

SOCIETY HILL

# Reporter

May/June 2024

The Newsletter  
of The Society Hill  
Civic Association

[www.societyhillcivic.org](http://www.societyhillcivic.org)

## Join Us for an All-New Gardens of Society Hill Tour

Saturday, June 8 & Sunday, June 9, 1 to 4 pm



Photo by Martha Levine

*A Fundraiser  
for SHCA*

We want you back this year for an all-new tour of gardens. If you missed it last year, plan to attend this time. It's a delightful self-guided tour of up to 18 gardens, all within our beautiful historic Society Hill neighborhood. This two-day event is Society Hill Civic Association's (SHCA) annual fundraiser.

The 2023 Gardens of Society Hill Tour was a blooming success. It attracted more than 500 visitors from across the tri-state area, including Philadelphia and its suburbs, New Jersey, and Delaware, as well as New York. This year, we are offering another

opportunity to visit more wonderful gardens. Behind high brick walls are many private urban gardens that are not easily visible from the street. Touring these lush hidden treasures is a real treat. Come and find inspiration for your own gardens.

**Thank you to the Garden Tour's generous business sponsors: Bartlett Tree Experts; Liberty Tree and Landscape; McFarland Tree and Landscape; Pam Rosser Thistle, Realtor BHHS Fox & Roach; and Premier Building Restoration.**

### Volunteers and Gardens Needed

In addition to buying tour tickets, there are two more ways you can support this fundraiser.

Do you have a garden that you are willing to share for the tour? We would love to see it. Is there another garden you can recommend? Let us know! Gardens may be of any size or design, but must be easily accessible from the street.

Can you volunteer your time to act as host in a garden for one three-hour period? In exchange, you will receive a complimentary ticket for the tour. Last year's volunteers said it was a great way to meet their neighbors and folks from all over the area.

Please contact our tour coordinators with your availability and/or questions. For garden suggestions, contact Martha Levine at [marthalev6@gmail.com](mailto:marthalev6@gmail.com); for volunteers, contact Linda Skale at [lcskale@gmail.com](mailto:lcskale@gmail.com).

### Details of the Tour

Dates: Saturday, June 8 and Sunday, June 9  
Time: 1 to 4 p.m.

### Ticket sales start May 6.

Advance ticket purchase is suggested. To order tickets, go online to our website: [www.societyhillcivic.org/garden\\_tour](http://www.societyhillcivic.org/garden_tour).

Pre-purchased ticket holders must check in and pick up their programs on the tour days at tour headquarters, **Old Pine Community Center, 401 Lombard Street.**

Tickets may also be purchased on the day of the tour at tour headquarters.

Each ticket is valid for both tour days.

Only paid ticket holders may enter the gardens.

Refreshments and restrooms will be available at the tour headquarters.

For more information about the tour, please email us at [info@societyhillcivic.org](mailto:info@societyhillcivic.org).

Wednesday,  
May  
**15**

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association Meeting  
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

**Old Pine Community Center  
401 Lombard Street**

5:45 p.m. **Board Meeting**

7:30 p.m. **General Membership Meeting**

Topic: **Election of Board Members and Officers  
(See Slate on page 5)**

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SOCIETY HILL

*Reporter*

**NUSA  
Award-Winning  
Newsletter  
First Place  
2020**

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Judy Lamirand

**Columnists**

Jane Biberman  
Samantha Brown  
Susan Burt Collins  
Jonathan Burton  
Claudia Carabelli  
Al Cavalari  
Jaime and Mike Fox  
Carol Hanlon  
Martha Levine  
Danielle Sandsmark  
Mary Sturdivant  
Richard de Wyngaert

**Contributors**

Izzy Halloran  
Mary Purcell  
Marc Raspanti

**Graphic Design**

Parallel Design, Inc.  
judy@parallel-design.com

**Send Press Releases to:**

info@societyhillcivic.org

**Advertising Manager**

William Jantsch  
wmjantsch@hotmail.com

**Submission Deadline**

July/August Issue: June 1

**Society Hill Civic Association**

P.O. Box 63503  
Philadelphia, PA 19147  
Tel. 215-629-1288

**Website**

Find past issues dating back to 1950 at [www.societyhillcivic.org](http://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](mailto: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.

## SHCA BOARD OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

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Lorna Katz Lawson,  
Martha Levine,  
Danielle Sandsmark

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Larry Spector

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Mary Purcell, David Haas  
Northwest: Sissie Lipton,  
Stacey Ackerman, Bernard Gelman  
Southwest: Mark Keener,  
Vince Piazza, Yvana Rizzo  
Southeast: Al Meinster,  
Nick DeGregorio, Robert Spears

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Independence Place: Barry Kramer  
Penn's Landing Condos: Priscilla Lo  
Society Hill Towers: Jeff Fogg  
St. James Court: Sharon Simon\*  
The St. James: Helen Grady\*  
Bingham Court: Bernice Koplin\*  
\*non-voting directors

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SUSAN BURT-COLLINS

## Reprise: Is the Juice Worth the Squeeze?

At the start of last year's new term for board members, I posed a question to myself and to all of us: is the juice worth the squeeze? My middle daughter had asked me the question originally, and recently, she was surprised to hear my answer: a resounding "yes." It really is worth the time, effort, and frustration, because we have made real progress and have continued doing important things that keep our neighborhood beautiful.

Here is a sampling of our accomplishments:

**Starr Garden:** We're pushing to repair and improve this important neighborhood playground for kids of all ages. Plans for the park have languished, and Starr Garden is something of an orphan: it is not within any RCO boundaries. Stacy Ackerman, a recent addition to SHCA's board and a long-time Society Hill resident, took on the challenge. She made inquiries, and suddenly, like a thirsty plant responding to much-needed water, there was interest and money. Poor Richard's Fund donated \$10,000 through SHCA's Society Hill Preservation Foundation (SHPF), SHCA's board voted to put in \$15,000, and the city, through Councilman Mark Squilla, pledged the lion's share of the funds. But the project is still short by \$310,000. Stacy located eligible grants, and she and Samantha Brown of Friends of Starr Garden are applying for grants to fill in the gap. The push continues, and it seems certain that work will soon be underway.

**Head House and the Shambles:** This historic treasure on 2nd Street urgently needs extensive repairs, and the entire area surrounding the structure needs reinvigoration. SHCA brought together stakeholders from historic preservation and planning communities to create the New Market Head House Conservancy, a new organization focused on both preservation and bringing Head House Square back to life. The first task was assessing the condition of the structure. SHCA provided the funds, and Milner Architects took on the work. The structure has been examined, the design researched, the history studied, and by the time you read this, Milner will have provided us with a road map of the projected work needed and its costs.

**Washington Square:** SHCA has partnered with Independence Historical Trust to maintain and beautify Washington Square. With Bill Jantsch taking the lead for SHCA and SHPF, funds raised by SHPF for the Square will be used to pay for needed improvements and repairs. Since the Trust is allowed to be fully engaged in managing projects

for the Square, big things will get done. Indeed, Jonathan Burton has already proved the Trust's value by raising a substantial sum to support work on the Guard House, and has located a National Park Service-acceptable contractor to do the job. In addition, under the leadership and direction of Sherley Young, volunteer gardeners continue their important work. The Washington Square Affair WILL continue in 2025. My prediction: it will be bigger, better, and a rival to Rittenhouse Ball on the Square!

**Lawrence Walkway:** Bricks need to be fixed, and trees need tending. SHCA has committed \$30,000 to this work, centering on Green's Court just to the east of Lawrence Street between 4th and 5th Streets. Jeff Fogg is in charge on behalf of SHCA.

**Foglietta Plaza:** Recognizing the challenges facing the dream remedy for this plaza, Mary Purcell, with funds raised through SHPF, is embarking on a smaller, more focused effort to improve the site, while recognizing the limitations of cost and future that make this a short-term fix.

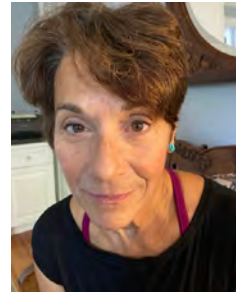
**Old Pine Community Center:** SHCA supports this community center at 4th and Lombard with annual grants and, thanks to David Haas, upgrades to Old Pine's internet capabilities.

**Addressing Blight:** The Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act is a state law that enables nonprofits to be appointed "conservators" of alleged blighted and abandoned properties. SHCA has taken steps to remedy unsafe conditions at a neglected property on the 400 block of Spruce.

**Gardens of Society Hill Tour:** With Martha Levine and Linda Skale again taking the lead, this spring's garden tour promises to be a highlight and delight.

**Beyond our Borders, Vacant Storefronts:** Mark Keener and Peter Bloomfield are meeting regularly with Councilman Squilla, Commerce Department officials, and many other neighborhood representatives to find attractive remedies for the darkened windows of empty storefronts that dot this part of our city.

Where are we now? We are working hard, working creatively, and partnering with others, to squeeze out the "juice" that will improve our beloved neighborhood as well as other parts of our city.



Susan Burt-Collins,  
SHCA President

**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.



## MAY 15, 2024 ELECTIONS

BY MARY PURCELL

## SHCA Board Officer and Director Slate

The Nominating and Elections Committee has completed the slate of proposed SHCA Officers and Directors for the term commencing June 1, which we are pleased to present for approval at the **May 15 general membership meeting**. Since the slate is uncontested, the vote will be done by affirmation for the following:

- Officers (five positions)
- Directors at Large (eight positions)
- Quadrant Directors (seven positions — one director each in the northwest and southeast quadrants, two in the northeast and three in the southwest quadrants, due to vacancies)

Thanks to committee co-chairs Claudia Carabelli and David Haas, and members Stacey Ackerman, Nick DeGregorio, and Mary Purcell for a job well done.

**Congratulations to all of our fine candidates!**

Thank you to departing board members Ed Butkowitz, Ericka Carroll, Vince Piazza, and Yvana Rizzo for their service.

**President:** Susan Burt Collins

**1st Vice President:** Claudia Carabelli

**2nd Vice President:** Bonnie Halda

**Treasurer:** Michael Gorman

**Secretary:** David Haas

**Directors at Large:** Barbara Gelman, Carol Hanlon, Ramona Johnson, Mark Keener, Bob Kramer, Al Meinster, Joe McLaughlin,\* Danielle Sandsmark

**NE Quadrant:**

Lorna Katz Lawson (term ending 5/26),  
Ellen Schwartz Siegel\* (term ending 5/27)

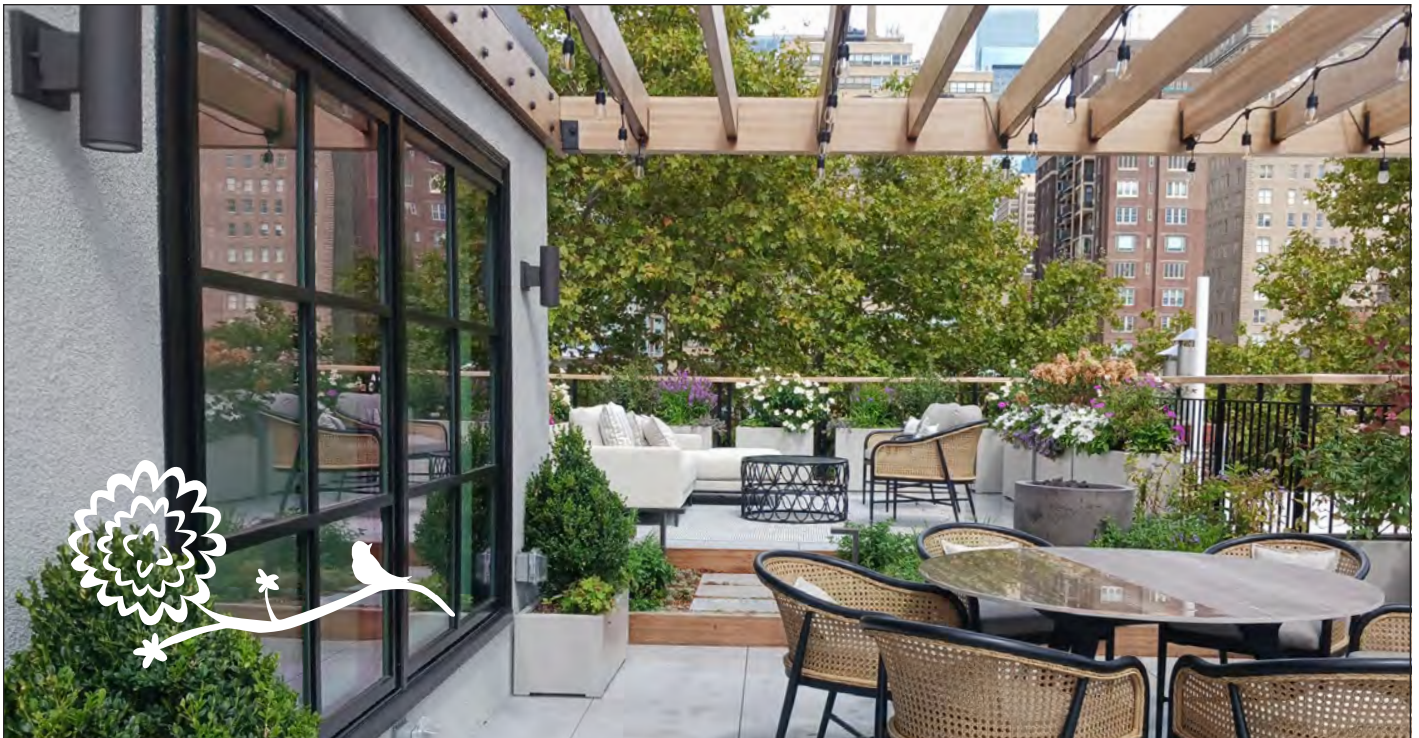
**NW Quadrant:** Bill Jantsch

**SE Quadrant:** Bob Curley

**SW Quadrant:** Ned Scharff\* (term ending 5/25),  
Mike Fox\* (term ending 5/26),  
Martha Levine (term ending 5/27)

\*Candidates new to the board. Biographies will be posted to our website [www.SocietyHillCivic.org](http://www.SocietyHillCivic.org).

*Note: Board members not subject to this election are not listed in the slate.*



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**FOGLIETTA PLAZA UPDATE**

BY MARY PURCELL

# What's Happening at Foglietta Plaza?

Spring is blooming, and our parks are coming alive again with neighbors, kids, picnics, and activities. But at one neighborhood park, not so much... our Foglietta Plaza. What is happening there?

You may recall that SHCA sponsored a programming study and a concept design for the park. OLIN performed these studies, funded by donations from the community, leadership commitments from Society Hill, and a grant secured by Councilmember Mark Squilla.

The resulting design followed extensive community and stakeholder engagement and provides for a central lawn flanked by gardens and neighborhood groves. More about OLIN's design is available in the May 2023 Reporter and the video Foglietta Plaza Design Concept Presentation on March 6, 2023 - YouTube.

The design process succeeded in coalescing multiple stakeholders around

a vision and provided the community a basis for responding to various use requests for this space. These successes are not trivial but have not yet paved the path forward.

Over the last year we have been speaking with our elected officials and working to identify the lead agency to take on the project of fundraising, construction, and ongoing maintenance of our new park. While this effort continues we now turn to these questions:

- **Are there aspects of the park design that can be created now?**
- **Having temporarily located the Irish and Scottish memorials here, PennDOT has promised to assist with our new park. How do we approach the ask?**
- **Can the central lawn be achieved now?**

We are again working with OLIN to review the associated feasibility and strategies. We plan to then renew discussions with

our elected officials and seek their advice and support. We will share our progress and let you know when there are actions we can take together.

**One action you can take now** is advocating for realization of the park design via e-mail to [info@95Revive.com](mailto:info@95Revive.com). PennDOT leaders have invited us to "bury them" with advocacy to show broad community support, an essential element in recruiting PennDOT support in realizing the park.

We remain committed to transforming our park into a welcoming, beautiful spot for reflection and recreation. We thank you, neighbors and stakeholders, for the support that continues to buoy that progress.



**Mary Purcell** is an SHCA Board member, Nominating and Elections Committee member and Foglietta Plaza Committee Chair.



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## KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

## The New Market and Head House: An Early Private and Government Joint Venture

*“Philadelphia’s markets became famous for the food offered, and for the careful regulation of the markets’ operations, which guarded the health and welfare of the citizens.”*

Head House Square is a National Historic Landmark. To achieve this status a property must “tell stories that are important to the history of the entire nation — not just local communities or states.” As owner of the property, the City of Philadelphia, under Mayor Frank Rizzo, had to submit an application to the Department of the Interior through a process administered by the National Park Service (NPS) to be considered for this special status. I found the city’s application. Appended to it was an abundance of correspondence, press releases, and a scholarly article by Margaret B. Tinkom writing for the Philadelphia Historical Commission in 1958. These sources provide most of what follows. Email me if you’d like me to send you the PDF.

Before the age of supermarkets, 18th-century markets brought together a large number of vendors, a large variety of products and a large number of customers. Patterned after the

structures in England, Philadelphia’s first marketplace was built down the middle of High Street (Market Street) from the corner of 2nd Street in 1709. It too had a head house that was used as a combined town hall and courthouse. By one study, in 1740 population had increased to 9,078 from 2,350 in 1709. This growth resulted in demand for a second market to the south in Society Hill. In 1741 the city began to plan our market and started the process of widening 2nd Street to accommodate the stalls to be built down the middle between Pine and Cedar (South) Streets.

The city condemned land up to 40 feet measured back from the street in all the lots along both sides of 2nd Street and a deal was made with two developers, Edward Shippen and Joseph Wharton, to implement the project. Historian Margaret Tinkom found only one actual case of a landowner being compensated in a transaction with Edward Shippen, but there surely were similar deals, and arguments, with the other property owners, some of whom had to agree to their houses being torn down. Significantly, Tinkom reports that the city was not funding the project, and the deals were between the private parties. Construction began with eight stalls to the north of Lombard Street, eight to the south, and was at the expense of the developers who were to retain the sole right to collect rent for the stalls until such time as they recouped their investment plus interest. The city had the right to take over the enterprise at any time as long as the private investors were paid what they had not yet collected. According to city minutes, the market always remained “Under the Direction, from Time to Time, of this Board.” Shippen and Wharton also stood to profit through their significant ownership of property in Society Hill, which would become more desirable due to the convenience of this new 18th-century version of a strip mall or shopping center.

Tinkom reports, “Philadelphia’s markets became famous for the variety and quality of the food offered for sale, and for the careful regulation of the markets’ operations which guarded the health and welfare of the citizens.” We seem to have a notion that our nation’s founding took place in the good old days before burdensome government regulation. By 1772 the city had

*continued on page 7*



**Old postcards of Head House are rare. This postcard from the early 20th century is shared thanks to Philadelphia collector Dr. Gus Spector, and is the only one I have seen.**

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**HISTORICAL RESTORATION**


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*continued from page 6*

exercised its option to end the private operation of the market, by settling with the developers, and taking over the operation of the market itself. Both market operations were kept humming by the “market clerks.” These city employees had to put up a bond to assure proper performance of their duties. They settled disputes between customers and vendors, checked the scales for accurate weights, prevented the sale of spoiled food, enforced every manner of regulation, and collected the various rents for different spots. The “country people,” who came from New Jersey or from the farms south of the city, were usually not charged anything if they brought their wares to market and offered them for sale from baskets or carts ranged along the curbs. The government regulated the days and hours the market took place, what was sold, and even where in the market it was sold: “Sellers of fish stand in a single row on each side of the market place beginning at Pine Street and continuing southward for forty feet.” From 1789 to 1889 the two city councils passed 150 regulations of matters such as smoking, use of open umbrellas, and parking spaces for wagons.

A Swedish visitor wrote how he wished that there were a comparable food outlet back home. Ben Franklin wrote that, due to the “well-furnished plentiful markets,” a kitchen garden was no longer needed. He planned to convert his into “grass-plots and gravel walks” and replace his vegetables with trees and flowering shrubs. Physician James Mease, remarking on the improved general health of Philadelphians, referred to the robust supply of provisions brought to market and the increased availability of vegetable nourishment.

By 1745, Shippen and Wharton completed their private construction of the market’s first phase. The new market’s design mirrored that of the High Street market, which had used the traditional form of markets in England: a long covered row of stalls or “shambles.” By 1811 after various expansions, it came to cover two blocks from Pine to Cedar (South) Streets with a Head House at both ends. The South Street house was added in 1799, and our remaining Pine Street house in 1804. The latter was also spearheaded by an initiative and loan to the city by a private investor. Both were used as fire houses shared by three fire companies.

By mid-19th century we begin to see proposals for demolishing the markets. New fashions in architecture and new marketing methods had made the market appear “hopelessly out of date.”

They were viewed as “obstacles to improvement and sanitation.” The head house at Cedar (South) Street was gone by 1860. The shambles we see today were restored in the 1960s. Our Head House has been renovated but has never required reconstruction.



**Head House and the Shambles today.**

A 1966 letter from the city’s special events director to the regional NPS director informs us that we used to have an event known as “Society Hill Week.” The city requested that the bronze plaque honoring the market as a national landmark be presented in a ceremony to take place during that event to be held the following June. The 1966 press release from Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, announcing the national landmark designation, states that our 18th-century “New Market” (Head House Market) “illustrates a formerly vital aspect of the distribution of foodstuffs.” NPS’s own announcement states that National Landmarks “possess exceptional value and are of national significance in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States.” It should be noted that the Park Service does not administer such sites. Inclusion in the program is voluntary.

Our little Head House is a lasting reminder of a combined private and government investment in a civic improvement, from a time long ago, that created improved access to a quality food supply. It is from a time when citizens, driven by population growth, came together and created government regulations to assure safety, good business practices, more convenience, and a healthier lifestyle. All this sounds somewhat modern, does it not? Who among us does not want a nice supermarket in our neighborhood? Let us give Margaret Tinkom the final words from 1958: “When the little fire engine house at the crossing of Second and Pine streets is put in order, the city will have made an important contribution to the rehabilitation of Society Hill and, by preserving this unique building, will have contributed significantly to our understanding of life in Philadelphia one hundred and fifty years ago.”

**Al Cavalari** is a certified member of the Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides. Write Al at [flagguysdn@aol.com](mailto:flagguysdn@aol.com).



*From 1789 to 1889 the two city councils passed 150 regulations of matters such as smoking, use of open umbrellas, and parking spaces for wagons.*

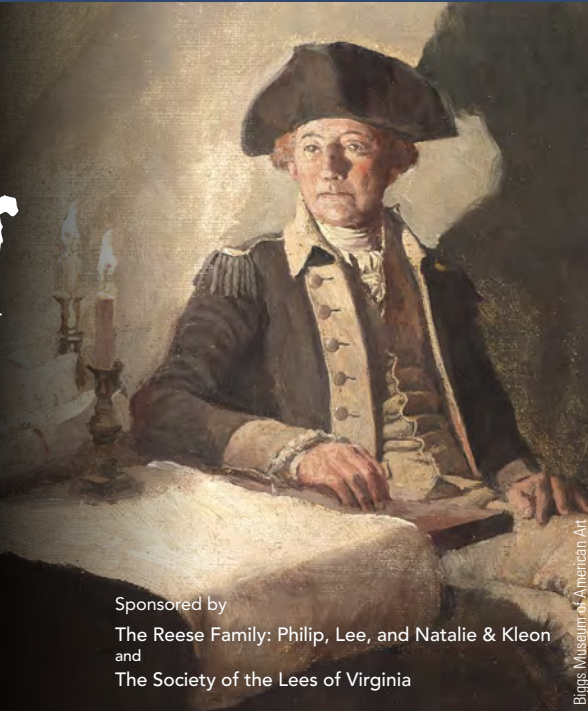


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## YOUR NEW ADMINISTRATOR

BY SAMANTHA BROWN

## It's Nice To Meet You!

**G**reetings! I am delighted to introduce myself as your brand-new SHCA administrator. I've lived in Society Hill for 20 years, so you may already recognize me. You can usually find me walking my beagle Charlie through the neighborhood or trotting along the sidewalks with my 5-year-old son on his scooter. Please don't hesitate to say hello!

**A Little About Me**

I grew up in a quiet town in western Massachusetts and first moved to Philadelphia to attend the University of Pennsylvania in 1998. I thrived in the excitement of the big city — so much culture and energy — though I missed the quiet and nature of my youth. I lived in New England for a couple of years after graduation, but in 2024 my path brought me back to Philadelphia. I'd only known campus life, but when I found my first apartment at 230 Pine Street, I fell in love with Society Hill and knew I'd found home.

Where else can you live amid so much natural beauty and architectural history, and still have the best things about a big city at your fingertips? My favorite place in Society Hill is St. Peter's Cemetery. I love to watch the parade of flowers each year from the earliest blooms in February, to the fields of daffodils that truly mark spring for me. Soon we'll get to see the annual explosion of dazzling Peonies.

But even more than the beauty of Society Hill, it's here that I found an intimate community that feels like family. My neighbors are my friends and they are my village when I need support. There are seven families with kids under 10 years old on my block alone. My son is



growing up with the kind of neighborhood playmates I imagined only existed in small towns. He started McCall this fall, and I have been inspired to dig deeper in my commitment to our community.

**How Can I Help?**

SHCA has protected and promoted not only the history of our streets and

homes, but has also brought me such a sense of community through the *Reporter* and *Spotlight*. In a large city, SHCA makes me feel connected to my neighbors.

That's why I'm so excited to be in a position to be of service to you as your Administrator. Do you have questions about SHCA membership, the services we provide, or the initiatives we support? Are you interested in getting involved in improving our community? Do you have information to share about local events or news in our neighborhood? Let me know! You can contact me at [info@societyhillcivic.org](mailto:info@societyhillcivic.org) or 215-629-1288. If I don't have the answers to your questions, I will put you in touch with the person who does.

**Do You Like History?**

What Society Hill neighbor doesn't? I moved into my dream house 14 years ago: a trinity on the 500 block of Cypress Street. Through the city archives, I learned that it was built between 1815 and 1817 and was first resided in—for the rent of \$48 a year—by Emmor Kimber, “bookseller and stationer.”

Emmor went on to become the principal founder of Kimberton, Pennsylvania. He was one of the earliest participants in, and extremely active with, the Underground Railroad movement. Emmor's daughters were also active participants in anti-slavery societies.

I'm looking forward to the 2026 celebration of our national history and heritage, which will no doubt be a moment for so many to learn stories just like this one that highlight the rich history of our neighborhood.

**Samantha Brown** is SHCA's administrator.

## Members-Only Benefit: List of Contractors

Spring is here, and now is the time to do some outside home improvements. Do you need a list of gardeners/landscapers to help spruce up your garden? Thinking of giving your house a fresh coat of paint?

Is that roof in need of repair? SHCA can help by providing our 11 page List of Contractors free to all current members on request. To receive a copy of the list, contact us at [info@societyhillcivic.org](mailto:info@societyhillcivic.org).



# McFarland's Value Proposition

## Experienced and Educated

Since 1958, McFarland Tree, Landscape and Hardscape Services has provided arboricultural service throughout Greater Philadelphia. Our comprehensive experience is augmented with continuing education and researched understanding of the practices of modern arboriculture along with our past experience. Staffed with a Board Certified Master Arborist and Certified Arborists, McFarland stays informed about current conditions and issues affecting your trees, shrubs and ornamentals.

## Service

We answer the phone when you call during business hours. Now, that's different! We are in constant contact with our arborists and field personnel to provide timely responses to your needs. A knowledgeable arborist will visit with you to discuss your needs and concerns. Seasoned veterans with well-maintained tools and equipment will perform the agreed-upon services to your satisfaction.

## Quality

Our recommendations are based on observations and a consultative approach that identifies your needs and expectations, tempered with our concern to maintain and improve the health, appearance and safety of your landscape. Custom pruning achieves the landscape appearance you desire while being performed to the specifications of proper arboricultural practices. Plant Health Care services include a thorough inspection before any



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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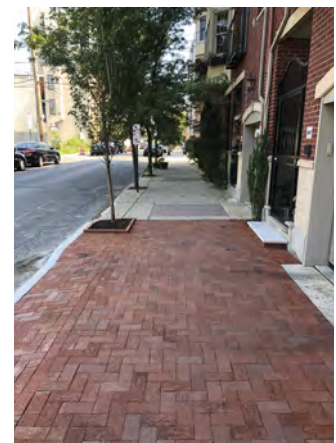
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## I-95 LONG RANGE PLANNING

BY MARY PURCELL

## What Do You Think? PennDOT Plans for I-95

**Y**es, even as we all are living through the current construction and looking forward to the CAP Park... PennDOT is also doing long-range planning for I-95 in the “central” area in Philadelphia, to include what they call the Penn’s Landing area, covering the broad stretch from Market Street at the north end to Mifflin Street at the south. The changes will be implemented possibly in the 2030s or more likely 2040s, but **the time for community input is now.**

The proposed changes include:

- Adding highway lanes from Pine to Christian
- Widening ramps and shoulders
- Adding an off-ramp at Lombard Street

These **highway changes could have significant long-term impact** on our neighborhood, specifically, and on Philadelphia broadly. Interchanges, off-ramps, and widened roads forever impact the adjacent neighborhoods.

SHCA has formed an I-95 Task Force to share our concerns with PennDOT. These concerns include the road-widening and Lombard Street off-ramp, as well as impacts and alternatives of another proposed change: removal of the southbound on-ramp at Front & Market, particularly as more traffic is expected when the new CAP park opens in 2028.

While we have sent our feedback to PennDOT, we are also considering hiring a transportation expert to guide us. From an initial discussion with Penn Professor Erick Guerra, we hear **there is no data to justify the proposed road widening and additional ramps.**

Inga Saffron wrote on this topic in *The Inquirer* dated January 22, 2024, where she broadly panned the proposals from a design, cost, and community-impact perspective, in the article “PennDOT wants to make I-95 even bigger and Philly residents are concerned” ([inquirer.com](https://www.inquirer.com)).

### To learn more and give feedback...

PennDOT has provided a website outlining the changes, available here I-95 Planning Study (<https://aecomviz.com/I95-CSP-360/>). On the site you will see that they provide information about the proposed changes in our Penn’s Landing area as well as areas farther south. The website is challenging to navigate; a more user-friendly option is this five-minute video outlining the proposals <https://vimeo.com/850636283>.

You may leave feedback on the plans on the PennDOT site by selecting “General Comments Leave Your Feedback.” Alternatively you may send an email to [info@95revive.com](mailto:info@95revive.com). Note PennDOT also has advised us to take the opportunity to advocate for realization of our Foglietta Plaza design, saying we should “bury them” here with requests for Foglietta Plaza. If you do wish to leave feedback, we ask you to consider putting in a word for this important Society Hill initiative as well.

**PennDOT’s next step is to create a “final Master Plan document”** later in 2024, followed by additional community engagement. We are asking about the scope and timing of this Master Plan document and community engagement. **We’ll keep you updated as we learn more.**

**Mary Purcell** is an SHCA Board member and I-95 Task Force Chair.



**Is an added off-ramp in Society Hill’s future?**



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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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## URBAN EDEN

BY MARY STURDIVANT

## At Liberty to Visit Gardening Shops

As the days get longer and warmer, that primal urge to dig in the dirt surges. Pots of colorful geraniums beckon from the sidewalk displays at the grocery and hardware stores. Take a deep breath and be patient... at least till after May 11, when no freak frost will destroy our green dreams.

How to grow things is such a necessary skill that it should be taught in school. I have several skills that are no longer of value, like my ability to refold a paper road map back to its original shape. Pity my poor friends who mastered the arcane mysteries of the slide rule. However, the ability to coax things out of the soil will always be needed. Apparently, having green plants around can improve your mood and mental health.

Caveat: Be prepared to fail. Optimism is required. I was so excited to get an herb garden kit. The seeds were planted according to directions and germinated within a few days. Mentally, I was already harvesting the basil for a caprese salad. Then I goofed. Too soon, I moved the planter from the coffee table's indirect sunlight to the table in front of the southern window. Not being able to locate the mister (it's here somewhere), I used the watering can. The delicate seedlings that didn't burn up drowned. Now the empty planter reminds me of how many farmers fail. In fact, according to the 2010 census, only 10 percent of our population still works in agriculture. Farming is not for the faint-hearted.

I'll just wait for the annual Hill-Physick House Plant Sale on Friday and Saturday, May 3rd and 4th. Picking up little pots already filled with the herbs I want is the failsafe back-up plan. But I haven't given up. No, I'm going to give it another go. I have my empty egg cartons (pulped paper and styrofoam). One source recommended orchid potting mix for the medium. My gardening buddy Ruth Ann found a mister for me at the Flower Show. So I've got my seeds and am ready to try again. I've learned my lesson about light.

Meanwhile, I decided to tour our area garden shops. **Urban Jungle** at 1526 East Passyunk has long been a go-to for plants and supplies. But a little cluster in Northern Liberties sparked my curiosity. The advantage of these shops, over the big box garden centers on Columbus Boulevard, is that the staff has usually been trained in the field. Temple's Ambler campus and Rutgers provide qualified graduates, and our numerous arboretums provide the job opportunities.



**Stump on the 900 block of North 2nd Street. Learn to care for your houseplants at in-store workshops.**

I started at **Stump** on the 900 block of North 2nd Street. Wow! Just walking in the shop felt so invigorating, as the air smelled so clean. I was a little early for the outdoor garden plants, but looking at the houseplants was fascinating. Brett and Ava told me there is another location on Bainbridge to check out. **City Planter** at 814 North 4th Street provides lots of choices, too. Finally, **Petit Jardin en Ville** at 134 North 3rd Street completed my tour. Soon I hope to head up to the Fairmount neighborhood to check out Cultivaire and Plants Etc. I hope they survived the pandemic. Someday I'll make it out to 7631 Ridge Avenue to check out the Secret Garden.

So many Society Hill neighbors are so creative with window boxes, containers, tree pits, door and window decorations, and little flower beds out front. Does it make you wonder what they are doing with their gardens behind the walls? We can take a peek at some of our neighbors' gardens during the **Gardens of Society Hill Tour** on Saturday, June 8, and Sunday, June 9. How else to explain how wonderful our neighborhood is? Stroll around and see for yourself!

Long-time neighbor **Mary Sturdivant** is a passionate gardener who oversees plot #5 in Washington Square with Ruth Ann Fenton and Joke 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."



**City Planter, located at 814 North 4th Street.**



**Petit Jardin en Ville at 134 North 3rd Street.**



## STEPPING BACK IN TIME

BY MARC S. RASPANTI, ESQUIRE

## Past Head House Square Businesses

*Part One*

There exists a richly historic patch of ancient soil in the heart of Society Hill. It has been known by different names over the years: Head House, Head House Square, the Shambles, and New Market are a few that come to mind. Over the past 30 years or so, establishments have come and gone. I have long enjoyed colorful anecdotes from lifetime Society Hill residents about a number of these establishments. Some places I knew, and others I never had the pleasure to frequent. Some were noteworthy, others have disappeared into the crevasses of time. As the Head House District plans for a much-anticipated renaissance, I thought it would be fun to piece together background I obtained from a variety of sources.

Part One of this series will focus on some noteworthy former establishments on the eastern part of Head House Square starting at 2nd and Pine Streets and ending at 3rd and Pine Streets. It is based on a healthy dose of nostalgia from longtime residents. Part Two will focus on some interesting former places on the western part of the square, which also are no longer around. Noteworthy or interesting, of course, is entirely within the purview of the author.

One of the most colorful places in recent memory is the **Monte Carlo Living Room**, which stood at the corner of 2nd and South Streets for more than 25 years. It opened in 1982 and closed in 2007. It was eventually replaced by the current-day Paddy Whacks Irish-themed bar and pub. The Living Room, as it was affectionately known, was a venerable Head House/South Street anchor. It hosted a cast of classic Philadelphia personalities, capped with a famous upstairs nightclub that some have referred to as a “den of iniquity.” Even visitors from Europe made their way to the nightclub. The tuxedo-attired waiters provided patrons with leather-bound menus and served sumptuous dinners for business, anniversaries, weddings, divorces, and every type of special occasion.

**The Monte Carlo Living Room, 2nd & South****The Dickens Inn, 421 South 2nd Street****Koffmeyer's Old Fashioned Cookies, 420 South 2nd Street**

It was a place where many men dressed in a jacket and tie, which was mostly required at the time. One could enjoy great food at premium prices on the first floor, in a European atmosphere staffed by award-winning chefs over the years, including Chef Nunzio Petruno of South Jersey fame. Fresh fish and shellfish would be hand-selected off a wooden cart displayed proudly for patrons. It was a favorite haunt of many regulars who enjoyed Wednesday happy hours, which featured a complimentary pasta bar.

Frankly, the small nightclub that was on the second floor is the reason people still speak of the Monte Carlo in hushed tones to this day. The dance floor was small, crowded, and the focal point of the club. It was a place to see and, more importantly, to be seen. Wherever you sat, creatively attired dancers were on full display. The DJ would accommodate requests from regulars, and bouncers would make sure that the often provocatively dressed patrons were safe, watched their expensive alcohol consumption, and kept out of serious shenanigans. Ironically, the notorious nature of some of the patrons ensured the safety of all. A number of patrons fell in love with each other, at least for a time, at the Monte Carlo Living Room — a few couples who I know met there and remain together to this day.

Not far from the Living Room was the graceful **Dickens Inn**, located at 421 South Second Street, where the current Cavanaugh's resides. This 18th-century building hosted the Inn from about 1980 until about 2002. The bar and restaurant were very popular with locals. It was a drinking emporium and a special events favorite. The Dickens Inn had a series of little nooks and rooms with a legendary street-level café bar, as well as quiet and cozy upper bars. It served a number of English specialties, including chicken potpie and shepherd's pie, as well as the classic English dish “bubble and squeak,” made with leftover potatoes, *continued on page 15*



STEPPING BACK IN TIME

continued from page 14

ham, greens, and cabbage. It is a dish still regarded by many in our neighborhood as an excellent hangover cure. My brother, a long-time Old City native, was married at the Dickens Inn in 1990 when it was in full and regal bloom. I still look back on that day with fondness, based on the excellent service and food we all enjoyed there. If you look very closely as you enter Cavanaugh's, you will find a small plaque from the Dickens Inn era. The plaque reveals a fascinating fact not known to me. The Dickens Inn was opened on January 17, 1980, by Cedric Charles Dickens, the great-grandson of the famous author Charles Dickens. Cedric was an eccentric figure well known by Society Hill natives even though his home was in London. Cavanaugh's continues in its location as the current incarnation of a popular watering hole.

Lastly, all the old timers remember **Koffmeyer's Old Fashioned Cookies**. This popular shop, located right next to the now abandoned CVS at 419 South 2nd Street, was a beloved Philadelphia tradition for over 40 years. By the way, the former CVS building was designed by an award-winning



Cedric Charles Dickens

architect named Adolf DeRoy Mark, which explains the mystery of the unusual features found on the second floor, a fact for another day. Koffmeyer's opened in 1978 and closed in 2000. Every single longtime resident with whom I spoke loved this place. Their stated mission was to provide the finest all-natural old-fashioned cookies at affordable prices such as the "Head House Square," which was a vanilla brownie, or cookie blondie. In January 2022, longtime Society Hill resident Samantha Shaw opened her boutique shop and reincarnated Koffmeyer's-type cookies at her shop at 306 South Street. We visit her shop often with our grandchildren, who are big fans of her cookies.

If you enjoyed Part One, please stay tuned for my selections to appear in Part Two of this series.



**Marc S. Raspanti**, an active Center City trial lawyer, resides with his wife in Society Hill. In addition to his passion for the law, he considers himself an amateur historian.

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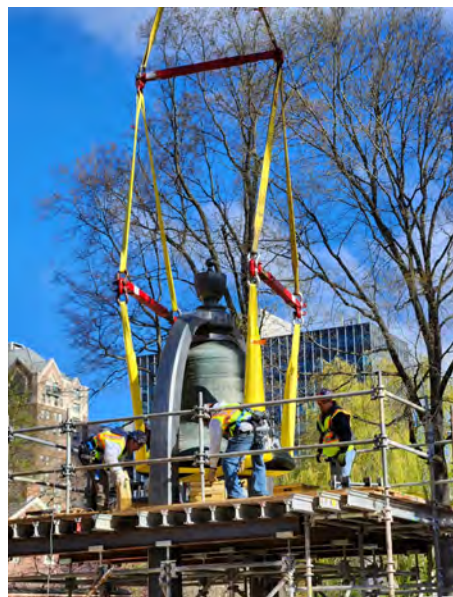
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BICENTENNIAL BELL INSTALLATION



Thanks to **Independence Historical Trust** and **Bonnie Halda** for these photos.



## INDEPENDENCE HISTORICAL TRUST

BY JONATHAN BURTON

## State of the Park

In late February, Steve Sims, Superintendent of Independence National Historical Park (INHP), spoke at the inaugural “State of the Park” event hosted by the Independence Historical Trust (the Trust). It was another opportunity for Steve to meet supporters and partners of the Trust, this time at Carpenters’ Hall, one of America’s most historic buildings.

Steve provided a rousing and detailed narration of how his journey with the National Park Service (NPS) began 17 years ago. He explained why it sometimes takes the NPS so long to get things done, and his explanation made sense. Here’s an excerpt from his remarks:

“Preserving and protecting resources requires deliberate study, science, and planning, so we can make informed and defensible decisions. The process may sometimes feel like it’s an endless sea of bureaucratic red tape. And we may get frustrated, but I want to assure you that we all have the same goal. We love our parks, and we must ensure that they are preserved and protected into perpetuity so that future generations will continue to experience the best idea America ever had. This preservation effort allows people to learn from and enjoy these resources. We are one of the only federal agencies with a mission to ensure you have fun.”

“In addition to having fun, one of our goals with each visitor... is to find a connection that resonates with you. The National Parks of Philadelphia have

a multitude of stories. There is a high likelihood that you have found a story that connects you to the grounds, monuments, historic structures, and stories of Philadelphia’s National Parks. When you find your connection, you also become a co-owner of this special place. And, with ownership comes a shared responsibility to promote, share, protect what generations have done. You are literally part of the NPS mission.”

“It is this sense of ownership that has led to the creation of the Independence Historical Trust. The National Park Service highly values the partnership we have with the Trust, because it allows us to better preserve and protect the National Parks of Philadelphia, your parks, for the education and enjoyment of our residents and visitors.”

Next year, the Trust will make the State of the Park event even larger and available to non-donors. We plan on opening the event to all residents of the surrounding communities at our National Park. The residents are key stakeholders whose ideas, opinions, expertise, and knowledge can help make Philadelphia’s National Parks the best they can be. Let’s have some fun and enjoy our shared backyard.

If you’re interested in volunteering with the Trust, reach out to me [Jonathan@INHT.org](mailto:Jonathan@INHT.org).

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



*Preparations are underway for America250 at Independence National Historical Park.*



## 250th Infrastructure Projects

**First Bank \$30M Rehabilitation** is underway. The Trust’s \$5M exhibit will look at **America’s financial system** through the lens of trade, work, land, slavery, and money. The goal for completion is in 2026.

**Bicentennial Bell Garden** will be complete in early summer 2024.

**Roof replacement** on Bishop White House and Walnut Street Houses has started.

**Wooden lamppost replacement** throughout INHP will begin in Spring 2024.

**Welcome Park’s** redesign is delayed, but work will resume this year. The William Penn statue will be kept. The goal is to broaden the story to include Native Americans.

**Washington Square Guard House** repair will begin in late May 2024.

**Declaration House** rehab is planned to start this fall with completion in summer 2026. There will be new exhibits.

**Independence Hall’s West Wing** will close for rehab this fall, with expected completion in summer 2026. The new exhibits will showcase copies of three documents critical to the process of nation-building — the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution of the United States — and, of course, the Syng ink stand... our witness to the documents’ creation.

**Dock Street** rehab is planned to start in late fall/early spring 2025 with completion by summer 2025.

**Wilson Park Rehab:** The NPS is working with the Trust to arrange funding. Completion date not yet known, but we hope to make this a 2026 completion along with waysides and orientation signage.

**INHP will get parkwide orientation and wayside signage replacement.** Directional signage will be replaced/refurbished by the end of 2025. Wayside signage will take longer, as some of the signs are from the 1990s and need to be redesigned.

**City Tavern:** INHP is in negotiations with a new lessee. Reopening date is not known.

**WELCOME GIFT BAGS**

BY MARTHA LEVINE

# What Is a Welcome Gift Bag?

*Welcome, New Neighbors!*

Are you a new first-time property owner here in Society Hill? If so, SHCA wants to welcome you to the neighborhood with a special gift: the Welcome Gift Bag. Each decorative bag is filled with a bottle of wine, a bag of coffee, and a box of chocolates, plus a pastry. Included are many gift cards to area restaurants, theaters, retailers, services, and museums. To help you learn about Society Hill, we offer important neighborhood information. That's a lot in one gift bag!

To make an appointment to receive a gift bag, please contact me at [marthalev6@gmail.com](mailto:marthalev6@gmail.com) or call 215-629-0727. The gift bag is presented at your home, which takes about 35 minutes or so.

Don't hesitate! We like presenting these gifts and we want to welcome you to the neighborhood. See delighted Welcome Gift Bag recipients below. We welcome 40 to 50 new neighbors each year!



**Ramona Johnson presents a gift bag to Nancy, her neighbor at Hopkinson House. Ramona is a long-time resident of Hopkinson House who now serves as the liaison between Hopkinson House and SHCA.**



**Robyn**



**Frank with Bailey**



**Jaqueline**



**Jim and Deb**



**Makeda**



**Morgan and Jesse**



**Andrea with Meeka**



**Mark with Ollie**



## WELCOME GIFT BAGS

BY MARTHA LEVINE

## Thank You, New Donors

*We welcome and thank new donors to our family of Welcome Gift Bag contributors:  
Bloomsday Cafe, Las Buglambilias, and Lantern Theater*

**Las Buglambilias, 15 South 3rd Street**

Just a few blocks from Society Hill in Old City, Las Buglambilias is a family-owned restaurant serving authentic Mexican food. Originally situated on South Street for 15 years, their new location is beautiful and welcoming. The menu includes a combination of Veracruzano dishes, Mexican street food favorites, and craft margaritas. Stop by for a great dining experience.

**Lantern Theater, 10th & Ludlow Streets**

Within walking distance of Society Hill, the Lantern Theater, with only 150 seats, provides an intimate setting for theatergoers. It is committed to providing thought-provoking, engaging, and fun productions for its audience. You will want to return again and again for delightful productions.



**Martha Levine** is an SHCA board member. She created and is chair of the Welcome Gift Bag program (previously known as the Welcome Baskets). Martha says, "It is a fun experience meeting and welcoming people who are new to the neighborhood. They have many questions about living here, and I am happy to answer them."

**As always, we ask you to support our long loyal business donors listed here. Without them, we could not have the Welcome Gift Bag program.**

*Restaurants*

**Bistro Romano**, 120 Lombard Street  
**Bloomsday Cafe**, 414 S.2nd Street  
**Bridget Foy's**, 200 South Street  
**Cavanaugh's Headhouse**, 421 S. 2nd Street  
**Cry Baby Pasta**, 627 S. 3rd Street  
**Fork Restaurant**, 306 Market Street  
**FRIEDA** (café), 320 Walnut Street  
**Gnocchi** (Italian), 613 E. Passyunk Avenue  
**High Street Philly**, 101 S. 9th Street  
**La Colombe Coffee Roasters**, 100 S. 6th Street  
**Las Buglambilias** (Mexican), 15 S. 3rd Street  
**Mahalo Hawaiian BBQ**, 117 South Street  
**Malbec Argentine Steakhouse**, 400 S. 2nd Street  
**Panorama**, 14 N. Front Street  
**PJ Clarke's**, 601 Walnut Street  
**Reading Terminal Market**, 1136 Arch Street  
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**Reading Terminal Market**, 1136 Arch Street  
**Sam Shaw's Treatery** (culinary & lifestyle boutique), 306 South Street  
**Show of Hands** (craft gallery), 1006 Pine Street  
**Stump Plants**, 622 S. 9th Street

*Museums*

**Museum of the American Revolution**, 101 S. 3rd Street  
**National Liberty Museum**, 321 Chestnut Street  
**Physick House & Powel House** (museums), 321 S. 4th Street

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

BY CAROL HANLON

# Society Hill: A Gem Worth Protecting

## Join Us!



Graffiti removal is just one of the many services your membership dues pay for.

Do you ever stop to appreciate the charm of Society Hill? The tree-lined streets with historic brick sidewalks, the vibrant farmer’s market at Head House Square, and the peaceful haven of Washington Square — these are just a few things that make this neighborhood so special. But what if we told you there’s a dedicated group working to preserve this very essence of Society Hill?

That’s where SHCA comes in. In a city that is constantly changing, we work to ensure a safe, clean, and beautiful environment for everyone who calls Society Hill home.

### Keeping It Clean and Pristine

Ever wonder why Society Hill is remarkably free of graffiti? SHCA’s swift removal efforts deter vandals and maintain the neighborhood’s appeal. The same dedication goes towards clean streets. SHCA employs a team for weekly debris removal, with increased frequency during peak seasons. Additionally, they coordinate thorough spring and fall clean-ups, working to keep our environment as tidy as possible.

### Preserving the Character and Charm

The architectural beauty and historic significance of Society Hill are not by chance. SHCA’s Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee works diligently to uphold these aspects. Tree tenders ensure the lush greenery thrives. We provide assistance to owners needing to repair brick sidewalks and support projects like the Franklin Light restoration, which all combine to add another layer of historical charm to Society Hill.

### Welcoming Newcomers and Keeping Residents Informed

Are you new to Society Hill? SHCA extends a warm welcome with gift bags including treats, cards, and information for new residents. SHCA also understands the importance of feeling connected, and that’s why we keep everyone informed through various channels. The weekly Spotlight email provides updates on ongoing efforts and upcoming events. The printed *Reporter* offers in-depth articles, and regular block coordinator updates foster a strong sense of community.  
*continued on page 25*

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

# Society Hill: A Gem Worth Protecting

*continued from page 24*

**Beyond What Meets the Eye**

SHCA’s influence extends far beyond these visible improvements. We actively advocate for residents’ interests in crucial city projects like the I-95 CAP and the Foglietta Plaza renovation. The SHCA also supports initiatives like the restoration of the Washington Square Guard House and the Shambles at Head House Square, as well as maintenance of public-space gardens, contributing to a more vibrant and enjoyable neighborhood.

**Become Part of the Legacy**

Society Hill’s appeal is a result of a dedicated community, and SHCA works to support these efforts. Here’s how you can be a part of all this.

**Join the SHCA.** Membership allows you to directly support our efforts and contribute to preserving the neighborhood’s character.

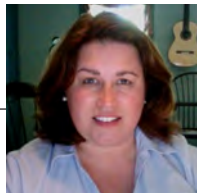
**Volunteer.** SHCA thrives on passionate volunteers. Consider joining a committee that aligns with your interests.

**Spread the word.** Talk to your neighbors about the SHCA’s importance and encourage them to join or volunteer.


Together, we can ensure that Society Hill remains the oasis it is today. Visit our website [www.societyhillcivic.org](http://www.societyhillcivic.org) under the “What We Do” tab to learn more about our initiatives. The “Calendar” section allows you to attend meetings and engage with the community. Sign up for the Spotlight email under “Publications” to stay updated. Most importantly, consider joining the SHCA or encourage others to do so. Together, we can make a real difference.

By joining forces, we can ensure Society Hill continues to be the wonderful neighborhood that first captured your heart. Remember, keeping this gem’s character alive requires the collective support of its residents. SHCA offers a platform for you to contribute and be a part of something bigger. So, take the first step today: join the SHCA and help write the next chapter of Society Hill’s story.

Thanks 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.



**Society Hill**  
CIVIC ASSOCIATION

## Membership Application

We encourage everyone to join online by going to [www.societyhillcivic.org/join](http://www.societyhillcivic.org/join).

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email (print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Residential Memberships	Business Memberships
<input type="radio"/> \$ 50 Basic Household Membership	<input type="radio"/> \$100 Institutions – 5+ employees
<input type="radio"/> \$ 40 Senior/Student/Single	<input type="radio"/> \$60 Institutions – fewer than 5 employees
<input type="radio"/> \$ 150 Georgian Grantor	
<input type="radio"/> \$ 300 Jefferson Benefactor	
<input type="radio"/> \$ 500 Washington Benefactor	
<input type="radio"/> \$1,000 Benjamin Franklin Benefactor	

Total Membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If paying membership dues by check, please make the check payable to:  
**Society Hill Civic Association**

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**Donations to SHPF**

Your membership is important to us, but your tax-deductible contribution will help to support our many programs. All donations to the Society Hill Preservation Foundation (SHPF), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, are tax-deductible.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Unrestricted

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ New Market Head House Conservancy

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Beautification of Washington Square    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ McCall School

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Sidewalk Cleaning/Graffiti Removal    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Starr Garden

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Zoning & Historic Preservation    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Franklin Lights

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Tree Tending    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ “Fix the Brix”

Total Donations \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If making a tax-deductible donation by check, make the check payable to:  
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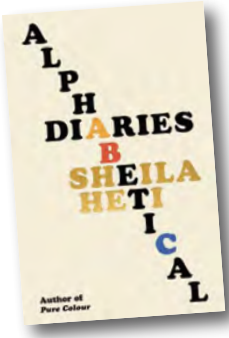
Mail this form and your check(s) to:  
**Society Hill Civic Association**, P.O. Box 63503, Philadelphia, PA 19147

Or join online at: [www.societyhillcivic.org/join](http://www.societyhillcivic.org/join)

ON OUR SHELVES

BY IZZY HALLORAN

# Alphabetical Diaries by Sheila Heti



Reading *Alphabetical Diaries* by Sheila Heti was an entirely unique experience. Published in February of 2024, *Alphabetical Diaries* is an autobiographical collection of 10 years worth of Heti’s personal journal entries, alphabetized and sectioned into chapters from A to Z. Heti truly plays with form by grabbing sentences from past entries and arranging them by the first letter of each sentence. The chapters vary in length, depending on how often she began a sentence with the denoted letter.

Some chapters, such as “K” and “Q” were very brief, while others, like “I” and “T” felt never-ending. There were many intriguing aspects to this book, some which made the process of reading exciting and fresh, while others felt destabilizing and frustrating. The author does not introduce any of the characters mentioned throughout the entries, so readers are left to put the pieces together themselves. In addition, there is no concept of linear time, reference to year, or any world events.

The entire book takes place inside Heti’s head, with a hyper focus on men, sex, career, place, and friends. There were moments of such raw, vulnerable confessions that I felt at times like I was molding into her, reading my own diary entries. The stitched-together sentences combined with the lack of paragraph breaks charge the chapters with a chaotic energy that I both appreciated and felt overwhelmed by. It is as though every thought, feeling, and action Heti mentions throughout the book is still happening, which warps the reader’s idea of time. The reader’s perception of her existence — her relationships, beliefs, and priorities — is in a constant state of flux.



*Alphabetical Diaries* by Sheila Heti is a bold experiment in both form and content that yields mixed results. I found myself glued to the pages of certain chapters, taking great enjoyment from the piecemeal content, while at other times, I grew exhausted by the repetition of specific words and sentiments. *Alphabetical Diaries* left me with many lingering questions. Did Heti consider a reader while cataloging these thoughts? Where were certain sentences she omitted? How did her perception of past self shift during the process of stitching 10 years of thoughts together? Ultimately, I appreciated the amount of madness and bravery required to craft a book as inventive as *Alphabetical Diaries*. I am confident that this book will linger in my mind for years to come.

### Save the Date: July 2 Release with Signed Books

Liz Moore’s new book, *The God of the Woods*, is a compelling, beautifully written literary thriller and family saga that takes place in an Adirondack summer camp. You will not put this book down!


Liz, a neighbor and the *New York Times* best-selling author of *Long Bright River*, will provide signed copies available at Head House Books (HHB) on July 2nd upon its release. *God of the Woods* is the perfect summer read. Stay tuned for the date of her HHB reading!



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

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## HAPPENINGS AT MCCALL SCHOOL

BY DANIELLE SANDSMARK

## Spring Is Science Fair Season

Each spring, 7th and 8th grade students take on a two-month long endeavor to explore an area of science of interest to them and their community. Rather than being limited to a few “conventional” experiments, a la the paper mache erupting volcanoes many of us remember, 6th-8th grade science teacher Mr. Scott Knoflicek encourages students to explore all areas of science, even if it is a topic taught as part of the usual curriculum. Over the last ten years under Mr. Knoflicek’s direction, students have explored astronomy, environmental science, and physics, as well as the life sciences and chemistry. Students research their topic using resources from across the city, including the Free Library and various university and online sources, to design their experiments and interpret results. Mr. Knoflicek advises all students, helping them to focus their research question, optimize experimental design, and ensure that proper safety procedures are followed.

At the conclusion of the unit, students present their projects in a McCall science fair for younger students. This not only helps the middle schoolers practice public speaking and improve their scientific communication, but also serves as a positive example for younger students, planting ideas for their own future science projects. After completing the in-school fair, students are encouraged to present their projects at the Philadel-



McCall students take notes at Science Fair.

phia George Washington Carver Science Fair, a citywide science fair that includes students from public, charter, private, and parochial schools. This fair, which is judged by experts in the various scientific disciplines, further builds students skills in scientific communication and reasoning. Receiving feedback from respected experts helps students to refine their projects and exposes them to various ways of thinking and interpreting data. This year, 28 McCall students competed in 13 different categories of science, and 15 came home with top prizes! Some projects submitted by McCall students include: “Can AI diagnose breast cancer?” (computer science), “Can Biodegradable Materials Replace Plastic as Protective Food Packaging?” (environmental science),

and “Fallen Arches: The Surprising Strength of Eggshells” (engineering).

Eight of these students went on to compete against students from Pennsylvania, Delaware, and southern New Jersey in the Delaware Valley Science Fair at the beginning of April.

Beyond the various topics of interest, these applied science experiences have a long-standing effect on students that extends far beyond the classroom. They learn vital skills in project and time management as they take on a complex assignment with an extended timeline. Students realize that the scientific process can be applied to questions that they have in their own lives and communities. Through their investigations, they appreciate that information is gained even when things “don’t work” and a hypothesis is disproven. The science fair process teaches students to critically analyze data and evidence, helping them to become better consumers of information. Ultimately, the science fair process encourages students to engage in active inquiry in every aspect of their lives. McCall students are proving themselves ready and able to rise to this challenge!

**Danielle Sandsmark**

is an SHCA board member and McCall School parent.



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HOPKINSON HOUSE #2309	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #1310-II	SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #2DS
HOPKINSON HOUSE #2403	HOPKINSON HOUSE #1417-18	HOPKINSON HOUSE #404
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HOPKINSON HOUSE #2915	SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #23EW	HOPKINSON HOUSE #1517-18
SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #7HS	SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #11AN	HOPKINSON HOUSE #2707-09
SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #6DN	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #1104-I	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #1801-II
SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #24FW	SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #14AS	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #502-I
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THE LIPPINCOTT #3SW	SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #22EN	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #2002-II
INDEPENDENCE PLACE #1608-I	SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #22BCS	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #805-II
INDEPENDENCE PLACE #411-II	METRO CLUB #513	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #907-I
INDEPENDENCE PLACE # 1007-II	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #1710-II	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #208-II
SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #19GS	HOPKINSON HOUSE #1513	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #311-I
SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #30HS	SOCIETY HILL TOWERS #5BCDS	INDEPENDENCE PLACE #408-II
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**'FIX THE BRIX' SUBSIDY**

BY MARTHA LEVINE

**Tree Pit DO's and DON'Ts**

People ask, "Can we use the "Fix the Brix" subsidy to fix our tree pits?" Yes, you can! And if the problem is tree roots, and expertise is needed by an arborist, we have a subsidy for that, too — our Tree Tenders. Often tree roots can push up sidewalk bricks or concrete. Below are some photos of problem tree pits, plus an example of an ideal model. Note that some pits can be too small for the size of the tree, and this may harm the tree's growth. Others have loose bricks that serve no purpose but providing inspiration for vandalism. Large Belgian blocks can provide a tripping hazard for pedestrians. A flat border surround for the tree pit is best as it allows rain water to flow into the soil.

**"Fix the Brix"**

For fixing brick or concrete sidewalks in Society Hill, SHCA provides a subsidy of 40% of the cost, up to a maximum of \$500 for members and \$400 for non-members.

Follow these steps to receive the subsidy:

- 1 Take a photo of your problem sidewalk area.
- 2 Hire a mason to do the work.
- 3 After the work is done, make sure it is to your satisfaction, and take a photo. Email a copy of the invoice, proof of payment, and photos to [info@societyhillcivic.org](mailto:info@societyhillcivic.org).
- 4 Receive a check within a few weeks.

**Need a mason or arborist? The Society Hill List of Contractors has a full list of both, and more. You must be a current SHCA member to obtain a list. Get a copy of the list by emailing [info@societyhillcivic.org](mailto:info@societyhillcivic.org).**

**Thanks for doing your neighborhood a service!**



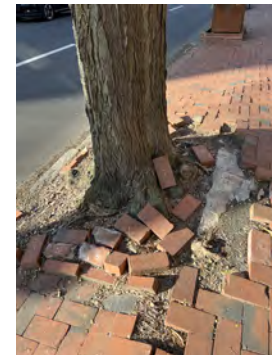
**Tree roots can push up bricks.**



**This tree pit is too small.**



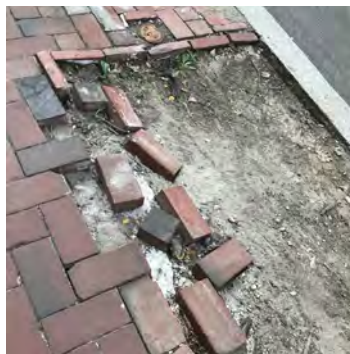
**Belgian block is a tripping hazard.**



**Take a look at your tree pit. If there are loose bricks, please remove them or have them secured in place.**



**Get reimbursed for stump removal with a Tree Tenders subsidy.**



**For empty tree pits, you can get on the list for a free street tree.**



**Excellent tree pit: right size with flat edge allowing rain water in.**

**Q: Do you know why Society Hill has little or no graffiti?**

**A:** Because SHCA has a contract with a graffiti removal service, Urbanscape Specialists, (formerly named Graffiti Removal Experts). They visit Society Hill twice a week and

remove all graffiti on public property. If you like living in a nearly graffiti-free neighborhood, you can thank SHCA. Your membership helps pay for this service.

Our graffiti removal rep is Kimberly Bennett. Email [kimberly.bennett@urbanscape-specialists.com](mailto:kimberly.bennett@urbanscape-specialists.com) if you see graffiti, and make sure to tell her the exact address.



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

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## NIFTY NEIGHBORS IN MY OWN BACKYARD

BY JANE BIBERMAN

## Regina Papale Mullen

This is a story about one of our extraordinary Society Hill neighbors, Regina Papale Mullen. Regina lives in a charming house that was built in 1840, with her husband, Ignatius; her son, also named Ignatius (Nace for short); and their adorable dog, Nugglet.

Regina has a rare form of macular degeneration known as Stargardt Disease. It manifests itself at a young age, rather than the traditional form that appears in older individuals. Stargardt's causes significant visual impairment.

"When I was 15 and in junior high school, I couldn't see anymore," relates Regina. "Eye doctors couldn't find lenses to correct it." After visiting Wills Eye Hospital and Scheie Eye Institute at Penn, she was eventually diagnosed with Stargardt's and has been losing her vision increasingly as each year goes by. Never one to give in to adversity, Regina decided to write a book about her condition that would help her son, as well as other children, cope with obstacles. Regina's book, published in 2023, is called *The Sixth Sense*. It shares anecdotal stories derived from her personal experience that allows children to look at disability and differences through a new lens — humor.

"My 'sixth sense' refers to the humor that is inside all of us just waiting to be discovered and developed," explains Regina. She suggests various ways to cope with all kinds of things. For example, "learn to laugh at yourself," she suggests. She provides "insight into the emotional roller coaster that is the psyche of a child with a disability," and promotes adaptability through "differentiating little deals from big deals, and creating healthy self-concepts." Regina was formerly a school psychologist and is active in many endeavors at St. Peter's School, which is close by.

In an interview with Regina and her son Nace broadcast on Fox News 29, Nace explained that he was very happy because the boy on the book cover looks like him and he had the same first name as the main character. Regina shared that shortly after getting her diagnoses at 15 years old, she was able to drive for two years but then started losing her vision at a more increased speed. She has not driven for 30 years, and has not been able to see normal print in a book. These days, she can read large print or listen



Regina Papale Mullen with her husband, Ignatius (holding their adorable dog Nugglet and my dog Dash), and her son, also named Ignatius (Nace for short).

*"My 'sixth sense' refers to the humor that is inside all of us just waiting to be discovered and developed."*

to audio books. The family is very close and enjoys going to the movies at the nearby Ritz theaters, where Regina can see the screen. They also enjoy going to concerts at Verizon Hall (soon to be renamed the Marian Anderson) to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Regina's book is illustrated by her friend and neighbor, Mickey Bissell. From the "Sixth Sense Book" website, we learn that Mickey has been painting ever since she can remember and she primarily works in color and design. She is able to create intriguing paintings from life, memory, or from any favorite photograph. Her work is mostly in acrylics and watercolors on canvas and paper. This is Mickey's first children's book collaboration.

Regina's next book will be about her own dog, a Jack Russell named Nugglet, who Regina fantasizes would like to be a Seeing Eye dog. He currently provides emotional support.



Regina's book is illustrated by her friend and neighbor, Mickey Bissell.

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



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Exact Solar has been good from start to finish. They promptly answered any questions I had upfront, communicated very clearly what we can expect has the homeowner, provided relatively quick installation and managed all of the permits and inspections with township. Highly recommend.  
- Stephen G.

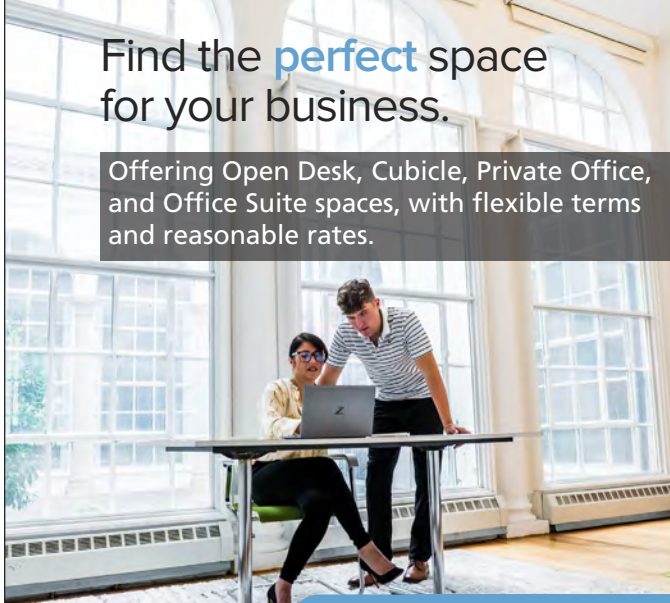
**Worth the Wait**  
I started working with Exact Solar in June 2021. They were consistently responsive and very helpful in all aspects of the design and permitting part of the process. Once the necessary approval and supply issues were taken care of, the installation itself was completed quickly and 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

PA Contractor #PA168312 | Philadelphia Contractor #058069 | Philadelphia Electrical Contractor #28454NJ  
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KIDS' KORNER

BY JAIME AND MIKE FOX

# Eat Brazilian Donuts, Repent, and Do the Mango Tango!



**Kouklet Brazilian Bakehouse**

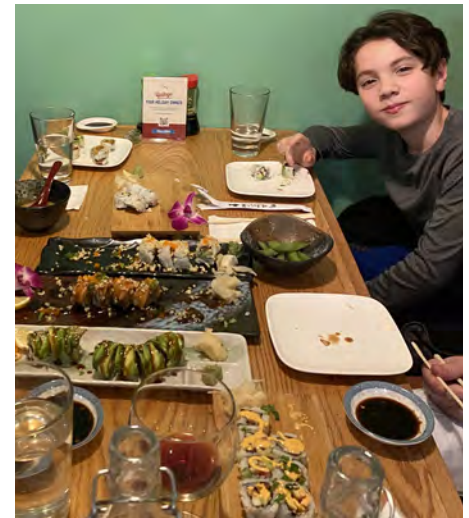
1647 East Passyunk Avenue

On a cold, overcast Sunday in February, we visited another donut shop, in our quest to find the finest donut in Philadelphia. We, like our letter carriers, will not be deterred by the weather! Kouklet is a quaint and welcoming space along East Passyunk Avenue. On that Sunday, Kouklet's featured flavors were chocolate, vanilla, and mango coconut. We chose chocolate and vanilla. Our assessment? Unfortunately, the donuts were hard to cut and share, because they're filled with cream, and they're extremely messy. Fortunately, the donuts were hard to cut and share, because they're filled with cream, and they're extremely messy. There might be a life lesson in here somewhere. Owen and Jordan enjoyed the donuts immensely and gave Kouklet four enthusiastic thumbs up.

**Eastern State Penitentiary**

2027 Fairmount Avenue

On a cold, overcast day in March (noticing a pattern here?), we grabbed our umbrellas and headed to the Eastern State Penitentiary in Fairmount. It had been about five years since we had been there, and we were super excited about returning. We found that not much has changed, as you would expect from an incredible piece of living history. The place is just breathtaking, with highlights including Al Capone's jail cell, various art installations, a restored synagogue, and a prison ball field. Owen had a lot of fun playing chess in the pop-up sports and recreation exhibit. Jaime enjoyed learning about the tunnel that prisoners escaped through underneath the penitentiary walls. Adult entry is \$21, youth ages 7 to 12 is \$17. Children 6 and under are free.



**Midori Sushi**

516 South 5th Street

The Foxes love our sushi. So, when Jordan was given the choice of where to bring five friends for dinner for her ninth birthday, you can guess what type of food she wanted... That's right: sushi! Our favorite local sushi restaurant is Midori. Located on 5th street between Lombard and South, this restaurant has everything one can ask for. If you are looking for no fuss BYOB dining where the television is often tuned to sumo wrestling, this is your place! Or if you simply want to do take-out, because it's date night after the children go to sleep, go right ahead! The rolls are unique, the fish is fresh, and the taste is delicious. Jordan's favorite roll is the Mango Tango, which is filled with tempura sweet potato, mango, and avocado, and topped with a sweet chili sauce. Jaime loves the caterpillar roll. Mike is partial to the spicy tuna roll. Prices are reasonable and service is laid back.



**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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- Class Parent at Society Hill Synagogue Pre-School and St. Peters School
- Society Hill Civic Association Member
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