

SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

www.societyhillcivic.org

Wondering About Head House History?

BY BONNIE HALDA



Head House, 2017
Photo by Bonnie Halda



Head House in 1927, festooned for its 182nd Anniversary.
Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org,

The iconic Head House in our neighborhood is probably the oldest extant firehouse and market structure in the country. In the mid-18th century, Joseph Wharton, a wealthy merchant and landowner, and Mayor Edward Shippen privately financed the building of open-air market sheds on 2nd Street. The sheds, which we call the “Shambles,” an English word meaning butcher shop or meat stall, was known as New Market to distinguish it from the market on High (now Market) Street. Spaces were rented to farmers and butchers who sold their goods. In 1772, the city of Philadelphia assumed ownership.

In 1805, a firehouse was built. It was called Head House, because it stood at the head of the market. This distinctive, two-story, red-brick building is surmounted by a white cupola containing a fire bell. The ground floor held two fire engines. The second-story room served as the office and residence of the market master, as well as a meeting place for volunteer firefighters and other citizens. The Head House has a rare clock that was built in 1815 by Isaiah Lukens, who also made the clock for Independence Hall.

In the late 1950s, at the beginning of Society Hill’s redevelopment period, a demolition firm began tearing down the market sheds, but Mayor Richardson Dilworth intervened. The sheds were rescued and restored, and in 1963, the Head House and Shambles were designated a National Historic Landmark.

By the late 1980s, the Head House and Shambles were deteriorating again. A grassroots group of neighbors and citizens called the Head House Conservancy formed a partnership with the city to raise about \$1 million in funds, kicked off by a state grant, to once again restore and preserve these significant structures. To encourage donations needed to completely replace the slate roof, the Conservancy accepted \$25 for a single slate or \$100 for five slates. Behind the slates, hundreds of generous neighbors wrote personal messages for future generations to read. When the roof again requires total replacement, perhaps 100 years from now, these messages from our generation to the next will be discovered.

In 1994, upon completion of its goal to fully restore the property for contemporary use, as well as for future generations, the Conservancy was awarded a “Certificate of Merit” by Pennsylvania’s Bureau for Historic Preservation.

Now, here we are. We’re buying our fruits and vegetables every week, mingling with neighbors and producers under the cover of the Shambles. We look around, admire, and wonder about the Head House itself, as it graces 2nd and Pine Streets. We’ve cared for this structure. We have experts in our midst with the know-how to repair and restore it. The question is: Will we continue to love it enough to keep it healthy and make it ready for the coming years? Stay tuned to find out how you can get involved.

Wednesday,
February

15

Speakers:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association Meeting
Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Pennsylvania Hospital, 8th & Spruce Streets

5:45 p.m. Board Meeting

Pennsylvania Hospital’s Great Court Room

7:00 p.m. General Membership Meeting

Pennsylvania Hospital’s Zubrow Auditorium

Stay tuned... for an informative, timely presentation.



Southernmost extension of the Shambles in 1916.
Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org,

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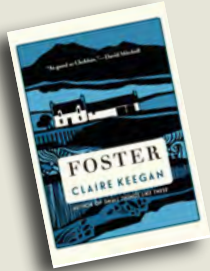


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Fear, and Fun



SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

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Find past issues in full 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 the editor, Judy Lamirand, at judy@parallel-design.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, and, as above, include 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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P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

BY SUSAN BURT COLLINS

Take What's Good and Make it Better

There is a rule in property law with a charming name, the "Rule Against Perpetuities." It prohibits a deceased person from controlling the passing down of property beyond 21 years after their death. It's a charming name and a wonderful principle. Things change, and we mustn't stand in the way. This idea has particular application to both our historic neighborhood and our long-running civic association: take what's good and make it better.

Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) has several new faces on the board and in the officer ranks. Come to our February meeting and get to know them. These people bring fresh perspectives, energy, and interests to SHCA as it continues working to improve Society Hill, striving to make it more beautiful, safer, and a better place to be.

At the organizational level, we are updating SHCA's bylaws under the leadership of Nick DeGregorio. Bonnie Halda and Danielle Sandsmark are refreshing our communications media, including this newsletter. David Haas is helping us achieve efficiency through technology, while Bill Jantsch is working with others to streamline our committees and task forces.

Meanwhile, we are attending to the treasures in our midst. Washington Square will be the focus in January when Jonathan Burton, from the Independence Historical Trust, meets with SHCA's board to discuss how SHCA can best leverage its role in the square with regard to fundraising and communication with the Park Service. As for the Head House and Shambles, which are in need of serious preservation work, Councilman Mark Squilla has been working with SHCA to scope out what must be done and how funding can be secured.

Children are the lifeblood of any neighborhood. To keep their spaces clean and inviting, Al Meinster successfully encouraged McCall School to conceal the double dumpsters that scarred the 6th Street side of the building. We are working with the Friends of Three Bears Park to see how we can cooperate in keeping this premier spot in good repair and safe for the many children, parents, and grandparents for whom Three Bears Park is the quintessential playground.

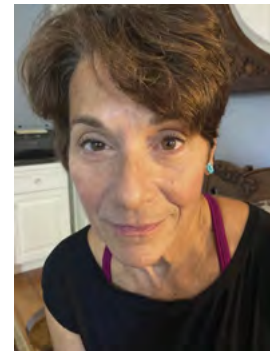
Walkways throughout Society Hill need our attention. Many would benefit from better lighting and tree and shrub pruning. The

appearance of our streets and sidewalks affect us every day, and our days go better when they are clear of leaves and litter. In a heavy downpour on Saturday, December 3, Yvana Rizzo and Al Meinster led our neighborhood clean up, commandeering brooms, rakes, and bags and supplying volunteers with orange juice and croissants. Dozens of our neighbors joined Streets Department crews to clean gutters, sidewalks, and streets.

Finally, there is our near neighbor South Street, struggling to revive itself as a vibrant commercial corridor, **not** an entertainment district, that can once again serve as a hub for shops, local arts, and restaurants. Board member Mark Keener and I are leading SHCA's efforts in working with Councilman Squilla, Queen Village Neighborhood Association, and the South Street Headhouse District to aim South Street in the right direction. Enforcement issues around smoking lounges, smoke shops, and noise are being addressed. The police department now has a nuisance division dedicated to curbing problems from troublesome businesses. A reimagined South Street will benefit all of us.

In sum, your civic association is paying attention to the old and the new, to what works and to what needs fixing. Please join us in that effort, as your ideas, concerns, and energy are the fuel that makes us run. Honoring the past, we look forward to the future.

Susan Burt Collins is a retired criminal and civil rights lawyer. She has worked to free a wrongly convicted man, taught history, and created Friends of Spring Garden School to raise money to build a playground.



Susan Burt Collins

*Please join us.
Your ideas,
concerns, and
energy are the
fuel that makes
SHCA run.*

Membership Perk – List of Contractors

SHCA gets at least five requests every single week for our popular **List of Contractors**. If your membership is current, and you need a copy, just ask! All of the contractors come highly recommended by neighbors.

Included are general contractors, plumbers, electricians, HVAC techs, painters, window replacement specialists, window washers, interior designers, masons, and roofers. A miscellaneous section includes furniture repair, rug cleaning, clock repair, smart home services, and more.

You must be a current SHCA member to receive a list.

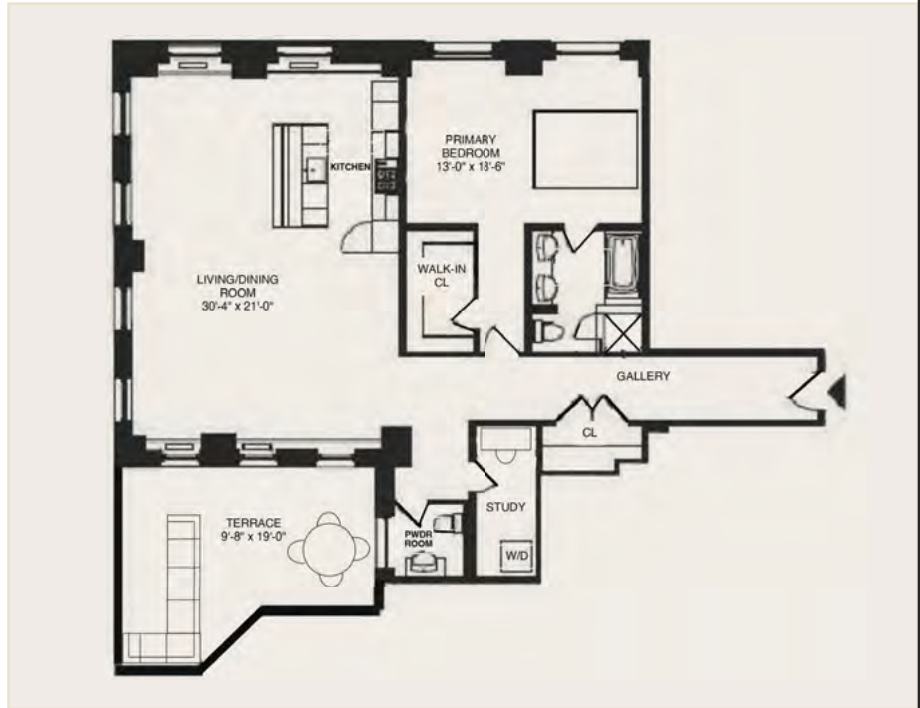
To obtain a list, call 215-629-0727 or email marthalev6@gmail.com.

The list is available by email or snail mail. Please do not share with non-members, as the list is a perk of membership.



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URBAN EDEN

BY MARY STURDIVANT

Indoor and Outdoor Winter Views

I hope all your winter holiday decorations are safely stored and no New Year's resolutions have been broken yet. When I got back from a Thanksgiving spent in Nashville, Tennessee, the smell of paperwhites greeted me at the door. Spacing out the timing of planting paperwhite bulbs in a shallow root bath provided further weeks of blooms. These were joined by very show off-y amaryllis. Both seem to be foolproof, even for the blackest of thumbs.

If you still need a flower fix in February, look for cyclamens and kalanchoe in most of the warm colors of the rainbow. I've never tried to get them to rebloom, but supposedly it can be done. I once dropped off a poinsettia in the basement maintenance office of the Parkway's Central Library. Occasionally, the staff watered it, but it got no food and only fluorescent light during the day. Next winter, it bloomed. Apparently "caring for" houseplants has many definitions.

My Christmas cactus flowers by Thanksgiving, but it is 20 years old and may be getting tired. I saw an offshoot I gave to Diane at Lee's Cleaners blooming enthusiastically on the counter in the west facing window. Yes, I was a little envious. Here is to the success of everyone who tries to bring some living green inside in winter.

With the gardens and trees stripped of most of their foliage, except for those intrepid hellebores and evergreens, you can really appreciate your vistas. Neighbors with high enough windows in highrises can see to the east that Philadelphia really is a port city. I suggest keeping window boxes and balcony containers simple, to frame the spectacular views from the Walt Whitman to the Benjamin Franklin bridges. Those lucky enough to peer into Washington Square, St. Peter's or Old Pine Street Presbyterian cemeteries, or one of the many small public or private gardens can easily see that we have kept the promise of the vision of Penn's "greene countrie towne."

Back in the day, one of my favorite sights was dusk in the winter, sitting at the second floor kitchen window, looking at the falling snow illuminated by the Franklin lamps. Street trees were bare, and you could occasionally hear the bells from the horse-drawn carriages. The horses no longer have to work during the cold of winter nor the heat of summer. However, we still can enjoy the stark branches against the winter sky.

What if your windows don't look out on postcard views? What if you look out at a parking lot or a blank wall? Some neighbors have been very inventive. Some of my friends freak out if anyone uses artificial anything in their greenspace, but I admire the neighbors who blocked out the view of the Acme parking lot with a high wall of fake "boxwood." It seems like a pragmatic alternative to reinforcing the roof and installing enough soil to maintain a border of arbor vitae. Another planted a bamboo forest to hide the proximity of their neighbors in the back.

Faced with a huge blank wall on the west side of their garden, one of the early pioneers on Pine Street patiently wired an argyle pattern on the beige stucco to support some plants. It took years, but the wall filled in with thick, healthy, and leafy limbs. Neighbors across the street did a similar espalier project with trees on an exterior wall.

A blank wall can beckon a graffiti artist or less talented tagger. When a wall on a 6th Street parking lot was hit, the late Dick Ostrander took a can of paint to the cinder blocks, then planted some vines. While Dick died several years ago, the wall stands untouched as testament to his civic pride.

Winter is nature's landscape contractor. Those high winds take down the weak limbs and sometimes entire trees. While we don't know if a tree falling in a forest makes a sound, one falling in our urban environment will do damage. Take care and beware as you walk through our winter wonderland.



Paperwhites



Lawrence Walkway off Pine Street offers many samples of this espalier technique, which saves space and enlivens blank walls in the garden or on the street.



Long-time neighbor **Mary Sturdivant** is a passionate gardener who oversees plot #5 in Washington Square with Ruth Ann Fenton and Jokè Nieuwland. She's a plucky petunia, who advises, "When you find yourself between a brick wall and a cement slab, just do your bloomin' best."



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INTERVIEW

BY SUSAN BURT COLLINS AND BONNIE HALDA

Mark Squilla, the Consensus Builder

Mark Squilla... Is it *Squilla*, *Squeella*, or just plain Mark? People may not know *what* to call him, but after seeing him work on their behalf for more than 10 years as a member of City Council, they definitely know *when* to call him. They call when they have problems, and Mark gets things done. Whether it's a traffic survey for a busy street, cleanup of an unsightly collection of trash or open dumpsters in an alleyway or school yard, or increased police attention, all of these things happen magically with a call to his office. We decided it was time to talk to him and learn who he is and why he has devoted himself to helping the many neighborhoods that make up the First District.

Born and raised in South Philadelphia, educated in local Catholic schools and LaSalle University, this is a man for whom service and family are central to his life. Below is a report on our conversation with Mark.

Reporter: How did you get started in this work?

Mark: I was working in IT at the State. My wife and I had four young children. We lived near Burke Playground at 2nd and Jackson. It was filled with trash and not a place for young children. I organized neighbors, and formed a Friends group. We cleaned it up. We started programs for the neighborhood children, held events in the Park and improved the playground equipment with the help of then-Councilmember DiCicco.

"People who care are the ones who get things done."

— Mark Squilla

Reporter: So you have done computer engineering?

Mark: Yes, my degree was in computer science, not political science.

Reporter: How do you deal with the needs of such varied neighborhoods?

Mark: It is tough. The questions from community groups almost always revolve around their boundaries. My job is to hear their concerns and try to resolve a problem. They may not always like the answer. When I can't do what one community asks, I need to explain how I made my decision. I can't be an advocate for one side or the other; I need to look out for what is best for all.

Reporter: Here in Society Hill, we are affected by what is happening with drug-addicted people coming here from Kensington. What can be done?

Mark: People suffering from addiction are leaving Kensington to sleep elsewhere, since they don't feel safe in their spots at night. I visited the encampments, listening to why the people there would not leave and get treatment. They explained that they had what they wanted there: Narcan, clean-up from the city, etc... So why leave? When given the choice of: get treatment or be moved, half of them opted for

treatment, shelter, or services. We need to change our approach; the current policies are not working.

Reporter: How has it been working on issues with SHCA?

Mark: SHCA worked hard on the zoning overlay. You listened to what the people wanted and what the city needed. You compromised. You created a plan that keeps the historic fabric of the neighborhood but also allows for growth.

Reporter: What about South Street, what can be done with the problems that street presents?

Mark: I believe that if we reimagine South Street as a place that the adjoining residents want to go to, it will also be a place that visitors and tourists want to go to. It can still have the vibe that it used to have, but be a place that is used by everyone, and that we are proud to have in our city.

Reporter: So what's on your agenda in the near future?

Mark: My priorities are improving public safety and creating affordable housing. The projects I need to complete are South Street, the I-95 cap, the Delaware River Trail, and finally, East Market Street.

Reporter: How do we change things in our neighborhood and city?

Mark: By working together, because people who care are the ones who get things done.



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BY AL CAVALARI

America's First National Bank

Why should you care about the First Bank of the United States?

In 1764, a farmer tells you a load of hay costs 100 Spanish dollars. The economy has a shortage of Spanish dollars in circulation. You don't have any. Your only hope is to convince him to accept what you do have: two five pound bills, three 20 shilling bills, some English guineas, some Portuguese moidores, and some Spanish doubloons. Or consider a 1784 newspaper ad selling government bonds: Nicholson's Certificates, Stelle's Certificates, Pennsylvania and Maryland bills of credit, Pennsylvania Militia Certificates, and Virginia land warrants. Are any of these a safe investment? Revolutionary war veterans believed that the government bonds they were issued as pensions were so worthless, they unloaded them at a fraction of their face value. The high risk that the Federal government would default made it preferable to take the loss, and at least get some cash out of them.

Now think about the dollar you have in your pocket called a Federal Reserve Note. Take it from Guam to Puerto Rico, from Alaska to Key West, and it is accepted without question. The American economy is so powerful that 11

sovereign nations use our dollar as their official currency. It is the world's reserve currency. Central banks around the globe need to keep large quantities of American dollars on hand to pay for commodity transactions and international debt obligations. What about government bonds today? U.S. treasuries are considered risk-free around the world, because they are backed by the power of our Federal government to tax its citizens. Investors trust that our government will continue to tax its citizens in order to fulfill its obligations. Be proud of the phrase "backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government."

If all of this seems like a good idea, thank Alexander Hamilton. George Washington is the father of our country, but Hamilton is the father of our financial system. A key component of his system was a national bank: the First Bank of the United States, created in 1791. It was fundamental in transforming our original states, actually sovereign little countries, all independent from each other, into a single nation. This controversial measure was opposed by Jefferson because *continued on page 9*

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continued from page 8



Gus Spector's collectible homemade "real photo card" printed directly onto photographic card stock. You can invest in the rehabilitation of this landmark at <https://support.inht.org/give/435847/#!/donation/checkout>

there is no specific authority in the Constitution for Congress to create a bank. Hamilton argued that the “necessary and proper” clause gave Congress the “implied power” to go beyond the strict words of the Constitution. Washington had to make the call, and he signed the bill. The bank became a key institution in consolidating Revolutionary War debt, establishing our national credit, allowing the U.S. to borrow money here and abroad, stabilizing the economy, and providing capital. Foreign money began to pour into the bank to the extent that, by 1809, foreign investors owned 72 percent of its shares.

Our card is from the collection of author and Philadelphia collector Gus Spector. It’s a “real photo card,” meaning it was developed directly onto photographic card stock, rather than printed on a printing press. This may explain why I had never seen it. Printing presses require large quantity print runs. Once the Brownie camera came out in the early 1900s, any amateur with modest home equipment could develop and print their own unique images. The typewritten text is a hint that this is a rare homemade card. I love the peek at street life with the vehicles and the guy working at the manhole. Note the gas station with the “Prestone” sign to the left.

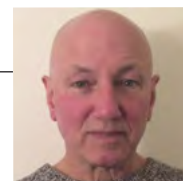
The Pennsylvania Department of the American Legion was headquartered in the First Bank from 1930 to 1945. The organization’s presence there is a noteworthy bit of symbolism. The Legion was founded on four pillars of activism. One of them is Americanism, which includes “support for the

U.S. Constitution.” Our local Legion post is Benjamin Franklin Post 405, “dedicated to Ben Franklin’s service to the United States of America.” It was founded in 1920 by Union League members at the Union League, where it still meets. Post 405 absorbed the Grand Army of the Republic Post 1, which was founded by Union League Civil War veterans in 1866 and met in The Union League.

The National Park Service considers the Bank to be “one of the most important accomplishments” of Washington’s administration and the building itself, at 3rd and Chestnut Streets, “one of the most important remaining physical artifacts” of his service. It has been closed for many years due to its degraded condition. In a spectacular development, our park has embarked on a \$40 million project to rehabilitate this landmark and open it to visitors in advance of our nation’s 250th birthday in 2026. I refer you to the article by Jonathan Burton of Independence Historical Trust in our last issue. Back issues are archived on SHCA’s website. He tells me that if all goes according to plan, work on this shovel-ready project could begin in February! The Trust needs to raise another \$7 million to accomplish the work not included in the government’s budget. Once again, the Bank is looking for investors. Show your support for Alexander Hamilton and your neighborhood by making a donation!

Once again, the First Bank is looking for investors. Show your support by making a donation!

Al Cavalari is a certified member of the Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides, Write to Al at flagguysdn@aol.com.





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BY MARTHA LEVINE

Welcome to the Neighborhood

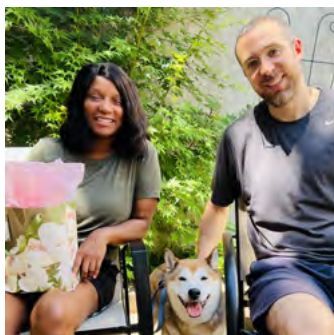
Are you a new homeowner in Society Hill? If you are a new first-time house or condo owner in Society Hill as of 2022, you can get a wonderful Welcome Gift Bag from SHCA. If you are interested, please let us know you are here, and we'll set up a time for you to receive your gifts at your home. It takes about 30 minutes for this in-person presentation.

Are you wondering what is in a Welcome Gift Bag? Each bag contains one bottle of wine, one bag of coffee, a pastry treat, and many gift cards donated by area businesses and organizations. Getting gift cards from area restaurants, retail shops, services, and museums introduces newcomers to many resources in our area. It also helps the businesses attract new customers. Welcome Gift Bags

create a partnership that welcomes new residents and supports local businesses.

If you would like to make an appointment for a Welcome Gift Bag to be presented to you, contact me at 215-629-0727 or marthalev6@gmail.com.

Martha Levine serves SHCA as vice president.



Patricia & Etienne with friend



Sara, Tyler and son



Sneha, Anand and son



Terry & Eileen



Tanya



Ericka & Julius



Sanjin & Kevin



James & Ashley

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- Fork Restaurant**, 306 Market Street
- Frieda Café**, 320 Walnut Street
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- Kanella** (Mediterranean), 1001 Spruce Street
- La Colombe Coffee Roasters**, 100 S. 6th Street
- Malbec Argentine Steakhouse**, 400 S. 2nd Street
- Panorama**, 14 N. Front Street
- PJ Clarke's**, 601 Walnut Street
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- Xochitl** (Mexican), 408 S. 2nd Street

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- MASS F.I.T. (gym)** 401 S. 2nd Street, lower level
- Museum of the American Revolution**, 101 S. 3rd Street
- National Liberty Museum**, 321 Chestnut Street
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WASHINGTON SQUARE

BY PENNY PLEASANCE

Inspiration for Garden Design

Designing the flower beds in Washington Square has been both rewarding and a privilege. I'm guided by a blend of personal experiences and study. The most influential of these comes from having visited countless private and commercial installations. Curiosity continued to fuel my book-learning and drew me to Mt. Cuba Center's botanical gardens in Hockessin, Delaware, for hands-on experiences.

I recently finished reading a new book by the prominent landscape historian Judith Tankard, who explores the life and work of Beatrix Ferrand, America's first female landscape architect (b. 1872 - d. 1959). I'm not going to pretend that I knew who Beatrix Ferrand was before I came across her name in a newsletter I subscribe to *Friends of Acadia* in Maine. I have only been a serious gardener for 15 years or so, having spent most of my adult life as an apartment dweller in Manhattan, followed by a few years in Brussels. My awareness of landscape designers boiled down to two: Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed New York City's Central Park, and, more recently, Piet Oudolf who designed the High Line, also in New York City.

While reading *Beatrix Ferrand: Garden Artist, Landscape Architect*, I felt an immediate kinship with her for reasons that aren't entirely all about garden design. First, she was the niece of Edith Wharton, the celebrated author of novels about Gilded Age New York. (If you're a fan of Wharton as I am, you will understand how being related to her would immediately raise one up a rung or two on the ladder of esteem.) I also admire her for having broken through the gender barrier in a profession that was previously closed to women. Ferrand determinedly both opened the door for and ushered in women who came after her.

It was her penchant for native plants that set her apart from other landscape designers of her day and resonated most concretely with me. Beatrix Ferrand was ahead of her time. She first became passionate about native plants during summers at her family's home in Bar Harbor, Maine. As a child she would go out into the wild landscape, collect plants, bring them home, and plant them in the family garden. Her designs for private estates, like Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden in Seal Harbor, Maine, were inspired by formal gardens of Italy and France that she visited in her youth while traveling with her aunt Edith. Nevertheless,

she relied on some native species when designing her celebrated gardens.

I also found it reassuring that even professional garden designers sometimes re-work their designs. Ferrand was constantly editing and observing what worked and what didn't, which is what I have been trying to do this year in Washington Square. Perhaps best known for her design of Dumbarton Oaks, Ferrand first began to work on the project in 1921 and continued for the next 30 years. (I've only been working on Washington Square for three.) She also focused heavily on the importance of trees, another common feature of our work. Washington Square is now an internationally designated Level I Arboretum, meaning it is a tree-focused garden.

In addition to her work on private estates, Ferrand also obtained several commissions to design collegiate campuses including Princeton, Yale, and the University of Chicago. Working on public landscapes required her to manage expectations differently than with her private clients, most of whom had a passing knowledge of plants and gardening. In a 1935 article about her work on the University of Chicago campus, Ferrand wrote, "Trees do not grow overnight, and transformations are not made by waving a fairy wand."

This is the central message I hope to carry with me and to convey to the public as we continue our work transforming the flower beds of Washington Square from a sterile garden filled with annuals and hostas to one that is populated with a variety of native perennials and shrubs that is alive with bees, butterflies, and birds.

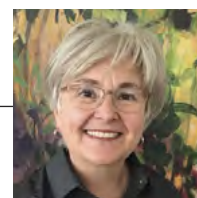
When it comes to garden design, I have found my new North Star. Her name is Beatrix Ferrand.

Penny Pleasance is one of the Potting Shed Cabinet's leaders and a plant specialist.



"Trees do not grow overnight... transformations are not made by waving a fairy wand."

— Beatrix Ferrand



OUT AND ABOUT

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HALDA

Society Hill's High-Rises

*SHCA's
Condominium
Representatives
speak out.*

Go West young man. No thank you! My choice of living is Society Hill, where history was made. Where my escape is Washington Square Park. Where my high-rise residence offers me every convenience. And you know what makes Society Hill thrive, it's our Society Hill Civic Association. This is a shout out to all high-rise residents to help keep our Society Hill neighborhood flourishing by supporting. Join SHCA.

Bernard Gelman, Independence Place



It is rewarding to be part of the neighborhood and to know that one has a voice when it comes to issues of mutual concern.



It is such a pleasure to live in the Hopkinson House, and after more than eight years here, we are enjoying the sense of fellowship and friendship we have found. The idea of community extends to the larger neighborhood, and when we leave our building, we enjoy being a part of it. We love its restaurants, its walkability, and the beauty of the tree-lined streets. We enjoy the convenience of local commerce. It is evident that Society Hill residents take pride in their surroundings, and many houses present rich plantings that beautify their homes and offer a bit of distraction to passersby. Our interest in the well-being of our neighbors does not end at the front door of our building. It is rewarding to be part of a neighborhood and to feel that one has a voice when it comes to issues of mutual concern.

Ramona Johnson, Hopkinson House

OUT AND ABOUT

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HALDA

Lofty Dreams, Grounded Living

Living in a high-rise in Society Hill is dream-worthy. What makes it even more memorable is becoming connected to the Society Hill neighborhood. The most beneficial connection for you and for the neighborhood is to become a member

of SHCA, the organization that keeps you in touch, keeps you informed, and expands your awareness of our wonderful neighborhood. Through its website, newsletters, Thursday emails, and meetings, we meet neighbors, learn about history, and find contractors, to name just a few benefits. I encourage every resident in a high-rise to make a commitment to becoming a member of this organization.

SHCA keeps you in touch, keeps you informed, expands your awareness of our wonderful neighborhood.

Helen Grady, The St. James



The real value of the Towers complex lies its location in Society Hill. Being an SHCA member lets me take advantage of the best in our neighborhood.



Drone photo by Chris Dantonio

My family makes frequent use of Spruce and Pine Street bike lanes, Headhouse Square restaurants, and Washington Square. We can thank SHCA for maintaining the quality of these amenities, from fixing bricks to keeping street lights working. Recently, I joined the Athenaeum, a hidden gem, after learning about its reopening in the *Reporter*, and I participated in a discussion with police from our local district, hosted by SHCA. Being a member lets me take advantage of the best in our neighborhood.

David Haas, Society Hill Towers



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INDEPENDENCE HISTORICAL TRUST

BY JONATHAN BURTON

What Is the Bicentennial Bell Garden?

The Independence Historical Trust, the trusted nonprofit partner to Independence National Historical Park (INHP), recently worked with the Park Service on reimagining the garden located on the northwest corner of 3rd and Walnut Streets. The garden will be known as the Bicentennial Bell Garden and will display the gift Queen Elizabeth II and the people of Great Britain gave to the United States in 1776 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of American independence. The Bicentennial Bell was cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, just like the Liberty Bell, and is intended to celebrate the common cause of freedom uniting the two nations.



What the Bicentennial Bell will look like when placed in the garden at 3rd & Walnut Streets.



Queen Elizabeth II spoke at the dedication ceremony at INHP’s Visitor Center on July 6, 1976. She expressed gratitude to America’s Founding Fathers for teaching the British “to respect the rights of others to govern themselves their own way.” The Bicentennial Bell was placed in a bell tower outside the old visitor center on 3rd Street between Chestnut and Walnut, the current location of the Museum of the American Revolution. The bell was removed and placed in storage in 2013, when the structure was demolished.

This is where the Independence Historical Trust (formerly the Friends of INHP) became involved with the current project. In the mid-2010s, the Trust got a planning and design grant from the William Penn Foundation to discover what the best solution would be for this forgotten piece of history. It wasn’t until 2019 that the Trust secured a \$1 million donation from the Landenberger Family Foundation to fund the entire project. Another local donor gave \$25,000. The Trust then learned the project’s cost increased to just over \$2 million, and the National Park stepped in with the rest of the funding. The Trust entered a partnership, design, and construction agreement with the National Park Service to secure the landscape design company and the iron artist needed to construct the bell’s armature and finial.

The Bicentennial Bell Garden will transform the green space at 3rd and Walnut. The bell will be

prominently displayed in the center, surrounded by interpretive gardens with spaces for individual interaction. The garden will be ADA-compliant and will include a ramp to connect the two levels of the garden.

The Trust hired the landscape architect and urban design company Studio Bryan Hanes to thoughtfully design the garden and the plantings. Studio Bryan Hanes carefully selected the plants to maximize the interpretive elements and meaning of the garden space. Plants that would have been period appropriate and traded between the U.S. and U.K. in the 1700s and 1800s are a major focus of the landscape design.

The bell’s armature, or iron structure holding the bell in place, is being designed by renowned local artist Warren Holzman, from Holzman Iron Studio in Philadelphia. The bell is massive, weighing in at 12,000 pounds and measuring five feet six inches tall. The armature will suspend the bell in the air with the bottom of the bell 10 feet off the ground.

This newly renovated garden will achieve the goal that was set when the Bicentennial Bell was cast in 1776: to show the world that two great nations that started their relationship in strife and war can become great partners and allies. It is also another example of how the Independence Historical Trust works with the National Park Service and philanthropic neighbors to help make Independence National Historical Park the best park in history! We work with our donors to ensure their philanthropic vision aligns with National Park Service projects to improve the park and the surrounding community.



Measuring the bell’s hanging height. (INHT photo)

Jonathan Burton is Director of Development for Independence Historical Trust and former executive director of Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.



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- Matt - Richboro, PA

Worth the Wait

I started working with Exact Solar in June 2021. They were consistently responsive and very helpful in all aspects of the design and permitting part of the process. Once the necessary approval and supply issues were taken care of, the installation itself was completed quickly and professionally, with the system going online in December/ January. Exact Solar was also very helpful with setting up net metering and SREC accounts. I highly recommend their services!
- Charles L - Morrisville, PA

Nice people and excellent service

Exact Solar installed our solar panel system, we've been extremely pleased with them. They were very nice to deal with, and got the job done when they said they would. What's been even better is the ongoing customer service. They have always been very prompt in responding to my phone calls and emails, and have been cheerful, helpful and proactive in resolving my issues and questions.
- Alan - Philadelphia, PA

Best solar company!

Everything from the sales to installation to customer service was top notch. Highly recommend. My neighbor used another solar company, his panels were installed 2 weeks before mine and his still are not working, ours have been working perfectly for over 4 months and we are extremely satisfied.
- Emmanuel - Souderton, PA

ON OUR SHELVES

BY KRISTEN BROWN

Claire Keegan's *Foster*

Although Claire Keegan's newest novella, *Foster*, spans a brief 130 pages, the novel's striking imagery and clear-cut plot do not fall short. The charming story centers around an unnamed young girl living in a rural, somewhat impoverished area of Ireland in the 1980s. Her mother's unexpected pregnancy destabilizes the family's financial welfare, and as a result, the girl must be sent away for the summer to live with the Kinsella family. As the girl ventures away from her home for the first time, she discovers a new, more tender form of parenting.

Instead of driving home directly after Sunday mass in Clonegal, the girl's father chauffeurs her to the Kinsellas. Even in the simple, short car ride, Keegan immediately paints a beautiful portrait of the Irish countryside. The summer day is hot and bright, and the girl daydreams about the uncertainty of the future. As she reflects on the rural scenery, she does so with a fresh child-like whimsy. The rustling leaves break apart the sunlight, and she describes every crisp sensation of light, temperature, and smell.

The Kinsellas' kitchen is warm and welcoming, and Edna Kinsella is equally so. She affectionately smiles, serves freshly baked rhubarb tarts, and licks her thumb to wipe off dirt from the girl's face — each action a gesture of maternal kindness. Though John Kinsella talks only of unemotional, practical topics, like his farm, the weather, and crops, he too has a reserved warmth.

The girl effortlessly integrates into the family. She grows into farm life like a blooming dahlia growing in summer. After a much-needed wash, Edna dresses her in baggy boy clothing and provides her with a bedroom fit for a child. There is an eerie echo that the room was perhaps inhabited at one time by someone else. The reader can sense a whisper of mourning and emptiness engulfing the small bedroom, but Keegan covertly withholds any additional information to honor the young girl's narration.

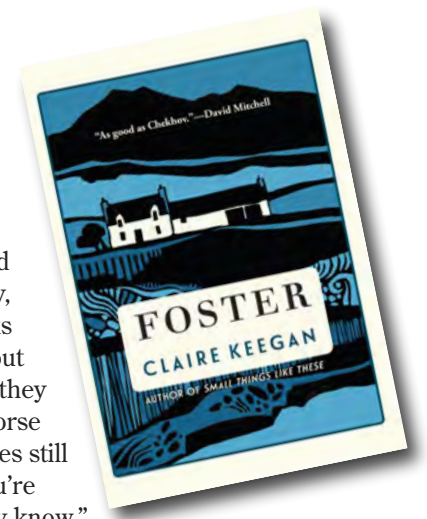
The girl is too young to fill in the blanks about how and why the Kinsella family has a child's bedroom despite them not having children. The wallpaper around the perimeter shows trains and a small boy in the distance. Without understanding why, the girl "feels sorry for every version of him." Similarly, she catches glimpses of sadness behind Edna's smile. Edna smiles wide but stares vacantly out the window, and the girl slowly detangles what is left unsaid.

During her stay on the Kinsella farm, the girl attends the funeral of an elderly neighbor. She doesn't seem to mind her first encounter with death, yet the adults decide that an acquaintance, Mildred, should drive her home early. Mildred is nosy, problematic, and insensitive. She asks the young girl invasive questions about the Kinsellas, like how much money they have, if they recite the rosary, and worse of all, she asks, "Are the child's clothes still hanging in the wardrobe? Sure, if you're sleeping in his room, you must surely know." Mildred reveals that John and Edna had a young boy who drowned in the slurry tank. The clues finally click in the girl's mind, and the prospect of impermanence is unveiled.

The house may be childless, but the Kinsellas fill it with much life and unconditional love. In the evenings, guests come to play forty-five and drink tea, and once, the company even brought a donkey into the house. The gatherings burst with playful laughter, a stark contrast to the girl's original household. The girl's birth parents provide what they can, but do not have enough time to show their affection for the children. Meanwhile, at the Kinsellas, the girl feels cared for and nurtured.

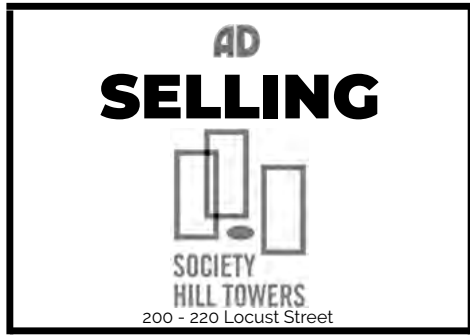
Tender moments add to the charm of Keegan's story. John Kinsella encourages the girl to reach her full potential. He builds her confidence so she can run faster and read better. The image of John placing his finger underneath each word in a storybook as the girl reads aloud is especially poignant. Edna braids her hair, clears out her ear wax, and dotes on her every need. Much to the young girl's disappointment, she must return to her parents by the end of the summer, and Edna quietly remarks, "God help you, child... if you were mine, I'd never leave you in a house of strangers."

The New York Times describes *Foster* as a "master class in child narration." That fact is only reaffirmed by the girl's whimsical curiosity for the world around her. The girl, like most children, is subtly wise, interpreting each new experience in a most pure form. She encounters love and loss for the first time, and it's fascinating to watch her emotional intelligence advance. Claire Keegan's novella *Foster*, similar to the girl, is short and sweet but proves that what may seem little can be unexpectedly profound.



Kristen Brown is a staff member at Head House Books, Society Hill's only local, independently owned bookstore.

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

BY MATT DEJULIO

2023 Membership Drive Commences

The first membership notice went out in early November. By early December, more than 400 Society Hill residents had renewed their SHCA memberships. That’s a great start, but, to be honest, we’re aiming quite a bit higher than that. For 2023, we hope to exceed the 2022 membership total of 1,148. Until then, we will be following up on that first notice — but only to those who have yet to renew! — by sending out email and snail mail reminders later in the new year.

Drawn from those who renewed by December 31, the winners of the restaurant certificates will be announced in the next issue (March/April 2023) of the *Reporter*.

If for any reason you have delayed in sending in your renewal, or simply wish to join a great organization, by all means, do so today. We welcome each and every one of the over 3,600 households in our neighborhood to join SHCA. As your civic association, SHCA helps protect your real estate investment by funding a number of improvement projects, as well as by providing subsidies to neighbors who plant trees and maintain their brick sidewalks. We also 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, our committee members, our 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.



PARK, AMERICA!

A limited number of monthly parking spaces are available at the lot at 511 S. Front Street, between South and Lombard Streets.

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Membership Application

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IMPORTANT: Today, most everyone communicates via email. Please be sure that we have your current email address — so that you can receive important updates between publication of our community newsletter. All SHCA emails will be judiciously screened, and rarely will we send emails more than once a week. Nor will we share your email address with anyone else. This convenient, 21st-century system helps save our civic association postage costs, while keeping you regularly informed.

<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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The following topics are of special interest to me. I welcome receipt of email updates on these topics.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Franklin Lights	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Events	<input type="checkbox"/> 5th Street Development
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MCCALL SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

BY DANIELLE SANDSMARK

Celebrating the Year of the Rabbit

This January, teachers and students at McCall School are gearing up to usher in the Year of the Rabbit with Lunar New Year celebrations. The Lunar New Year is the biggest holiday of the year in China and many other Asian countries. The celebration spans 15 days, marks the start of the lunar calendar, and concludes with the Lantern Festival. It all begins this year on Lunar New Year's Eve, with the new moon on Saturday, January 21.

At McCall, the Lunar New Year is an opportunity for Asian students and staff to share important aspects of their cultures. Many teachers incorporate Lunar New Year references into lesson plans throughout the month. For example, the tradition of sharing red envelopes with money to wish friends and family good luck becomes part of math lessons, and lantern making and Chinese character drawing are woven into art instruction. Classrooms participate in a door decorating contest, reminiscent of the Chinese

custom of adorning the doors of homes with red decorations to ward off Nian, a beast who threatens crops, animals, and humans, but who hates the color red.

The McCall School's Lunar New Year celebration is capped off by a school-wide assembly that includes student performances, Chinese drummer demonstrations, and martial arts instruction. Sampling Asian foods used to celebrate the holiday exposes students to new culinary traditions. Dragon dancers, who are thought to help stave off evil, cap off the day with a visit to every classroom and are a highlight for students from all grades.

The families of McCall thank our neighbors for their support. We wish you and yours a fabulous 2023!



Danielle Sandsmark is an SHCA board member and McCall School parent.



McCall classroom door decorated for Lunar New Year. Red lanterns are believed to ward off bad luck.



Students enjoy performances from lion dancers at McCall in February 2022.

SHCA joins McCall in wishing You and Yours a Happy and Healthy New Year!

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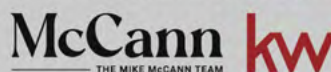


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NIFTY NEIGHBORS IN MY BACKYARD

BY JANE BIBERMAN

Marion Pulsifer Grows a Green Team

A grassroots group of 15 like-minded strangers, all residents of Independence Place, met in January 2021, during the pandemic and in the midst of a major capital renovation project, with the aim of creating a more sustainable community. They established the Green Team, a diverse, multi-disciplinary group made up of Independence Place residents and liaison representatives of the property owners' board and other residential committees.



Marion Pulsifer, leader of the Independence Place Green Team.

The group coalesced into a team, with the knowledge, time, and commitment to research, prioritize, and deploy relevant initiatives. It was supported by leaders of green committees at The Philadelphian and William Penn House, and its commitment was shared broadly by the Independence Place community. All wanted to be part of the evolving, critical mass movement toward a better climate and world, but were searching for real-life, pragmatic actions to take.

The Green Team held a retreat and agreed to a mission statement focused on empowering others and goals that would further efforts to save money and save resources. Priorities were set among many possible, worthy efforts according to three criteria: significant, quantifiable, and "feel-good." Following an introductory Zoom call for all residents, over the next two years more than 200 residents participated in a spring house cleaning, a book drive, hazardous waste and fall compost collections, and learned through Zoom calls about topics such as recycling, sustainable gardening, and energy savings. A 24-page Green Guide gives options for individual efforts, local programs, and transit.

Marion Pulsifer, a former teacher, retired attorney, and consultant, is leading the Independence Place Green Team and acting as liaison with other entities. She coordinated the Independence Place responses to the Transportation Survey for District 2030. With its neighbor, Hopkinson

House, she organized the first-ever experimental project on balcony gardening with native plants. Marion represents Independence Place in cooperating with a number of other multi-family buildings across the city to create a formal organization to share strategies and to coordinate sustainability efforts.

She was counsel to the State of California Department of Transportation in Los Angeles and Regional Council to

the Federal Transit Administration in New York City. With her own firm, she consulted on public-private transportation projects around the U.S. until she retired in 2012.

Marion and her husband, Mike, moved to Philadelphia in 2006. They enjoy city living and are involved in a number of initiatives, such as volunteer gardening at Washington Square for SHCA, the Union League, Broad Street Ministries, and Wayne Oratorio Society. They have two sons and five grandchildren.



Jane Biberman is a freelance writer and longtime contributor to the *Reporter*. She volunteers at the Bucks County SPCA and has two rescued donkeys, along with an adopted dog and cat.

Defining local significant, quantifiable, and "feel good" actions to take to create a better climate and world.

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KIDS' KORNER

BY JAIME AND MIKE FOX

Famous Food, Fear, and Fun

Famous 4th Street Deli

Words cannot describe how much we love this restaurant. But we will try! We love this restaurant so much that we have been visiting it for decades. Its location factored into our decision to buy our present home. We were close to naming our first-born "Pastrami." Okay, that last one is not entirely true. But you get the picture!

We visit Famous at least once per month and enjoy everything the deli has to offer, from the deli meats and cheeses, to the delectable desserts, along with the ambiance unique to a genuine Jewish deli. Our current favorite dish is the matzoh ball soup. Our favorite dessert — there are so many! — is any of the chocolate cakes, each slice seemingly weighing in at what feels like five pounds. The kids love the French toast and fruit salad, as well as the cookies that come at the end of the meal with the check.

Ghost Tour Philadelphia

For the last three years, we have watched a gentleman in a large black cloak, carrying a lantern, walk past our home with several people following him. Assuming it was a tour, we stopped the guide to ask which tour company he represented. He replied, "Ghost Tour Philadelphia." We pocketed this information and waited until one eerily drizzly, murky night in early October, when we decided to join the tour. It did not disappoint. Prior to the tour starting, we told the guide where we lived and asked her, a "gentlewoman" this time, to tell a story near our house. To make a long story short, she stopped right in front and told such a frightening tale that it freaked out our son for days! Well worth it. The cost was \$20 per adult and \$13 per child (ages 4-12). The tour takes about 75 to 90 minutes. It begins at Signers' Garden at 5th and Chestnut and takes you around Independence Mall, Society Hill, Washington Square, and Old City. Be sure to stop and wave as you pass by our house, if you dare! <https://www.ghosttour.com/>

Museum of Illusions

In October, we visited the Museum of Illusions for the first time. We had a blast! The Museum boasts a series of mind-bending exhibits consisting of optical illusions, puzzles, and brain teasers, which can be covered in about an hour. Our favorite was a moving tunnel. This vertigo-inducing exhibit felt like we were on an amusement park

ride. We went through it at least 10 times! When asked what he thought of the museum, our 10-year-old son said "It was short but fun." When our seven-year-old daughter was asked what she liked best at the museum, she said, "Everything." It is a great place for people of all ages and offers lots of opportunities to take fun and interesting photos.



The Fox family moved to Society Hill in August 2019 and loves to take advantage of the wonderful spaces and activities that Society Hill has to offer. Kids' Korner will feature topics such as restaurants, parks, recreation and culture. Readers feedback and suggestions are welcome.



Experience the magic of taking unbelievable photos at the Museum of Illusions.

RESOLVE TO JOIN SHCA

BY MARTHA LEVINE

How Does SHCA Membership Benefit You?

It's a New Year, and it's time to renew your SHCA membership.



Remember, it pays to be a member!

Your annual membership dues pay for essential services that help to make Society Hill a clean, safe and attractive place to live. We cannot do it without you. Here are just four of the unique services SHCA provides to our neighborhood:

Weekly Sidewalk Sweeping

How do we keep our sidewalks so clean? For many years, SHCA has contracted with the Center City District to sweep and bag litter left on our sidewalks. The service is performed every Friday year-round. During warmer months, clean-up is expanded to Mondays as well.

Graffiti Removal Service

Who likes to see graffiti? No one does! So it must be removed immediately. A few years ago, SHCA came to the rescue and hired Todd Kelley and his company Graffiti Removal Experts to do a weekly sweep and remove all graffiti. If you see graffiti, report it to associate Kimberly at kimberlyb@graffitiremovalexperts.com. Graffiti will be removed within a day or two.

Sidewalk and Tree Subsidies

“Fix the Brix:” Brick sidewalks require regular maintenance in order to stay level and safe. Our “Fix the Brix” subsidy encourages homeowners to level their sidewalks by reimbursing some of the cost. Nearly 300 households have taken advantage of the program, making our sidewalks safer, to avoid causing serious trips and falls.

Tree Tenders: Street trees make our neighborhood green, beautiful and healthy. But trees need care. The Tree Tenders subsidy helps homeowners afford professional care for their trees when it comes to pruning, removing and replacing a dead tree, and planting new trees.

Remember, trees and sidewalks are both homeowners’ responsibilities, and SHCA subsidies are here to help homeowners.

Join online at www.societyhillcivic.org/join/ or fill out and mail in the form on Page 21.

Your membership dues support the excellent services provided by SHCA.

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