

SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

www.societyhillcivic.org

Cancellations, Changes and Gratitude



A sign of the times.

It seems this spring that the world changed overnight, bringing anxiety and uncertainty to every corner of the globe. Invisible and unyielding, the COVID-19 virus has quickly altered life in Society Hill in ways that no one could have predicted in January.

With social distancing in effect, it was necessary for the Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) to cancel or postpone several of its much-anticipated, heavily attended events. Sadly, the 42nd House and Garden Tour, scheduled for May 17, has been canceled. Our June 3 Washington Square Affair, however, has been optimistically postponed to Thursday, October 8. In addition, we canceled our community-wide Spring Clean-Up Day, always held the week before the House Tour. Consider, though, organizing your block to do a socially responsible tidying up, or relieve some boredom by wielding a broom in front of your own home.

Changes are noticeable throughout our community in unexpected and sometimes bizarre ways. Contemplate catching up with a friend, fully masked and gloved, while sitting on separate benches in Washington Square. Experience a neighborhood Happy Hour with participants raising glasses in the street, while standing six

feet apart. Or enjoy a convivial dinner party or animated book discussion on Zoom. These trying times definitely demand creativity, flexibility, patience and good humor.

They also call upon us to offer thanks and support to those directly dealing with the stress caused by this crisis. In that vein, SHCA donated \$10,000 to each of three organizations whose missions have become even more urgent now: Philabundance, Project Home and Women Against Abuse. It also expressed the thanks of our community to the dedicated Pennsylvania Hospital doctors and nurses with food and care packages; and distributed lunches to the hard-working men and women at both the 5th Street Acme and the 6th Police District. Here in our own community, neighbors on the 500 block of Pine Street are among those who gather nightly at 7 p.m. to cheer and applaud our heroic health care workers. In truth, we can raise the spirits of everyone who contributes to making our lives run smoothly with a simple "thank you."

Tough times make us tougher, but they can also make us more resilient and compassionate. Let's hope that, as we observe physical social distancing, we can find other ways to connect and stay strong as we flatten the curve.

Wednesday,
June
17

Elections:

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Larry Spector

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Mary Purcell

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Martha Levine

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Brian Wengenroth

Recording Secretary

Ben Speciale

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association Meeting
Tentatively Scheduled for June 17, 2020

Time & Location: TBA

Speaker: TBA

Topic: TBA

We will vote on this slate of individuals to make up SHCA's 2020-21 Board of Officers and Directors.

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Concha Alborg

Norm Lieberman

Southeast Quadrant

Bob Curley

MAKE SOME NOISE!



Pine Street neighbor Barbara Oldenhoff adds some noise to her block's nightly tribute honoring Philly's healthcare workers.

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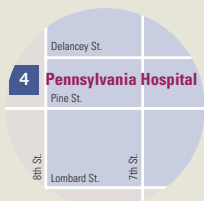
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SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

NUSA Award-Winning Newsletter 2014 thru 2019

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Submission Deadline

July/August Issue:
 June 1

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Find past issues in color at www.societyhillcivic.org.

The views set forth in the opinion articles are the views of the authors and are not necessarily those of SHCA.

Submissions

If you have news that would be of interest to Society Hillers, email Sandra Rothman at sandra.rothman@aol.com. Materials must be submitted in writing and include the name of a contact person. Edited submissions will be considered for publication if space permits. Letters to the Editor must be signed, with contact information.

SHCA Mission Statement

The aims and purposes of SHCA are: to promote the improvement of the Society Hill area of Philadelphia, including its cultural, educational and civic activities, and the preservation and restoration of its historic buildings; to represent the residents of Society Hill in matters affecting the City of Philadelphia generally and Society Hill in particular; and to interpret the value and significance of Society Hill to the public.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY LARRY SPECTOR

That you are reading a digital version of this *Reporter* edition only adds to the litany of changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. No use here dwelling further on how life is not the same. Instead, I ask that you indulge me in veering away from local matters with mention of two books that I think are pertinent now.

The first comes to mind from how clearly the worldwide reaction to the pandemic shows that hundreds of millions of people — even billions — can actually behave in the same way to mitigate harm. Social distancing and staying home are collective behaviors of the kind that I haven't seen in my lifetime and that perhaps haven't been displayed since our parents and grandparents turned out all the lights at night or otherwise acted *en masse* during WWII.

Imagine if there is something that we could do with even less effort and inconvenience to lessen climate change. A book by Jonathan Safran Foer infers that there is. He asks: What is worse — a person who denies the fact of climate change; or a person who accepts it as fact but does nothing about it? Posing this and other provocative questions in approaching his main point, he describes what we can do — and it has nothing to do with clean energy. I recommend to you, *We Are the Weather*.

The second is the novel that follows the passage below. I have not read more beautiful writing. I read it when I seek tranquility, and in these days you may find it useful as well. John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*:

“The Salinas Valley is in Northern California. It is a long narrow swale between two ranges of mountains, and the Salinas River winds and twists up the center until it falls at last into Monterey Bay.

I remember my childhood names for grasses and secret flowers. I remember where a toad may live and what time the birds awaken in the summer — and what trees and seasons smelled like — how people looked and walked and smelled even. The memory of odors is very rich.

I remember that the Gabilan Mountains to the east of the valley were light gay mountains full of sun and loveliness and a kind of invitation, so that you wanted to climb into their warm foothills almost as you want to climb into the lap of a beloved mother. They were beckoning mountains with a brown grass love. The Santa Lucias stood up against the sky to the west and kept the valley from the open sea, and they were dark and brooding — unfriendly and dangerous.

* * *

The spring flowers in a wet year were unbelievable. The whole valley floor, and the foothills too, would be carpeted with lupins and poppies. Once a woman told me that colored flowers would seem more bright if you added a few white flowers to give the colors definition. Every petal of blue lupin is edged with white, so that a field of lupins is more blue than you can imagine. And mixed with these were splashes of California poppies. These too are of a burning color — not orange, not gold, but if pure gold were liquid and could raise a cream, that golden cream might be like the color of the poppies. When their season was over the yellow mustard came up and grew to a great height. When my grandfather came into the valley the mustard was so tall that a man on horseback showed only his head above the yellow flowers. On the uplands the grass would be strewn with buttercups, with hen-and-chickens, with black-centered yellow violets. And a little later in the season there would be red and yellow stands of Indian paintbrush. These were the flowers of the open places exposed to the sun.”

Stay safe.



**SHCA President
Larry Spector**

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SUPPORTING OUR FRONTLINE WORKERS

Helping in the Fight Against COVID-19

The Society Hill Civic Association has formed a small committee to explore ways to support our community, as well as those who are truly on the frontlines during the coronavirus pandemic. These committed individuals put themselves at risk every day to provide us with what we need. They include healthcare workers, first responders, pharmacists, grocery store employees, delivery people and transit workers, to name a few.

In early April, SHCA board members delivered meals to Pennsylvania Hospital to support our local healthcare heroes. The emergency department was fed one day and the ICU critical care staff another evening. They surprised ICU nurses with 48 gift bags containing hand lotion, lip balm and other toiletries, thanking them for their much-appreciated service.

The board also arranged to have 50 hoagies delivered to our 5th Street Acme workers for two shifts, to show the community's appreciation for all of their hard work keeping the food line running smoothly. In addition, hoagies were on the menu when lunch was delivered to officers at the 6th Police District.

Many thanks to them for their frontline service during these difficult times. All recipients were grateful for the gifts and, more so, for the recognition.

SHCA purchased the food for both groups from local businesses Spread Bagelry at 5th and South Streets, and Primo Hoagies at 128 S. 11th Street. Our purchase from local restaurants and food stores helps keep these businesses alive and functioning.



SHCA delivered meals from Spread Bagelry to Pennsylvania Hospital Emergency Room staff one day and ICU staff the next to support our local healthcare heroes.

One of 48 goodie bags presented to the ICU nurses at Pennsylvania Hospital.



Two shifts of Acme workers were delighted to receive 50 hoagies from SHCA. The hoagies were purchased from Primo Hoagies at 128 S. 11th Street.



Community Officer Julie Carpenter, photo left, hoists a hoagie; her fellow officers receive SHCA's gift of lunch, recognizing the community's thanks for their service.

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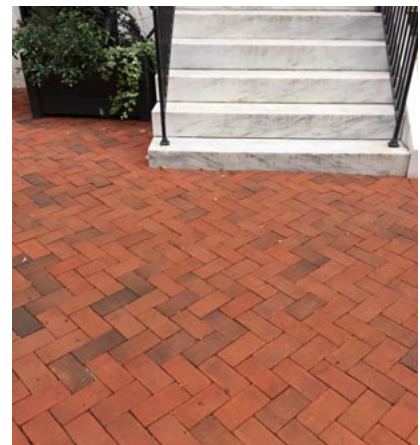
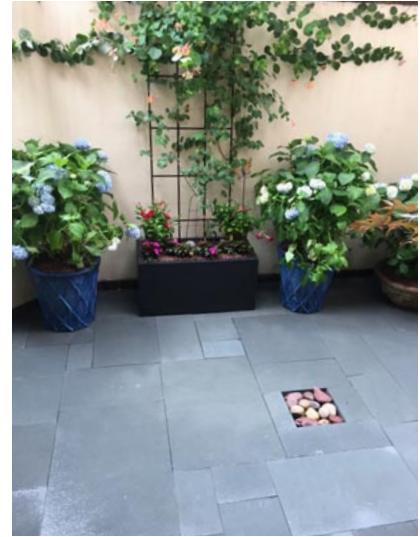
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Brick sidewalks in Society Hill and downtown Philly are being renovated to provide a smooth, safe walking surface for pedestrians. We have experience and have repaired many sidewalks and patios in the city. The upheaval caused by tree roots can often be carefully corrected without removing or killing trees. Call McFarland to inquire about fixing your bricks.

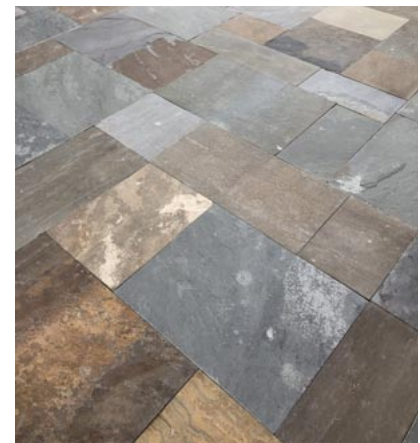
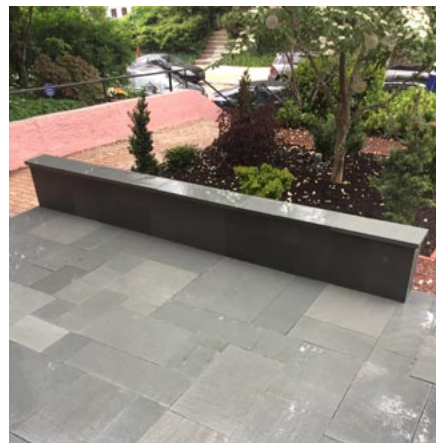


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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

BY MARTHA LEVINE

Help Keep Our Favorite Restaurants, Food Markets and Pharmacies in Business!

While we are staying in place to avoid person-to-person contact, SHCA presents some options for delivery of food, pharmaceuticals and necessities to your door. This will also help keep our restaurants, markets and pharmacies in business.

This list will be updated periodically. Let us know if a restaurant or store is no longer providing services, and we will remove them from the list.

SHCA is not endorsing any particular restaurant or business. If your grocery store, market, pharmacy or restaurant offers takeout or delivery to Society Hill and would like to be included on this list, please contact SHCA at 215-629-0727 or marthalev6@gmail.com.

SHCA urges observance of **Take Out Tuesdays**. Mark your calendar so that Tuesday is one night, at least, when we help support and show our appreciation for our area restaurants.



Pharmacies

- Washington Square Pharmacy**
241 S. 6th Street, 215-925-1466
- CVS Pharmacy**
314 S. 5th Street, 215-923-1289
- CVS Pharmacy**
421 S. 2nd Street, 215-627-3983

Food Markets

The following local food stores will deliver through Instacart or Mercato. Go to www.instacart.com or www.mercato.com.

Acme Markets

DiBruno's

CVS

ShopRite

Sprouts

Wegmans

Headhouse Farmers Market
Sundays, 2nd and Pine Streets

Giordano Garden Groceries
215-389-6500, delivery, takeout

Market at Hopkinson House
215-627-5381, takeout only

At Reading Terminal Market:
all Mercato & takeout

Bassetts Ice Cream (215-925-4315)

Iovine Brothers Produce Market
(215-928-4366),

Original Turkey (215-925-5598)

Market Bakery (215-925-4787)

Sue's Market

Society Hill Towers Marketplace,
215-982-1678, delivery/takeout

Whole Foods

go to www.amazon.com



Restaurants

The following restaurants will deliver from their own locations or through GrubHub (grubhub.com), Caviar (trycaviar.com), DoorDash (doordash.com) or Uber Eats (ubereats.com) as indicated. Takeout by pre-order only.

Alyan's Middle East Restaurant,
603 S. 4th Street, 215-922-3553,
GrubHub & Caviar delivery and takeout

Ants' Pants, 526 S. 4th Street,
215-309-2877, takeout only;
625 S. 6th Street, 267-324-3553,
DoorDash delivery and takeout

Bistro Romano, 120 Lombard
Street, 215-925-8880, takeout
or Caviar and Uber Eats delivery,
wine shop for delivery

Bodhi To Go (coffee), 410 S.
2nd Street, 267-239-2928,
www.bodhi2go.com, delivery
and takeout

Bud & Marilyn's, 1234 Locust
Street, 215-925-8880, DoorDash
delivery

Cavanaugh's Headhouse,
421 S. 2nd Street, 215-928-9307,
GrubHub & Caviar delivery, takeout

Crème Brulee Bistro & Café,
1800 S. 4th Street. 215-334-9000,
takeout or Grubhub delivery

Cry Baby Pasta, 627 S. 3rd Street,
267-534-3076, takeout, delivery

El Vez, 121 S. 13th Street,
215-253-3777, takeout or
Uber Eats delivery

Famous 4th Street Deli,
700 S. 4th Street, 215-922-3274,
takeout or Caviar delivery

Fat Salmon (Japanese),
719 Walnut Street, 215-928-8881,
takeout, Caviar, DoorDash delivery

Forsythia (modern French), 233
Chestnut Street, 215-644-9395,
Caviar delivery and takeout

Frieda Café, 320 Walnut Street,
215-600-1291, takeout or Uber
Eats delivery

Garces Restaurants, all deliveries
and pickup at Olde Bar, 125 Walnut
Street, 215-253-3777, delivery
through Caviar & Uber Eats

Gigi Pizza, 504 Bainbridge Street,
267-457-5688, Caviar delivery
and takeout

Gnocchi, 613 E. Passyunk Avenue,
215-592-8300, GrubHub delivery
or takeout

GreenStreet Coffee,
call 215-634-9044 for delivery.

Han Dynasty, 133 Chestnut Street,
215-922-1888, Caviar delivery

High Street on Market, 308 Market
Street, 215-625-0988, delivery and
takeout

Homemade Goodies by Roz
(bakery), 510 S. 5th Street,
215-592-9616, takeout only

Hungry Pigeon, 743 S. 4th Street,
215-278-2736, DoorDash delivery

Indeblue (Indian) 205 S. 13th Street,
215-545-4633, takeout, Caviar,
DoorDash, or Grubhub delivery.

Isot Mediterranean Cuisine. BYOB.
622 S. 6th Street, 267-457-3622,
Takeout or Grubhub delivery.

La Bugambilas (Mexican),
148 South Street.,215-922-3190,
DoorDash delivery and takeout

La Colombe Coffee,
www.lacolombe.com, free delivery

La Nonna, 214 South Street,
267-928-3262, takeout only

La Scala's Restaurant,
615 Chestnut Street,
215-928-0900, GrubHub delivery

Little Fish, 746 S. 6th Street,
267-455-0172, takeout only

Little Nonna, 1234 Locust Street,
215-546-2100, Caviar delivery

Lorenzo's Pizza, 305 South Street,
215-627-4110, takeout

Malbec Argentine Restaurant,
400 S. 2nd Street, 215-515-3899,
takeout or Caviar delivery

Mustard Greens (Chinese),
622 S. 2nd Street, 215-627-0833,
takeout only

Oilly, 700 S. 5th Street,
267-457-5319, delivery and takeout

O'Neals Pub, 611 S. 3rd Street,
215-574-9495, direct delivery or
Caviar and takeout

Pietro's Coal Oven Pizzeria,
121 South Street, 215-733-0675,
Caviar delivery, takeout

Pizzeria Stella, 420 S. 2nd Street,
215-320-8000, takeout only

Positano Coast, 212 Walnut Street,
215-238-0499, takeout or Caviar
delivery

Primo Hoagies, 128 S. 11th Street,
215-925-4500, takeout or Caviar,
DoorDash, GrubHub delivery

Spasso Italian Grill, 345 S. Front
Street, 215-592-7661, DoorDash
delivery

Spread Bagelry, 443 South Street,
Caviar and Grub delivery, takeout

Tamarind Tai Restaurant,
117 South Street, 215-925-2764,
takeout or GrubHub, Caviar,
DoorDash delivery

Triangle Tavern, 1338 S. 10th Street,
215-800-1992, Caviar delivery

Twisted Tail, 509 S. 2nd Street,
215-558-2471, takeout and delivery

Village Whiskey (burgers),
118 S. 18th Street, 215-253-3777,
Caviar delivery



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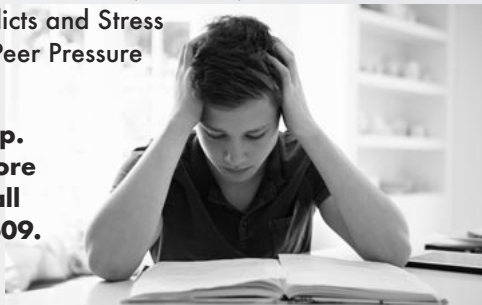
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OUR SEASON OF SOCIAL DISTANCE

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

Staying Sane in the Shadow of COVID-19

As I write this piece for an early May publication date, I have no idea if it will still be relevant. Information changes daily, if not hourly. Unprecedented in our lifetime, the COVID-19 pandemic has already had effects that we couldn't begin to fathom just months ago. It's at once surreal and yet equally terrifying.

So here we are with a stay-at-home order in place and social distancing our new normal. The timeline is uncertain. Pre COVID-19, virtually all recommendations for staying healthy, both physically and emotionally, included strong social support. So, what to do? If ever there was a time to think outside the box, this is it.

Connect with Your Social Network

Having this happen in an age of online technology is fortuitous. Lots of options are out there.

Zoom and **FaceTime** include video that makes you feel more connected than a simple phone call. **Houseparty** lets you join up with others and play games online while you do. Text, call or e-mail — whatever it takes to reach out and connect with someone.

Religious buildings may be shuttered, but many faith communities are offering **online religious services** and support.

Some blocks host "**Happy Hours**" — 10 people or less at least six feet apart. Neighbors step out front with their beverage of choice to catch up with each other. Others organize small neighborhood karaoke or dance parties, all within distancing guidelines.

You may want to curl up on your couch to **binge watch** TV and wolf down junk food. If you need to do that occasionally, so be it. But most days, please take care of yourself. You'll feel more energetic and it may improve your odds should you become infected. Eat healthy, keep your alcohol consumption in check, exercise and try to get adequate sleep. Walk, run, bike or check out online exercise programs.

Keep a Schedule

Being productive can help you feel better. Establish a routine. Shower, dress, eat and plan your day. It makes the time go faster and will give you at least a small sense of accomplishment that you've made it successfully through another day. High five!

Learn a New Skill

Like it or not, you finally have all that free time on your hands that you once longed for. Have you always wanted to play an instrument, bake a soufflé, learn another language or master chess? Those lessons are as close as your computer. With a little persistence and determination, you can add to your repertoire.

Music Heals the Soul

Make music. Listen to music. Everyone from contemporary artists to the Philadelphia Orchestra offers online performances. YouTube is full of inspiring amateur productions. Find a virtual dance party or just crank up the volume and boogie in your kitchen.

Be Kind to Yourself

Treat yourself as well as you would a good friend. We all have moments of desperation right now. Go easy on yourself if you become upset, fall off a diet or just need a lazy day to regroup. We're all doing the best we can.

Show Appreciation

Today's superheroes, our healthcare workers, deserve tremendous gratitude. So do the grocery store clerks, restaurants, delivery people, truckers, first responders and everyone else helping to keep society running. Show your appreciation as you can. A meal, a tip or even a simple thank you will go a long way. Hugs will have to wait.

Focus on the Positive

Even with a looming disaster, flowers bloom, birds sing and children play. Take it in. Fear of loneliness while isolated has compelled many people to adopt or foster pets. The innate goodness of people shines through in so many ways. Focus on that.

Feel Free to Escape

Try a funny movie, a good book, even a midday nap. It's ok, even healthy, to laugh when you can. These escapes will fuel you to handle the tough stuff.

Do Something to Help

Donate money, give blood, support local restaurants and check on your neighbors.

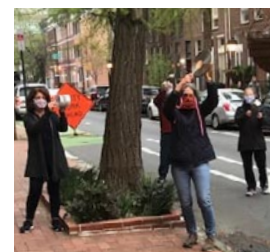
Please ask for help if you need it.

Follow all the health guidelines to keep this monster in check.

We **will** get through this together.



Crank up the volume and boogie!



Neighbors on the 500 block of Pine Street get together every night at 7 p.m. to show their loud support for our healthcare workers, as well as connect and offer support to each other.

KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

Playgrounds Now and Then

Philadelphia is under a stay-at-home order to prevent the very scene you see in this card, which was published by the Playgrounds Association of Philadelphia in 1910. Unfortunately, these joyful kids would soon face their own flu

pandemic in 1918. This card was part of a set of four published to promote playgrounds as a benefit to society. Now playgrounds are being closed to save it. How tragic that something so enriching to the human soul could become potentially deadly.

Our playground system began in the 19th century with the activism of philanthropic organizations. They sought to foster healthy minds and bodies of poorer children suffering from the effects of increased housing density and industrialization. Constructive supervised play could impute good moral standards and divert kids away from criminal activity. The concept is known as the American Playground Movement. Starr Garden Park, at Lombard and Sixth Streets, is one of the earliest examples.

By 1882, philanthropist Theodore Starr had purchased two tiny plots

for use as neighborhood gardens that took on a combined playground purpose. Several private organizations, eventually forming the Starr Center Association, cooperated with him to develop the project for kids in a distressed neighborhood who would otherwise have no place to play than the streets and potentially wind up in trouble. The site became known as Starr Garden. With time, a very large community center building with a nursery, kindergarten, gymnasium, showers, bath, club room, library and a kitchen for low-cost meals was added. Adjoining plots were added to include the entire block, and Starr Garden became known as "Philadelphia's first

real playground." It was eventually transferred to the Playgrounds Association of Philadelphia, the publisher of this postcard.

Formed in 1907, the Association explains its purpose in the 1910 annual report: "It is during leisure rather than during work time that character is formed... The excellent effect of recreation on character is seen in children at play. Often for the first time they learn the meaning of self-restraint. They learn the significance of co-operation and group action in those games requiring teamwork... We shall also continue our propaganda for supervised play until every citizen is a friend of the inalienable right of the child to supervised play in the open air."

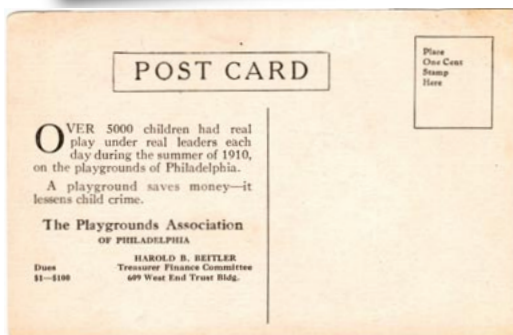
Playgrounds were to be a means to combat the problems of overcrowded neighborhoods that had come to define Penn's "Green Country Towne," by "protecting the children from possible contagion of low moral standards by establishing play centres, where they shall be under proper and effective supervision while they play."

By 1910, the organization was managing a collection of playgrounds. It managed to get the City of Philadelphia into the playground business at a time when it was thought to be the work of private philanthropists, rather than government. The group lobbied the municipal government to create the Public Playgrounds Committee of Philadelphia and give it a budget. This city agency then took over all the Association's playgrounds and began to build its own. The Association continued on as a friends' group, advocating for playgrounds and raising money for specific improvement projects such as a fence and gymnastic equipment for Starr Gardens.

In 1906 there had been no municipal playground facilities. By 1913, a Board of Recreation would be managing 13 playgrounds. Its 1913 annual report stated that the city had "advanced... from backwardness to a leading position among American cities operating Playgrounds." As with Mural Arts Philadelphia today, visitors were coming from around the world to study the city's program.

In 1910, the Playground Association of Philadelphia wrote, "We seem sometimes to have forgotten that the aim of school and college is not primarily learning, but the development of strong, well-balanced men and women who can bear the

continued on Page 11



UPDATE

Starr Garden was in the midst of planning for a giant fundraising campaign for a complete renovation before this crisis began and will resume efforts as soon as is feasible. Imagine how exciting a brand new beautiful park will be when we are all able to safely come together again. StarrGarden-Neighbors@gmail.com.

KEEPING POSTED

continued from Page 10

burdens and do the work of their own place in life and meet the emergencies of a complex civilization.” Regrettably, according to a February 6, 2019 WHYY report by Nina Feldman, today two-thirds of Philadelphia School District elementary schools don’t have playgrounds.

The Department of Recreation officially merged with the Fairmount Park Commission in 2010 to create our Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. It manages over 10,000 acres and hundreds of recreation facilities, including our playgrounds. It explains itself this way: “We help people grow; that’s what we do.”

Our neighborhood playgrounds are the result of activism that began in the 19th century, expanded by the Playgrounds Association of Philadelphia over a hundred years ago. We even have one in our neighborhood that seems to attract bears. The next time the sounds of kids on a playground make you smile, you’ll know the playground didn’t just happen by accident.

Sources: Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, “Playgrounds” by Deborah Shine Valentine, University of Pennsylvania

Finding Aids, Playground Association of Philadelphia
1910 Annual Report

Editor’s note: Read more about Starr Garden in the November/December 2016 issue of the *Reporter*, page 11: www.societyhillcivic.org.

Al Cavalari is a certified member of the Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides. For a day job, he operates the Flag Guys®, a flag business in upstate New York. send comments to Al at flagguys@aol.com.



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

Neighbor to Neighbor With Penn's Village

As any of us old enough to ride the bus for free can attest to, aging is not for the faint of heart. While the lucky among us remain healthy and highly functional, many need some assistance. Most people, no matter what their age, still want to remain as active as possible, socially connected, helping each other and learning new things. While some folks love the idea of senior communities with multiple levels of care, for us intrepid city dwellers that may not always be the case. If you have a strong desire to remain in your home, enjoying all that the city has to offer, Penn's Village may be the answer.

Penn's Village is one of three Philadelphia chapters of the "Village-to-Village Movement" which exists in 250 locations all across the US, as well as Australia and New Zealand. The basic premise is one of utilizing neighborhood volunteers to assist those who need help to "age in place." Founded in 2007-2008, Penn's Village serves the area of Washington Avenue to Girard Avenue, from the Delaware to the Schuylkill Rivers. It is a community-based non-profit that assists older people, as well as younger people with special needs. There are different levels of membership based on what you're looking for, whether services and/or programs (workshops). Many neighbors are both members and volunteers.

Jane Eeley, Executive Director of Penn's Village, heads up the organization along with two other part-time employees. One handles their database. A second works as the administrative coordinator. Their board of directors is comprised of individuals from all walks of life who bring a wide breadth of expertise and experience. Volunteers do all the planning.

Some of the services that members can access and that volunteers provide are:

Transportation: Volunteers, using their own car, can provide rides to health appointments, pharmacies and food stores within and around central Philadelphia.

Companionship: Companions visit those who are isolated or unable to venture outside frequently. These can be in-home visits to talk, watch TV, read or do puzzles together. Sometimes they include walks or outings for lunch or a cultural event.

Minor Repairs: Volunteers provide some light home maintenance — changing light bulbs or HVAC filters or maybe hanging photos.

Technology Assistance: Tech-savvy volunteers can help with computers, SMART phones and other devices.

Errands: A neighbor may need something from the grocery store, post office or dry cleaners.

Health Pals: Specially trained volunteers can accompany a member to a doctor's appointment as a source of support or an extra set of ears.

Administrative Office Support: Penn's Village can use help with mailings, filings, technical support and phone calls.

Join a Committee: If you have a specific interest or expertise, maybe being part of one of their many committees is a way for you to help.

Emergency Pet Care: Members occasionally need temporary help to feed or walk a pet.

Home Organization: If you have a little of organizational guru Marie Kondo in you, helping someone sort out or de-clutter their space may be your volunteer niche.

While all of these services are valuable, the largest areas of need are for companionship and transportation.

Those volunteers who provide **companionship** work out mutually convenient times with the member. Sometimes it's just checking in for a visit, but often-times the volunteer and member venture out to lunch, movies or other events.

Transportation, most often to doctor's appointments or shopping, is also in

COVID 19 UPDATE

Office – The office at First Presbyterian Church is currently closed. All office activities are being handled remotely. Staff is available via e-mail and telephone.

Services – Volunteer delivered in-person services are suspended. Penn's Village will be in touch with members by phone to assist with accessing alternative services. Companionship services can continue via phone calls, FaceTime and Skype.

Programs and Events – Many programs/ workshops/social events are continuing as online events hosted by Zoom Conferencing. Just download and install the Zoom app on your computer or mobile device to join the event.

great demand. Not everyone in the city has a car. If you do, you can make a great difference to someone in need.

Affinity Groups, for members with common interests, are member-initiated and led. French Conversation, Knitting and US History are just a few now in place.

Penn's Village offers about five programs each month on a myriad of topics. They've covered everything from managing your smart phone, end-of-life issues, history and politics to beer pairing. The variety is impressive. They also have a monthly newsletter that is quite informative and can be accessed online.

And, as Jane Eeley noted, the nicest outgrowth of their organization is the wonderful friendships that develop along the way. Penn's Village is about neighbors together — connecting, engaging and thriving.

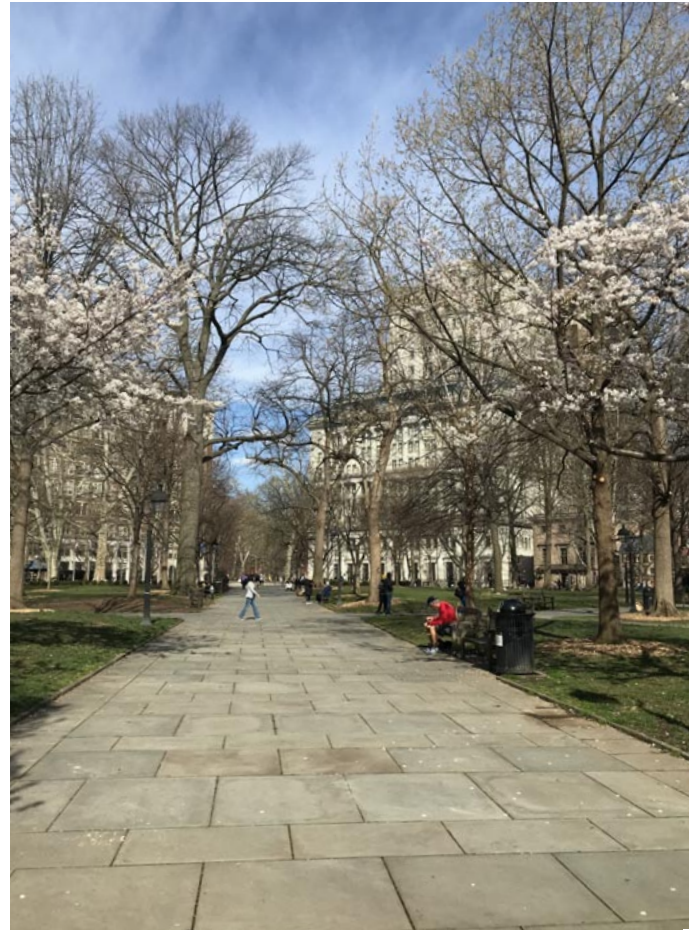
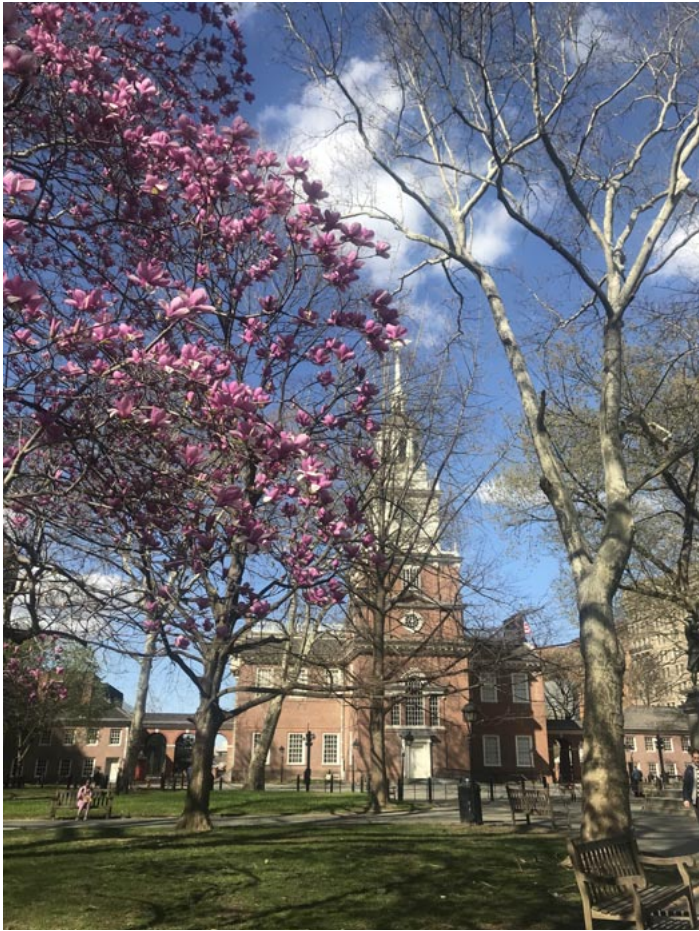
"It takes a village" obviously doesn't apply just to children. For more information, visit www.pennsvillage.org or call 215-925-7333.

Claudia Carabelli serves on the SHCA board as SW Quadrant Director.

OUT AND ABOUT

PHOTOS BY MARTHA LEVINE

Beautiful Society Hill



OUT AND ABOUT

Help Keep It Green

Spring has arrived, and for our green-thumbed neighbors that means finding pleasure in tending to the gardens, decks and window boxes that help make our community so beautiful.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our go-to sources for plant material have closed this year. PhilaFlora, run by the non-profit Philadelphia-based Landhealth Institute, remains an exception. This native plant nursery provides both delivery and curbside pickup.

LandHealth's philosophy is grounded in the belief that healthy land is at the root of healthy communities. The organization takes pride in the revitalization of underutilized urban sites, which is why PhilaFlora sits on previously vacant ground in the Parkside neighborhood at the heart of West Philadelphia, at 4864 Parkside Avenue.

Here you will find plant species specific to Philadelphia's ecosystem, which helps support land health across our neighborhoods and region. Native plants create functional and beautiful landscapes that require less

maintenance than traditional gardens. Plants are cultivated with Philadelphia in mind to attract the songbirds, butterflies and other beneficial insects most important to our ecosystem.

Visit www.landhealthinstitute.org/nursery for a list of available plants. Or contact them at info@landhealthinstitute.org or 267-571-5750.



The Philaflora Landhealth Institute native plant nursery is open for business and provides both delivery and curbside pickup.



Echinacea are perennial bloomers native to eastern North America.

NEED BLOOMS?

The Annual Hill-Physick House Plant Sale

PhilaLandmarks and the Hill-Physick House Garden Committee is pleased to announce this year's preorder-only Plant Sale.

The sale supports local nurseries by bringing their quality plants to you. In turn, your purchases directly support PhilaLandmarks' operations, preservation efforts and gardens.

Pick-up and payment will be arranged upon order confirmation and held on Wednesday, May 20th at the Hill-Physick House.

Submit preorder form before May 8th. After you submit a pre-order form, you will be contacted to go over details and availability before the order is completed and your payment processed.

Find a link to the preorder form at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/97770573417>.

Please note that PhilaLandmarks is compliant with governmental restrictions related to COVID-19. This year's sale operations have been changed in response to social distancing practices. Notice will be given to everyone who submits

a pre-order form if the sale is unable to take place before May 20. All orders will be available for pickup on a stated date. Deliveries within a four-block radius of the Hill-Physick House are also possible.

If you're unable to participate in the plant sale, please consider donating directly to support PhilaLandmarks.



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WASHINGTON SQUARE COMMITTEE REPORT

BY FRED MANFRED

Tree Canopy Pruning Completed, Affair Rescheduled

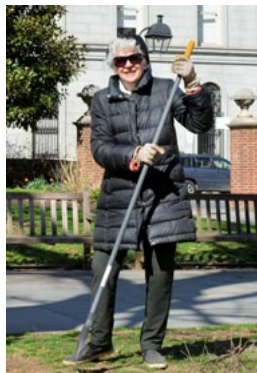
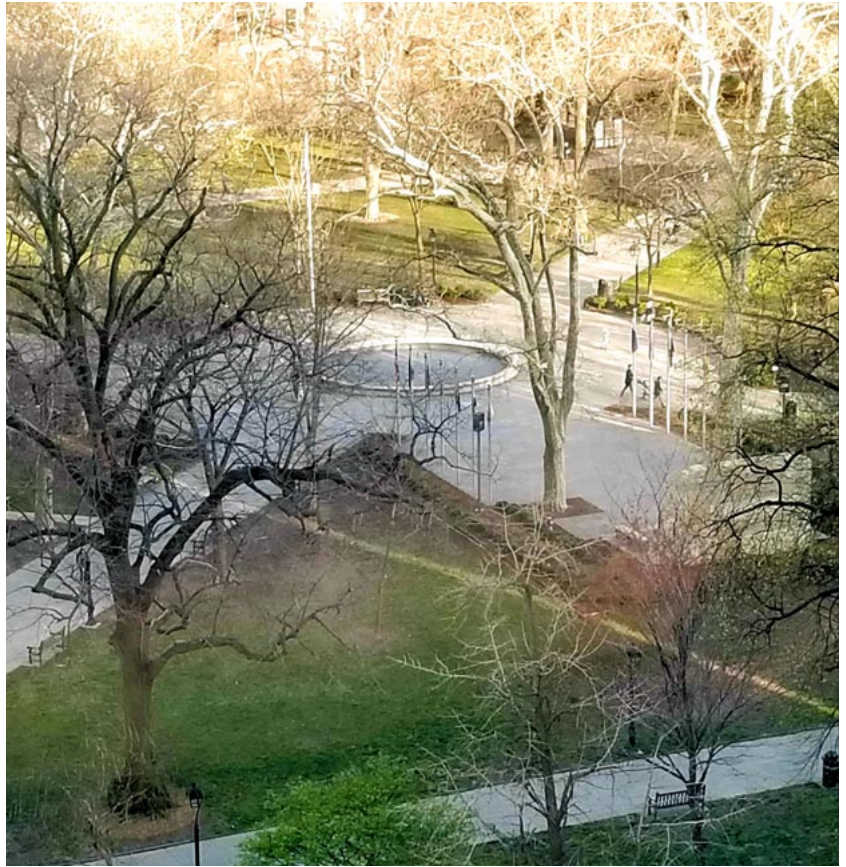
Postponed, *but not cancelled*, is the good news from SHCA regarding the Washington Square Affair 2020. The Affair's committee has secured fall dates for the gala. The Independence National Historic Park service has agreed to Thursday, October 8 as the new date for the Affair. Our gracious hosts of the Patron Cocktail Affair, Zoe Pappas and Aleni Pappas, have agreed to hold their special evening on Thursday, September 24.

In Washington Square, we made great progress this past winter and early spring. The pruning of the tree canopy was completed. Volunteers spread wood chips around the trunks of the trees, cleared the flower beds of debris and hand pruned the many hydrangeas throughout the park. The park staff then blew mulch into all the flower beds.

Complying to restrictions on public gatherings due to COVID-19, our committee eliminated group activities or any person-to-person activities requiring distancing less than six feet. There is no planting of the 5,000 perennials and annuals. Perennials will be planted this fall. The nurseries from whom we'd placed orders months ago generously have agreed to delay shipments without penalty. If conditions permit, many of the nurseries will authorize partial shipments at our request.

A few volunteers took on the difficult work of hand tilling large patches of bare soil and applying grass seed. They also hand pruned the 182 bushes around the memorial and fountain. Lastly, a few stalwart volunteers continue to weed the edges between the pathways and curbing.

Most rewarding has been the outpouring of gratitude from the community for our work and for the beauty of the park. Joan Johnson, of the Lippincott, remarked, "Never has our park been so well groomed. It's everybody's therapy, it seems." Indeed, the park has expanded its role as a calming refuge where the community can exchange greetings of best wishes and good health, while practicing social distancing.



Sherley Young (lower left) and her stalwart Square volunteers.



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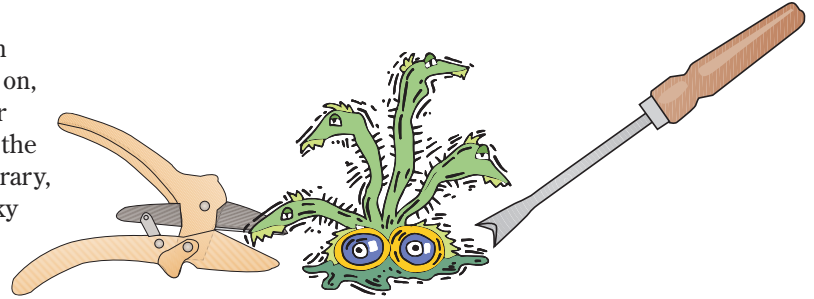
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WEED PATROL UPDATE

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

COVID-19 or Not, Here They Come

Spring is finally here, and with it comes an explosion of new growth. It's one thing we can reliably count on, even in the face of a pandemic. Daily walks may be our only outing these days. Seeing the trees green up and the flowers in bloom can provide a much-needed, if temporary, respite from bigger worries. Unfortunately, those pesky weeds also abound.



Current social distancing guidelines make it impossible for the **Weed Patrol** to safely convene. So how can we keep Society Hill's weed growth to a minimum? Here's one small slice of life where you can still exercise some control.

Let's face it. There aren't too many places we can go right now. So, pick a nice day, put on your mask and gloves, and step outside to weed around your property. Pay special attention to those tree pits. It will get you out in the fresh air with a task at hand and the gratification of having done something positive. You can keep the neighborhood looking great while experiencing a real sense of accomplishment. Little things mean a lot, especially right now.

Remember to wash your hands when you finish. Stay safe.



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L-Shaped Studio (600 Sq Ft) with separate Sleeping Alcove and Separate Office overlooking Washington Sq - Parquet Flrs just refinished and Unit freshly painted

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HOPKINSON HOUSE RENTAL - \$2,695

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TAKING TOURING TO THE STREETS

A Walking Tour of Historic Society Hill

2020 Society Hill Open House & Garden Tour Cancelled

We Offer Our Online Self-Guided Walking Tour



Tour photographs by Bonnie Halda

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we regret to inform you that the Society Hill Open House and Garden Tour has been cancelled. It is impossible to have this tour and avoid crowds.

In lieu of the tour, we suggest taking our SHCA self-guided outdoor walking tour of 12 interesting sites in Society Hill. The guide here provides a good opportunity to get outdoors and enjoy the fresh air while still maintaining social distancing.

To take the tour, you may download the pages here and print them or use your cell phone as you walk. There are beautiful photos and informative descriptions to guide you for a pleasant walk alone or with a friend, while staying apart. Enjoy our beautiful neighborhood and its architecture. Look for Tour #2 coming soon.

Although the tour is shown in one order, you can start anywhere and see the entire list of 12 stops. See map below.

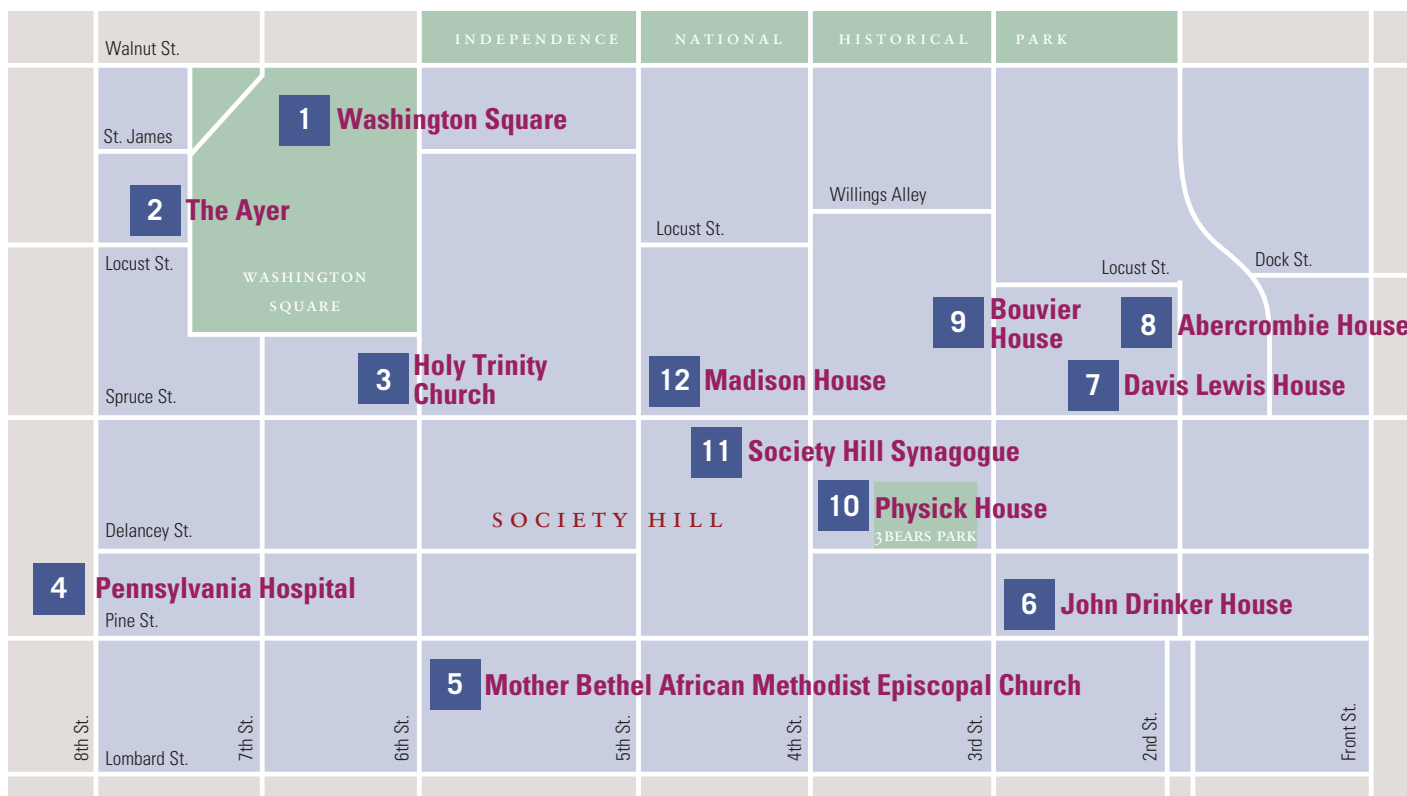
As you may know, Society Hill has one of the largest inventories of 18th- and 19th-century buildings in the United States, a nice contrast with our many contemporary 20th- and 21st-century ones. The grid pattern, used by the ancient Romans, is the basis for the Philadelphia plan. The grid makes finding your way around quite simple—you can't get lost in Philadelphia. North-south streets are numbered 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. and east-west streets are named after trees: Walnut, Locust, Spruce, Pine, Lombard.

Stay well,

*Linda Skale and Martha Levine
Chairs, Society Hill Open House & Garden Tour*

Walking Tour Map Key

- 1 Washington Square: Between 6th & 7th, Walnut & Spruce Sts**
- 2 N.W. Ayer & Son: 204-212 West Washington Square**
- 3 Holy Trinity Church: 6th & Spruce Street**
- 4 Pennsylvania Hospital: 801-845 Pine Street**
- 5 Mother Bethel AME Church: 419 South 6th Street**
- 6 John Drinker House: 241 Pine Street**
- 7 Davis-Lenox House: 217 Spruce Street**
- 8 Abercrombie House: 270 South 2nd Street**
- 9 Bouvier Houses: 258, 260, 262 South 3rd Street**
- 10 Physick House: 321 South 4th Street**
- 11 Society Hill Synagogue: 418 Spruce Street**
- 12 Madison House: 429 Spruce Street**



1 Washington Square

Between 6th & 7th Streets,
Walnut & Spruce Streets



Originally called Southeast Square, it was established in 1682 as one of the five original squares set aside as parks for the public by William Penn's surveyor, Thomas Holme. It took nearly 150 years before Penn's vision of a public park became a reality.

The park has served as a potter's field and a pasture. It was a burial ground, with over 2,000 Revolutionary war soldiers buried here, as well as yellow fever victims. By the early 19th century, the city began laying out a formal park with gravel sidewalks, benches, a fence and over 200 trees. Renamed in honor of George Washington, the park opened to the public in 1825. The park was redesigned in 1880s and again in 1915 with the walkway pattern we see today.

2 The Ayer

204-212 West Washington Square

This Art Deco-style building with its ornate bronze doors on the west side of Washington Square was headquarters for N.W. Ayer & Son, once Philadelphia's largest advertising company. The building was designed by Ralph B. Bencker in 1929. Some of the notable slogans developed by the firm include: "When it rains, it pours," for Morton Salt in 1912; "A Diamond is forever," for DeBeers in 1947; and "Be all you can be," for the U.S. Army in 1981.



The building now houses 50 condominiums with restaurants on the first floor.

3 Holy Trinity Church

6th & Spruce Streets



The German Catholic community built this church so they could pray and teach in German. This fine example of Flemish bond brick work with glazed headers was built in 1789 as the first parish for a specific national group in this country. The parishioners also established the first Catholic orphan asylum in America in 1797. Although fire damage led to alterations in 1860 and again in 1890, the church's three-aisle plan, polygonal chancel, and east-facing altar has changed little from its original appearance.

4 Pennsylvania Hospital

801-845 Pine Street



The nation's oldest hospital was founded in 1751 by Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Thomas Bond. This was an institution for treating the city's poor, not the well-to-do, who were treated in their homes. The hospital complex, designated a National Historic Landmark, is composed of a number of buildings of various types and dates as well as planned landscaping and grounds.

The Pine Street building, constructed between 1794 and 1805, is the historic centerpiece of the complex and is an outstanding example of Federal architecture. On the roof, note the balustrade around the skylight of the nation's oldest surgical amphitheater, called "the dreaded oval room."

On the 8th Street side is a large brick archway that was an entry for horse-drawn ambulances.

5 Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

419 South 6th Street



Designated a National Historic Landmark, the church was founded by Richard Allen, a former slave who purchased his own freedom in 1783 and began preaching the gospel in Pennsylvania and nearby states. Bethel Church was dedicated in July 1794 on land that Allen purchased in 1791. By the 1810s,

the church had more than 1,000 members. It served as an “Underground Railroad” to freedom in the 19th Century. Today, the church continues to have a large, active congregation.

The present structure, built between 1889 and 1890 with a Romanesque limestone façade, is the fourth church on this lot, and is located on the oldest real estate in the US continuously owned by African Americans. Note the large stained glass windows on the side elevations and the four-story tower.

6 John Drinker House

241 Pine Street

John Drinker, brickmason, early Society Hill developer, and builder of Drinker’s Court, built this house as his home in 1765. Descended from this family was Catherine Drinker Bowen, a well-known author and historian. This house, with its simple paneled door and pent eave, is typical of the earliest Philadelphia brick houses. It was restored in 1956.



7 Davis-Lenox House

217 Spruce Street

The Davis-Lenox House was built in 1758 by James Davis, a member of the Carpenters’ Company. In 1783, an additional floor was added by Major David Lenox, who served as an officer in the Continental Army. Lenox was wounded and captured at Fort Washington in 1776, and was held as a prisoner by the British

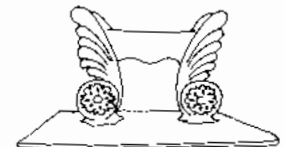


until his exchange in 1778. After the war he entered mercantile life in Philadelphia and became president of the Bank of the United States. The house is Georgian in style; the pediment over the door, boot scraper, and marble stairs are original to the house.

Boot Scrapers

As some streets were unpaved, boot scrapers were essential for removing mud. Found near the front steps or incorporated in the stair railings, they were made of wrought iron through the early-19th century. Later they were cast in molds.

Wrought Iron



Cast Iron

8 Abercrombie House

270 South 2nd Street

When the prosperous Scottish sea captain James Abercrombie built this four-and-a-half-story Georgian house around 1759, it was one of the tallest dwellings in Philadelphia. It has an unusual decked gable roof with balustrade, which must have once afforded a fine view of the port.



The house, used as a warehouse early in the 20th century, was restored in the 1960s and occupied by a toy museum for many years before returning to residential use.

9 Bouvier Houses

258-260-262 South 3rd Street

Among the very few brownstones in Society Hill, this group was built in 1849-50 on land once occupied by the elaborate Bingham Mansion.

Built by Michael Bouvier, a French immigrant, marble and mahogany merchant, and great-great-grandfather of Jacqueline

Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, the massive three-and-a-half-story houses are Greek Revival/Italianate in style, which was the height of fashion at the time. Note the stone entablatures over the doors and windows, the wood cornices, cast iron rails on the balconies, and the service cellar entrances.



10 Hill-Physick House

321 South 4th Street



The elegant Federal mansion is one of only two free-standing houses remaining in Society Hill. It was built in 1786 for Henry Hill, a wealthy Madeira wine importer, who lived there until his death from the yellow fever epidemic in 1793. The house was purchased by Dr. Philip Syng Physick in 1815. He lived there until his death in 1837. Dr. Physick, known during his lifetime as the "Father of American Surgery," was responsible for the advancement of surgical methods and improvements in surgical instrumentation.

The mansion was restored and made a house museum by The Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in the mid-1960s. The grand furnishings are of the Regency period. In 1976, the house was designated a National Historic Landmark.

11 Society Hill Synagogue

418 Spruce Street



Originally the Spruce Street Baptist Church, built in 1829-30, this building was converted to a synagogue by Romanian Jews in 1910 during the Jewish immigration period from Eastern Europe.

In 1851, the façade of the church was altered to an eclectic Italian Revival style, instead of the usual Gothic or Palladian style of the other churches of the day. The imposing granite stairway leads up to the main floor where the sanctuary is located.

The facade was restored in 1968 working from original drawings found at the Philadelphia Contributionship. Although the building has gone through changes in stewardship and configuration, its basic mission as a haven for religious freedom and enlightened social action has remained.

12 Madison House

429 Spruce Street

Dolley Payne Todd was widowed at a young age when her husband, John, died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. According to some accounts, in May of 1794, Aaron Burr, a friend of the family, introduced Dolley to James Madison, at Madison's request, and they were married that year.

The Madisons lived at 429 Spruce Street during his term in the U.S. Congress from 1795 to 1796. During those times the house was a hub of social and political activity.



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ON OUR SHELF

BY NATALIE WEST

A Family and Nation in Crisis

When I first read Jenny Offill's *Dept of Speculation*, it felt like an earth-shattering event in my growth as a reader. Her style was so unique, so seemingly disjointed yet meticulously crafted, that I couldn't believe such a slim paperback could quietly contain such multitudes. As soon as *Weather* hit the shelves, I wasted no time reading it.

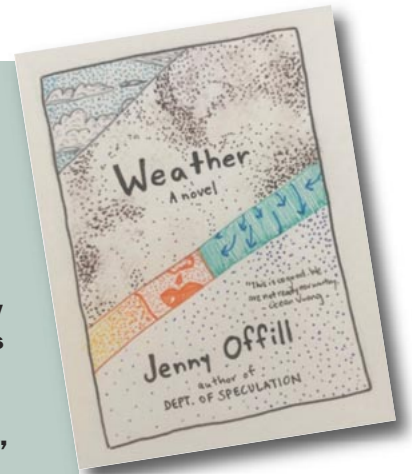
Weather tells the story of Lizzie, a university librarian who plays the role of an unofficial therapist to the doomsdayers and nihilists who write to her coworker's podcast, *Hell or High Water*. As Lizzie begins to lose faith in her ability to soothe the nerves of these eccentrics, the various relationships in her life strain under her newfound obsession with the end of the world.

It's unsettling how captivating this novel about an impending dystopia is. Offill's protagonist is just as anxious and on-edge as many of us, yet we are willingly along for the ride and are infatuated with her story, due mostly in part to Offill's ability to subtly and, with fluid mastery, connect her character's stories with the reader's own. The novel is not about Lizzie, but what it means to be a human floundering in the unknown, suspended in place by the overbearing power of an uncertain and unimaginable future. It's also about the omnipresent danger of spending too much of one's time speculating about what cannot be individually controlled, and not finding the strength in oneself to turn back to the present.

Finding the words to explain how it feels to live in a time in which the world can change overnight, and in which disaster is always right around the corner, is daunting. Offill writes about this uncomfortable state of mind by using wit, warmth and unconventional movement, allowing us the pleasure of laughing at ourselves, as well as understanding our existential crises in a new light. Her grasp on the inner workings of a worry-laden mind is so complete that we find our most hidden selves in every short paragraph, and more subtly, in the spaces between them.

The arc of Lizzie's story is constantly disrupted by short and concise facts, some of them ostensibly random, others not, about zen monasteries, lyrics by the hip-hop group A Tribe Called Quest, jokes, and anecdotes about mythic arctic dwellers. The resulting effect is the feeling of reading not a carefully crafted work of fiction, but the messy narration of a brain constantly bombarded with

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information. Such a depiction of a 21st-century mind shaped by technology and climate despair is both eerie and enthralling.

Offill's choppy, minimalist style is so intriguing because it leaves nothing to hide behind: its intention is laid bare, with every word seemingly carrying more weight than usual. Its vulnerability is what makes it so impossible to ignore, what makes us feel as if we are simultaneously taking a trip through a stranger's mind and our own. Offill might as well be announcing: if these words are not enough, then I have nothing else to give. Luckily, they are more than enough to keep us returning again and again to what feels like one of the most relevant novels of our current climate.

I read *Weather* before the COVID-19 pandemic began, but I am writing this review now from my living room and self-quarantining from the outside world, where I hear birds singing as they go about their lives as usual. I find that flipping through the pages of Offill's novel again under these confusing and uncertain circumstances has brought new meaning to her words, and somewhat surprisingly, new hope to myself. For although she writes of people obsessed with the possibility of disaster, she buries a fainter message beneath her words: humans are resilient. Change may be inevitable, but adaptation is as well.

I look forward to the future, if only to keep returning to the genius of Jenny Offill.

Richard De Wyngaert is the proprietor of Society Hill's only local, independently owned bookstore, Head House Books, located at 619 S. 2nd street. Bookseller **Natalie West** wrote this article.

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SOUTH STREET HEADHOUSE DISTRICT

BY KERI WHITE

Fabric Row and Locals Come to the Rescue

When the scope of the current COVID-19 pandemic expanded, it became clear that schools would be shut for an indefinite period. However, online learning was not a viable option for many of Philadelphia’s low-income students who do not possess home computers. The School District of Philadelphia allocated ten million dollars to provide the necessary technology to enable remote learning and set up 100 distribution sites for 50,000 Chromebook computers. This was a herculean logistical task — and then safety concerns loomed. Educators and other staff needed protective masks to manage the distribution process, but due to shortages and priority given to hospital personnel, none were available.

Enter Dana Feinberg, Project Coordinator for South Street Headhouse District (SSHD), a force of nature and skilled seamstress. She explains: “There was a clear need to support our community, and there were no masks to be had for non-medical professionals. With Fabric Row a part of the District, it was an obvious move for our organization to jump in.”

Jump they did. Fleishman Fabrics & Supplies had bolts of medical-grade fabric suitable for use in protective masks. Through private donations, Dana organized a large fabric purchase. She then recruited locals, including Steel Pony owners Joanne and Dennis



Personal protective masks from start to finish.



Litz and Oxymoron Fashion House owner and designer Monica Monique, to produce masks. They donated their time and materials to deliver hundreds of masks in record time.

Melissa McNair also joined the cause. In addition to being captain of the Mummies’ Vaudevillains New Year Brigade, she sews their costumes. Melissa and her crew had been using Off-Center, SSHD’s Community Center at 5th and South Streets, as a working space and had sewing machines set up and ready to go.

At press time, the project was deemed a success, with the necessary masks delivered to the School District to protect everyone at the distribution sites. But Dana and her team planned to continue providing masks to help combat the shortages. Mike Harris, SSHD Executive Director, sums it up nicely, “The District is filled with talent and its sense of community is strong. When there was an opportunity to help the city during the coronavirus crisis, there was no hesitation. It was a beautiful thing.”

Thanks to Fleishman Fabrics and Supplies at 737 S. 5th Street; Steel Pony at 758 S. 4th Street, www.steelpony.com; Oxymoron Fashion House at 750 S. 4th Street, www.monicomoniqueshop.com; and Melissa McNair, captain of Vaudevillains New Year Brigade, at www.facebook.com/vaudevillainsnyb/.

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

BY MATT DEJULIO

2020 Membership Drive Will Be Challenging

By early April, 1,034 Society Hill residents had either renewed their association membership or joined for the first time — somewhat lagging the total of 1,050 the same time last year. The recent world health crisis may be interfering with some membership efforts.

So far 29 new members have signed up — down 75 from last year at this time. Some 199 residents have not yet responded to two mailings, five more than last year. If you have delayed in sending in your renewal, or wish to join, please do so today.

Please remember to sign up for our **weekly** email newsletter at www.societyhillcivic.org, so you can keep informed on a regular basis of important neighborhood issues. During the health crisis, it is critical to stay informed. You can also avail yourself of a weekly updated list of available resources.

We welcome each of the over 3,600 households in our neighborhood to join SHCA. Your civic association helps protect your real estate investment by funding many of our improvement projects, as well as providing subsidies to neighbors who plant trees and fix their sidewalks. We help enhance your quality of life when we advocate on your behalf regarding zoning changes, real estate taxes, crime problems and traffic issues. All of this is accomplished through the hard work of our dedicated board of directors, committee members, block coordinators, and most importantly, your membership dues.

Without member dues, SHCA would cease to function. Protect your neighborhood and your real estate investment. Sign up today!


Email Mattdejulio@aol.com with questions or comments which will be shared with our board members representing every quadrant in our unique historic neighborhood.

Matt DeJulio is a retired publishing executive. He has served SHCA as its administrator since 2001.

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<p>Residential Memberships</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 50 Basic Household Membership</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 40 Senior/Student/Single</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 100 Federal Friend</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 150 Georgian Grantor</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 300 Jefferson Benefactor</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 500 Washington Benefactor</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 1,000 Benjamin Franklin Benefactor</p>	<p>Business Memberships</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 100 Institutions — 5+ employees</p> <p><input type="radio"/> \$ 60 Institutions — fewer than 5 employees</p>
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NIFTY NEIGHBORS IN MY OWN BACK YARD

BY JANE BIBERMAN

Michael Norris, Amateur Historian, Proudly Discusses Carpenters' Hall

I just learned that Carpenters' Hall is the oldest colonial building in Philadelphia. Having lived on Washington Square since 1998, I'm embarrassed to confess that I've never set foot in this unique 18th-century building. I've walked my dog on its grounds in Independence Square Park numerous times, but it wasn't until talking to Michael Norris that I took any notice. Michael was named executive director of this historic landmark last September.

Michael lives on the fringes of Society Hill, in Bella Vista, with his partner, Jeff Varatto, who works in the marketing and development department of Jefferson Hospital. Their elderly terrier mix, Luke, was adopted from Morris Animal Refuge.

"I went to Temple University, where I majored in journalism and worked as a guide," says Michael. "Then I accidentally fell into non-profit and development. I grew up in Chester County and moved to Philadelphia because it reminded me of Europe. I was attracted to Society Hill because of its historic neighborhood. Many of the houses were built in the 18th century. Most likely, they were built by the members of Carpenters' Hall."

Michael has always been interested in history. "I'm a voracious reader and I'm just finishing Hillary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* trilogy," he notes. "Carpenters' Hall has a library on the second floor. We've had a few concerts there, and I'd love to have more. In the 1920s, the Musical Fund Society was located here. It was built in 1840, and members practiced at Carpenters' Hall. It was a precursor to the Philadelphia Orchestra. Several exhibits are also slated. The McCullough Prize will be awarded in June."

The youngest of three brothers and a sister, Michael, 55, notes that they are all lovers of history. "I was a kid during the Bicentennial. I moved to Philadelphia from Chester County because the city is so historic," he explains, adding, "I love the history, as well as the vibrant contemporary city." Michael points out that most visitors to Carpenters' Hall are from Society Hill, with a significant number from Europe. "In fact," he points out, "Carpenters' Hall was designed by Robert Smith, who was from Scotland. He designed Christ Church and the Powell



Michael Norris

House and many of the houses in Society Hill, which most likely were built by members of Carpenters' Hall." In addition, Smith designed Nassau Hall in Princeton and numerous buildings in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Michael loves to walk around our neighborhood. He also loves to travel and visited Rome this past January. "I've

been to Italy a number of times and also France and England." A film buff, he frequents the Ritz Theater. "And," he notes, "for many years I contributed a Q and A to the Ritz program books." He also goes to the AMC movie theaters. "The most recent movies he has seen in movie theaters are *Little Women* and *1917*. At press time in early April, Michael was immersed in the *Tiger King* documentary. "It's seven hours long and pretty interesting. I like documentaries, especially those about animals."

As for restaurants, he loves Indian food: "My favorites are Tassin on 11th Street and Taj India in Northeast Philadelphia. I also love Mexican food and go to all the nearby Mexican restaurants." He also likes to cook and loves the fact he lives in walking distance of the Italian Market. "I've been doing a lot of cooking lately," he laughs, referencing the COVID-19 Virus that is keeping him home.

Michael is anxious to get back to work. "Hopefully, people will be interested in Carpenters' Hall. Like many people in Philadelphia, I visited Carpenters' Hall in seventh grade. In my nine months as executive director, I've learned many things. For example, I didn't know that the hall was built in 1775. Or that before the Revolution, Ben Franklin held secret meetings there with the ambassador of the French government. That led to France becoming our ally and our oldest diplomatic partner. Actually, one of our members, Charles Cook, has written a book for teenagers called *The Spies at Carpenters' Hall*. It's available at local bookstores."

"I can't wait until we re-open and invite all Philadelphians, especially, Society Hillers, to visit and discover a historical and architectural jewel."

Jane Biberman, former editor of *Inside Magazine*, is a freelance writer who has contributed to a variety of publications.



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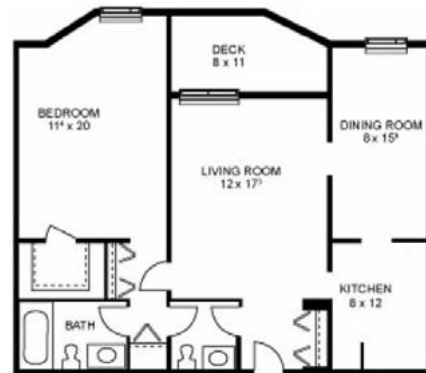


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