



SOCIETY HILL

# Reporter

www.societyhillcivic.com

## Summer in Society Hill is Discovery Time

The July 4th celebrations are now history! But isn't it wonderful that all we had to do was step outside our homes to be welcomed by fireworks and tall ships, reminding us how blessed we are to be living in "America's most historic square mile."

"We, the people" of Society Hill live in a unique urban environment that offers not only visual harmony and beauty but a diverse community of neighbors involved in the daily comings and goings of modern life. Once in a while we may stop and marvel at the wide range of cultural institutions and historic sites within our midst. So it is with great pleasure that we enclose within this issue of the *Reporter* an informative brochure that describes more than 30 institutions within walking distance of our homes or places of work.

Whether your personal interest is history, art, architecture or simply an afternoon of educational fun, this colorful brochure and useful map — published by Philadelphia's Historic Neighborhood Consortium and designed by our *Reporter's* own designer, Judy Lamirand — is a valuable resource to keep for all seasons. Especially since it is summertime, you will enjoy sharing the brochure with your guests — because, honestly, when was the last time you visited the Independence Seaport Museum? Have you spent any time at the amazing new National Constitution Center, just a few blocks

from Independence Hall? When was the last time you toured either the Powel House or Physick House? (We refer you to the page 11 article featuring these two wonderful house museums.)

We all do love the summer. It's a time for travel, leisure and rest. It's a time to read the book that's been waiting on your shelf for months, or to connect with friends and family members, and a time to explore and discover the world. For many of us, particularly our children, summer offers the gift of nonscheduled time — a time to play. So go play at the Fireman's Hall Museum or the Betsy Ross House. Be inspired at the American Philosophical Society or at any of several historic houses of worship in our neighborhood. Philadelphia's tradition of diversity and freedom is epitomized, alive and flourishing, right here in our little corner of the world!



### A Gift for You!

Inside this issue you'll find an informative brochure and map that describes more than 30 cultural attractions in our neighborhood.

## N.Y. Times News Flash!

In the *New York Times* Real Estate section for Sunday June 13, 2004, Society Hill was featured. The article included a colorful illustration of Spruce Street townhouses as a typical streetscape and a very positive description of our community as one of "cobblestone streets, charming houses and increasingly high real estate prices." Best of all, this full-page article quoted SHCA's new President Tania Rorke, who moved to Society Hill with her husband, Tom, in 1997: "Our little enclave has all the conveniences of the city and all the benefits of the suburbs, but it is more closeknit," she said. "I come to my front door and see my neighbors, and many nights we sit on our stoops and talk." The article was accompanied by a family photo in which Tania and Tom each hold one of their two young daughters. In addition, the article described the forthcoming new development, Liberty Court, consisting of 35 luxury townhouses, the first such large development in the area in decades. (See page 7 for more about this project.)

WED.

July

21

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Old Pine Community Center  
4th and Lombard Streets  
Wednesday July 21, 7 p.m.

All SHCA members are welcome to attend. Please note that there will be no Board Meeting in August. The next SHCA Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 22 at 6 p.m. followed by a General Membership Meeting at 7:30 p.m. — with venue and primary topic to be determined.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Room for All Neighbors to Get Involved

It is a great privilege to be asked to preside over an association that strives to improve the quality of life for all of us who live in the neighborhood. I feel fortunate to have this opportunity to work closely with so many wonderful people who are willing to devote their time, their energy and their skills.

Past president Liza Seltzer and her family have moved from the neighborhood. During her year as president, Liza dedicated a great deal of her time to improving our neighborhood's quality of life. Under her presidency, SHCA was able to secure grants totaling over \$160,000. A portion of these funds will be used to upgrade the lighting for a significant number of our Franklin Lampposts. These grants will also support initiatives to improve community safety and beautification, and will assist the Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee with their efforts to maintain the integrity of our neighborhood.

During Liza's presidency, numerous committees were formed or reactivated, including the development of a Safe and Sound Committee, which coordinates quality of life issues that residents face. The Society Hill Town Watch has again become active. A dedicated group of volunteers has been patrolling our streets for the past nine months in an attempt to make them safer. Our successful McCall School Initiative has increased the number of children entering McCall School's kindergarten program. McCall has become a model for how public schools in Philadelphia can thrive with the right support.

My involvement with the Society Hill Civic Association began after a negative experience with one of its committees. I believe that one should not complain about something unless one is willing to work for change. As Liza Seltzer once said, "The Association only serves the neighborhood well if the individuals who are served by the Association participate in it." I got involved. I encourage all of you to do the same.

Society Hill Civic Association is responsible for a number of issues that many residents may not

be aware of. SHCA contracts with the Center City District to have our streets and sidewalks cleaned following each trash pick up. Our Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee assists Society Hill homeowners in obtaining approvals, when appropriate, from the Historical Commission or the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I). Our Clean-Up Day Committee schedules two seasonal neighborhood-wide clean-ups. Our Social Committee schedules two functions a year so that neighbors can meet and get to know one another. The Washington Square Committee plans to work with Independence National Historical Park to improve plantings in the Square. The Three Bears Park Improvement Committee is working with the Friends of Three Bears Park, which is independent of SHCA, to replace the outmoded playground equipment and make other park improvements.

Again, I urge you to become involved. You can volunteer as much time as you are able on any committee of your choice. If you have questions or concerns, or suggestions, please call or e-mail SHCA's Administrator, Matt DeJulio, your block coordinator, your quadrant leader, a vice president, or me. Any of us will be happy to address your concerns and welcome you to participate. Most importantly, by communicating your concerns, we will become aware of them.

The Society Hill Civic Association is not an exclusive group of residents. We are individuals who care about our community and are working together to make our neighborhood a safe, enjoyable one in which to live. In the September/October issue of this newsletter, we'll provide a list of all SHCA Board directors and block coordinators. Until then, if you're uncertain about the names and contact numbers of your quadrant leaders or your block coordinator, please contact Matt DeJulio at 215-629-1288 or [MattDeJulio@aol.com](mailto:MattDeJulio@aol.com) and he will get back to you promptly. Finally, as SHCA's newly elected President, I look forward to meeting and working with you.



**Tania Rorke**  
SHCA President

### THANK YOU, DARK HORSE!

We send oodles of thanks to the Dark Horse Restaurant for hosting a wonderful evening for our civic association social on May 26th. More than 200 SHCA members attended this very successful event, where neighbors enjoyed a variety of wonderful appetizers and a full open bar. We are fortunate to have this fine establishment in our corner of the world!

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Bernice & Joseph Koplin

## TOWN WATCH NEWS

## Join Society Hill's Safety Team

**Your Invitation Still Stands**

Beautiful evenings in Society Hill offer great opportunities to walk the streets, see flowers and trees, peek into lit-up windows, enjoy the companionship of your Town Watch partner, as well as maybe lose a little weight or catch a bad guy. ★ Walk with the BEST — Society Hill Town Watch received an award from the city as the BEST Town Watch in the Sixth District — presented on June 26th at Philadelphia Operation Town Watch Annual Anti-Crime Conference and Luncheon at the Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel. JOIN TOWN WATCH and become part of Society Hill's safety team. Contact Michael Erdos at 267-251-0349 or michael.erdos@phila.gov.

Also, SHTW is looking for the new volunteer who called. Jerod, please call again.

★This actually happened last month!

**Updated Town Watch Street Signs**

They've arrived and are going up. Installation began the week of June 14.

**Town Watch Window Stickers**

Call Michael if you want one. Take notice of the signs and stickers — another crime deterrent.

**National Night Out – August 3**

A “Candlelight Happening” will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. in support of Town Watch Nationwide. Place to be announced; look for a flier.

**Crime Statistics**

To keep you informed, we will provide crime statistics in every other issue of the *Reporter*. Remember to report all incidents to 911, and be sure a report is written up. If you do, the captain can deploy troops to problem areas and crime statistics will be accurate. This list represents the last several months.

Robberies - 6	Vandalism - 20
Stolen Autos - 7	Thefts from Auto - 16
Pick Pocket - 2	Aggravated Assault - 1 (domestic)



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**The Sixth Police District Advisory Council** (PDAC) presented an award to Captain Brian Korn at its last meeting of the season, June 30, for his commitment to community policing and his responsiveness to the issues, problems and needs of the Sixth District. PDAC invites you to join us at its monthly meetings — held September through June — to discuss problems that are occurring in Society Hill. Contact Marilyn Appel at 215-922-2626 or harmara@juno.com if you would like to attend a meeting or become part of PDAC. Meanwhile we hope you will plan ahead for PDAC's flea market, which will be held in the fall to raise funds for its programs. Programs include an annual holiday party for first graders living in the Sixth District (including entertainment, food and gifts); our annual Thanksgiving dinner for police officers scheduled to work on the holiday; and holiday food baskets for the needy. Donations of goods and/or cash are welcome. So clean out your basement. Call Marilyn with donations or to make arrangements for pick-up.

**Problem: Noise from helicopters.** Letters have been written to several organizations. A couple of replies indicate willingness to help with noise abatement — we'll keep you posted.

**Problem: Noise from motorcycles.** Officers have been trained, equipment has been calibrated, and signs warning of "up to \$300 fines" will soon be posted, mostly on South Street.

**Problem: Pedestrian and traffic safety.** YOU are our best source. As you drive Society Hill streets, please note where trees block the view of traffic lights. Let Martha Levine know the locations, and she'll let owners know of the problem. You should be able to see a traffic light from the middle of the street at least 100 feet away. E-mail Martha at marthalev@aol.com

**Problem: Speeding on Society Hill Streets.** The speed limit for city streets is **25 mph** for cars, motorcycles and other vehicles. Our Safe & Sound Committee has been working on the problem of speeding through Society Hill streets for a very long time by talking to Councilman DiCicco and to Traffic .We requested that signs be posted with the speed limit and that it be strictly enforced. All of us will be much safer if we cross at intersections, NOT in the middle of the block. We were very distressed to learn of the tragic death of Giovanni Petri, who was hit by a speeding motorcycle in June. (See page 18.)

**Problem: Pickpocketing and stolen purses — especially from restaurants.** Ladies: Hanging your purses on the backs of chairs or carrying open-top purses provides pickpockets with opportunities to fish for your wallets, change purses, charge cards and IDs. Please be aware and keep your purses between your feet, and always take them with you when you leave your seat.

**Window Washer Scam** We do not yet have all the facts about this years-long scam that has been reported in previous issues. However, we urge you never to allow any stranger or door-to-door salesperson into your home unless s/he carries proper ID. (A utility person will be properly attired with an authentic, not xeroxed, ID, and you should check with the utility company before allowing that person into your house.) Look first through a peep hole, a side window or a Franklin busy-body mirror and make sure it's someone you expect. If not, call the utility company.

**OLD CELL PHONES STILL NEEDED** These donated phones are reprogrammed to call only 911 and are given to abused women and/or senior citizens. Drop off your old cell phones and chargers at 414 Spruce Street.

**CITY SMARTS**

**Pedestrian Safety**

- Use well-lit, busy streets.
- Carry cell phone, keys and emergency money separately in a pocket, not purse.
- Men should carry wallets in an inside jacket pocket or side, not rear, trouser pocket.
- Walk facing traffic.
- Have house or car keys in hand when approaching home or vehicle.

**If you suspect you are being followed by a car:**

- change direction and visibly write down license number.

**by someone on foot:**

- cross the street, go into a store or a friend's house, or scream if you're really scared.

**Know your neighborhood. Be Aware. Be Observant.**

**CALL 911**

**Report crimes against seniors to C.A.R.E. 215-685-9486**

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# Liberty Court: A New Townhouse Development



Beautifully appointed, four-story homes are soon to be built.

Many of you may wonder if the partially built houses on the 200 block of Lombard Street will ever be completed or replaced with new housing. Well, it appears that day is near. In fact, if you pass by the site, you may see demolition crews hard at work — because an entirely new development of 35 single-family, luxury townhouses, lining both Lombard and S. 3rd Streets, will replace the surface parking lot.

According to the developers, Liberty Court at Society Hill promises to offer beautifully appointed four-story houses that blend into the historic fabric of our neighborhood. Five different styles of brick houses will be built, ranging in size from 2,800 to 4,100 square feet, and in price from \$.9 to \$1.4 million. The homes include garages, private landscaped patio gardens, and rooftop decks; some will have elevators, additional bedrooms or loft space. Dramatic spaces combined with high-end appliances and finishes will appeal to the sophisticated urban dweller.

As for configuration of the streetscape, the developers will extend and widen both Philip (north/south) and Gaskill (east/west) Streets. The plan is for traffic to flow eastward along Gaskill, then north on Philip, and empty onto Lombard Street. However, AFC's founder Arthur Fefferman tells us he is working with the city to change the direction to a westward

flow, with entry on Lombard, and exit onto Third. Thoughts are that this change will help reduce the need for residents to travel South Street or the narrow 300 block of Gaskill.

The two-year construction schedule is staged in phases of 12 units each. The first 12 homes are due to be finished early 2005. Completion of the entire project is expected for mid-2006. The project begins when the Sales Center opens in July. A portion of the surface parking lot will remain open in accordance with the builders' schedule.

Liberty Court's team includes its financial architect, AFC, a real estate investment banking firm that has financed and restored several landmark properties — such as the office building at 1608 Walnut Street and the historic Drake Tower. Its development company is a Philadelphia-based firm, the Altman Group, which boasts 50 years of industry experience — including a conversion of the historic Benjamin Franklin Hotel into a luxury residential and commercial property. Rounding out the team is Barton & Associates Architects and Planners, noted for their contributions to the home building industry. This design firm is responsible for the major new condo complex already under construction in Old City on N. 2nd Street — the long-awaited "National Products" project.

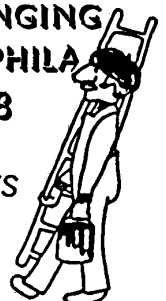
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Update: Honoring Two Society Hill Pioneers

Charles E. Peterson and Edmund N. Bacon

Two pioneers who spearheaded Society Hill's rebirth will soon be honored with an informational sign highlighting their contributions. What had been a rundown neighborhood of 18th- and 19th-century houses interspersed with factories and warehouses has become, through their leadership in the 1950's and 60's, one of America's most renowned urban renewal success stories.

The Society Hill Civic Association believes it is time to give Edmund N. Bacon and Charles E. Peterson the public recognition recognition they deserve. SHCA has allotted funds to design, fabricate and install a handsome and informative sign to enhance our streetscape. This sign will educate residents and visitors alike, and will be similar to others throughout the neighborhood, such as those at Society Hill Synagogue, St. Peter's Church, and Head House Square. It will be a permanent, double-sided, maintenance-free sign, installed on city-owned property, that will provide information with colorful "before and after" graphics.

SHCA's planning committee charged with this task is enthusiastically moving forward, although it faced some road blocks due to (what else?) bureaucracy! After a careful survey of the neighborhood, committee members have chosen an ideal city-owned site. We are now quite optimistic, because in our corner we have the full support of Councilman DiCicco, Philadelphia's Historical Commission and other city offices. Once the committee gets final approval from the Streets Department, they will move into high gear to complete the project by the end of the year. Plans are to have both Mr. Bacon and Mr. Peterson celebrate with us at a groundbreaking ceremony.

Committee members are Penny Batcheler, former chief architect at Independence Park, and Bernice Hamel. Together they were responsible for selecting the graphics and writing the text for the two signs at Head House Square. Other active committee participants include neighbors Darlene Cavalier (who first made the case before SHCA to honor these gentlemen); Jackie Bagley, an experienced historic tourist guide; and Karen Stevens, archivist at Independence Park. Joel Katz, responsible for similar signs throughout Society Hill, was hired by SHCA to carry out all aspects of the project from design and fabrication to installation.

*Note:* Please see page 10 about the new Powel House sign. Both this sign honoring Society Hill's two pioneers and the Powel House sign are expected to be fabricated, manufactured and installed at about the same time, through Joel Katz's professional services, so as to receive financial discounts.

WASHINGTON SQUARE GARDENING

**The Green Team:** A group of Society Hill neighbors volunteered their horticultural expertise and/or muscle for a Washington Square gardening and beautification session which took place on Saturday, May 15th.



**Ronald V. Donato, Jr., MBA**  
*Vice President*

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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION UPDATE

## Powel House Sign Missing



Powel House

Some of you may have noticed that something is missing at 244 S. 3rd Street. The Powel House has lost its sign. On Saturday, May 1, a car jumped the curb, destroyed the sign, and damaged Powel House's steps and historic wrought-iron railing. Mickey Herr, the site manager, had just closed the museum and left for dinner. When she returned two hours later she discovered the damage. Had a neighbor or passerby called the police at the time of the incident (or recorded the license plate number), the driver might well have been apprehended. We are thankful that no one on the street was injured.

This accident has encouraged the Landmarks Society to move quickly on its long-standing plan to improve the sign at Powel House so that it is consistent in appearance and quality with other interpretive signs in our neighborhood. Unfortunately, Landmarks had not reached its fundraising quota to pay for a new, more attractive sign, which had long been on

its wish list. Thus, the accident will now require Landmarks to shift its funds away from other needed projects.

Since the new sign will require two to three months for design approval, production and installation, a temporary sign will be used during museum hours to help visitors identify the museum. Contributions to help defray the cost of replacing the sign are most welcome (see coupon on page 11). The new sign will be created by the designer responsible for several other important signs in our community.

Mickey Herr reminds readers that volunteers are always welcome to work at the Powel House either as museum guides or to assist in the garden (or both), and supporters are encouraged to attend any of Landmarks' fundraisers during the year. For more information, please contact Powel House at 215-627-0364, or Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, 321 South 4th St., 215-925-2251.

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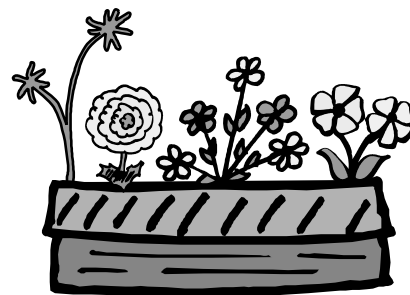
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HELP SUPPORT OUR LOCAL TREASURES

# Living With History: Landmarks In Society Hill

Living in this historic area, we can sometimes overlook the treasures in our own backyard. It's hard not to notice Washington Square or get involved when something is needed for Independence Park, but gems like the Powel House and the Physick House can occasionally fall beneath your personal radar.

The Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, commonly referred to simply as "Landmarks" or "the Landmarks Society," is a nonprofit organization that has played a significant role in the historic preservation movement in Society Hill. Notably, Landmarks purchased, restored and furnished two distinguished neighborhood house museums which are regularly open for private or group tours.

The Landmarks Society has its own interesting history, dating back to 1931, when Frances Anne Wister and a group of supporters founded the Society to save the Powel House, at 244 S. 3rd Street, from its impending demolition. This elegant Georgian brick mansion, built in 1765, was the home of Samuel Powel, known as the "Patriot Mayor," because he was the last colonial mayor of Philadelphia under the British Crown and Philadelphia's first mayor after the American Revolution.

The Physick House, at 321 S. 4th Street, was donated to the Landmarks Society in the 1960's by Ambassador and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg. Built in 1786, this house is the only remaining free-standing Federal townhouse in Philadelphia. Dr. Philip Syng Physick, the "Father of American Surgery," took up residence there in 1815 and lived there until he died in 1837. One of the foremost surgeons of the time,

Dr. Physick was among the few courageous doctors who remained in the city to care for the sick during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793.

The Powel and Physick Houses, their historical residents, and their current stewards have played an important role in our community's history and rebirth. It is now time for residents to play a supporting role. Whether you were one of the 4,000 visitors Powel House welcomed last year, or you attended the Annual Plant Sale at the Physick House, you should not simply stop there — because the preservation of any historic site requires ongoing dedication and ongoing generosity. Society Hillers benefit from the beauty these houses lend to our streetscape, and so we believe Landmarks deserves our help.

We encourage all Society Hill residents to join Landmark's membership program. Annual membership dues are as little as \$25, so please consider filling out the coupon below to become a supporter. We also recommend giving the gift of Landmarks membership to friends and family.

Members receive free admission to all of Landmarks' historic houses, free tours and lectures, a subscription to its newsletter, and invitations to special events, such as summer garden parties, holiday parties and more. Volunteers are always welcome to work as museum guides or to assist in the gardens.

Please take this opportunity to help preserve and celebrate the cultural heritage we enjoy in Society Hill. For more information, call 215-925-2251 or visit Landmarks' website at [www.philalandmarks.org](http://www.philalandmarks.org).



Physick House

## LANDMARKS SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP COUPON

Yes, I (we) wish to join the Landmarks Society and help support its work to preserve and interpret local history. Enclosed is my (our) annual tax-deductible membership fee:

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**MORE HISTORIC PRESERVATION UPDATES**


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## Anti-Preservation Bill Causes National Alarm

The May-June 2004 issue of *Preservation Magazine*, published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, critically reported on a proposed Philadelphia bill that would transfer the authority to designate a historic district to City Council. This bill would also give City Council the power to nullify any existing historic district — e.g. nullify the protection our community enjoys. In addition, the bill would rule out historic designation for any property in any area targeted for redevelopment with federal funds. Even Independence Hall is at risk, according to the *Washington Post* of March 22, 2004: “Theoretically, the bill could take Independence Hall, which is owned by the city, off the city’s historic preservation rolls.”

This broad-based, anti-preservation bill, #04003, proposed by City Councilwoman Jannie L. Blackwell, caught the attention of William Becker, an architect who chairs the Design Advocacy Group of Philadelphia.

He says, “We think the bill will seriously weaken the 30 years of accumulated preservation practice...and will move decision-making authority from the realm of qualified preservation professionals into the highly political realm of City Council.”

Many local and national organizations also have expressed concern, perceiving the bill as one that would undermine the very notion of preserving historic homes and sites. Thus, the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia has established a Task Force to obtain comments and suggestions from the general public — especially from people who live or work in existing historic districts or historic buildings. If you want to participate in this Task Force, call the Alliance’s Special Events Director at 215-546-1146, Ext. 19 — or check the calendar on the Preservation Alliance’s website, [www.preservationalliance.com](http://www.preservationalliance.com), for information. We’ll keep you posted.

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The bill...  
would undermine  
the very notion  
of preserving  
historic homes  
and sites.

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### An Enticing Easement Program

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An easement for any historic property protects that property in perpetuity. The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia has a unique easement program that Society Hill homeowners may be interested in learning about. Several corporate and large buildings within the city have the benefit of being protected forever by this easement program, but only a small number of private homes in Society Hill enjoy this level of protection. The Preservation Alliance is now focusing its efforts on expanding the program to reach owners of historic residences, because in short, an easement not only protects the structure, but also offers homeowners the ability to qualify for a federal income tax deduction.

Society Hill homeowners who are interested in the level of protection provided by the Preservation Alliance’s Easement program, with its accompanying tax-deductible benefits, should contact J. Randall Cotton, associate director of the Alliance, at 215-546-1146, Ext. 21. And be sure to reserve your place at a special Alliance forum on this topic, to be held Thursday, July 15, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Left Bank, located at 3131 Walnut Street in West Philadelphia.



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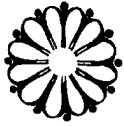
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## Historic Houses of Worship in the News

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### Old St. Mary's Bids Farewell to Monsignor Sharkey

Monsignor John A. Sharkey has been a familiar presence at Old St. Mary's Catholic Church for the past 15 years. Thus, it was with great difficulty that we said good-bye to him when he retired on June 28th. Monsignor will now be Pastor Emeritus at Saint Monica's in South Philadelphia, and Reverend Dominic M. Chiaravelle, from Epiphany Of Our Lord, will be his replacement.

Monsignor Sharkey fondly recalls working for an insurance company at 4th & Walnut Streets while he was a high school freshman. Walking to work, he would cut through Independence Hall, appreciative of its significance and beauty. Though the area has changed much since that time, he has always enjoyed St. Mary's historical setting. Monsignor admits that he wasn't around when President Washington and Adams attended Vespers at Old St. Mary's, but he was proud to say that Old St. Mary's was the first Catholic Church in which the first and second president attended a service together. We thank Monsignor Sharkey for his love, guidance, support and understanding, and we wish him all the best in his new parish.

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### Old St. Joseph's Church Seeks National Historical Landmark Status

The Society Hill Civic Association recently lent its full support to efforts by Old St. Joseph's Church to gain designation as a National Historical Landmark. Frankly, we were surprised to learn that Old St. Joseph's Church does not enjoy the distinction of being a National Historical Landmark, because Old St. Joe's (as Society Hillers affectionately call it), is the oldest Catholic Church in Philadelphia. Tucked away at 321 Willings Alley, immediately east of S. 4th Street between Walnut and Spruce Streets, Old St. Joe's was first established in 1733 by English Jesuits. During the 1730's, it was one of the few sites in all the British Empire where Catholic mass could be celebrated.

Today Society Hill residents appreciate the many diverse historic houses of worship in our midst, which we proudly share with visitors from across the country and around the world. In our daily lives we see evidence of a neighborhood that exemplifies William Penn's tolerance for religious freedom — his "Holy Experiment" that began in 1701 when he created the Charter of Privileges.



**Old St. Joseph's Church**

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### A Letter From The Superintendent of Independence Park

## New Screening Facilities for Bell & Hall

Dear Friends:

It has been a month since Independence National Historical Park (INHP) began its pilot program to screen our visitors only once when they visit both Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Although the pilot is still underway, early indications look quite good. With three screening posts inside the former Liberty Bell Pavilion, lines are minimal. While additional traffic flow improvements are desirable, visitors can cross Chestnut Street with few problems. This first month has been a learning process but we have adjusted our procedures to provide a good visitor experience and still maintained mandatory federal treasures security within the Department of the Interior guidelines.

Evaluation of the pilot program will occur in a few months. Before then, INHP will consider

long-range security alternatives. To this end, our design team will develop concepts for a screening facility at both the Liberty Bell Center and another on Independence Square. In addition to establishing permanent security screening facilities, we want to provide rest rooms for our visitors inside the secure zone.

Although we have more work to do before holding a public meeting, I wanted to share with you our ideas, and reassure you that we are continuing to provide "access with security" to our national treasures. I strongly encourage you to share your ideas about the current system with us, so we can evaluate the results and determine our future course of action. Thank you for your support of what I call "The Best Park in History."

**Mary Bomar**, Superintendent  
Independence National Historical Park

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A diagram showing the location of Friends Select. A vertical line represents a street with a box labeled 'City Hall'. A diagonal line intersects it, with a star at the intersection. An arrow points from the star to a box labeled 'FRIENDS SELECT'. A circle labeled 'Logan Circle' is on the diagonal line. An arrow points from Logan Circle to a box labeled 'Art Museum'.

A college preparatory, coed, Quaker day school, pre-K through 12, at 17th on The Parkway in Center City Philadelphia. Admission and open house information: 215.561.5900 ext 104.  
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# Zoning & Historic Preservation Report

BY PAUL BONI

**Starbucks Coffee Shop: 700-718 Walnut**  
SHCA's Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee (ZHP) approved Starbucks' request for a zoning variance to open a coffee shop at the southeast corner of 8th and Walnut Streets. A variance was needed because the Zoning Code, as of 1995, prohibits take-out shops anywhere on Walnut (or Chestnut) Streets. As stated in the Zoning Code, Walnut Street is important to the City's "historic, cultural and commercial viability" and, "take-out shops, while not harmful in and of themselves, could have possible negative impacts if a number of them are allowed to be concentrated in any one particular area."

The ZHP Committee weighed the various factors involved with this request. On one hand, there was not tremendous support for yet another bland, corporate storefront (there are already about ten Starbucks in Center City); on the other hand, there was recognition that Starbucks is a relatively clean and attractive operation. Our committee negotiated a package of conditions with the Starbucks management team, including the following restrictions: (1) the variance applies to Starbucks only and is not transferable to any other take-out operation should Starbucks vacate the premises; (2) sidewalk seating is limited to one row of tables against the building. Other conditions were agreed to also, such as litter control and provisions to ensure peace and quiet. These conditions are in writing and are binding on the owner of the property and on Starbucks. Finally, we note that, given the location involved, we cooperated and coordinated with the Washington West Civic Association, and they reached an agreement with similar terms.

## **427 Spruce Street**

The owner applied to the Historical Commission to add a deck to the 3rd floor rear of this house. The ZHP Committee learned of this request and asked the owner to present plans at a ZHP meeting, but the owner informed us that he would not postpone his appearance before the Historical Commission in order to attend our ZHP meeting. At the City's Architectural Review Committee, which is the first step in the Historical Commission's process, the project received favorable consideration, albeit by a very slim margin. Then the project was scheduled for a vote of the full Historical Commission, which is the last step in the process.

We again contacted the owner and asked for a presentation to the ZHP Committee at which time the neighbors could see the plans. Again, we were not able to persuade the owner to come to a meeting. As to the merits of the project itself, the owner never provided a set of the plans; so one of our volunteers traveled to City Hall to review the plans on record. After reviewing them, we believed that the deck would result in a dormer window modification, and this did cause us concern. The Historical Commission voted to deny the deck.

## **Our Committee Works for You!**

A major benefit of the ZHP is that we offer a forum for your neighbors to learn about a project you are planning. In most instances, you can avoid objections or filings of protest simply by keeping your neighbors in the loop; and there is no better way to do this than to schedule a presentation with the ZHP Committee so that we can invite those neighbors impacted by your proposed changes. Usually it is not your project per se that will upset your neighbors. Rather it is a neighbor first learning of your project by being awakened at 7 a.m. by the sounds of demolition or hammering.

As our committee is likely to learn about your project either from a staff person at one of the City's agencies or from a concerned neighbor, the best way to save time is to be proactive and present your project at one of our meetings. We cannot dictate any outcome to these agencies; all we can do is be a part of the process. Our role is to prevent projects that are extreme or that, even in the aggregate, might cause an unwelcome change to the character of the neighborhood. Our guess is that your perspective on these issues depends on whether you are an "applicant" or a "neighbor." Given that each project affects many neighbors, more often you will be the neighbor. Indeed, today's applicant is tomorrow's neighbor. It is not easy to obtain Historical Commission approval. However, going through the process is the best way to protect the character of Society Hill.

**Presentations can be arranged by contacting Paul Boni, ZHP chair, at paulboni@bonilaw.com, or Matt DeJulio, SHCA Administrator, at MattDeJulio@aol.com or 215-629-1288.**



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**IN MEMORIAM**

**Fondly Remembering Our Dear Departed Neighbors**

**Paul William Putney, Esq.**

With sadness we report that Paul William Putney, Esq, a president of the Society Hill Civic Association during the 1970's, was killed in an automobile accident on June 5 at 64 years of age. A prominent Philadelphia estates and trusts attorney, he was associated with the firm Dechert, L.L.P. throughout his distinguished career of 39 years. Active in many worthwhile causes throughout Pennsylvania, Paul Putney was a founding member of the Board of Managers of the Old Pine Community Center. Although no longer residents of Society Hill after they moved to Huntingdon Valley several years ago, he and his wife, Joan, maintained their membership at Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church, where his funeral was held on June 8 — officiated by Pastor Deborah A. McKinley. Many neighbors attended the funeral. He is survived by his wife, two children and four grandchildren.

**Giovanni Petri**

On June 10 Giovanni Petri, a resident of 317 Spruce Street, was struck down by a motorcycle in front of his house near the walkway of Spruce and St. Joseph's Way. Family and neighbors witnessed the tragic accident at 4:20 p.m., and within ten minutes he was pronounced dead at the scene. At age 68, he has left behind his wife, Margaret, and two grown children, Vincent and Carla. A spontaneous memorial of flowers and other mementos was immediately assembled at the accident site, and his funeral service was held at Old St. Joseph's Church on June 15. The highest ranking architect for Philadelphia's Water Department, Giovanni will be remembered as a meticulous homeowner who was often seen sweeping his sidewalk — and his neighbors' sidewalks — in all kinds of weather. A skilled gardener who frequently distributed his home-grown figs, arugula, basil and tomatoes to many friends, he was also a welcoming and gregarious host, always eager to share his delicious Tuscan dishes, his wonderful conversation and generous spirit. He will be sorely missed.

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# Kids' Beat

A COLUMN BY KERI WHITE

## Vigilance: No Such Thing as "Too Careful"

Initially, I set out to write a light-hearted, humorous column about suburban grandparents being turned loose in Society Hill for a week of babysitting, but that fell by the wayside with the Stalker still at-large. Fortunately, the vigilance of our community seems to be keeping the Stalker's activities at bay. But as parents in an urban area, we cannot relax for a moment when it comes to supervising our children.

I urge neighbors to be on the lookout for child-care peculiarities. Like most "Park Moms" (my husband emphasizes the capitalization as he deems that the title implies a combination of Florence Nightingale and Wyatt Earp), we know most of the children, parents and nannies in the neighborhood. We might not know names, but we are familiar with the combinations. If you see a child with a new grown-up, inquire, "Johnny, who is your new friend?" If the child is too young to talk, introduce yourself to the adult and ask if he/she is new to the neighborhood. This is a friendly, non-threatening approach, which will likely ascertain that the family has hired a new sitter, or that a relative has come for a visit. If the reaction seems suspicious, you should call for help.

When a child's safety is in question, there is no such thing as being "too careful." I am confident that there are no parents in Society Hill, or on the face of the earth, who would prefer that we ignore an unfamiliar adult with their children in the interest of sparing "Auntie Rose's" feelings.

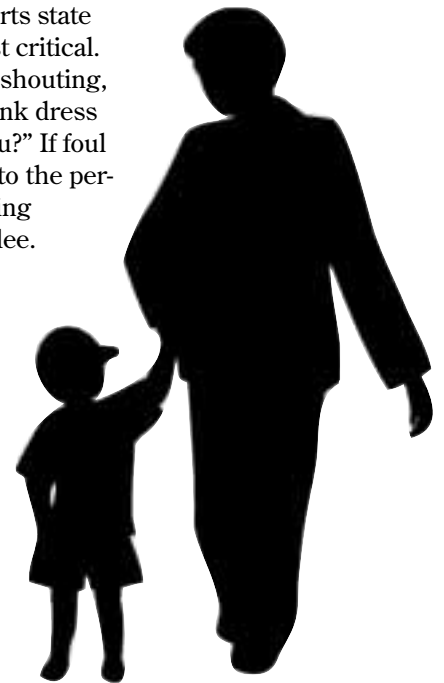
Another concern is the dreaded trip to the market. We all relish the chance to hit SuperFresh at rush hour with multiple offspring in tow, searching for a healthy, quick meal that will accommodate the lactose-intolerant pasta eating son, the no-carb husband, and the vegetable-averse daughter. As we read labels for carb counts and milk products, one of the children invariably wanders into the cereal aisle in the hope of hitting Mom at a weak moment for some Fruit Loops. Then you realize that no one is tugging on your right hand and your heart stops. Human nature dictates that we deal with this problem on our own, creating a minimum of disturbance and embarrassment, but child safety advocates and law enforcement officials disagree. Experts state that the first ten minutes are the most critical. They advise us to create a ruckus by shouting, "Help! My 4 year old daughter in a pink dress is missing! Janie, Janie, where are you?" If foul play is afoot, the strongest deterrent to the perpetrator will be the possibility of getting caught, and his likely behavior is to flee.

So much for my light-hearted and humorous column. If you see some 50-somethings wandering the neighborhood with a 5 and 7 year old dragging them around, arguing over whether to have sushi or samosas, give them a hand. It will be my suburban parents navigating the rocky shoals of child care in Society Hill while my husband and I enjoy a much-needed vacation.

### Kid's Quote

"I am the Yoga Child...the Yoga Child...the Yoga Child."

**Kelsey, age 5**  
(In her sleep)



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 More Trash: Good News & Bad News!
 

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## Beware the Trash Enforcers

**Good News – Reminder:** As you probably have heard, our civic association prevailed upon the City to change Society Hill's trash pick-up hours. Initially, after the City changed its pick-up day, we were required to put out our trash between the hours of 10 p.m. Thursday evening and 6 a.m. Friday morning. But because Hillers found this to be a hardship, we won an important concession: from now on, we can set out our trash two hours earlier on Thursday night (Friday night when there is a holiday during the week) — that is, after 8 instead of 10 p.m. **However, please note that this timeframe will be strictly enforced, as the City intends to be vigilant about fining people who set out their trash prior to 8 p.m. on Thursday nights.**

**Bad News – Holiday Collections:**

Please make a note of the following important information regarding change of trash pick-up during holiday weeks: All trash and recycling collections will be one day behind schedule for the remainder of any week where there is an observed City holiday. For example, since Independence Day was celebrated as a legal holiday on July 5th this month with July 4th falling on a Sunday, this week's trash pick-up is on the following Saturday morning (July 10) rather than Friday morning. For Labor Day, which falls on Monday, September 6, our weekly trash pick-up will again fall one day later — on Saturday, September 11 rather than Friday, September 10. Therefore, please remember: **when there is a legal holiday, you must set out your trash and recyclables a day later — either Friday night after 8 p.m. or Saturday morning prior to 6 a.m.**



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**There were 60 MLS single family homes sold in 2003**

**The average sale price was \$602,575**

**The lowest priced home sold for \$190,447.00**

**The highest priced home sold for \$1,550,000.00**

**Homes were on the market for an average of 91 days**

**The average sales price increased 25% since 2000**

**In 2002, 63 homes sold for an average price of \$561,313 in 84 days**

**In 2001, 54 homes sold for an average price of \$541,188 in 76 days**

**In 2000, 59 homes sold for an average price of \$482,948 in 69 days**

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# My Frustrating Experience with a Contractor

A PERSONAL HORROR STORY BY KERI WHITE

## When Hiring a Contractor, Know What You're Getting

Living in Society Hill is a pleasure; but, it is also a responsibility. Many of the homes in our neighborhood are historic, and plans to renovate the facade of any building (historic or otherwise) in this officially designated "historic district" must go through an approval process designed to protect the visual delight of our streetscape — now and for years to come.

As a director serving on the Board of the Society Hill Civic Association, as well as the proud owner of a well-maintained 1830 townhouse, I am one of the last people you would expect to run afoul of the City's Historical Commission. It is an embarrassing and infuriating tale that I share with you in the hope that learning of my experience may prevent other neighbors from having similar woes.

It began with a leaky roof. Our contractor advised us to hire a mason to install an 8-inch partition wall covered with copper flashing — a fairly typical detail. As luck would have it, a mason was working on a neighbor's home, apparently in a competent fashion, and we approached him. He seemed interested in the job, so we introduced him to our contractor, who has notoriously high standards. They outlined the job; we discussed it and all seemed well, so I hired him.

I monitored the contractor's comings and goings but did not climb out on the roof with his crew. Imagine my horror when I crossed the street to view the "completed" job and saw four feet of cinderblock sitting atop my roof. If you happened to pass a hyperventilating woman holding onto two children one evening in May on Spruce Street, then you saw my initial reaction. After my panic attack, I phoned the mason. I was near hysteria: "You MUST take that monstrosity off my roof, **I am on the board of the civic association. They will kick me out of Society Hill!** How could you do this to a historic home? expletive, expletive..." He lackadaisically promised to return the following day to remove it. Unfortunately, it rained, so he covered the cinderblock with a secure tarp and I prayed for sun.

Meanwhile, a neighbor took exception to the project (I might have invited him to get in line!) But, instead of knocking on my door, he

took a large number of photographs, reported me to the City's Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I), the Historical Commission, SHCA's Zoning & Historical Preservation Committee (ZHP), and possibly the FBI and CIA. Fortunately, the ZHP Committee has an experienced, sympathetic member who alerted me and directed me to Randy Baron at the Historical Commission. They both assured me that I could remain in Society Hill.

I was also fortunate that Randy Baron is a kind, reasonable and sympathetic soul, although he may have been gentle with me because he could sense my impending breakdown. He explained that he needed to see drawings of the proposed work and then the project could be sent to L&I for a permit (a necessity which the mason overlooked.) Randy also assured me that I would not be arrested if I complied in a timely fashion.

The original mason dragged his feet for the ensuing weeks, so we found another company who went through the proper channels. However, as of this writing, the work has not begun, and we will likely be faced once again with going through the process of locating a suitably experienced contractor.

The moral of the story...before doing any work that affects the exterior of your home, seek advice from our civic association's Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee. Because of the ongoing work of these experienced volunteers, several of them professional architects and engineers, our neighborhood maintains its beautiful and historic nature. This committee is a resource, as its members are knowledgeable and helpful. Their advice is invaluable in navigating the process of approval required from either the Historical Commission, L&I and often both.

We are fortunate to live in such a beautiful area and fortunate to have dedicated volunteers and city employees who work to keep it that way. To contact the chairman of SHCA's Zoning & Historic Preservation Committee, Paul Boni, e-mail paulboni@bonilaw.com. For Randy Baron at the Historical Commission, call 215-686-4543. For L&I, call 215-686-2463. As of press time, I have not been contacted by the FBI or CIA, but if you see surveillance equipment on Spruce Street, you'll know why.



**Under wraps: Tarps cover a roof repair gone wrong on Spruce Street.**

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# Make Your House Shine This Summer

There's something about spring and summer that sends a signal to spruce up our homes. This explains why Society Hill is now buzzing with home improvements — whether it's a crew of painters applying a fresh coat of paint, a carpenter repairing shutters, roofers replacing a roof, or a gardener installing flower boxes — it's all happening here and now, because outdoor work cannot be done in winter. So if you notice that wood surfaces are peeling, cracked or deteriorating (e.g. shutters, doors, cornices, or windows), this is the right time to contact a painter who can restore them. Or perhaps a carpenter is needed to repair or replace a door, gate or window. And, to improve the appearance of your home at night while providing better security, we suggest installing a front door light. Then, after all of the work has been completed, it's time to hire a reliable window washer. (Warning: Do not hire

the fellow who shows up unannounced at your door! Several neighbors have been scammed by this phony "window-washer.")

Whatever your repair needs, your best bet is to ask a neighbor for a reliable reference or use the **Society Hill's Recommended List of Contractors**. Every kind of contractor — painters, plumbers, electricians, masons (brickwork, stucco), carpenters, gardeners and ironworkers — is included in this comprehensive, 12-page list — another unique service provided by SHCA. To request the list, contact Martha Levine at 215-629-0727 or marthalev@aol.com.

Finally, we suggest you do your own follow-up, by conferring with others who have used a contractor from the list — so that you can find out if that neighbor was satisfied with the contractor's quality of work and reliability. It's your home — preserve it!

## Use Society Hill's Recommended List of Contractors



### MEMBERSHIP REPORT

At press time, SHCA membership stands at 946 — with six months left to reach our goal of 1,000 by year's end. (Last year we came close, as 979 members signed up). Whether you are a long-time resident or have recently moved into the neighborhood, here is your chance to assist your civic association to reach the attainable goal of 1,000 members. That magical number will speak volumes when we lobby City agencies to effect improvements for our neighborhood.

Society Hill residents should know that SHCA spends \$1,550 a month (\$18,600 per year) to contract with the Center City District for weekly sidewalk cleaning following the City's trash pick-up on Friday mornings. The "green machine," added to SHCA's budget this past year, reaches each Society Hill block

once every month. We have received a number of compliments from neighbors who have noticed the difference. In effect, we need to collect dues from at least 456 members at \$40 annually to cover the cost of this service. In addition, we thank our neighbor Dave Stevens, who monitors and reports any lapses in the Center City District's "green machine" service in our community.

Thus, your dues really make a difference. To help us reach our goal of 1,000 dues-paying members for 2004, we need to welcome only 54 more new or returning SHCA members. Assuming that 65 members from 2003 will renew, we can reach this historic goal. So please join or renew today! Any questions, call 215-629-1288 or visit our website at [www.societyhillcivic.org](http://www.societyhillcivic.org).

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# The Greening of Head House Square

## The South Street Headhouse District filled 37 containers surrounding Head House Square with plants.

In spring the streets of Society Hill are filled with flowers and plantings that sprinkle our neighborhood with color. As the weather begins to warm, residents fill their winter-dormant containers and drab patches of earth with vibrant, living celebrations of spring. These plants serve as a visual acknowledgment that neighbors care about our community and want to share that aesthetic with others.

That level of caring is what drove neighbors a few months ago to ask why the 37 planters surrounding Head House Square were still empty or in some cases half-filled with lack-luster grasses. In years past, the containers had been planted with a variety of flowers and greens — a gift to the community by Wayne Spilove, owner of historic Ross House, which is situated across from Head House Square at the corner of 2nd and Pine Streets. At that time Dick Ostrander served as executive director of the South Street Headhouse District, and he reports that there was community concern to improve the appearance of the Square. Spilove, who was then chairman of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, donated the containers filled with beautiful flowers and plants.

The District, whose responsibility it is for maintaining the entire Head House property, then needed to develop a system to care for the plants. They contracted with the Center City District for this maintenance program, and for the first three years following receipt of the planters, the containers were emptied and stored out-of-sight at the end of the summer season. Eventually, but unfortunately, that process was considered too much of a nuisance by the SSHD, and the containers languished empty and uncared for on the Square throughout the winter months.

When spring rolled around this year, however, Dave Hammond, current executive director of SSHD, received several phone calls from community residents about these empty containers. Dave, new to his position in January, set out to learn the history behind the planters, and he was put in touch with Kelly Nelson, vice president of SHCA. Mixing Kelly's input with Dave's long tenure at Kmart (with its many garden centers) resulted in a plan that Dave hopes

will satisfy residents for all seasons. "My objective is to select evergreens and bushes that will remain healthy and green all year — so we won't have empty-container syndrome," said Dave. "Then we will fill in with annuals."

The plants and flowers now adorning the Square were purchased by the South Street Headhouse District from Philadelphia Houseplant Wholesalers, who were hired on June 4th and had the containers filled by June 6th — interfering with the plan for a "neighborhood planting party" involving residents and businesses, because the Wholesalers would guarantee their plants only if they did the planting themselves. Now when you walk by Head House Square you will see planters filled with holly, a variety of arborvitae, boxwoods, sweet potato vine, dahlias, petunias and impatiens, and they will soon be bursting with colorful flowers.

As in years past, the Center City District has been hired to care for the plants by regularly watering and weeding them, as well as removing annuals before the first frost. On behalf of our entire community, we thank all who participated in this greening and planting drive — most particularly SSHD's Dave Hammond, SHCA's vice-president Kelly Nelson, and Dick Ostrander, former SSHD executive director who also happens to be a past president of our own Society Hill Civic Association.



### MYSTERY GARDENER FOUND!



**Who Filled the Flower Boxes?**

As reported in the May/June issue of the *Society Hill Reporter*, Steven Chernekov and Kyle Brooks, co-owners of the Salon @5th

(opposite the Super-Fresh on 5th Street) were flabbergasted one morning in March when they discovered that their flower boxes had been stolen. The next morning, the boxes reappeared — filled with beautiful, colorful floral arrangements. Following the *Reporter* story asking readers if they had any information about this mysterious gardener, Chernekov and Brooks were inundated with inquiries. Eventually they did learn "whodunit" — by finding a professional card inserted in one of

the flower boxes. Apparently, a very satisfied client of the salon, James Andrew Sarappa, was the stealth gardener. Sarappa is a landscape designer from the New Jersey shore area who thought it would be fun to surprise the Salon's owners while beautifying the commercial-looking streetscape. By the way, Sarappa's card reads: "Creating the Finest in Outdoor Living, with excellence in container gardens and exotic plantings." His phone number is 609-601-6152.

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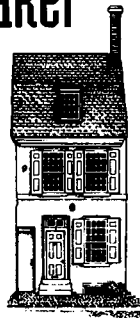


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## Meet & Greet Our New Reporters



### Lana Noël

New to the SHCA Board of Directors, Lana Noël enthusiastically joins the *Reporter* team. By assisting on the newsletter and other SHCA projects, she hopes to give back

to the community she fondly calls home. Lana has enjoyed living in Society Hill with husband Josh Nadel for a few years now. Movie theaters, restaurants, and neighboring parks provide fun for them and their 4-year-old son—who also loves biking to his grandparents' home nearby.

Not always a city girl, Lana grew up in the quiet and beautiful countryside of northern Pennsylvania. Yearning for what lay beyond the mountains surrounding her valley home, she enrolled at Philadelphia's Temple University. Upon graduation, Lana moved to New York to work in the sales department of Knoll,

Inc., an international furniture design company. For personal enrichment, she attended writing courses at New York University. Some time later, Lana took a position with American Express Company to manage one of its customer communications teams. She was soon offered a promotion with relocation to Phoenix, Arizona that she accepted. A year after she traveled west, though, a marriage proposal drew Lana back to Philadelphia, and to an administrative director job at a local engineering firm, Day & Zimmermann. After she completed the desktop publishing program at Moore College of Art, she edited and produced one of D&Z's company newsletters.

Lana chose to set aside her career once her son was born to enjoy her days with him. This special time has opened the door for Lana to pursue her passion for singing, leading her to study with the director of a Temple University choir. Lana recently was selected to join the prestigious Philadelphia women's choir Anna Crusis. She continues to practice Yoga and Alexander Technique, perfect complements to voice work.

### SUBMISSIONS

#### We want to hear from you.

One of the goals of the *Reporter* is to print news of interest to Society Hill residents — especially happenings in and around our community. To publicize an event in the *Reporter*, press releases or copy should be submitted to the SHCA office by email, mail or fax.

Material must be submitted in writing and include the name of a contact person. Edited material may appear if there is space; otherwise upcoming events may be listed in the Community Calendar. Only signed Letters to the Editors will be considered for publication.

#### Society Hill Civic Association

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tel: 215-629-1288  
fax: 215-625-9914  
email: MattDeJulio@aol.com

### Catherine Signorello

Catherine Signorello, a native of the Philadelphia suburbs, has recently joined the *Reporter's* writing team. Catherine first moved to Society Hill when she and husband, Frank, a current SHCA Board Director, were engaged three years ago. They live in an 1830's brownstone on Lombard Street, which they have restored.

Currently the coordinator of alumni relations at William Penn Charter School in East Falls, Catherine has worked at three area independent schools as well as the University of Pennsylvania. She also keeps a hand in investment real estate. "I think I was born with pen to paper," said Catherine, who has a B.A. in English from Lafayette College. "I always try to bring writing and creativity into my job descriptions and volunteer work."

Over the last decade, Catherine has been an active volunteer in many Philadelphia organizations and events, including the Academy Ball,

the Horticultural Society's Azalea Garden Party, the Red Cross's Red Ball, the Junior League and the World Affairs Council. She practices yoga, reads every day and loves going to the grocery store, which is a testament to her passion for all things culinary!



She and Frank can also be seen at the Arden Theater, the Orpheus Club and WXPN's World Café Series. Catherine continues to enjoy the entertainment amenities that city life offers. With the opportunity to write for our neighborhood newsletter, Catherine plans to embrace the chance to connect people with each other and their surroundings. "Connection and community make up part of my ideology," she said. "I'm grateful to be able to combine writing and community — that's really exciting for me!"

## NOTEWORTHY NEIGHBORS

A COLUMN BY DAVID WOODS

## Bernice and Joseph Koplín



There are, according to my sources, 193 countries on this planet. Joe and Bernice Koplín have visited no fewer than 47 of them. So even though the Koplíns have spent a good deal of time in the air — a highly appropriate place for a pair of avid avians — they are truly grounded in Society Hill, having lived in the same Bingham Court home for almost 40 years. It's their love of birds that has winged them on many of their world travels; but it's also their penchant for visiting far-flung family and friends — and their passion for music.



Closer to home, that musical enthusiasm has led to lawyer Bernice's role as chair of the Central (Women's) Committee of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and to her taking ballet lessons. And Joe, an accountant, is a former professional trumpet player who at age 10 was a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. After serving for two years in the US Army band and playing at the funeral of President Kennedy, he was invited by Leopold Stokowski to play in the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, and to serve as the great conductor's music librarian.

Although the Koplíns share office space at the law firm of Schachtel, Gerstley, Levine, & Koplín, PC, accountants and lawyers are not allowed to be professional partners; and so, says Joe, "We don't talk to each other during the day, except if it's something to do with the kids." Those kids are Jonathan, 30, a global strategy manager with Samsung in Seoul, Korea; and Joshua, 27, who is finishing up a master's degree in Industrial Design at Pratt.

One is tempted to say that the parents are empty nesters. In any event, the pair embarked upon their birding life because, says, Bernice, "As a Girl Scout I became interested in the outdoors, hiking and camping." Adds Joe: "I did it because I didn't want to be left home; I wanted to travel." And the Koplíns can surely claim to be high flyers. Aside from his musical prowess, Joe has had his own tax practice since 1985. And Bernice, as well as being a law firm partner specializing in tax and trial advocacy, holds masters' degrees in anthropology and library science.

The advantage of living in Society Hill, Bernice and Joe agree, is the area's historic ambiance, which they enjoy as they walk to work. And so they give back! Many an evening they have patrolled the neighborhood as Town Watch volunteers, and over the years both have been involved in the Bingham Court Association one way or another — Joe as its president and treasurer several times. Joe has also served as an SHCA Quadrant director. Bernice has contributed her expertise for Starr Garden playground, preparing its charitable exemption status.

As a couple of film buffs who own some 500 movie DVDs, they note that they "practically live at" the nearby Ritz movie theaters. The Koplíns clearly don't let the grass grow under their feet: they're just back from an Asian tour, and about to set off for Eastern Europe — and presumably more than just a bird's eye view of some more of those 193 countries.

Contact David at [dwoods@healthpublishing.com](mailto:dwoods@healthpublishing.com)



**On a recent cruise along the Yangtze River in central China, Bernice and Joe dressed as Emperor and Empress.**

# The Green Tree Perpetual Assurance Company

## Episode VII • Company Portraits

By 1815, The Green Tree was well established and prospering, and, owing to their patriotic regard for George Washington, the Trustees decided that the first portrait the Company would acquire should be his. They therefore commissioned Bass Otis (1784-1861), for a fee of \$25, to copy Gilbert Stuart's 1796 Athenaeum portrait of Washington, painted from life. The Green Tree purchased two additional Washington portraits from the Peale family in 1923—a pencil sketch and an oil by Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860). The oil is one of the “porthole” portraits, so called because of the oval frame painted directly on the canvas. The portrait shows Washington dressed in Continental uniform, with gold epaulettes, white neck cloth, and ruffle. The back of the painting bears the original inscription, “Painted by Rembrandt Peale in 1854, From his original portrait, of 1795.” Rembrandt Peale was the second son of Charles Willson Peale (buried in St. Peter's churchyard), who persuaded Washington to pose for him and his son “during three long sittings.” After Washington's death, Rembrandt Peale for a time devoted himself exclusively to painting a heroic, standard portrait of Washington that would include the finest characteristics of existing portraits and the Houdon bust made from Washington's death mask. Peale made some seventy-five copies of his original “porthole” portrait, justifying the works by his belief that as the only painter still living for whom Washington had sat, he was the most reliable. After exhibiting the original “porthole” portrait on a tour of Europe, Peale sold it to the US Senate in 1832 for \$2,000. The pencil sketch of Washington's head in The Green Tree Collection is drawn on tracing paper and quartered, perhaps as an aid to proportioning. Analysis of the drawing suggests that the sketch derived from the original sittings in 1795 and was therefore used in arriving at the final “porthole” portrait.

Among the portraits of its Chairmen in The Green Tree Collection is one of General George Cadwalader painted by Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) in 1880.

Cadwalader had distinguished himself during the Philadelphia Nativist Riots in 1844, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. After his death, Thomas Eakins was selected, possibly through the influence of Trustee John T. Lewis who had also been a trustee of The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, to paint Cadwalader's portrait, and on May 15, 1880, Eakins received \$250 for his portrait. Evidently the painting was made from a photographic *carte de visite* now in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Both show a man of middle age, with a direct, strong countenance and with wind-swept hair that is a surprising element in the painting, but quite natural in the photograph taken outdoors. When the painting was made, Eakins was still teaching at The Academy and was shortly thereafter made Director, but by 1886 the heated controversy over his teaching principles—his reliance on the camera to fix images for examination and his insistence on nude male models in his life classes attended by young women—led to his resignation.

Cecilia Beaux, one of Eakins' pupils at The Academy, wrote that his principles of art “were rock-bottom, fundamental, but somehow reached regions by research, that others could not gain by flight.” Cecilia Beaux herself (1855-1942) became one of the country's foremost artists. Born in Philadelphia, she trained at The Academy and abroad and in 1895 was appointed the first woman faculty member of The Academy. In 1907 she was commissioned for the portrait of J. Dickinson Sergeant, Chairman of The Green Tree from 1906 until his death in 1909. This portrait, like many of her later works, reflects a grandeur of style characteristic of John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), whom she greatly admired.

Sargent, too, was commissioned by The Green Tree to paint a Chairman: S. Weir Mitchell. Although Mitchell had earned a prominent place in American medicine, he began a second career at age fifty as the author of historical romances, poetry, essays, and children's stories, as well as a translation of the late medieval poem *The Pearl*.



Although Sargent was born in Florence and spent much of his life abroad, he was the son of a Boston physician and his Philadelphia wife, Mary Newbold Singer, and thought of himself as an American. In May of 1903 he returned to Philadelphia, where he was immediately drawn into the city's art community. He exchanged portraits with Thomas Eakins, whose work he admired, and visited The Academy, where his friend William Merritt Chase taught. Also teaching there at the time was Cecelia Beaux.

In 1910 William Merritt Chase (1848-1916) was commissioned to paint Henry Williams Biddle, Chairman of The Green Tree from 1909 until his death in 1923. Henry Williams Biddle was the son of Thomas Alexander Biddle and the grandson of Thomas Biddle, who founded the banking house of Thomas A. Biddle & Co. One of the most respected and beloved Chairmen of The Green Tree, Biddle was a man larger than life, as the Chase portrait suggests in its portrayal of a man imposing in both figure and character. The portrait may have been the model for the famous 1911 Baca-Flor portrait of J. P. Morgan, for it bears a striking resemblance.

In addition to being successful businessmen, the Trustees of The Green Tree have usually been prominent in Philadelphia civic and cultural affairs. Many were enthusiastic patrons of the arts, and fifteen early Trustees of The Green Tree were also directors of The Academy. Together with like-minded colleagues, these Trustees of The Green Tree were influential in shaping the style of the Philadelphia painting of their day.

*(To be continued.)*

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

Thursday, July 15

**Preservation Alliance Easement Program**

Forum at The Left Bank  
3131 Walnut St., 6-7 p.m.  
See page 13 or call J. Randall Cotton at 215-546-1146, Ext. 21 for more information.

Wednesday, July 21

**SHCA Board of Directors Meeting**

Old Pine Community Center  
4th & Lombard Streets  
7 p.m.

Friday, July 16

**Music at Old Pine Church**

Bob Seelay, boogie-woogie-champion  
8 p.m. \$15

Sunday, July 18

**Music at Old Pine Church**

Jazz Vespers: Spirit Winds  
Saxophone Quartet  
5 p.m.

Sunday, August 15

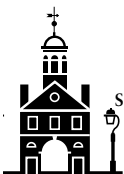
**Music at Old Pine Church**

Jazz Vespers: Zan Gardner Quartet  
5 p.m.

Wednesday, September 22

**SHCA Meetings**

Board Meeting: 6 p.m.  
General Membership Meeting: 7:30 p.m.  
Meeting Site & primary topic to be announced. Note: one week later than usual due to Rosh Hashanah holiday.



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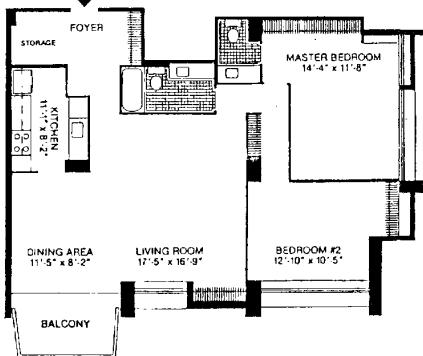


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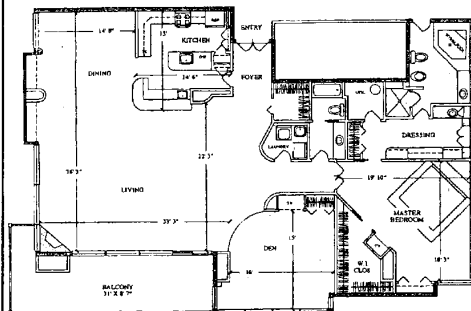
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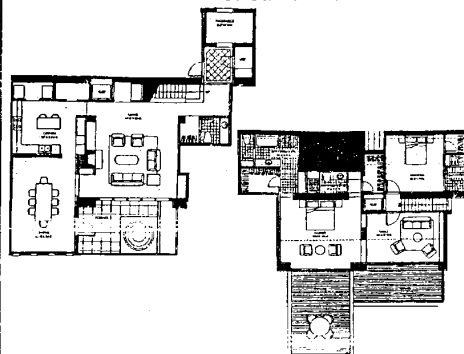
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