

SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

March/April 2024

The Newsletter
of The Society Hill
Civic Association

www.societyhillcivic.org

Make a Contribution to Your Neighborhood By Joining the SHCA Board

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN



Do you have great ideas about how to improve your community? Are you willing to roll up your sleeves and pitch in to get the job done? If the answer is yes, then consider volunteering for a position on the Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) Board of Directors. We are a team dedicated to preserving the character and community of Society Hill. We address changes and challenges by listening to all sides and working together to find solutions. We represent a community of 3,000 households — those living in high-rise condos, apartments, and single-family homes — plus many active institutions like Old Pine Community Center, Mother Bethel Church, and the Athenaeum. Besides our role as the Registered Community Organization for zoning issues in our area, we help with playground improvements, support historic renovations of important buildings, and contribute to the maintenance and beauty of Washington Square. We do a lot. Join us!

This year's elections will take place at our May 15 General Membership Meeting. Members will elect a president, two vice presidents, a secretary, a treasurer, and up to eight directors-at-large, all for one-year terms. In addition, four

of the 12 quadrant directors' terms are ending and need to be filled.

SHCA's Nominating Committee puts together a slate of candidates from those continuing their service and new people willing to join the board. To nominate yourself or a neighbor, please contact the Nominating and Elections Committee by emailing info@societyhillcivic.org by April 2, 2024. Please include a short, one-paragraph bio and note the reasons you would like to serve on the board. Nominees must live within the boundaries of Society Hill (see map below), be at least 21 years old, and be an SHCA member. In addition, nominees for quadrant director must live in that quadrant.

Visit www.societyhillcivic.org for more information about SHCA, its board, and the nominating process.

All nominees will be listed in the May/June issue of the *Reporter*.



David Haas and **Claudia Carabelli** serve on SHCA's board of and are Co-chairs of the Nominating Committee.

Wednesday,
March
20

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association Meeting
Wednesday, March 20, 2024

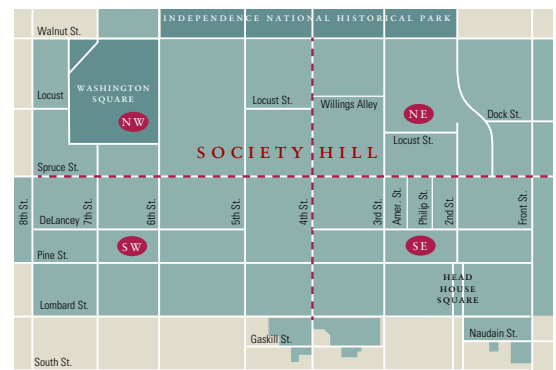
Old Pine Community Center
401 Lombard Street

5:45 p.m. Board Meeting

7:30 p.m. General Membership Meeting

Speakers: SHCA Members

Topic: It's your turn to speak! Bring your visions, your questions and your concerns about Society Hill to the March General Membership Meeting.



SHCA divides Society Hill into quadrants for the purpose of electing its Board of Directors. They are Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest. Fourth Street serves as the dividing line between the east and west quadrants. Spruce Street is the dividing line between the north and south quadrants.

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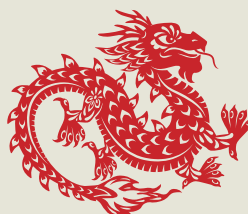
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SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

**NUSA
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2020**

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Website
Find past issues dating back to
1950 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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*non-voting directors

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SUSAN BURT-COLLINS

What's in a Map?

Although we see ourselves as a historic district, and indeed, Society Hill is recognized as one because of all of the significant buildings that line our streets, SHCA is also a Registered Community Organization (RCO), with boundaries determined by the Planning Commission of the city, not by the location of historic buildings. As an RCO, SHCA has the right to be notified of any application for zoning variance, special exception, or project undergoing civic design review within its boundaries. SHCA then has the right to schedule a public meeting, within 45 days of notification, where the applicant or their representative will present the proposal and accept questions and comments from the public. In this way, we can have a significant role in decisions regarding zoning changes, variances, and the many ways the city balances varying interests of the community on issues relating to the built environment. As an RCO, we can influence what buildings can be built or changed and what businesses can operate along our streets.

A look at the map shows that although most of our neighborhood contains the quiet, tree-lined streets that make up the historic district,

several blocks of South Street and a block of Chestnut Street are within our purview for zoning purposes. These borders place an obligation on us, particularly on the very hard-working Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee led by Paul Boni. But they also present a real opportunity to influence what happens not just on our residential streets but also on the commercial corridor of South Street.

As we move into spring, it is worth remembering that South Street is a place we can all help revitalize by frequenting its new restaurants and shops. In our role as an RCO, we can help stop nuisance establishments from operating on South Street and make room for things everyone can enjoy.

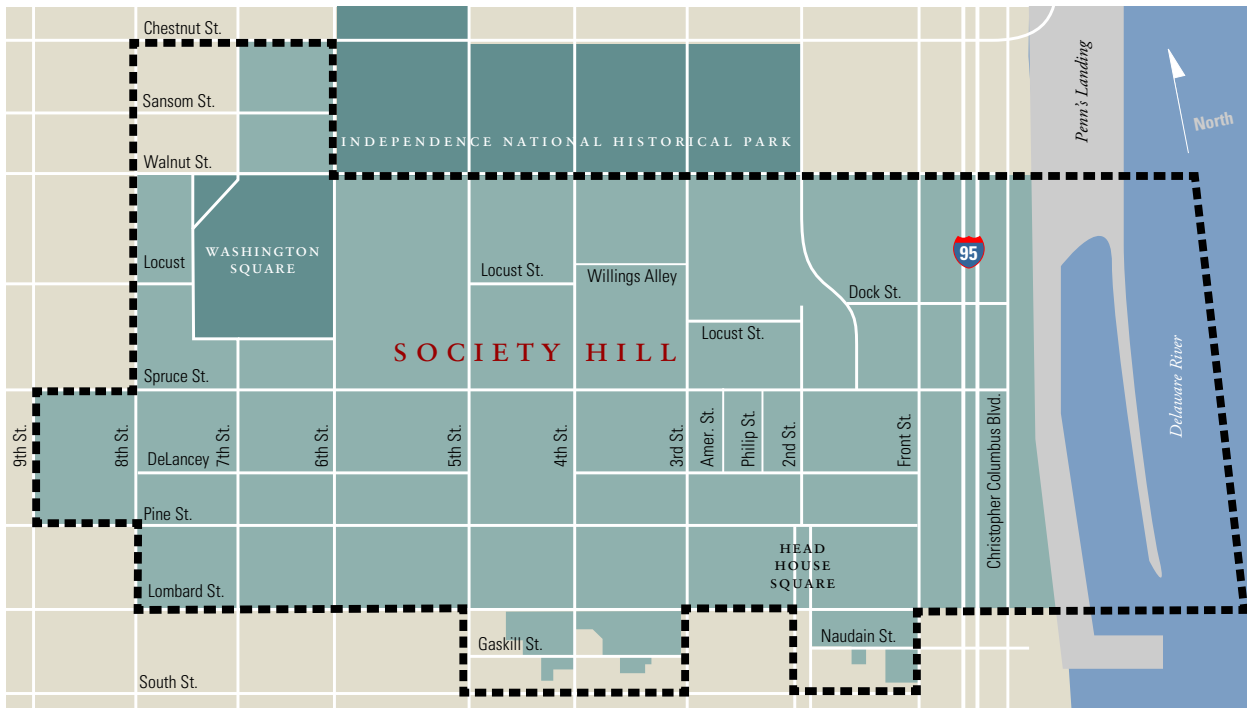
A map does more than show us the way to Jim's Steaks (4th and South... opening in late March!). Borders drawn on that map also give us a voice in how our neighborhood operates.



Susan Burt-Collins, SHCA President

RCO Borders, Benefits and Responsibilities

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.



The line of black dashes shows the boundary of the SHCA Registered Community Organization. The light green area shows the blocks represented by SHCA according to its bylaws: the area contained within the midlines of 8th, Lombard, Front, and Walnut Streets, expanded on the eastern boundary to the Delaware River between Lombard and Walnut Streets and augmented by the boundaries established by the Society Hill Historic District.



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CLEAN-UP DAY APRIL 6

BY AL MEINSTER

Citywide Street and Sidewalk Sweeping

Society Hill will be participating in the citywide **Clean-up Day** effort on April 6. Starting at 8 a.m. the morning of Clean-up Day, leaf bags along with brooms and rakes will be available in Delancey (a.k.a Three Bears) Park. Bagged leaves and street litter, but no household trash, should be left by noon at intersections on Locust, Spruce, Pine, or Lombard Streets where they cross the numbered streets. Neighbors will not be requested to move their cars.

Paper-shredding and e-waste recycling will be available on April 6 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at our Front and Lombard Streets parking lot. Bring all of your old documents, folders, and correspondence, including personal and confidential information, that you would like to dispose of in a responsible and sustainable

way while protecting yourself from identity theft. Gain a greener sense of security and organization! E-cycle your used electronics instead of placing them in a landfill. Bring anything with a plug except a television or monitor. No stoves or refrigerators, either.

Clean-Up Day restores the beauty of our very special neighborhood and reflects the pride shared by those of us fortunate enough to call Society Hill our home. Your participation is critical to our success, and we look forward to seeing you on Clean-Up Day!

Questions should be directed to Al Meister, Clean-Up Day co-chairperson, at k3eax@yahoo.com.

Al Meister is an SHCA board member.



TREE TENDERS UPDATE

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

Spring Prep for Street Trees

Winter is mostly in the rearview mirror, which can only mean one thing. Spring is just around the corner! Even though the calendar notes March 19 as the start of the new season, experienced gardeners know it can still be too early to plant many flowers and shrubs. If, like me, you're eager to start playing in the dirt again, street tree pits make for a great place to get a jump on things.

Tree pits have probably been neglected over the cold winter months. Now is a good time to clear out any weeds or trash. The soil may have become hard and compacted as well. Loosen up the soil with a rake or garden hand cultivator. Water well and cover with a high-quality mulch. Licorice root is best, but others will do if it's not available. Adhere to the 3 x 3 x 3 rule: mulch should be 3 inches deep in a 3-foot radius from the tree with a 3-inch space around the tree trunk.

Weed removal should be done by hand. **Do not spray weed killer of any kind in a tree pit.** A beautiful tree on 5th Street (across from the ACME parking lot) was killed by someone's overzealous use of weed spray on the overgrown pit of weeds. Pull the weeds regularly when they're still small, and it won't become too burdensome.



Photos of the same tree pit, before and after being weeded and mulched.

Watering, especially of trees planted in the last two years, should commence again by late March. Those little guys still need to be nurtured for their best chance of survival.

Need a tree? If you have an empty pit, April is a good time to apply for a fall 2024 Tree Tenders tree. The deadline is early May. It's an easy online application, with which I'm happy to help you. Trees are free and planted by our volunteers.

Let's do what we can to keep all our beautiful trees healthy and thriving.

Claudia Carabelli is a former RN and retired school counselor. She co-chairs the Society Hill Tree Tenders.



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treatment so that we apply materials only when and where they are needed. Landscape projects are meticulously executed and guaranteed. We also offer Blue Stone installations.

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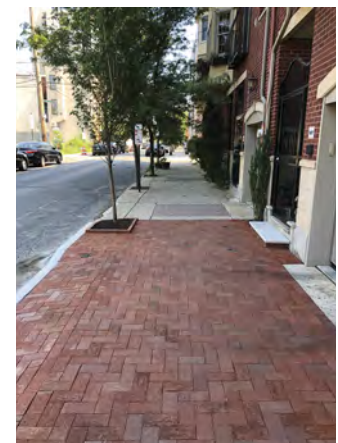
McFarland Blue trucks, uniformed personnel, attention to detail and thorough clean-up of your property help differentiate McFarland. Our management of your landscape can be total or selective, depending on your needs and budget. If we cannot immediately identify the cause of a landscape problem, we will research the issue until we have solid answers to report to you. As a second-generation business, we have been satisfying our clients with a lifelong-relationship approach to service.

Fix Your Bricks

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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TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFTS

BY WILLIAM JANTSCH

The Society Hill Preservation Foundation

Greetings from the Society Hill Preservation Foundation! For those of you who may not be familiar with this organization, I am happy to explain what we are all about. I would also like to discuss some of our plans for improvements in our Society Hill neighborhood.

When you pay your membership dues to SHCA, the cost of the dues is not a tax-deductible expense. Although the SHCA is itself a non-profit organization, it does not qualify for tax-exempt status. In order to enable neighbors to make donations that are tax-deductible, SHCA created the Society Hill Preservation Foundation (or "Foundation"), a fully tax-exempt non-profit corporation. Since the Foundation is a tax-exempt non-profit corporation, anyone donating money to the Foundation can claim a tax deduction on the full amount. Thus, dues paid to SHCA are not a tax-deductible expense, whereas gifts to the Foundation are.

Although the Foundation is wholly owned by SHCA, the Foundation operates as a distinct business entity. The Foundation has its own board of directors and officers, who act separately from, but cooperatively with, SHCA. The function of the Foundation board is to ensure that donated funds are properly deposited and disbursed.

The Foundation is not associated with any other fundraising entity in Society Hill, such as the Society Hill Fund.

The Foundation works with SHCA to fund improvement projects in Society Hill. One of our largest ongoing projects is supporting improvements in Washington Square. Since the National Park Service (NPS) manages Washington Square, our improvement initiatives are undertaken in cooperation with NPS. You can see the volunteers of SHCA's Washington Square Committee involved in gardening and beautification of the park. The Foundation funds these efforts, and we will be funding larger projects as well, including renovation of the guardhouse and others. The Foundation is acting in cooperation with the Independence National Historical Trust to assist with some of the larger projects.

Our most recent project is the creation of a conservancy for the Headhouse and Shambles. Our goal is to rehabilitate and maintain this historical icon, so that it can continue to serve as a focal point, emanating the energy and vibrancy that define our neighborhood.

The Foundation funds many other neighborhood projects, including Tree Tenders and "Fix the Brix." Donors can designate which projects they wish to support, and the Foundation respects those requests absolutely. We rely on fundraising events such as the Washington Square Affair, as well as individual donations, to support our work.

For the future, I see many opportunities for the Foundation to promote SHCA's vision of "Keeping the Character" of Society Hill by maintaining its beauty, its historical character, and the level of quality of life that defines Society Hill. For instance, we can take another look at the Civic Master Plan where it addresses our open spaces and green spaces. (The Plan is on the website under Zoning, look at pages 109-118.) As the City of Philadelphia prepares for the Quarter Millennial Celebration, we anticipate large numbers of visitors who will be bringing business and energy to our streets. Guests may be delighted with a day trip to our beautiful green spaces, but we get to enjoy them year-round. The beautification and improved safety of these spaces would be a great benefit to us all.

To fund these efforts, the Foundation will continue to work with SHCA to plan fundraising activities that will be enjoyable and add to the sense of community that binds us together in Society Hill. SHCA is grateful for the support of its members, without which it could not operate. When you go online to renew your membership at www.societyhillcivic.org/join/, remember you can also make a tax-deductible donation at www.societyhillcivic.org/foundation/donate/.



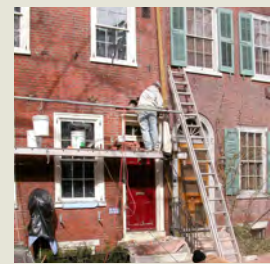
William Jantsch is the Society Hill Preservation Foundation president, and an SHCA board member. He has lived in Society Hill for more than 13 years with his wife, Nancy, and their dog Paris.

Members-Only Benefit: List of Contractors

If you are a current SHCA member, you are eligible to receive our popular and helpful List of Contractors. The list has 11 pages of contractors under all categories, including general contractors, handymen, electricians, plumbers, window washers, HVAC and more. You name it, we have it. We are happy to send members the list electronically or as a hard copy.

To get your copy, call 215-629-0727 or email marthalev6@gmail.com.

We also appreciate recommendations of contractors you have worked with to add to the list. We are looking for a new category: technical support. Can you recommend someone you have worked with who provided in-home services for fixing computer problems? And if you find someone on the list is no longer working, please let us know.



HISTORICAL RESTORATION

BY JONATHAN RUBIN

Mother Bethel Receives Preservation Grant

If you're like me, having lived in Philadelphia for more than 20 years — 18 of which were in Queen Village — you find yourself on well-worn walking paths to get to beloved destinations. For me, it was the route from our house at 3rd and Bainbridge to Washington Square: Beginning at Bainbridge Green, walking north on 3rd Street, crossing South Street into Society Hill, and ending up at the fountain at Washington Square.

If time wasn't an issue, I would take 3rd Street, — oftentimes cutting through St. Peter's cemetery because, why not? — and make a left onto the cobblestones of Delancey, stopping in at Three Bears Park, then continuing up the meandering herringbone brick sidewalk leading to Green's and Lawrence Court, a left onto Spruce for two blocks, then wandering back to Lombard while passing the magnificent (wait for it!) Mother Bethel, African Methodist Episcopal Church.



One of Mother Bethel's stained glass windows in need of restoration.

I would look up at the stained glass clearstory windows, and marvel at their beauty. There's something about those circles that captures my eye. The congregation, founded in 1794, is the oldest African Methodist Episcopal congregation in the nation.

My company, Philadelphia House Painting & Historical Restoration, submitted an estimate that was vital to getting the preservation grant, and it has been selected to do the work. We are very excited about restoring the church's sanctuary windows and some other exterior woodwork.

So far, we have only seen the windows using an iPhone telephoto lens and photographs from

a drone. But nothing beats being 12 inches from the surface and actually touching it. It's a moment of truth: Will my scraper sink into soft, rotted wood or will it merely scrape off the paint? We hope (and pray) that the wood is sound enough for us to do simple restoration-level surface preparation: scraping and sanding, oil priming, wood filling, re-priming, caulking, then two coats of Sherman Williams Emerald gloss paint. The fear is the possibility of having to recreate the wood, which is a very big "known unknown."

In past articles, I have talked about the conversation between us as restorers and the builders/designers who created these beautiful structures. It's also a conversation between us and the last painter who worked on this building. For unknown reasons, some sort of stain was used instead of paint. Stains are great if you want the pigment to penetrate into the wood, like a deck or a piece of furniture. But stain does not create an exterior shell like an acrylic paint, which repels the weather. Woodwork like this should absolutely be protected with paint and not a stain. We want an unbreachable barrier.

Choosing the right materials is one of the most important parts of this job, and then actually reading the labels and following the directions. It's amazing how much information you can get by simply reading the side of a can of paint or ready patch. The first step is always to make sure the surface is clean, and free of dirt, oil, and loose paint. No kidding! Find the bottom of whatever it is that you are doing, then proceed from there.

Now, our conversation turns towards the architecture of the church. Buildings create feeling, and the feeling one gets when one sits in the sanctuary of Mother Bethel is breathless wonder — a feeling of freedom and hope, concepts dear to the African-American experience (and to all people on planet earth, for that matter).

This concept of freedom is built into our DNA, especially as Philadelphians, the place where the Declaration of Independence was written (though "all men are created equal" is a statement rife with irony considering #metoo and the pretzel logic of an enslaved human counting as 3/5th of a person).

The freedom to choose one's destiny, to design a soaring structure meant to capture the light of god through clearstory splendor, is at the heart of what it means to be an American.

continued on page 9

About the Preservation Grant

Mother Bethel Church, a designated National Historic Landmark, will receive \$90,000 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to help rehabilitate its intricate stained-glass windows, preserving its historical and architectural grandeur.

Funding for the window restoration comes from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, which announced \$4 million in preservation grants for 31 historic Black churches across the country.

HISTORICAL RESTORATION

continued from page 8

My father-in-law recently immigrated to the United States from Russia, as part of a Jewish refugee program. His apartment in St. Petersburg was built at the height of the communist brutalist design era — every apartment exactly the same. It truly is impossible to tell one apartment building from another: five stories, made of concrete; no frills, just depressing Soviet design.

Ironically, St. Petersburg was originally designed and built by Italian architects. Peter the Great wanted to build a “Venice of the north,” which he largely accomplished. Then, the thought police took over, and architecture was neutered and rendered purely utilitarian.

Diametrically opposed to this is Mother Bethel, an example of the freedom to express love via architecture. It’s up to us to be the caretakers of that freedom. Maintaining a building is like maintaining a democracy: take if for granted and it will break down.

We look forward to sharing the restoration of the windows in the coming months.



Window on the façade of Mother Bethel Church.

Jonathan Rubin is the owner and operator of Philadelphia House Painting & Historical Restoration www.PhiladelphiaHousePainting.com. He lived in Queen Village for 18+ years and chaired Friends of Bainbridge Green. He now lives with his wife and two kids in Merion Station.



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URBAN EDEN

BY MARY STURDIVANT

The Winter of Our Content



NASA claims "The snake plant's rate of filtration is too slow for practical indoor use." I say to NASA, "Go to Mars!"

Photo by Bari Shor

When the daily high temperature plunges below freezing, listen to that inner voice of your self-care advocate and stay inside! Indoor gardening activities include cultivating houseplants that can cleanse the air. While friends debate the merits of various HEPA air purifiers, I can tune out and contemplate which foliage pattern I prefer for my snake plant (*Dracaena trifasciata*).

I discovered the merits of the snake plant when a cousin put me in charge of her two prize plants while she and her husband snow birded to Florida. I noticed quickly that the air in my living room smelled better. When I had to relinquish them, I got my own on an impulse purchase at IKEA on Columbus Boulevard. No research, I just liked the way it looked. It seemed healthy, and it was cheap. It tolerates low light and irregular watering, but can upset dogs' and cats' stomachs if ingested. The snake plant adds nothing to my electric bill, consumes less than a toilet flush of water in a month, and the design adds to the décor.

The web has tons of advice on choosing houseplants just to clear the air. Have fun!

Next, light, more specifically sunshine, elevates my mood. Some neighbors might suffer from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) and, like some plants, require special light bulbs to mimic sunlight. I lift my spirits with flowers, but not cut flowers so much. They die too quickly and get costly when replaced weekly. This year I splurged on a spring bulb garden from White Flower Farm. The bulbs were ready for forcing, so I just had to unbox the basket, set it in a south-facing window, and water occasionally. Two weeks later, the hyacinths bloomed first and the tulips came last. I had something to delight my eyes and nose as the hyacinths perfumed the air around them. It smelled like spring! March brings the Philadelphia Flower Show to the Convention Center (March 2-10). After enduring February, we need it.

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URBAN EDEN

BY MARY STURDIVANT

Consider Composting

Contentedly curled on the couch, I consider another topic: composting. Composting is totally voluntary for us for now in Society Hill. But I learned that if garbage goes into the landfill, it produces methane gas. As a child growing up in Delaware County, all of my neighbors had a pail in the ground near the kitchen door. The lid reminded me of the hatch on the submarines my father served on. No rat or raccoon was getting in there. The garbage was collected once a week, but in the early sixties, the township stopped collections. Officials claimed they could no longer sell the scraps to the New Jersey pig farms. I haven't thought about composting since then.

Some sources claim Americans throw out 35 to 45 percent of our foodstuff. Not me, no way. Then my doctor told me to take a potassium supplement. Overwhelmed by the choices at the drugstore, I asked the pharmacist for a recommendation. He said, "An orange or a banana a day." Done. But now I have peels and rinds that should *not* go down the garbage disposal. Should I compost?

Normally, I am pretty opinionated, but composting is so personal with so many considerations. So I will throw out some questions. Are you composting for yourself? If so, do you have the space outdoors? Pennsylvania Horticultural Society recommends a three-foot cubic space.

Or, do you just want the detritus whisked away? The two big players in Philadelphia are Circle Compost (www.circlecompost.com, 267-388-1493) and Bennett Compost (www.bennettcompost.com, 215-520-2406). These ambitious and accommodating entrepreneurs give lots of choices for pricing, container capacity, pick up/delivery frequency, and what can and cannot be composted. According to David Bloovman of Circle Compost, 126 Society Hill residents already participate in Circle's

program. Tim Bennett's business serves several high rises, and has a woman co-owner.

If you want to go the DIY route, you have lots of choices, including tabletop models. The four main questions to consider follow:

- 1 Does the container keep in odors?
- 2 Does the container attract pests? (Fruit flies and rodents are the biggest issue for me.)
- 3 What capacity do you need (single person household vs. family of four)?
- 4 How easy is it to keep clean?

There are few items I don't worry about composting. My coffee grounds and used tea leaves go right into the empty English muffin plastic sleeve and out on the hydrangeas and azaleas. They counteract the sweetness of the leaf mulch. Since Federal Donuts took the three-piece chicken off the menu, bones are no longer a problem. The chicken breast "tenders" have no bones.

If you are composting or decide to, please share your experiences with me by emailing marysturdivant@comcast.net.

Oh, another "Everyone knows but me" item: Don't put compost directly on your flowerbed. Mix soil or perlite with it to promote drainage and aeration. In gardening, too much of a good thing can be deadly.

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."



Circle Compost and Bennett Compost collection buckets



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Liberty Tree

by Thomas Paine

In a chariot of light, from the regions of the day,
The Goddess of Liberty came,
Ten thousand celestials directed her way,
And hither conducted the dame.
A fair budding branch from the gardens above,
Where millions with millions agree,
She brought in her hand as a pledge of her love,
And the plant she named Liberty Tree.

The celestial exotic stuck deep in the ground,
Like a native it flourished and bore;
The fame of its fruit drew the nations around,
To seek out this peaceable shore.
Unmindful of names or distinctions they came,
For freemen like brothers agree;
With one spirit endued, they one friendship pursued,
And their temple was Liberty Tree.

Beneath this fair tree, like the patriarchs of old,
Their bread in contentment they ate,
Unvexed with the troubles of silver or gold,
The cares of the grand and the great.
With timber and tar they Old England supplied,
And supported her power on the sea;
Her battles they fought, without getting a goat,
For the honor of Liberty Tree.

But hear, O ye swains ('tis a tale most profane),
How all the tyrannical powers,
Kings, Commons and Lords, are uniting amain
To cut down this guardian of ours.
From the East to the West blow the trumpet to arms,
Thro' the land let the sound of it flee;
Let the far and the near all unite with a cheer,
In defense of our Liberty Tree.



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INDEPENDENCE HISTORICAL TRUST

BY JONATHAN BURTON

The Bicentennial Bell

At last, Independence National Historical Park (INHP) and the Independence Historical Trust have broken ground on the Bicentennial Bell Garden at 3rd and Walnut Streets. Early last November on a chilly, yet sunny morning, it was announced that the garden formerly known as the Benjamin Rush Garden will be transformed to display the Bicentennial Bell that Queen Elizabeth II and the people of England gifted to the United States in 1976. But why do we even have a Bicentennial Bell?

In the early 1970s, INHP announced its plan to build a new visitor center at 3rd and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia. In response, the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company offered \$50,000 for the casting of a Bicentennial Bell to hang in the tower of that new visitor center. Hancock's proposal recommended that the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, England, cast the bell — the same foundry that first cast the bell that later became the "Liberty Bell." Shortly after Hancock presented their plan, the British Ambassador to the United States met with National Park Service (NPS) officials to propose that the Bicentennial Bell would be a gift from the people of Britain to the people of the United States to celebrate the 1976 United States Bicentennial.

In January 1976, molds for the bell were made. On March 4, the bell was cast with a mixture of copper and tin during a 16-minute pour. When completed, the bell was 6 feet 10 inches in diameter at its lip and 5 foot 6 inches in height. It weighed approximately six tons. It is inscribed:

FOR THE
PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES
FROM THE
PEOPLE OF BRITAIN
4 JULY 1976
LET FREEDOM RING

The words "Let Freedom Ring" were chosen for this bell for what they represent of the joint heritage and purpose of the British and American peoples. The words come from the last line of the anthem, "My Country 'tis of Thee," written by Samuel Francis Smith and sung to the same music as the British national anthem.

The Bicentennial Bell hung in the tower of INHP's Visitor Center at 3rd and Chestnut Streets from June 15, 1976 until January 31, 2013. It rang daily at 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to mark the busiest hours at the park. In 2013, the NPS, working

with Northwind Engineering and the George Young Company removed the bell from the tower because the visitor center had been sold to a private non-profit institution, the Museum of the American Revolution.

So, what now? It is hard to see past the garden's temporary fencing, but the concrete base has been poured and is almost fully cured. The armature, crafted by a brilliant metal artist, Warren Holzman from Holzman Iron Studios in Kensington, will soon be installed in the bell's base.

(If you need custom ironwork crafted at your house, look him up.) After a test fitting at the bell's storage facility, the team at Sautter Crane is scheduled to install the bell at the garden site in late March. Once the bell is secure, the remaining hardscaping in the garden will be completed by the local all-female owned engineering and construction firm, G-Force. Once the construction is completed, the local landscape architectural and urban design firm, Studio Bryan Hanes, will complete the plantings. The plant material has been carefully curated to include plants that were traded between the United States and the United Kingdom in the 18th and 19th centuries. The talented NPS staff is overseeing all of the work.

We expect the Bicentennial Bell Garden to be fully completed this summer. Please stay tuned to the Independence Historical Trust's website (www.inht.org), sign up for our e-newsletter, or email me at Jonathan@INHT.org for more updates.



The newly cast Bicentennial Bell was ready to leave the foundry in England in 1976.



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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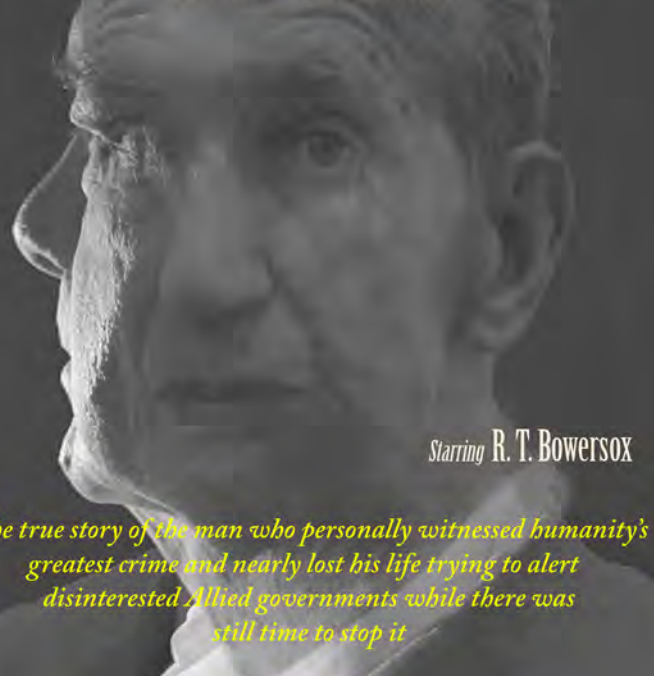
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KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

Which One Is the Real Liberty Bell?

The Liberty Bell is one of the world’s most recognized symbols. It not surprising that it has inspired many copies and even false sightings. To mark April Fools Day, I offer a selection of tricky postcards to see if you can pick out the real Liberty Bells.

Three Liberty Bells >

This post card was found on eBay captioned “A Man and Women Standing at the Liberty Bell.” One wonders which of the three bells the seller thinks is the Liberty Bell. April Fools!



< The Real Liberty Bell

The eBay seller of this card claims that it depicts “the real Liberty Bell.” The real Liberty Bell is much larger than this one. It also has a large wooden yoke, not the cast metal yoke shown here. I am also pretty certain the National Park Service does not let the real Liberty Bell lie around outside in the weeds. People are funny.

Bell in Belfry >

This is another card on eBay that the owner thinks shows the Liberty Bell, but it is all wrong. The Liberty Bell would have been mounted in this way, but it rang its last note in 1846 when it cracked for the second time. It was removed from the steeple completely in June of 1852, well before this photograph would have been taken. Plus, the bell size and the interior of this belfry are all wrong.



< Tower Room

From 1852, when it was removed from the steeple, until 1894, the bell hung from a chain in the tower room of Independence Hall. It was placed in a glass case at floor level and eventually displayed on these wishbone supports, where it remained until 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 1976, when it was moved to the glass building across the street to mark the start of the Bicentennial. Many people remember seeing the bell in this display. This image is missing the bolts, which stabilize the crack, and the brackets gripping the edge of the bell that you will see if you visit the bell today. Those features are left over from the 1915 road trip. This card predates the trip. The wishbone brackets are still in the park’s collection.



Living Photograph >

During World War I, photographer Arthur Mole developed a process of creating giant images using masses of people. Seen from the ground, there was no effect, but seen from an 80-foot tower, the result was a clear image. This Liberty Bell is made with 25,000 soldiers.

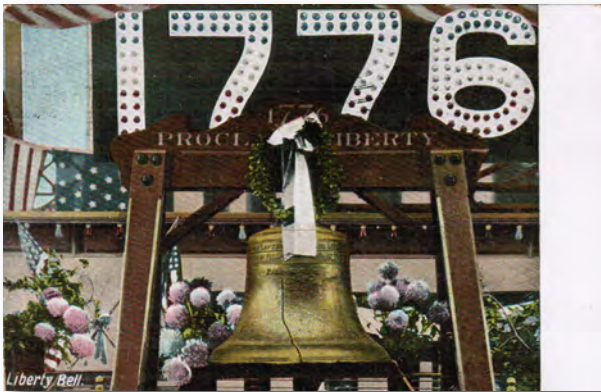


continued on page 16

KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

Which One Is the Real Liberty Bell?

*continued from page 15***< Road Trip!**

Beginning in 1885, when it visited World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans, the bell took seven cross-country trips. The expo's commissioner wrote to the mayor of Philadelphia expressing the sentiment that, with the Civil War being fresh in people's hearts, a visit from the Liberty Bell could go a long way toward uniting the country. The City of Brother Love embraced the idea, and off the bell went. There are no cards of that trip because it was before the age of picture postcards. From the postmarks on multiple specimens I have of this card, I believe it is from the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. Everywhere the bell went it was treated like a rock star by the crowds who came out to see and perhaps even be photographed with it.

< Another Road Trip!

In 1915, the bell's final trip took it to California for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and then to San Diego for the Panama-California Exposition. For this trip, a special railroad car was built that included an electric generator powered by the car's wheels to provide an impressive lighting effect. A battery stored electricity when the train was not moving. Cards from the road trips are not particularly rare, but this is the only nighttime one I have seen. Philadelphia police officers traveled with the bell, and you can see two of them in this image. I love the blue-collar guys in front. The overexposed lighting from the flash imparts a kind of impromptu feeling to the event.

< Liberty Bell?

It sure looks like it, and that *is* Independence Hall in the background. However, this is the Justice Bell, paid for by suffragist Katharine Wentworth Ruschenberger. The bell's clapper was chained in place preventing the bell from being rung, thereby symbolically silencing the bell in the way women were being silenced without the right to vote. The bell was taken on a 5,000-mile trip covering every county in Pennsylvania. Upon the adoption of the 19th amendment, the ceremony pictured here was held in 1920 on the south side of Independence Hall. During the ceremony, the clapper was freed and Ms. Ruschenberger's niece Katharine rang the bell. You may visit the Justice Bell at the Washington Memorial Chapel at Valley Forge.

< Suffragists

Here are the ladies on their journey, possibly in Erie, Pennsylvania. I just love their white dresses, which were part of their imagery, and that very cool hairdo of the hatless lady on the right. The banner reads "We Proclaim the Bell's New Message JUSTICE." Where would be without people willing to change the world?



KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

Which One Is the Real Liberty Bell?



continued from page 16

< Truman Library

In 1957, the U.S. Treasury purchased 53 replica Liberty Bells, one for each state and territory, to promote the sale of savings bonds. The bells were made by Paccard Bell Foundry in the French Alps town of Annecy-le-Vieux. The Zion Church bell shown below is one of them. The U.S. Treasury gifted a bell to the town. The town in turn gifted a bell to the city of Independence Missouri, the hometown of WWI artillery veteran Harry Truman who served in France. That bell is on display at his presidential library. The Paccard foundry began in 1796 and still makes the same replica bells purchased by the U.S. Treasury.



< Zion Church

With the approach of the British army in 1777, the State House Bell along with the bells of Christ Church and St. Peter's were ordered removed to a safe place to prevent the invaders from melting them into cannons. They were hidden in the basement of Zion High Reformed Church in Allentown, where they remained until the British left in 1778. This card shows a replica bell in a museum created there in 1962. Zion Church recently closed and sold its building to Resurrected Life Community Church. Owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the bell will remain in its historical basement location. The Resurrected Life Community has resolved make it available to visitors again.



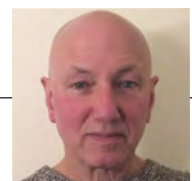
< The 1976 Bicentennial Display

Visitors often reminisce about having visited the bell when it was "on display outside." For our Bicentennial, it was decided to move the bell from its display on the first floor of Independence Hall to a new building across the street that would be better able to accommodate the crowds. People who visited the bell there often have in their memory the view you see in this card, because the building was largely made of glass! Park rangers keep photos of that building to show that the bell was not outdoors. The bell remained inside that building until 2003, when it was moved into its own museum where you can visit it today. Ask to see the photos!



< Sesquicentennial Bell 1926

Lit at night with 26,000 light bulbs, this 80-foot bell was seen for miles around. It marked the entrance to the fairgrounds in South Philadelphia where the stadiums now are. The bell was big, but the fair was a big flop. For many reasons, it did not draw the crowds that were expected and lost a great deal of money. Cool bell, though.



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

WELCOME GIFT BAGS

BY MARTHA LEVINE

New Society Hill Owners Love Getting Gifts!



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Hey, new first-time owners in Society Hill: You qualify for our special gift, the Society Hill Welcome Gift Bags. If you purchased a property, house, or condo, in 2023 or 2024 and wish to have this gift presented to you, please let us know.

In 2023, SHCA presented 40 of these gift bags to new folks who are so happy to be living in our great neighborhood, and of course, who doesn't like to receive a gift?

Each gift bag contains: one bottle of wine, one bag of La Colombe coffee, a pastry treat, and a box of Naked Chocolate artisan chocolates. All of this, plus lots of gift cards to area restaurants, retail, services, entertainment, museums, and important neighborhood information are presented at your home by appointment.

To request a Welcome Gift Bag, email me at marthalev6@gmail.com or call 215-629-0727.

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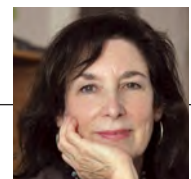


Not only do we greet new owners, we promote local businesses that donate gift cards or products to our gift bags. We welcome **Stump Plants** as our newest Gift Bag donor. They are conveniently located at 622 S. 9th Street in Bella Vista, one block from Whole Foods. This lovely light-filled corner store is inviting, and their staff is informed and helpful. They offer "Plants, Wares and Community." They can help with design and selection of the right plants for your needs.



We welcome back long-time Welcome Gift Bag contributor, **Arden Theatre**, located at 40 N. 2nd Street. Arden is one of our popular and award-winning local theaters with a full lineup of productions for their 2023-2024 season. Their last program ends mid-June, so there is still plenty of time to get tickets. As usual Arden will host a fun summer camp for kids.

Martha Levine is an SHCA board member and chair of the Franklin Lights Committee.



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- Fork Restaurant**, 306 Market Street
- FRIEDA** (café), 320 Walnut Street
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- La Colombe Coffee Roasters**, 100 S. 6th Street
- Mahalo Hawaiian BBQ**, 117 South Street
- Malbec Argentine Steakhouse**, 400 S. 2nd Street
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- PJ Clarke's**, 601 Walnut Street
- Reading Terminal Market**, 1136 Arch Street
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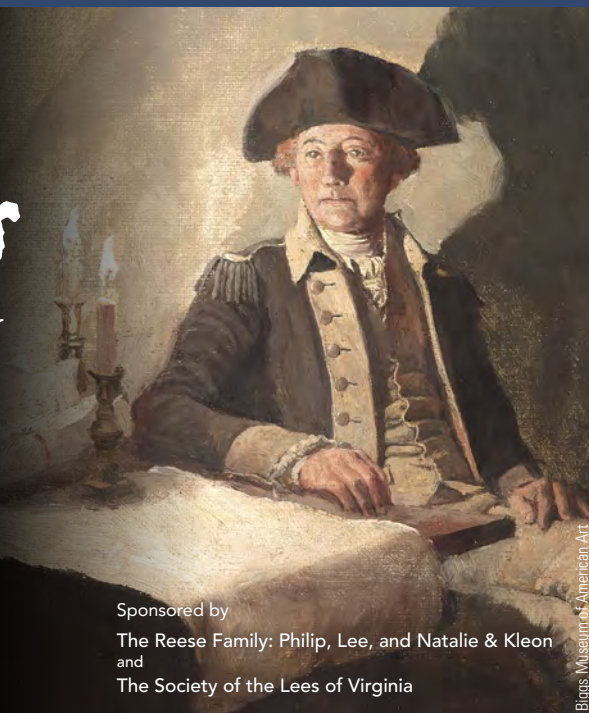
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- Phila. Chamber Ensemble** (at Old Pine Church), www.pceconcerts.org
- Physick House & Powel House** (museums), 321 S. 4th Street
- Pileggi on the Square** (salon), 717 Walnut Street
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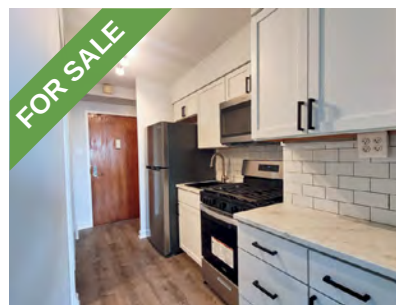
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ON OUR SHELVES

BY IZZY HALLORAN

Book Review: *Prophet Song*

I began reading *Prophet Song* by Paul Lynch with lofty expectations. As a winner of the 2023 Booker Prize, I expected extraordinary writing, complex characters, and a robust plot. *Prophet Song* exceeded my expectations, quickly becoming one of my favorite books. A devastating, moving novel, Lynch engages the reader with each word. An unsettling novel in many ways, *Prophet Song* presents itself as a semi-dystopian Irish novel that explores the cruelty of war, the idea of place, and the pain of motherhood.

The novel centers around Eilish Stack, mother of four children, Mark, Bailey, Molly, and Ben, and wife to Larry Stack. The Stacks are a seemingly normal family living in Dublin, Ireland, in an unspecified contemporary time. Eilish works as a scientist, and her husband Larry is a trade unionist. When a right-wing, totalitarian government comes into power in Ireland, Larry is arrested and kidnapped by the new government for opposing the oppressive regime. As reality begins to crumble around her, Eilish is fired from her job and is forced to adjust to life as a single mother who must protect her four children and her sick father.

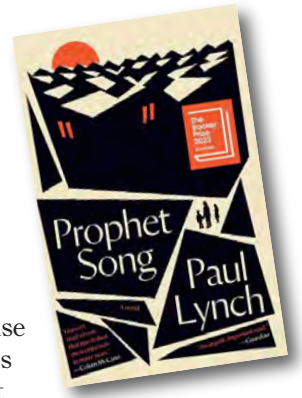
As violence erupts and death surrounds her, Eilish absorbs her children's pain and anguish like a sponge, a receptacle for blame. She takes every

action possible to keep her family safe, fighting ferociously for her family's livelihoods as their fate is ripped out of her hands and thrust into the government's. A woman of principle, Eilish refuses to leave her home as a civil war between the government and the resistance erupts in her front yard. Even as her family splinters and her agency is ripped away, Eilish fights to the bitter end.

The composition of *Prophet Song* conveys a sense of urgency to the reader. The text of the novel is primarily written in long blocks with infrequent paragraph breaks. Through this composition style, Lynch provides the reader no reprieve from the unrelenting presence of war.

Although *Prophet Song* is deemed as dystopian, the idea of a family thrust into war is not a distant concept. While reading, I became very emotional imagining the anguish of innocent people living under an oppressive occupation. This book touched me so deeply because it parallels our modern circumstances, encapsulating the fissures of war.

Izzy Halloran is a bookseller and Events Coordinator at Head House Books, Society Hill's only local, independently owned bookstore.



'FIX THE BRIX' SUBSIDY

BY MARTHA LEVINE

More Than 300 Sidewalks Fixed, and Counting

Spring time is a great time to fix up and clean up. Our sidewalks are not the city's responsibility to repair — it is our job as home owners to make sure our sidewalks are not trip worthy. SHCA has been assisting homeowners with our generous subsidy, "Fix the Brix," for brick and concrete sidewalks, since 2009. We have subsidized over 300 households for sidewalk repairs, both brick and concrete. Take a look at your sidewalk and assess its condition.

Tree pits are another problem — their roots can push up the sidewalk causing unevenness. Sometimes bricks around the pits get dislodged and can be used for vandalism. Tree pit bricks need to be secured or stored to keep them out of the hands of vandals (car windows are a target).

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- 4 Receive a check within a few weeks.

Thanks for doing your neighborhood a service!



Please secure or remove and store loose bricks.



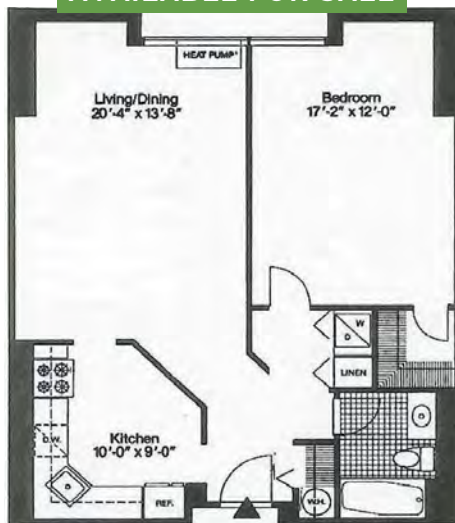
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HAPPENINGS AT MCCALL SCHOOL

BY DANIELLE SANDSMARK

Welcoming the Year of the Dragon



Students and teachers at McCall School welcomed in the Year of the Dragon with a Lunar New Year celebration on February 12. Lunar New Year is the biggest holiday of the year in China and many other Asian countries, celebrated by over two billion people around the world. The “spring festival” spans 15 days at the start of the Chinese lunar calendar and concludes with the Lantern Festival.

The Lunar New Year is based on the Chinese zodiac, which follows a twelve-year cycle. Each year is represented by a different animal, in order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. In Chinese astrology, the zodiac animals are each affiliated with an element — metal, wood, water, fire, or earth. As we move around the zodiac cycle, when an animal reappears after 12 years, its elemental affiliation will shift. This is the year of the Wood Dragon, which was last celebrated in 1964! Wood represents vitality and creativity, while the dragon symbolizes success, intelligence, and honor in Chinese culture. This combination makes people born in the Year of the Wood Dragon full of energy and drive. They dream of changing

the world and are good at coming up with innovative ideas and implementing them.

At McCall, celebrations of the Lunar New Year are interwoven with classroom instruction throughout the two-week festival. Students design and decorate Chinese fans in art class. Red lanterns and decorations, intended to ward off Nian, the beast who threatens crops, animals, and humans, adorn hallways and classroom doors.

The highlight of the McCall celebrations is the Lunar New Year assembly. McCall students from kindergarten to eighth grade participate, putting together performances that span genres from classical ballet and piano to hip-hop dancing and guitar. This year, students developed performances designed to evoke the characteristics of the dragon: confidence, power, and good fortune. Dragon dancers, who are thought to help stave off evil, dance through the hallways and classrooms, a highlight for students from all grades.

From our McCall family to yours, Gong xi fa cai: may you be happy and prosperous!



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



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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

BY CAROL HANLON

Seven Reasons to Rise Up and Join SHCA

Ramona Johnson, SHCA member and Hopkinson House resident, has been kind enough to share this article with us which was originally published in the Winter issue of the Hopkinson House newsletter, on the House.

Society Hill surrounds my home in Hopkinson House, and our neighborhood offers something for everyone. All of our neighborhood high-rise building residents enjoy many benefits from being part of Society Hill, and that is why membership in SHCA is so important. If you are not already a member, please join. If you are a member, it is time to renew.

Membership is valuable to high-rise residents for many reasons. Seven of my favorite reasons follow.

Reason #1: When City Council's Bill 220299, a.k.a. the "Sprinkler Bill," was proposed, Hopkinson House and other high-rise buildings were faced with the threat of large expenditures for retrofitting each unit with a sprinkler system. Many disputed the need for sprinkler-fitting all the units, and SHCA stood up for its constituents in Hopkinson House, Independence Place, and Society Hill Towers. SHCA voted to send a resolution to Councilman Squilla and other Council members, voicing its unanimous opposition to the bill and asking that the bill be withdrawn. You have no doubt heard that the bill is dormant for now, and, because it was not considered during the last councilmanic session, it will have to be reintroduced in a future session to be considered. We are grateful that SHCA lent its considerable clout to high-rise residents on this issue.

Reason #2: Conservation and enhancement of Washington Square are paid for in part by SHCA and the gala fundraisers that it holds in the square. Washington Square serves as a front yard to both Hopkinson House and Independence Place as we walk out the door. Many Hop House residents volunteer to do gardening and cleanup projects throughout all seasons, an effort that is organized by SHCA. Many of us have attended SHCA's Washington Square Affair fundraisers for the park.

Through its Preservation Foundation, the SHCA will fund the ongoing restoration of the Guardhouse, and it is actively working on that effort now. Washington Square is part of the National Park Service, but when individual citizens and local organizations are inspired to play a role in its preservation and upkeep, changes can happen more quickly. SHCA helps make that happen.

Reason #3: The SHCA emails the Spotlight, a weekly e-newsletter, to everyone who signs up for it. Spotlight tells its readers all about local events and topics of interest. I look forward to seeing the announcements, photos, and notices that land in my inbox every week.

Reason #4: SHCA pays the Center City District for regular cleaning of sidewalks and sponsors a twice-yearly clean-up day that includes shredding of unwanted paper and e-cycling electronics. SHCA hires a graffiti-removal expert to remove graffiti from public areas within its boundaries. The SHCA's Clean and Beautiful Committee and the Safe and Sound Committee work to keep the neighborhood well-maintained and safe.

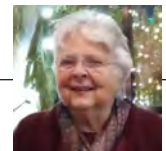
Reason #5: New owners in Society Hill get Welcome Gift Bags! This includes high-rise condos! In the bag you will find wine, coffee, chocolates, and special treats, as well as neighborhood information and gift cards for local restaurants, theaters, and shops. Receiving a Welcome Gift Bag is a lovely way to get acquainted with the neighborhood. The bag's contents are donated by local merchants and organizations. If you are a new owner and haven't received a Welcome Gift Bag yet, refer to the article on page 12 for instructions on how to request one.

Reason #6: SHCA publishes *The Society Hill Reporter* on a bi-monthly basis, both in print and online. Residents of Hopkinson House, Independence Place, Society Hill Towers, Penn's Landing, and the St. James hi-rises can find paper copies at the front desk or mailroom of their building. An electronic copy is available to all on SHCA's website. The *Reporter* keeps us in touch with local events, issues, and businesses, as well as fascinating insiders' investigations into the history of Society Hill.

Reason #7: SHCA collaborates with nearby civic associations and police on issues of noise, traffic, and crime. Collaboration is one way that we connect to the big city that is our larger home. It helps to have people working together on these issues that affect all of us.

There are many more reasons for being part of SHCA. Check them out via the website at societyhillcivic.org. You'll find much more information about how SHCA enhances our daily lives. While you are there, use the opportunity to become a member or to renew your membership. A basic household membership is \$50 annually. Seniors and students pay \$40 annually. Tax-deductible contributions can also be made to the Society Hill Preservation Foundation through the website. If you prefer to pay by check, there is a form you can print out and instructions for mailing it in with your check.

Join SHCA or renew your membership, and you'll gain a renewed sense of pride in being part of what makes Society Hill such a special place to live.



Ramona Johnson is a long-time resident of Hopkinson House who now serves as the liaison between Hopkinson House and SHCA.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

BY CAROL HANLON

The Early Bird Gets the Gift Certificates!

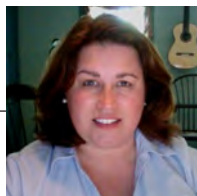
The SHCA Membership Committee is pleased to announce that two \$100 gift certificates have been awarded to SHCA members drawn from those who joined or renewed their membership before December 31, 2023, for the 2024 Membership Campaign. The gift certificates are for any Garces Restaurant. Thanks go to Garces from SHCA for all the support they have provided, especially during the past two Washington Square Affairs. The winners this year were Diane & Kurt, and Anthony & Mark!

By early February, there were 445 Society Hill residents signed up for 2024 SHCA membership. This is just a little behind last year's 492 early February new and renewing members. If you have not gotten around to sending in your 2024 membership dues, now is the time. Registering now will save us the cost of sending snail mail reminders to those who have not yet responded to the email reminder.

It is never too late to support the work of SHCA. Whether you appreciate our work keeping Society Hill clean, safe, and beautiful, welcoming new neighbors, keeping you informed of information important to our area of the city, or supporting neighborhood initiatives, we welcome you to join us as a member for 2024. Please see our website at www.societyhillcivic.org for a full description of the wide variety of work we do for Society Hill and information on how to become a member.

Thank you for your support!

Carol Hanlon is a SHCA board member who works on a variety of initiatives to support schools, gardens and historic sites in and near Society Hill.



SHCA members gathered at Bridget Foy's on South Street for the Annual Holiday Social.



Society Hill
CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Membership Application

We encourage everyone to join online by going to www.societyhillcivic.org/join.

If you prefer to pay by check, fill out this form and follow the mailing instructions at the bottom.

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Or join online at: www.societyhillcivic.org/join

NIFTY NEIGHBORS IN OUR BACKYARD

BY JANE BIBERMAN

Megan & Antonio Kennedy



Megan & Antonio

Writing a story about the **Sweet Life Bake Shop** comes with multiple benefits, such as sampling the goods in the store. Cupcakes come in so many flavors that it's essential the reporter try as many as possible. Located on the 700 block of South Street, the shop has been popular ever since it opened in 2010. The brainchild of Megan Kennedy, 40, and her husband, Antonio, 49, the bakery enjoys great success. I first heard about it on the PBS show *You Gotta Know*.

The couple, who has three children, has been in business since 2010. Megan notes while they have always made cupcakes and cakes, banana pudding is their signature dish. "When we moved to this location — we were formerly in South Philly at 22nd and Federal — we began offering many different flavors, starting with just two and branching out from there. We now offer at least six flavors of pudding daily, too." For eager shoppers, Megan told me, February featured Chocolate Covered Strawberry Pudding.



Banana pudding comes in six different flavors.

"It wasn't so much that we chose Society Hill as it was that we liked the foot traffic on South Street," notes Megan who is a graduate of Philadelphia University (formerly the College of Textiles and Science). "I enjoyed baking as a child and started working for a bakery in 2009. When the woman closed her shop, I decided to open my own. I have always made cakes, cupcakes and banana pudding. We now offer at least six flavors of cupcakes daily, often with seasonal ingredients. Our popular flavors are chocolate, red velvet, and raspberry."

In addition, Megan offers dairy-free cupcakes in the shop and cakes by special order. "We hope to have gluten-free offerings soon," she says, "and are working on getting them just right."

For more information, visit www.sweetlifephilly.com.



Jane Biberman is a freelance writer and longtime contributor to the *Reporter*.

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Featured in a Wall Street Journal article in August 2022, this Bingham Court townhouse will be available early fall 2024. Inquiries can be made to the owner: mkeefe253@gmail.com

NOTE CARDS

BY MARTHA LEVINE

Beautiful Society Hill Note Cards for Sale

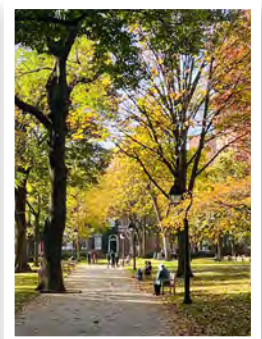
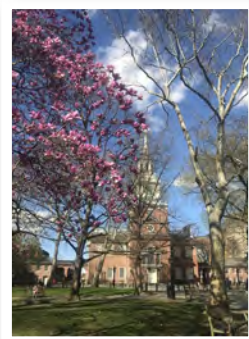
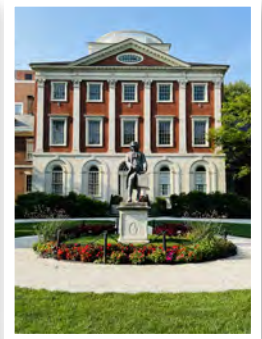
We have had a robust response to the sale of our beautiful Society Hill note cards, with 70 boxes already sold as of this writing. **Each box contains 12 cards**, and each card features a different full-color view showing some of our favorite places in Society Hill. The cards capture the beauty and history of our wonderful neighborhood. They are great for personal use or for gifts. The inside is blank so the cards can be used for all occasions: thank yous, birthdays, holidays, or keeping in touch.

Don't put off ordering, as supplies are limited and will not last long.

Orders are limited to two boxes per household. To see all 12 cards and place an order, go to www.societyhillcivic.org and click on "What's Happening."

The cards will be delivered to your door.

Photography is by SHCA Board member **Martha Levine**.
Printing is by Jeffrey Stockbridge, Fine Art Print.



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OUR CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

A New Gig for Dexter

My therapy dog Dexter, a ten-year-old Cavachon (Cavalier/Bichon mix), has been profiled here before. But since his newest “job” is so unique to our city, I thought he deserved a sequel.

A little background: Therapy dogs are just one category of “working dogs.” While not as extensively trained as service animals, they nevertheless need to master basic obedience and undergo a thorough evaluation in order to be certified. They commonly visit schools, hospitals, and community events. Service dogs are highly trained to assist people with disabilities and cannot be denied entry anywhere. Access to therapy dogs is at the discretion of each facility. To keep Dexter’s certification up to date, I submit annual proof of his updated vaccines and have my veterinarian attest to his temperament. The Vet School at Penn then does additional health testing and behavioral screening.

Dexter is my third therapy dog. For several years, he accompanied me to the junior high where I did school counseling. He’s “worked” with me facilitating bereavement groups, doing college de-stress events, and making appearances at an elementary Reading Buddies program. We’ve done school visits for the PSPCA’s humane education program and regularly make the rounds at Pennsylvania Hospital. Most of our time is now spent at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), where we visit young people dealing with behavioral health issues. Dexter has been invaluable as a source of comfort to both patients and staff. He’s also quite skilled at “reading the room.” He seems to innately know whether it’s time to interact playfully or to remain calm in order to help de-escalate an agitated child.

About two years ago, while visiting the chemo infusion unit at Pennsylvania Hospital, I met a patient I’d visited before. Her daughter had accompanied her this time, and we struck up a conversation. She mentioned working at the District Attorney’s office, and I was curious if they used any therapy dogs in court. They didn’t, but she seemed to think they’d be interested in doing so. She provided contact



Dexter

information for their Director of Victim Support Services. We soon connected, and I found her and her staff extremely receptive to the idea. What followed was 20 months of wrangling to get Dexter approved for a pilot program.

Much like applying to any human job, both my dog and I had to provide our resumes, certifications, and proof of insurance. There’s nothing like having a building full of lawyers pore over your dog’s liability insurance policy. Never mind that he’d already been deemed safe enough to lay on the beds of critically ill children in the ICU at CHOP. Multiple phone calls and Zoom meetings ensued. We did three in-person

visits to the DA’s office for Dexter to interact with staff. He even had an informal sit-down with DA Larry Krasner. After a phone conference with the deciding judge and her team and a final Zoom meeting with no fewer than nine officials from the DA’s office, Dexter was finally deemed good to go.

What will his new job entail? As you can imagine, testifying in court is quite stressful for children, especially if they’ve endured abuse or neglect. Dexter and I will be with the child in a private waiting area outside the courtroom. We’ll need to remain out of view of the jury, lest the sight of the child with a cute dog bias their view of the child’s testimony. The kids will be able to play with Dexter, cuddle with him, or just watch him. Our hope is that the dog will provide a calming influence to help ease their stress and anxiety. He’ll also be a friendly diversion to distract from the situation at hand. While dogs have been used in court settings elsewhere, this will be a first for the Philadelphia DA’s office. I guess that officially makes Dexter a trailblazer. If he had a social media presence, I suppose he might even be an “influencer.”

I truly hope this program can bring a degree of comfort to children who have already endured so much. Having seen Dexter work his magic so many times, I’m confident it will.

A therapy dog in court.

A first for Philadelphia!

Claudia Carabelli is a former RN and retired school counselor. She co-chairs the Society Hill Tree Tenders.

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 Independence Seaport Museum

KIDS' KORNER

BY JAIME AND MIKE FOX

Discovering Deep Discounts and Dreams of Donuts

**Independence Seaport Museum**

www.phillyseaport.org
211 S. Columbus Boulevard

This year, we became members of the Independence Seaport Museum. Admittedly, this was mostly driven by the discount we received when signing the kids up for the museum's summer camp. The camp discount paid for itself! But little did we know we would get so much more out of our membership. The museum is much more than just the building attached to Liberty Point. Our membership also includes access to the Submarine *Becuna* and Cruiser *Olympia*. The submarine, which moved to its current location in 1996, is very easy to walk past and miss. In fact, we have done just that for the last four years since moving to Society Hill. Mike and Owen took a guided tour of the submarine. The very knowledgeable tour guide remained patient while the tour's 12 visitors fired questions at him for one hour. *Becuna* is small and may not be for the claustrophobic among us. It is hard to believe 80 brave service people lived together in the submarine during its commission. This historical treasure had Owen so enthralled that he brought Jaime and Jordan back two weeks later to take another tour. We intend to go back in a few weeks to see the new second floor of the museum and take a tour of the *Olympia*.

Walnut Street Theatre

www.walnutstreettheatre.org
825 Walnut Street

In 2020, the Walnut Street Theater made us an offer we couldn't refuse. No, America's Oldest Theater did not threaten our family. Rather, they offered to sell us two orchestra seats to five shows during previews for \$280 in total. This year, Mike took Owen to see *Elvis—A Musical Revolution*. Owen walked in having never heard of Elvis. He walked out the youngest fan of The King outside



of Memphis, Tennessee. As always, the show was very enjoyable and the performances were spectacular. The theater has been very accommodating in the event of a scheduling conflict. We just walk over and chat with the two men who work in the ticket booth. They are extremely helpful and friendly. If you would rather not purchase a subscription but have your eye on a specific show, you may be able to purchase tickets to the show at a deep discount. Just head to the ticket office on the day of the show and pay half-price if tickets still remain. Get there early!

Mochinut

www.mochinut.com
108 Chestnut Street

Jaime read an article naming the best donuts in Philadelphia. So, of course, we had to investigate for ourselves. This will be the first of a series of articles devoted to quality donuts in our fair city. Our first stop was the closest to our home, Mochinut in Old City. At first, we were struck by the donuts' unusual shape and impressed with the many varieties from which to choose. After some deliberation, we chose raspberry, strawberry, and Oreo. The kids thoroughly enjoyed tasting all three. Their favorite was the raspberry, while Jaime preferred the Oreo. What makes these donuts different from other donuts? These are made with rice flour. Does that make them healthier for you? Who knows. But we do know they taste good and are very light and fluffy with a bit of crunch on the outside. With menu items like Cheetos hotdogs and bubble tea, we plan to come back soon.



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

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