview of the new museum, which will open its doors on Independence Mall six months from now: July 4th, 2003. Mark your calendar and be sure to attend the Center's grand opening festivities.

Ms. Linton's slide presentation will summarize and demonstrate some of the museum's nearly 100 interactive, multi-media exhibits and programs that will engage the minds and hearts of people from all walks of life and from every age

group—whether 8 or 80. These exhibits will journey through time, beginning with the Revolutionary period and arriving at “constitutional issues” of the present day.

The story of “We, the People” will be told in the Center's star-shaped Kimmel Theater, where “Freedom Rising,” a 17-minute program which combines a live actor, film and video projection will be seen. The culminating experience for museum visitors will occur in Signers' Hall, as they walk among life-size bronze statues of the 42 men who took part in one of the seminal moments in American history—when 39 individuals signed the Constitution and three dissented on September 17, 1787. Here visitors may symbolically affirm their own constitutional beliefs and sign their names to a facsimile Constitution in a custom-made signing book that will be permanently displayed.

Architect's model of the National Constitution Center, slated for a grand opening on July 4, 2003



WED.

January

15

Board Meeting

6:00 p.m.

All Society Hill Civic Association members are welcome to attend.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association Meetings
Wednesday, January 15, 2003

Mother Bethel Church
Corner of 6th and Lombard Streets

General Membership Meeting

7:00 p.m. Meet and Greet Your Neighbors

7:30 p.m. Membership Meeting Begins

All Society Hill residents are invited to attend.

Mother Bethel AME Church to Host Meeting

All neighbors are invited to attend SHCA's General Membership Meeting, at 7 p.m., which is being graciously hosted by Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, at 419 S. 6th Street. At the meeting, we will also hear a few words about Mother Bethel's ambitious plans to expand and improve its facility. (See the July/August *Reporter* for an in-depth article about the history of Mother Bethel Church, its founder, Richard Allen, and plans for the future.)

Greetings to Everyone for a
Happy and Peaceful Year in 2003.



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Please include your name and telephone number with your submission. Letters to the editor and announcements will not be published (no matter how newsworthy!) unless they are signed.
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P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

Penn's Landing Deserves a Gem of a Plan

Let the public, with the assistance of planning professionals, tell the developers what WE envision.

Inga Saffron of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote an important series on Penn's Landing, in part comparing it with waterfront development in other cities. She suggests that the planning process in Philadelphia was flawed, recommending community involvement be an integral part of a new approach for the development of this important site—a factor that was missing in the past. Given the lack of success in implementing the flawed plans of previously selected developers for Penn's Landing, a new approach is clearly required. Penn's Landing is an urban park and, like Fairmount Park, it should be treated with deference.

In today's era of full disclosure, I need to "fess up." In 1984 I put together a development team which requested Piers 11, 13-15, 19 and 21 North be put up for public bid. My group was the only bidder, as no one else saw any future in the waterfront. We built the city's first full-service marina consisting of 300 boat slips; created the first entertainment deck (home of Rock Lobster); converted the first pier for restaurants (Dave and Busters and Menji-En), and turned charred pilings into an 85,000 square-foot parking deck.

When others became interested in the area, I helped organize the Philadelphia Waterfront Developers Council, which focused on improving the abysmal infrastructure. The Council retained an architectural firm and, with Senator Vincent Fumo's support, promoted a plan to redesign Delaware Avenue from a pothole-laden truck route into a waterfront boulevard. The completed and renamed Columbus Boulevard is the result of that effort. With our prodding the long-stalled ramps from I-95 were built, connecting this interstate highway with the previously isolated waterfront. Through lobbying, we succeeded in getting the city's foul-smelling incinerator closed and made that

area environmentally clean—plus the car impoundment lot at Delaware and Spring Garden Streets was moved. Both sites are now available for development.

I originated the idea to light the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. With leadership from Society Hill resident Diane Semingson (then the City Representative who had a penchant for lighting) and supported by the mayors of Philadelphia and Camden, a bi-state committee was formed to light the bridge in commemoration of the Bicentennial of the Constitution. The wonderful lighting design by the late architect Steve Izenour continues to surprise and delight visitors and residents.

In 1989, shortly after William Rouse withdrew as developer, I formed another company that bid on Penn's Landing. Our plan was more low-rise and almost entirely entertainment oriented. The former Meridian Bank committed to provide the financing. However, the city chose a suburban-type shopping mall design, a repeatedly selected and failed concept that is the wrong idea.

What is the right idea? Follow the lead of SHCA in its approach to Foglietta Plaza. Our association retained a world-recognized land-planning firm, Olin Partnership, that designed New York's Battery and Bryant Parks. SHCA assembled a committee of residents to work with Olin. We also received input from Society Hills Towers, Penn's Landing Square, adjacent commercial property owners, elected officials, and from SHCA's board and membership. We have a plan that, if funded, will be a real winner for our neighborhood and the city.

Penn's Landing Corporation should do the same. Retain a premier land-planning firm. Trust public input. Complete a real public planning process. Let the public, with the assistance of seasoned professionals, tell the developers what we envision for our publicly funded, urban waterfront. Penn's Landing is a gem. The development process should treat it as the community jewel it could be.



Malcolm Lazin
President

See page 7
for more about
Penn's Landing.

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 Don't Fence Me In

Independence Square Behind Barricades



Sign of the times: Barricades restrict access to Independence Square.

Safety concerns prompted the city & federal government to make plans for protecting our historic shrines.

Walker Gilmore of the Philadelphia Planning Commission tells us that his agency and many others, official and neighborhood-based, are actively involved in addressing the issue of safety at Independence Square. The Streets Department engaged the Edwards and Kelsey firm to respond to a confidential report from the National Park Service (NPS) about safety concerns at one of the nation's most historic squares. Based on these concerns, the Park Service would prefer to fence in the Square from Market Street to Sansom or possibly even to Walnut Street.

Phil Sheridan, spokesperson for Independence National Historical Park, reminded us that in 1997 the Park Service proposed closing all vehicular traffic along the 500 block of Chestnut Street in order to protect Independence Hall. But the city and nearby neighborhoods, including ours, were opposed to this disruption of traffic flow. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, the NPS consulted an outside security firm that made a series of recommendations. As a result, the Park Service has closed off Chestnut Street to all vehicular traffic and has installed perimeter boundaries to control access to Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell—with the idea that it is better to be safe than sorry—because the mission of the Park Service, after all, is to preserve its historic sites and to protect its visitors.

Then on December 1, 2002, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* published an editorial opposing the closure of Chestnut Street. This editorial spurred the creation of the "Coalition to Free

Chestnut Street," a group whose sole purpose is to reclaim the 500 block of the street. The coalition has circulated a petition, signed by hundreds of people, that call for the reopening of Chestnut Street. It has support from businesses, cultural institutions, residents and several communities, including Old City Civic Association, Center City District, Old City District, and, provisionally, SHCA. The group, led by Ken Kaiserman (the Bourse), John Keenan (the Omni Hotel) and Ann Meredith (Lights of Liberty) has lobbied for a meeting with the mayor who has authority to reopen the street.

But surprising front-page news in the *Inquirer* on December 21st claimed that the city will definitely close the block "for good." According to the paper, this breaking news was based on a decision made by the city's Managing Director Estelle Richman months ago, and Mayor Street apparently agrees with her decision, which was made public in the midst of the holiday season. The article went on to say that leaders of the Coalition to Free Chestnut Street had been trying to meet with the mayor for weeks, but had received no response. Nor have there been any public meetings on the subject. So one question we ask is: Is this really a done deal?

Another unanswered question regarding the closure of this street and adjacent ones in this central business, residential and historic neighborhood is whether or not a threat assessment has been conducted by the FBI or other national security agency. Since we don't have the answer, and because our civic association does not recognize the NPS as a national security agency, SHCA has joined the coalition—with a proviso: if the FBI or other national security agency concludes that it is important to close Chestnut Street, we will support that decision.

Whatever happens, however, the Center City District is presently looking at ways to make the barricaded area less intimidating and more user-friendly. They have suggested, for example, better cleanup of the exterior sites, and clearer signage—thus giving improved directions to tourists—assuming that tourism will continue in spite of the current obstacles. For those of us who live here, however, and for some of our elected officials (Senator Arlen Specter, for one), the present barricaded compound sends the wrong message.



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Meanwhile, city planners are currently studying a report on the impact of traffic patterns resulting from these barricades. One suggestion is to improve the appearance of these barriers with shrubbery and flowers, similar to the White House. While we may not be able to avoid a change in the current traffic patterns, we may be able to make the Square more welcoming to pedestrians, while keeping it safe for all of us.

Although at press time, the closure of Chestnut Street seems to be a "closed" subject, there still may be room to express your opinion. You can add your name to the petition by faxing it to:

215-733-0901

P E T I T I O N T O F R E E C H E S T N U T S T R E E T

"We, the undersigned businesses and civic organizations, strongly oppose the continued closure of the 500 block of Chestnut Street and the possible closures of 5th and 6th Streets. The closure has severely compromised the vitality, accessibility, transportation, beauty, livelihood and enterprise of Historic Philadelphia, as well as the very fabric of the community and surrounding neighborhoods."

Name: _____

Title: _____

Business/Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Add my name as a Coalition supporter and include it in the Coalition's petition to elected officials.

Property Tax Update

Evans' Bill Moves Tax Debate to Harrisburg

State Representative Dwight Evans has promised to introduce a measure allowing the city to place an annual 4% cap on real estate tax increases.

Spurred by angry taxpayers whose property taxes have increased, City Council members responded with a variety of measures to provide relief. Two bills sponsored by Councilman Frank DiCicco and supported by SHCA would freeze taxes at current rates—but they were tabled. Three other bills were passed by Council on November 21st. A bill proposed by Councilman Brian O'Neill would cap increases at 4%, but this requires action by the state legislature when it returns from its January recess.

The most recent news, at press time, is that our city's final hope in curbing these seemingly arbitrary tax increases may lie with the state legislature and Governor-elect Ed Rendell. State Representative Dwight Evans has promised to introduce a measure allowing the city to place an annual 4% cap on real estate tax increases, which would essentially enact the O'Neill bill. Evans' proposal is the necessary


ingredient under state law that would permit the city to enact a 4% cap bill—which was approved by City Council in November. The wild card in this four-month long tax increase debate is whether Rendell will sign the 4% cap law or veto it.

Approximately 229,000 of Philadelphia's 451,000 residential property owners received notices that their taxes would increase next year. Many of these property assessments increased by more than 10%, while assessments for about 900 increased in excess of 100%!

For continuous updates on this highly charged and still unresolved subject, check the website of the Coalition for Fair Taxes at www.phillytaxes.org. This citywide group, organized by former city deputy commerce director Terry Gillen, is working to bring the property tax battle to an equitable conclusion.

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Penn's Landing

The Public Speaks Out

With a unified voice, citizens call for a thoughtful master plan to guide development of the city's waterfront.

The future of Penn's Landing has been much discussed in the news lately. The city is presently calling for Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) in order to begin selecting another developer for this major waterfront site. In addition, Mayor Street has scheduled a series of hearings inviting community input, with the idea that the developer selected should take into account public opinion when coming up with a master plan.

However, "We, the People" believe that the administration's current process is flawed for several reasons: First, these public hearings were scheduled with very little lead time, not giving communities and their representatives sufficient time to meet and make their recommendations. If public input is truly welcome, then these public hearings would not be taking place at the busiest time of the year—beginning December 19th and concluding mid-January, 2003. This is inadequate time to receive public input.

A second flaw in the city's process is that RFQs and RFPs have been issued when there is no consensus about what the waterfront should ultimately become. Finding out what "We the People" envision for this most important river site should be the administration's first step—not choosing a developer. We've lived through enough proposals by enough developers over the past 20 years. Developers have not been able to come up with an adequate plan for this critical site.

At press time, some public hearings have already been held, although with very short notice. For example, on December 19th two hearings were conducted at the Independence Seaport Museum. People from communities all across the city spoke out, and the prevailing theme heard over and over is that this vital riverfront should be a "people's park," not a commercial or residential development.

At the afternoon session, SHCA President Malcolm Lazin spoke about the need for hiring a highly qualified land-planning firm to design a charrette, similar to the process our associa-

tion used when analyzing the adjacent Foglietta Plaza site. Other Society Hillers spoke, including architects Penny Batcheler and SHCA Vice-president Bonnie Halda. Civic activists Jo Ann Buller and Bernice Hamel also reiterated the common theme that Penn's Landing belongs to the people, and that soliciting Requests for Proposals by January 2003, as the administration intends, is premature. Another significant point stressed by several people, including Society Hill residents Richard Lush and Donald Bean, who both spoke at the evening session, is that people embrace Penn's Landing in its present incarnation—as an open and airy space for public festivals and celebrations.

People embrace Penn's Landing in its present incarnation—an open and airy space for public festivals and celebrations.

Neighbor John Lawson, FAIA, an erudite architect, spoke about the need for increasing access for pedestrians and bicycles to the water's edge. All speakers agreed that developers should be solicited only after community input is heard and a master plan formulated—one that takes community input into account.

To the administration's credit, it recently created a website to welcome dialogue about Penn's Landing. To post your comments, go to <http://pennslanding.phila.gov> and click on the "Login" or "Forum" tabs at the top of the page.

Because the future of the waterfront affects so many of us directly, you may want to take a few moments to visit the Penn's Landing Development Project website to let the city know *your* vision for its future. And while you're at it, you can ask that more time be given so that more public opinion can be expressed.

Additional public hearings on the fate of Penn's Landing:
Thursday, January 9, 2003 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. sessions
Temple University Kiva Auditorium/Ritter Hall Annex
1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue (at Park Avenue)

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As appeared in the January 2002 issue
of *Philadelphia Magazine*

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 Who's Minding the Store?

Neighborhood Activists Keep a Watchful Eye

Society Hill is fortunate that its citizenry includes many who care deeply about the quality of life in our historic area. Our website, www.societyhillcivic.com, lists the committees now operating, which include, for example: Zoning & Historical Preservation; Sidewalk/Anti-Graffiti; Independence Branch Free Library; Foglietta Plaza; Washington Square; and, of course, the *Reporter*. The list goes on and is subject to change and updating that reflects neighborhood needs. Block coordinators are an integral part of the volunteer efforts. They are "on-call" to disseminate information, answer questions, and address concerns from those who call with neighborhood issues. If you don't know your block coordinator, log onto SHCA's website or contact Martha Levine, chair of the committee, at 215-629-0727 or marthalev@aol.com.

New Alliance for Neighbors, Businesses and Government

Recently a meeting of the South Street Alliance was held at the office of the city's Managing Director Estelle Richman. Participants included business representatives, elected and appointed government officials, and presidents or vice presidents of neighborhood associations affected by South Street events. SHCA Vice President Bernice Hamel represented Society Hill, while other nearby community organizations—Queen Village, Washington Square West, Bella Vista and Hawthorne—were represented by their officers. The purpose of this quarterly Alliance is to deal with frustrations that residents and businesses have experienced regarding bureaucratic hang-ups. The Alliance intends to take preventive measures dealing with problems that result from South Street happenings—particularly Mardi Gras and the Greek Picnic. The hope is that this forum will provide dialogue and structure needed to address issues in a timely, effective

manner and reduce the delay and annoyance of "red tape" which diminishes our quality of life.

Coalition of Philadelphia Neighborhood Associations

In the spirit of citywide cooperation to improve all neighborhoods, a large-scale volunteer organization, The Coalition of Philadelphia Neighborhood Associations (CPNA) has been reestablished. CPNA hopes that large groups of voters from broad sections of the city will attract the attention of our elected officials and be a successful conduit for spreading information that informed citizens can use. Our civic association is a member of CPNA, and SHCA participates in most CPNA sessions.

South Street Headhouse District

The South Street Headhouse District (SSHD) is also active in our neighborhood. Unlike neighborhood associations, the SSHD is not a volunteer organization but an independent municipal authority that derives its revenues by taxing business properties located within its self-defined boundaries. (Residential properties within the District are not taxed.) The SSHD's mission is to provide a safe, clean, well-managed community. It supports the South Street Police Detail located in the Fresh Fields/Whole Foods complex on South Street. The District pays most of the operating costs for the Detail, except police salaries. Both the South Street Police Detail and SSHD work closely with the city and the 3rd Police District to keep the South Street area a desirable destination for shopping, dining and entertainment.

From block coordinators to city officials, there are many who truly care about Philadelphia's neighborhoods, and in so doing, they care about the city as a whole. If it seems that mission statements may have a bit of overlap, remember: many hands make light work!



Update on Proposed Change for Creating Historic Districts

As reported in the previous edition of the *Reporter*, a disturbing new ordinance was proposed that would limit the Historical Commission's authority to designate new Historic Districts within the City of Philadelphia.

Our civic association, together with other organizations, opposed the bill, which was proposed by Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell. This vocal opposition was coordinated by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.

For the time being this bill is in hibernation, but we'll keep you posted if there is any movement to go forward with a bill that would undermine the Historical Commission's high standards and professional processes.

Kids' Beat

New Column Focuses on Children



Keri White

Welcome to Kids' Beat! I am thrilled to present a column dealing with the rewards and benefits, trials and tribulations, issues, decisions, and occasional hilarity we face while raising children in Society Hill. This new column in the *Reporter* features issues that affect the growing number of young families who are choosing to stay here in Society Hill rather than migrate to the "burbs."

Kids' Beat will address topics such as schools, restaurants, parks, recreation and culture... and, of course, I welcome feedback and suggestions from readers on subjects that warrant attention. I hope to provide a "kids quote" for each issue—something that only a Society Hill kid would say, that epitomizes the reasons we all stay. Please e-mail your best quotes along with the child's first name and age to SHCA's administrator, Matt DeJulio, at MattDeJulio@aol.com.

Editors' Note: We welcome Keri White, who has recently joined the staff of the *Reporter* as our children's columnist. This column will cover topics concerning children and young families working and living in Society Hill.

Keri is the mother of two young children (Cormick, 6 and Kelsey, 3), who have been her full-time job for the past six years. Before that, she taught 7th grade at St. Mary's School, served as Director of Public Relations for the Police Athletic League of Philadelphia, and wrote for the *University City News* as well as various freelance clients.

Keri moved to Society Hill in 1994 with her husband Matthew, an attorney with Wolf, Block, Schorr and Solis-Cohen. They have been members of the Society Hill Civic Association since their arrival, as well as avid users and supporters of Three Bears Park.

"I want to go to Morimoto for dinner."

**Cormick, age 6
Society Hill Kid**



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Being a Good Neighbor

Avoiding Legal Tangles

Regulations pertaining to the most common causes of neighborhood discord and potential liability for homeowners—such as trees, sidewalks or pavement, and trash—have been the focus of previous articles in the *Reporter's* continuing series on responsibilities of homeownership. In this installment, we touch on other likely trouble spots that can cause conflict, at best, or tragedy, at worst. Neighbors, by definition, must practice tolerance and live in peace with one another. To be a good neighbor, we suggest vigilance regarding the following potential nuisances:

- **Noise**

Most ordinances against noise and/or noisy neighbors are enforced by police, landlords, neighborhood associations, and courts. Homeowners are financially liable if an angry neighbor can show that noise is excessive and disturbing and that the homeowner has been requested to curb a disturbance but has not complied.

- **Animals**

You are responsible for your dog's barking and for respecting leash and "pooper-scooper" laws. Numbers and types of animals allowed on a given property are restricted as well, and animal owners must comply or risk liability.

- **Zoning**

Be aware that your "terrific" plan to convert a single-family dwelling into apartments or begin a business in your home may be against our city's zoning code. Please check with the SHCA's Zoning Committee or with the city's Zoning Board before beginning your construction project.

- **Views**

While there is no legal "right" to air, light or views, you, the homeowner, must show that any construction project impairing your neighbor's view has reasonable use to you. You may not maliciously block a neighbor's view.

- **Fences**

Urban fence rules often carefully detail whether a fence can be built at all, and, if so, may regulate its height, location and construction material. Do not think that the hedge fence you built is not a fence—because it is. Also, don't think "out of sight, out of mind" or build a "spite fence" that does not serve a reasonable purpose. Liability to the owner looms.

- **Boundaries and Easements**

The boundary between you and your neighbor must be clear, or those involved must take legal steps to ascertain an agreed-upon boundary. Don't find yourself involved in trespassing issues or unclear titles in which you may lose financially. Easements are legal rights to use another person's land for a particular purpose. Often the easement belongs to a utility company. Sometimes the easement belongs to another property owner who has an easement for use such as a driveway or sewer access.

- **Water**

You are liable for causing water damage to a neighbor's property if, for example, you leave on your outdoor sprinkler while you are away.

- **Attractive Nuisances**

An "attractive nuisance" is a potentially harmful object on your property that is so enticing it could draw a child onto your property to investigate. If the child is harmed while satisfying natural curiosity, you are responsible. A discarded refrigerator with its door attached or an idling lawnmower are examples of such nuisances that can bring financial responsibility—not to mention tragedy—to a property owner.

Homeowners must keep in mind that with the joy of homeownership comes responsibility to know and obey laws designed to help us be good neighbors. Common sense and simple courtesy are the underpinnings of most laws and regulations.

GIFT RECEIVED AT HOLIDAY SOCIAL

\$100,000 Check Given to SHCA

SHCA's Holiday Party on December 4th was a great success. Hosted by the Omni Hotel in its beautiful Azalea Room, participating association members were treated to luscious hors d'oeuvres and complimentary drinks. But the high point of the evening occurred when State Representative Marie Lederer presented a check for \$100,000 to SHCA's President Malcolm Lazin. This generous gift is targeted for our association's



Foglietta Plaza project (or other community capital improvements) which may ultimately result in a whole new look and function for the plaza. Represent-

ative Lederer stressed that Society Hill is an important neighborhood in Philadelphia—not only for its residents—but for the entire city. We send applause to Marie!

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Z O N I N G & H I S T O R I C P R E S E R V A T I O N

SHCA's Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee (ZHP) continues to work with property owners in the neighborhood. As always, the committee urges owners to present their plans to us prior to seeking approvals from the Historical Commission or the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). Presentations can be arranged by contacting Paul Boni, ZHP chair, at paulboni@bonilaw.com, or SHCA's Administrator, Matt DeJulio, at MattDeJulio@aol.com or 215-629-1288.

The following properties are currently being monitored by the committee:

224 Delancey Street: At our December 9th meeting, we learned from the owners and their architect that they seek a zoning variance to enlarge the house in excess of the code's percentage lot coverage limitation. (The code requires that a certain amount of area on every property be open space.) Historically, and even where the current neighbors do not object, the ZHP has taken a very hard line against projects that would encroach upon existing open space. This is because no one resides in a home indefinitely, and long-term, future neighbors could be negatively affected by such short-term decisions. Although this proposed project would exceed the code by only a few percentage points, our committee chose to abide by our policy and not support the project. At press time, the owner's hearing at the Zoning Board has not yet occurred. The ZHP believes it important to maintain our precedent for other situations, including those where owners build out their houses to the maximum extent allowable under the code, intentionally waiting a few years to attempt to obtain a variance for a second addition—arguing for leniency due to the project exceeding the limits by only a few percentage points.

420 South 2nd Street Update: As described in the previous issue of the *Reporter*, at our October 14th meeting the owners of the 12th Street Cantina presented the committee with a proposal for a Mexican-style restaurant—to be called Rosalita's, which would not apply for a liquor license nor have BYOB plans. This new eatery would occupy the currently vacant storefront immediately adjacent to Cosi at the corner of Lombard Street. The property is located within the boundaries of the South Street Headhouse District (SSHD), which is a municipal authority that provides additional safety and sanitation services within its designated area. The ZHP committee gave its support for the project with the condition that the restaurant be mindful of undue litter, exhaust, signage and sidewalk clutter, but SSHD's board opposes it because they do not want any additional "take-out" restaurants

in the area. At press time the property owner has postponed his ZBA hearing so as to continue negotiations with the District.

277 S. 3rd Street Update: We are pleased to report that the owner has at last removed the unsightly yellow "for sale" banner that was causing much consternation. The neighbors, especially on the 200 Block of 3rd Street, submitted a lengthy written petition bringing this matter to the attention of L&I. The ZHP committee also sent a letter to L&I complaining about the banner. L&I determined that the sign was illegal, issued two violations, and assessed a fine against the owner. In sum, due to the advocacy of neighbors and our committee, L&I took action. Now a professional, appropriate "for sale" sign is displayed. In the meantime the owner applied for Historical Commission approval for exterior changes. We objected, and his application was denied.

400-414 Walnut Street Update: The SHCA is currently in litigation regarding the conversion of this large commercial building into 67 residential apartments, located at the important corner of 4th and Walnut Streets. The developer, Turchi, Inc., obtained a zoning variance for the construction of a penthouse unit; however, due to our committee's advocacy, the Zoning Board of Adjustment conditioned the variance based on the requirement that Turchi has an agreement with an offsite parking lot that provides space for 67 vehicles. The penthouse is currently under construction, and so we asked the city what sort of parking agreement had been put in place. We learned that Turchi procured a one-paragraph letter from a parking garage on the 700 block of Sansom Street indicating that the garage owner will entertain offers from Turchi's tenants for parking spots at standard rates. When we inquired about this with L&I, Deputy Administrator David Perri informed us that, indeed, L&I believes the Sansom garage letter does not satisfy the Zoning Board's condition. Unfortunately, Perri also informed us that L&I considers this to be a mere "operational" issue and, therefore, will not revoke the building permit for the penthouse. So, no thanks to L&I, construction continues while our court case marches on.

Another troubling note is that when L&I approved the building's conversion to 67 residential units without providing a single onsite parking space, it had based its decision on an outdated version of the Zoning Code—a version that does not include applicable language requiring onsite parking, which forms the very heart of our court case.

American Heroes are Honored as Washington Square is



Malcolm L. Lazin, President of the Society Hill Civic Association and Chair of its Washington Square Committee spoke before a spellbound audience about the historical significance of this hallowed ground. The words on these pages have been excerpted from his moving presentation.



Offering a wreath, Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter (right) stands beside Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Defense.



WPVI TV news anchor Marc Howard, a Society Hill resident, attended the dedication ceremony.

“Today we congregate on the largest burial site of the soldiers whose sacrifice gave birth to a new nation...we stand on what was Potter’s Field, now Washington Square. Those buried here were captured at Brandywine and Valley Forge.

“This is the place where the British unceremoniously interred in a mass grave the greatest of our patriots...

On Veterans Day, November 11, 2002, the Fairmount Park Commission entrusted the care and management of Washington Square to the National Park Service.



Winchell Carroll, leader of the Washington Square Foundation and the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution brought along his "troops" in period garb to participate at this dedication ceremony.

Incorporated into Independence National Historical Park



Chairman of the Fairmount Park Commission Robert Nix stands beside Marie Rust, Director of the Northeast Region of the National Park Service.

“One hundred and eighty years after those patriots were dumped without a marker, the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier was erected.

On July 4, 1976, the Eternal Flame was dedicated.

On the Bicentennial of the Constitution, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger laid a wreath and paid tribute.

Today, 226 years later, their sacrifice will forever be incorporated into the interpretative literature and guided tours of Independence National Historical Park.

A perpetual military guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier will recognize those long interred soldiers as a continuous beacon for government of, by and for every generation of Americans.”



Veterans of every stripe gathered with their loved ones at the restored Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary Soldier to pay homage to America’s greatest patriots.



Photography by Richard Chaitt



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NOTABLE NEIGHBORS OF THE PAST

Frank Johnson: A Remarkable Musician & Man

One of the historic markers you probably drive by frequently, or even walk by without noticing, is on Pine Street between 5th and 6th Streets. It honors Francis (Frank) Johnson, who lived in the neighborhood in the early 19th century. A native of Martinique, where he was born in 1792 to African parents, Frank Johnson emigrated to Philadelphia in 1809 and became one of the leading composers and bandleaders in the city until his death in 1844. He was first a fiddler, a member of the black marching band led by Matthew Black that grew out of the War of 1812. In 1821 Johnson formed his own group, the "Coloured Black Band." Though it started with a few members, Johnson's band grew to more than 20 musicians in its heyday of the late 1820s, 30s and 40s.

At that time, Philadelphia was bustling with life, music, musicians, composers, and publishers. The Society Hill area was a popular hub for concerts. The Musical Fund Society had been founded in 1820 and well-attended concerts were held at at 3rd and Spruce Streets in the magnificent Washington Hall, designed by Robert Mills. When the crowds grew too large for the Hall, the concerts were moved to the second floor of Carpenters Hall. It was in this atmosphere that Johnson flourished, composing, performing and gaining wide acceptance among blacks and whites. He was a favorite performer at the many balls held by the Philadelphia elite, but his career was not without controversy. One of Johnson's specialties was marching music, although white militia bands frequently refused to play with him here and in upstate New York where he was often invited to perform. His popularity, however, grew when he composed cotillion music and conducted promenades at Saratoga Springs and in Philadelphia.

The Penn Library Keffer Collection of Sheet Music has a number of Johnson's compositions—among them the Philadelphia Firemen's

Cotillion, which is dedicated to Philadelphia firemen who tried valiantly to save children in an orphanage fire in 1822. The Penn website describes Frank Johnson's contributions to American music:

"There is an impressive list of "firsts" associated with Johnson's accomplishments: first black American composer to have works published as sheet music; first to have such a strong influence as to establish a "school" of black musicians; the first black American to give public concerts; the first American musical ensemble, black or white, to present concerts abroad; the first musician to introduce the promenade concert style in America."

In 1837, after a series of European concerts, Frank Johnson gave a command performance for the young, newly crowned Queen Victoria. Always ahead of the game, Johnson played for her his own composition, "Victoria Gallopade." *A Detroit Free Press* article in 1839 said of him: "He stands without rival in the States."



Frank Johnson, from a lithograph by Hoffy, 1846



Johnson's "Philadelphia Firemen's Cotillion" is dedicated to firemen who valiantly tried to save children in an orphanage fire in 1822.

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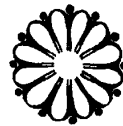
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CONDO CORNER

Independence Place

“Home Sweet Home” is most likely what Independence Place residents call their twin condominium towers—but the history of the site includes an even more literal link to the 19th-century song of the same name.

Today, the bronze, brick, and tinted glass buildings in the 200 block of South 6th Street—25 stories each, comprising over 480 units—are the tallest structures to occupy the area opposite the southeast corner of Washington Square Park. Many of the units have commanding views of the city’s sweep, and all of them enjoy a stone’s-throw proximity to the lush, recently refurbished park.

But until the completion of One Independence Place in 1981 and its companion in 1986, their location was host, for about 200 years, to a rich mix of buildings that rarely rose above the 50-foot mark. City records reveal a history of lavish private residences and humbler row homes, municipal offices, retail stores, small factories, and public spaces.

The oldest structure on that area for which the city’s Historical Commission has records is a house built for a John Hood in 1788—for the princely sum of £380. It sat atop what is now the 6th Street garage opening for Independence Place.

By that year, the city had begun expanding west from its docks, in considerable density, as far as 6th Street. Development farther west was sparser; the block on South 6th bounded to the north by Locust (then Prune) Street became a residential favorite of lawyers, doctors, and other professionals who worked in nearby public buildings.

One lawyer, Richard Rush, built his house in 1809 in the plaza space now between the two condo towers. Rush, the son of Declaration of Independence signer Dr. Benjamin Rush, served as James Monroe’s Secretary of State and John Quincy Adams’ Secretary of Treasury. Others not necessarily found in history books, have also called the block home. For example, the Bobrow Brothers made cigars there as late as the 1930’s, and a U.S. Rubber Products plant anchored space that was to eventually be occupied by the southeast side of the first tower.

Citizens were well-served by Firehouse Engine #37, a distinctive building that was ultimately razed during Mayor Dilworth’s administration.

The landscape evolved with a variety of commercial and residential properties through the 1960s, all the while undergoing a gradual decline in major new construction. By decade’s end, many buildings had been torn down when a developer first proposed a condominium complex for the location—a project that eventually was abandoned. But that developer’s effort laid the underground parking garage and footings for what eventually became Independence Place a few years later.

Construction on that project was announced as Philadelphia’s high-rise boom began percolating in the early 1980’s. Co-developers were the Greenwood Group and Cadillac-Fairview Society Hill Inc., while the Salkin Group was responsible for its architectural design.

The first tower was ready for occupancy in 1981. A softening in both the real estate market and the nation’s economy delayed completion of the second tower until 1986. Nevertheless, Independence Place has enjoyed robust sales and occupancy levels ever since, offering an urbane setting with 24/7 concierge and door service, easy access to commercial office space, and convenient retail shops at ground level.

Truly a “home sweet home”—which brings us full-circle to the popular tune of that name and its connection to Independence Place:

In 1820 the Winter Tivoli Theater was opened by Stanislaus Surin on the property’s northernmost boundary. That music hall became the City Theater in 1822, and a few years later, the Prune Street Theater. Some historians believe it was in that venue, by mid-century, that America’s first hit tune was given its debut: “Home Sweet Home” was the most popular song in the land during the Civil War. But—talk about a show-stopper that “brings down the house”—the Prune Street Theater was razed shortly thereafter, in 1856!



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You're Invited...

Come to a Salsa Soiree

The Young Friends of Independence Park Host a Benefit at the Society Hill Dance Academy

Just when you think it can't get any colder outside and no one is planning anything fun until the warmer months of spring, the Young Friends of Independence Park will be hosting Salsa Soiree on Saturday, January 18th, from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. Take the opportunity to salsa, swing, and tango the night away at the new Society Hill Dance

Academy, located at historic Head House Square, 401 South 2nd Street. Get decked out in your coolest attire and enjoy an evening of dancing and fun. Highlights include dance lessons, a great silent auction, and award-winning wines from Blue Mountain Vineyards, a new neighbor on 4th Street. Members' price is \$35 in advance; non-members' price, \$45 in advance; and the door price is \$60 for everyone, members or not. Reservations can be made by calling Jacqueline Shultz, at 215-928-1188. The Young Friends thank you for supporting Independence Park!



Local Connections...

Map Shows Links to Lewis & Clark History

The Philadelphia Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation (LCTHF) has published a first map of Lewis and Clark related sites in this city. For the first time research has been summarized in map form. The two-sided color map comes with a revised edition of *Contributions of Philadelphia to Lewis and Clark History* by the late Paul Russell Cutright of Jenkintown, who was a faculty member at Beaver College, now Arcadia University.

Cutright used original letters and documents to describe Lewis' activities in Philadelphia. The Foundation's magazine, *We Proceeded On*,

originally published it. The national LCTHF will hold its annual meeting here in the Bicentennial year, August 9-13, 2003, at the Loews Hotel. Area history fans who would like to attend may find details of the program and registration at www.lewisandclarkphila.org. The 50-page booklet with map serves as a fundraiser at \$14 plus \$3.95 S&H. Send check to Philadelphia Chapter, LCTHF, 6010 Cannon Hill Road, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Write or e-mail davistp@mindspring.com for quantity pricing. The Chapter acknowledges support from James Allan Printing and Design Group.



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A Tip from the West Coast: BE PREPARED

One of our neighbors—a transplant from California—offers the following recommendations based on what she and her friends put into practice in earthquake country. These ideas could benefit us in any kind of emergency:

- Should the city’s water supply be interrupted or contaminated, bottled water is easy to stock, but plan on a gallon per day per family member for as long as 10 days. One extra easy source is your water heater—if you shut off the valve bringing water into the house. Baby wipes will get you clean, can be stored easily and don’t waste water.
- In case of power or natural gas outages, have a way to cook and boil water. If you have a gas barbecue, get an extra propane tank if you can safely store it. If not, an old-fashioned, lightweight backpacking stove or a chafing dish with extra fuel might get you through.

• Keep a supply of canned and dried foods, including juices, meats or fish, high energy staples—peanut butter, pasta, dried fruit. Don’t forget treats. (Every six months or so, you should replenish and throw an “earthquake” feed to use up the old supply.)



- Make sure you have a battery-operated radio or television, as well as ample batteries for it and for flashlights. A few 72-hour candles, such as those sold by the Vermont Country Store, would be useful.
- Update the family first aid kit, and don’t forget to include family prescriptions.

The best thing about these recommendations made by our new California neighbor is that she compared “Being Prepared” to remembering to carry an umbrella on a cloudy day: once the family was prepared, nothing more happened.

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50 Welcome Baskets Delivered in 2002!

Fifty new Society Hill homeowners were treated to large Welcome Baskets during 2002! These impressive baskets, each valued at up to \$600, include gift certificates from area theaters, restaurants, salons and shops, as well as samples of tasty food or gourmet items, plus relevant community information. We have dozens of newcomers on the list scheduled for deliveries in 2003, but tracking down every new homeowner can be difficult. Please let us know if you or a friend has recently purchased a house or condo in Society Hill. Receiving a Welcome Basket is a wonderful welcome to new neighbors in our community.

Contact committee chair Martha Levine at 215-629-0727 or marthalev@aol.com.

We encourage Society Hillers to patronize the following participating businesses and organizations which so generously donate to our basket program.

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NOTEWORTHY NEIGHBORS

Tony and Karen Biddle

History and heritage are much in evidence at Tony and Karen Biddle's home. For a start, the house itself, built in 1830, is said to have been a stop along the Underground Railway...one of the scattered safe places for hiding slaves en route from the South to more hospitable northern states and Canada. Henry Clay also used the house as headquarters for his mid-19th century presidential bid.

And then, there's the imposing portrait of one William Biddle, who came to these shores from Kent in 1681; and another of Tony's father—Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, Jr.—who served during World War II as America's London-based ambassador to Poland and the eleven Eastern European governments in exile...and who resigned in protest following the Yalta Conference, when most of those countries were ceded to the Soviet bloc. Later, Dwight Eisenhower invited Tony's father to be his running mate in the presidential election, but Biddle declined, citing the compelling reason that he was a Democrat.

The present Anthony Biddle continues the historical imperative: after serving for 20 years as an executive of Chase Manhattan Bank in New York and London, he is now a consultant to Hill International, a company that manages large construction projects, including the ambitious one celebrating America's heritage and now being built here in our own historical neighborhood at revitalized Independence Mall.

Tony and Karen met as students at Cornell. Karen went to work with advertising agencies in New York and London, one of which held the U.S. Navy recruiting account for which she developed the slogan "It's not just a job, it's an adventure." Actually, both Karen and Tony have salt water in their veins. Karen's father and her husband served as naval officers, and they are frequent sailors on the Chesapeake Bay.

The couple moved into their present house in 1987. It's situated on Panama Street, which runs parallel to the McCall School, a building that looked more like a place of incarceration than of education, Karen thought. So she persuaded the ruling "wardens" to tear up the macadam, and plant trees, bushes, and flowers. It was, she says, "the greening of McCall," which many Society Hillers will recall as a worthwhile and successful community campaign.

All three of their children—Tony IV (17), Cordelia (15) and Nicholas (10)—attended McCall; Tony moved on to Episcopal Academy while the other two currently attend Masterman. The children have an illustrious heritage, as much in their genes as in the place they call home. And Society Hill, say their parents, feels much more like a village than part of a major urban center—Philadelphia being one of their two favorite cities; the other is London.
—DAVID WOODS

For the Biddles, Society Hill is not just a neighborhood—it's an adventure!



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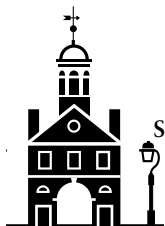
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February Board Meeting
 Wednesday, February 19, 7 p.m.
 Old Pine Community Center
 4th & Lombard Streets



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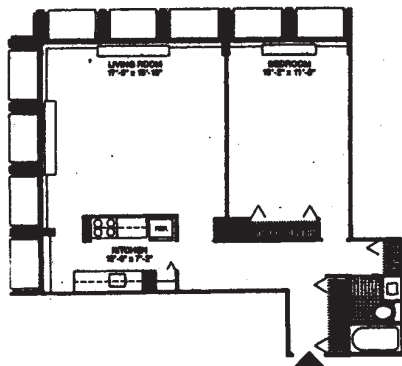
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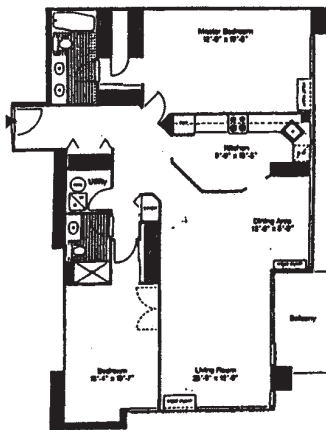
210 Locust Street



Corner one bedroom with south, river and city views
\$209,900

Independence Place

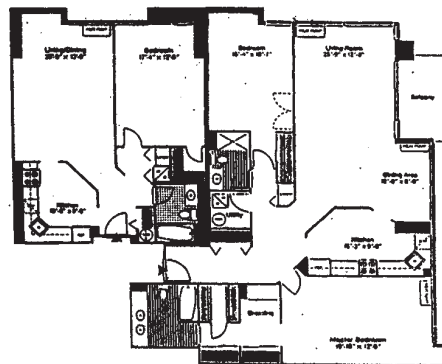
241 S. 6th Street



Two bedroom, two bath, upgraded kitchen and bath, many built-ins
\$525,000

Independence Place

241 S. 6th Street



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