



SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

January/February 2025
The Newsletter
of the Society Hill
Civic Association

www.societyhillcivic.org

Wrapping Up December

BY BRANDON ENGELHARDT



A window box with evergreens in front of caroling figurines sets the scene for seasonal celebrations.



Renewed your SHCA membership yet? Scan this QR code and click on JOIN NOW to start or renew membership.

There's nothing quite like the holidays to bring folks together, especially if, as Perry Como put it, you're "headin' for Pennsylvania, and some homemade pumpkin pie." My wife, Tara, and I hosted Christmas this year, after multiple years of lobbying. In the end, it wasn't our words or our pleas that brought our far-flung family members, ranging from New York City to San Francisco, to spend the holidays in Philadelphia. It was the character found in Society Hill versus that of New York. There's something about a window box on a cobblestone street, spruced up with evergreen, twigs, and berries, in the shadow of a group of Pennsylvania Dutch Byers' Choice Carolers to set the scene. As our younger cousins say, "We're going to Old Timeyville."

As many of our neighbors recall, Society Hill wasn't always capable of fundraising with note cards and calendars featuring beautiful photographs of our neighborhood (see page 29). In the 19th century post-industrial age, Society Hill had fallen into disrepair and neglect. It took a huge urban renewal project in the 1950s to revitalize the neighborhood we know today. History reminds us that the shining neighborhood on the hill can remain or dissolve, depending on the time and money that community members invest in maintenance and community building. The 2024 holiday season delivered on that front with three successful community events to help restore, maintain, and invest in our community.

For restoration, the New Market & Head House Conservancy hosted a successful event, meeting the fundraising goal for restoration of the Lukens Clock in the Head House cupola. The plan is to have the clock installed and running by this June, and, as they say, the clock is ticking. Congratulations to the team involved. We all look forward to a lighted clock soon! More work is to be done, so please visit www.headhousesquare.org and stay tuned for announcements about events and upgrades to one of our central special spaces.

As for maintenance, large volunteer crews met on each corner in Society Hill on December 7 for the Great Society Hill Clean-Up. Our neighborhood clean-up days are a long-standing tradition that forms the base for Philadelphia's new city-wide Clean and Green effort. Mayor Parker's Fiscal Year budget dedicates \$477 million of operating capital to clean-up, and it's the number two line item behind public safety. The Clean and Green initiative includes new trash receptacles, twice-a-week trash collection (see page 7), and a citywide 13-week deep-cleaning schedule (Society Hill's week begins on January 6, 2025). For full updates on new initiatives, go to www.officeofcleanandgreen.org. Scroll to the bottom and fill out the 'stay informed' section to sign up for the newsletter.

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Wednesday,
January
15

5:45 p.m.

7:30 p.m.

Topic:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association Meeting
Wednesday, January 15, 2025

Old Pine Community Center
401 Lombard Street

Board Meeting

Community Meeting

It's your turn to speak! Bring your visions, questions and concerns about Society Hill to the January Community Meeting.

Society Hill Spirit Shines



Our domiciles are dressed for the holidays! More photos on page 17. Photos by Brandon Engelhardt

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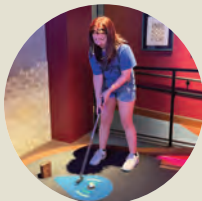
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Maia Weintraub



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Hole in One Dozen?
Par for the Course!



SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

NUSA
Award-Winning
Newsletter
First Place
2020

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Submission Deadline

March/April Issue: February 1

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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.

SHCA Mission Statement

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

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SUSAN BURT COLLINS

It Is Unity That Makes Us a Community

As the year ends, I am again moved to talk about community and how the Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) can make sure that, here in Society Hill, a community is what we are. Our goal is to foster community through common purpose and understanding, and to communicate that sense of oneness to the city government in our many efforts to address issues affecting us.

Perhaps the best example of someone who does this is Martha Levine, with her Welcome Gift Bags, the hugely successful garden tour that raises funds for SHCA, and her inveterate attention to Franklin lights. She does all these things not to be fancy, exclusive or applauded, but to help our neighborhood look and feel like a special place. Her agenda is the community — our community — and the people in it.

There are others who are unafraid to roll up their sleeves and do the unglamorous work that makes Society Hill an attractive place to live. It is Sherley Young who leads many dedicated gardeners in maintaining Washington Square. It is Sherley who made sure the sprinkler system got repaired and kept working (SHCA's Society Hill Preservation Foundation dollars paid for this), and it is Sherley who is working through Independence Historical Trust to communicate with the National Park Service about what needs to be done in the Square. Then there is Clean-Up Day chief Al Meinster, who, at 81 years of age, arranges for the city trucks to come pick up bagged leaves, makes the trek to pick up supplies, and braves the cold to distribute those supplies to residents.

These are just a few of the many people who make our neighborhood a special place, with our red brick sidewalks and walkways (Jeff Fogg made sure Lawrence Walkway was beautifully restored), our Franklin lights, and our parks. But does an attractive infrastructure make us a community? It helps, but it is not enough. We do not enter in any agreement to live here. We are not gated and restricted, we pay no dues and submit to no rules. We are simply neighbors. SHCA is intended to be an expression of that neighborliness.

SHCA welcomes new members as well as new ideas. We need both people who own and people who rent in our community to join, so we are truly representative of all of our neighbors. We need to say "no" to endless criticism of any new idea or different way of doing things.

We need to avoid saying, "but we never did it this way before." We need to assume the good faith of others and act in good faith ourselves. We need to encourage change and adaptability in ourselves and SHCA. We need to listen. We need to gather for enjoyable times, as we did in September under the Shambles and in December at Bridget Foy's. We need to row in the same direction: towards a clean, safe, attractive neighborhood that works hard and with kindness to achieve the best outcome for the most people.

Back to the good stuff. Thanks to Stacey Ackerman and Samantha Brown, a grant of \$350,000 has been awarded to the city for the restoration of Starr Garden. With these funds, along with \$560,000 through Councilmember Mark Squilla and donations from Poor Richard's Charitable Trust and SHCA, the work can begin. (See story on page 4.)

The clock in the Head House will be working again by springtime. The last \$15,000 was raised at a well-attended event at Twisted Tail on November 8. Lots of neighbors came out to support this first project of the New Market & Head House Conservancy.

As I write this, the SHCA board has voted to oppose the proposed 76ers arena build on Market Street, supporting both Wash West and Chinatown in their opposition. We continue to engage with the city on limiting new smoke shops on South Street. We have met with police officials to urge more staffing for the South Street mini-station that has been so successful in helping South Street quiet down. And they heard us, promising to keep the staffing levels up in the critical spring and summer season.

These are wins, and we are moving forward.

On a recent Sunday morning, if you were near 6th and Pine, you came across a particularly good neighbor: a bicyclist who saw a problem and stopped to fix it. A full trash can had toppled over, spreading a sticky mess in all directions. The cyclist got off his bike and got to work. He came, he saw, he cleaned up. Now that's what this neighborhood, at its best, is all about.

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



Susan Burt Collins,
SHCA President

We need to row in the same direction: towards a clean, safe, attractive neighborhood that works hard and with kindness to achieve the best outcome for the most people.



Bonnie Haida photo

Wishing You a Safe, Healthy, and Happy New Year!

STARR GARDEN PLAYGROUND RENOVATION

BY STACEY ACKERMAN, STARR GARDEN COMMITTEE CHAIR

Starr Garden Renovation Is Moving Forward!

S Starr Garden Playground, Philadelphia's first playground, serves five neighborhoods, but technically belongs to none. Just 10 yards from the border of Society Hill, the playground is an invaluable resource for Society Hill families, as well as McCall and Meredith Schools, St. Peter's School, and more than a dozen local preschools, summer camps, and afterschool programs.

This essential community resource has needed significant care and repair for some time. The last renovation of the playground area was in 1985. After 40 years of service, the playground equipment is well past its prime, and the playground surfaces are riddled with dangerous holes and exposed tree roots. The issues go beyond the play equipment. Many, if not most, of the original benches and picnic tables have been lost to carpenter bees or rot. There are drainage issues causing recurring flooding in the picnic area. An arborist's assessment of the wooded area revealed the need for pruning and removal of dead

or sick trees along with sustainable replanting. The water fountain hasn't been functional in years.

The Road to Renovation

Starr Garden Neighbors & Friends, the charitable organization which supports Starr Garden, began the process of community engagement and planning in 2018. In 2020, as a result of this work, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation prepared a plan for renovation.

The scope of the project includes:

- Complete renovation of the playground
- Care for existing trees and additional planting to maintain the tree canopy
- Increasing the number and quality of shaded benches and picnic tables
- New water feature
- ADA-compliant water fountain
- Basketball court refurbishing
- Addressing drainage/flooding issues

Funding for the Renovation

When the project cost estimate came in at nearly \$900,000, Councilmember Mark Squilla pledged \$560,000 in support of the project — over half the cost of the proposed renovation. The project was off to a promising start, but much more action was needed to make this renovation a reality.

In 2023, the vision for the project was revived, and SHCA stepped up! SHCA president Susan Burt Collins and board member Stacey Ackerman secured unanimous board approval for an additional \$15,000 funding for

this critical project. In addition, Poor Richard's Charitable Trust donated \$10,000 to Society Hill Preservation Foundation to be used only for Starr Garden. These funds, with the money pledged by the city, totaled \$585,000, still a \$300,000 or more shortfall.

Bridging the Gap with State Support

Recognizing the gap in funding, Susan Burt Collins asked Stacey Ackerman to try to identify sources of state funding. Two potential sources were found, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). However, each had maximum awards well below what was needed.

After working with Parks & Recreation, it was requested that the grant writing be done by Stacey Ackerman; by Samantha Brown, who is both SHCA's administrator and a Starr Garden Neighbors & Friends board member; and by Lisa Hardy and Anna Whitesell, both fellow Starr Garden board members who had been working on this project from the start. Our ultimate success was due in no small part to the excellent guidance and technical expertise of Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, in particular Chris Creelman and Mark Paronish. We are so grateful to them and Pennsylvania DCNR Liaison Jeanne Barret Ortiz.

Grant work at this level is significant and complex. It requires substantial support from the community as well as local and state governments. The team worked tirelessly for two months, holding weekly check-ins and investing hours in research to craft the application. They sourced budgeting and rendering. They solicited letters of support from more than a dozen organizations that use the park daily, from Queen Village Neighborhood Association to St. Peter's School to McCall Home and School Association, and endorsements by State Senator Nikil Saval and Pennsylvania State Representative Mary Isaacson.



Neighbors of all ages gathered at Starr Garden to pitch in on Clean-Up Day.

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STARR GARDEN PLAYGROUND RENOVATION

continued from page 4



Announcement of \$350,000 award from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to Philadelphia Parks & Recreation for renovation of Starr Garden.

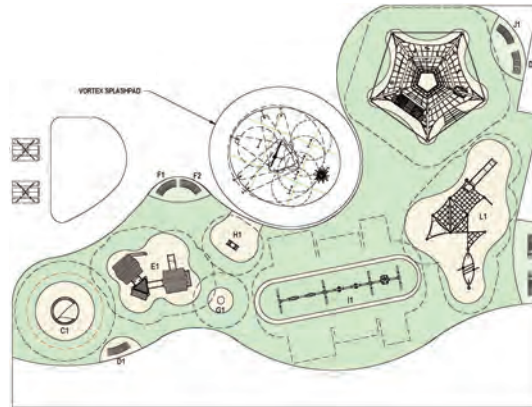


Anna Whitesell, Philadelphia Commissioner Susan Slawson, and Lisa Hardy

Full Speed Ahead!

We were all overjoyed to learn that DCNR had not, in fact, granted the estimated \$250,000 potential grant, but instead **awarded \$350,000 to Philadelphia Parks & Recreation for renovation of Starr Garden playground.** With this grant award, the total committed funding for the project now stands at \$935,000! With the entire estimate raised — and then some! — the Parks & Recreation team can begin the renovation process immediately.

The first step will be to re-bid the project, since the original estimate was crafted nearly four years ago. It's possible that equipment and/or pricing has changed after the original bid. Images of the concept are shown here, but please understand they are subject to change based on many



Planned playground concept

factors the Parks & Recreation team must consider as they embark on a major renovation like this. Even so, we tentatively expect to see the renovation begin as early as Fall 2025.

Special thanks to Carolyn Stanish for first introducing the project; to the 2023 SHCA Board for approving funding and

establishing a committee for the project; to Councilmember Mark Squilla for securing substantial city funding; to SHCA Starr Garden Committee Chair Stacey Ackerman and SHCA Administrator Samantha Brown for providing grant writing skills; to Starr Garden Neighbors and Friends board members Anna Whitesell and Lisa Hardy; to Philadelphia Parks & Recreation's Chris Creelman and Mark Paronish, who worked directly on the project and application; and to Pennsylvania DCNR Liaison Jeanne Barret Ortiz, who provided sage advice for the application process.

We can't wait to see you at Starr Garden this year!

Stacey Ackerman, SHCA board member, chairs the Starr Garden Committee.



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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.



215-844-TREE



"CLEAN AND GREEN" INITIATIVE

BY MARTHA LEVINE

New Twice-a-Week Trash Collection Program

It's finally here! As of December 2, 2024, we welcomed a much-needed pilot program to increase curbside trash and recycling collection from one day a week to two days per week. Mayor Cherelle Parker hopes this program, part of her "Clean and Green" initiative, will keep household trash off the streets and will reduce the problem of illegal dumping in our city. Parker wants to make Philadelphia the "cleanest, greenest big city in the nation." Carlton Williams, director of the Clean and Green Initiative, hopes this program will stop the dumping of household trash in or along side the Big Bellies and other trash cans at our corners. Apparently, illegal residential trash dumping is one of the most common 311 calls. Trash left on corners outside of trash pickup days affects our property values. The pilot program costs the city \$11 million.

The area involved in the pilot runs from Callowhill Street to Pattison Avenue and from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill River. This area was chosen as the most problematic for trash on the streets in Philadelphia. If successful, the program will expand to include many other parts of the city. In addition, we can expect a repeat of the 13-week cleanup of every block in the city, starting here January 6.

Here is the schedule for Society Hill:

- If your usual trash and recycling pickup is on Thursdays, your second day is on Mondays (no recycling on the added day). You may receive a fine if you mix recyclables with your trash on day two.
- If your usual trash and recycling collection is on Fridays, your second pickup day is Tuesdays (no recycling).

After a holiday, trash and recycling collection is delayed by one day for the rest of the week. For our area with two collections a week, after a holiday, there will be only one collection that week: the first pickup day with recycling.

*"Wow, this is great.
We caught up with what other
big cities are doing."*

*"I wish neighbors would wait
and not put out trash midday the
previous day. How about waiting
'til 6 p.m. the evening before?
Trash pickers are at work."*

*"Please use a recycle bin.
Use a plastic bin, not a paper bag
that falls apart on our sidewalks.
What a mess! Cohen's Hardware
and Staples sell them."*

*"We must tie up the plastic bags,
or trash is all over the sidewalks.
Use a trash can if possible."*

— Neighbor comments and concerns

2025 City-Observed Holidays That Affect Collections

Keep this helpful list of weeks with special collections dates handy.

New Year's Day—Wednesday, January 1
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—Monday, Jan 20
Presidents' Day—Monday, February 17
Good Friday—Friday, March 28
Memorial Day—Monday, May 26
Juneteenth—Thursday, June 19
Independence Day—Friday, July 4
Labor Day—Monday, September 1
Indigenous Peoples' Day—Monday, Oct 13
Veterans' Day—Tuesday, November 11
Thanksgiving—Thursday, November 27
Thanksgiving Friday—Friday, November 28
Christmas Day—Thursday, December 25
For more information on trash/recycle pickups, bulk trash pickups, drop off locations, tree recycling, etc., see phila.gov/departments/departments-of-sanitation/

Where Do I Dispose of or Recycle My Christmas Tree?

Christmas trees placed with your curbside trash will end up in a landfill. If you'd like your tree to be recycled instead, here are some options. For a full list, go to www.phila.gov/services/trash-recycling-city-upkeep/dispose-of-christmas-trees/. Remember to remove all decorations.

City-run Drop-off Convenience Centers run by the Department of Sanitation will take trees for composting from Monday, January 6, to Saturday, January 18. Visit the website above for a map of sanitation convenience center locations.

Community Collection Event. Passyunk Square Civic Association will collect trees at 13th and Reed Streets on Saturday, January 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The cost is \$5 per tree.

Arrange for curbside pickup service. Bennett Compost will pick up trees for composting, by appointment, at \$20 per tree. Service is available the weekends

of January 4-5, January 11-12, and January 18-19. Schedule pickup online: www.bennettcompost.com/seasonal.

Philly Goat Project. Yes, goats love to eat Christmas trees! The Tree-Cycle Festival takes place at the Farm at Awbury Arboretum in Mount Airy, 6336 Ardleigh Street, on Saturday, January 4, and Saturday, January 11, from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. Just drop off your tree or stay and enjoy festival activities and goat watching. Suggested donation is \$20 per tree. Learn more at phillygoatproject.org/treecyclefestival.



STEPPING BACK IN TIME

BY MARC S. RASPANTI, ESQ.

A Man Full of Trouble Tavern Is Reborn Again

In the shadow of the Society Hill Towers south tower, located at 127-129 Spruce Street, sits the oldest and only standing pre-Revolutionary tavern in Philadelphia. Bearing a melancholy name, “A Man Full of Trouble Tavern” was built in 1759 in a swampy, mosquito-ridden patch of what was then Dock Street. It consists of two small buildings, the Paschall house and the larger tavern building, which, years ago, were joined together under one roof. The tavern is made of red Pennsylvania brick and is two-and-a-half stories high, with a porch facing the Delaware River.

When the tavern was built, it was not located in the best part of old Philadelphia. The original neighborhood bears no resemblance to modern-day Society Hill. According to historical accounts, there were more than 100 taverns supporting a growing and important port town. Early Philadelphia water supply was often heavily contaminated, creating many health issues. Spirits often cured the thirst left by a lack of clean drinking water. Today, only one original 265-year-old tavern, that was at times a flophouse, still survives. Fortunately, due to the conservation efforts of two visionary Philadelphians, it is about to join the 21st century with a brand-new lease on life.

Like many things in Philadelphia, the Tavern has endured numerous chapters over its long history. Some are fairly well documented; others remain steeped in mystery. The Tavern never served

**A Man Full of Trouble Tavern**

the high-and-mighty patrons of early Philadelphia. It did not host the tony crowd of the original City Tavern, where Franklin, Lafayette, Washington, and Jefferson, among other legendary luminaries, enjoyed fine food and drank imported Madeira wine. But, despite its illustrious pedigree, the original City Tavern was razed in 1854 and didn't even make it to the 20th century. A now-vacant 15,000 square-foot replica sits where the original City Tavern once stood.

There are no reports of any Founding Fathers or Early American aristocracy imbibing at the Tavern. Rather, the Tavern served less genteel patrons, including sailors, dockworkers, port merchants, and deckhands with drink, food, oysters, produce, groceries, warm fish sandwiches, and limited

**Newly commissioned colorful period sign**

lodging on the upper floors. Lodgers often shared a bed with three or four random patrons. At one time, chickens were sold from the establishment.

The Tavern changed hands many times over the years and went by many different names. Built in 1769 by Michael Sisk, the structure was put into commercial service sometime in the 1760s by its first unlicensed tavern keeper, Joseph Beeks. Beeks' successor, James Alexander, obtained a license in 1773 and ran the pub through 1789, when Thomas Wilkins took it over for a short time. Perhaps the most noteworthy owner, widow Martha Smallwood, acquired the property in 1796 and ran it for the next 30 years. Historical and archaeological data hint that Smallwood may have succeeded in bringing a small amount of gentility to a previously rough-and-tumble tavern. Subsequent to widow Smallwood's death in 1826, the establishment morphed into Stafford's Tavern, Cove Cornice House, Naylor's Hotel (a mid-19th-century hotel famous for its oysters), and, in the mid-20th century, a wholesale chicken market.

Surviving sketches and several interesting photographs on display at the Tavern taken in 1860 and 1958 depict how time has treated this small but sturdy Georgian building. Time has not always been kind.

continued on page 9

**“Little Dock & Spruce Streets,” watercolor, 1835****Photo circa 1860**

STEPPING BACK IN TIME

continued from page 8



Photo from 1965

The First Renaissance

In the 1960s, the Tavern enjoyed its first true renaissance. Civic leader, urban planner, visionary, and city councilmember Virginia Knauer, along with her husband Wilhelm, purchased the property, fully restored it, and opened it to the public for historical tours. Mrs. Knauer was a legendary urban thought leader who literally saved the Tavern from the wrecking ball. Society Hill had fallen into severe urban decay after World War II, and urban renewal in Philadelphia was still a novel concept at that time. The Knauer family believed that someday Society Hill would be returned to its past splendor. They wanted the Tavern to be part of that rebirth.

Indeed, in 1966, the Knauer family invited a graduate class in archeology at the University of Pennsylvania to excavate a small area of the Tavern's basement. Many interesting common-day items from the building were unearthed. I am told some of these excavated artifacts now adorn the walls of the Indian King Tavern in Haddonfield, New Jersey. At the time they owned it, the Knauer family put many beautiful period artifacts they possessed on display throughout the property in their Tavern-created museum. The Knauer family never turned it back into a drinking establishment. A small plaque is visible on the tavern, which acknowledges their substantial contributions.

I was fortunate to interview the granddaughter of Virginia Knauer, Nancy Knauer, a prominent law professor. Nancy Knauer was kind enough to share many fond memories of the Tavern and her trail-blazing grandmother. She even conducted tours of the Tavern when she was a young girl. However, dwindling attendance and the inability to make the museum accessible to larger crowds led to the Tavern closing in 1994. The Knauer family closed the museum and deeded the building to the University of Pennsylvania, which used it to house students and visiting professors. Unfortunately,

the mixed use of the building and the growing demands on maintenance led to its decline. Much work was needed to stabilize and rehabilitate the structure if it were to survive.

The Second Renaissance

In May 2021, the Tavern had another positive turn of events. An Old City resident, lawyer, and real estate investor, Dan Wheeler, had walked past the old decaying tavern many times and wondered about its history. He seized upon the opportunity to fulfill his dream and bought the Tavern when it came up for sale. Over the next two years, Mr. Wheeler lovingly stabilized and restored the building. There were virtually no items of value left in the Tavern at the time of his purchase. To date, he has invested more than \$750,000 of his own funds into desperately needed renovations, which include a new roof, paint, stone and brick regrouting, a complete HVAC system, upgraded plumbing, upgraded electrical, and the installation of all new bathrooms including an ADA-compliant restroom on the first floor. Every effort has been made to keep renovations as gentle as possible, while breathing 21st-century amenities into an 18th-century building.

I recently had the privilege to enjoy a pre-opening, top-to-bottom tour by the proud new owner and current steward of this ancient Tavern, Dan Wheeler. He has been involved in every aspect of its renovation. The first floor will be restored to a small, cozy tavern, serving beer, wine, and spirits supplied by Pennsylvania Succession Fermentory of Chester County. It will serve up to 25 patrons. Eventually, there may be limited seating outside. Only light snacks are currently on the menu at this time. Dan's plan is to open the Tavern to the public five days a week. It will be a great place to enjoy a drink before heading off to dinner. The second floor is being restored to a period museum, with

continued on page 11



Plaques note the early history of the building and honor the Knauer's contributions, as well as their late son, former court of common pleas judge Wilhelm Knauer, Jr.



Enjoy locally brewed wine and spirits in the newly reopened tavern.



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Our Historic Restoration of a Horse Stable Home in Society Hill

STEPPING BACK IN TIME

continued from page 9



special exhibitions already in the works. The third floor of the Tavern will remain as administrative offices and storage for now. Dan serves as developer, chief collector, amateur historian, and curator of the fledgling but growing second-floor museum. It is clearly a labor of love for him.



Artifacts include a small cannon from the Siege at Yorktown, two muskets forged in Philadelphia, and the iconic wooden figure from the original Bookbinders restaurant.

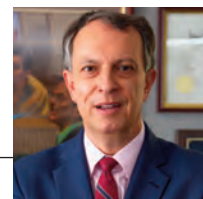
While the museum is still a work in progress, Dan has ambitious plans to fill the second floor with interesting artifacts. I enjoyed viewing some of the historical artifacts he has already gathered in the museum, which include a small cannon from the Siege at Yorktown, one of the first printed copies of the Constitution, an array of unique historical maps of Philadelphia, two muskets forged nearby in Philadelphia, a large clock, photographs, books, and other works, including the wooden iconic figure from the original Bookbinders restaurant. A colorful period sign was commissioned and now adorns the side of the Tavern, as was the custom in the 18th century.

Mr. Wheeler hopes the Society Hill neighborhood will embrace its oldest neighbor by patronizing it for small special events, birthdays, historical societies, and also as a unique wedding weekend venue. He wants the Tavern to be tourist and neighborhood friendly. I asked Dan what his dream was as the latest caretaker of this amazing place. He quickly responded, "I wanted to breathe life into a building that has been closed to the public for 30 years." As did Virginia Knauer, Dan vows to keep his property off the ubiquitous condo list and preserve the building and its essence for at least the next 100 years.

Is the Tavern Haunted?

Mr. Wheeler says he has spent a lot of time on the site renovating the Tavern and has not had any ghostly encounters. However, he concedes he has never spent a single night sleeping in the building. I had the opportunity to interview another Center City lawyer and former colleague who chooses to remain anonymous. He resided in the building from about 1986 to 1989. He tells a very different story about his time living in the building. He lived alone on the second floor of the Tavern. While he never saw any spirits and remains agnostic about ghosts, he was adamant that he heard strange footsteps very often during the years he lived there. My colleague claims he spoke to previous renters who also heard the same eerie noises. Who really knows?

As I spent a quiet Sunday afternoon in the Tavern preparing this story, I wondered how many departed souls over so many years had passed over the thin threshold and entered the Tavern to share a drink, some food, a smoke from a clay pipe, companionship, and a brief respite from the hard life they clearly led during and before our nation's tumultuous founding. I wondered what their lives were like hundreds of years ago and what became of many of them. For almost 300 years, A Man Full of Trouble Tavern has stood as a silent witness to many historical events in Philadelphia. While Philadelphia is now a very different place than when the Tavern was first built, Society Hill is fortunate to have a very old neighbor still around for new generations to experience.



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.

The Brewers Speak



Partners, l to r, Ben Devon, Justin Kerber, and Keith Hartwig

Succession Fermentory is a small farmhouse brewery located in Cochranville, Pennsylvania, about 50 miles west of Philadelphia. We're excited to reopen A Man Full of Trouble Tavern to the public, for the first time since 1994, and have it operate as a bar just as it did when it was built in 1759. We plan to offer a rotating list of wild ales, farmhouse beers, and sours, plus wine and spirits produced in Pennsylvania. We'll also offer a nice spread of snacks for guests' enjoyment.

We are grateful to Dan Wheeler, a true fan of Philadelphia's past, who is responsible for the building's restoration. Without his passion, our dream of opening a bar here would not have been possible.

—Benjamin Devon, wine aficionado and food industry expert

Hours: Thu (4-10 p.m.), Fri (2-10 p.m.), Sat (12-10 p.m.), Sun (12-8 p.m.), Mon (4-10 p.m.)

TREE TENDERS

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

Keeping the Neighborhood Green

Nature gifted us with a beautiful day for the 2024 Tree Tenders Fall Planting. On the morning of November 16, twelve intrepid volunteers, armed with shovels and brooms, headed out to add more little trees to Society Hill. We were happy to have four new volunteers join our crew — actually five if you count my little grandson Luca. Just three years old, he was delighted to help shovel small amounts of soil, he and already knows that trees need water and mulch to grow strong and healthy.

Planting may sound simple: dig a hole and put in the tree. In reality, it's a bit more complicated. Our bare root trees need to be planted at just the right depth so the roots can spread but the root flare isn't buried. Weeds and rocks need to be cleared from the pit, and we never know



what we'll encounter as we start to dig. We've yet to find buried treasure, but old roots, rocks, concrete, and even metal cages left over from plantings of earlier days can make the process more challenging than anticipated. Somehow, we always get the trees planted. Our crew is quite determined and does not let obstacles of any kind stand in their way.

Three new saplings now have homes on the 300 block of Delancey Street. That block has lost several old trees over the last few years. Some fell and some were diseased. A fourth tree was planted on the 700 block of Lombard Street. The new trees need generous watering until the first frost and then not again until spring. We touched base with all of the property owners to review the necessary care. Although the trees are leafless and scrawny right now, they'll leaf out in the spring to give us a preview of what they'll look like once they mature.

A big thank you to our wonderful volunteers and to the homeowners willing to have a tree planted and take on its care. It's a big part of what keeps the neighborhood green, healthy, and beautiful.

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

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VISIONS FOR A REIMAGINED I-95

BY MARY PURCELL, CHAIR SHCA I-95 TASK FORCE

Society Hill Leads Joint Community Meeting Re: I-95

Showing the power of civic associations to lead the way, pulling together communities and electeds and agencies, 150 Philadelphians from Society Hill, Old City, Queen Village, Pennsport and Whitman gathered on October 29 to share their visions for a reimagined I-95.

PennDOT plans to rebuild the aging highway adjacent to these neighborhoods in the next 10 to 20 years, and the communities want their voices heard. For more background on PennDOT plans and our concerns, see page 11 of our May/June 2024 *Reporter* at www.societyhillcivic.org.

Sponsored by SHCA and hosted by Pennsport at their EOM Athletic Association, consultant Frank Jaskiewicz of JzTI led the meeting, with SHCA's Mary Purcell facilitating the community discussion.

Starting with an overview of proposals floated by PennDOT in September 2023, Mr. Jaskiewicz pivoted to the "good stuff." Employing sample images, he engaged the community on the following types of opportunities and challenges:

- Underpass treatments
- Highway caps
- Community amenities
- Traffic calming and transitions from highway to local streets
- Safe streets for everyone

Community members said...

- NO to new ramps because of their imposition into neighborhoods
- YES to traffic calming elements at transitions from highway ramps and from Columbus Boulevard to communities
- YES to preserving the ball fields near Walt Whitman Bridge
- YES to preserving and improving amenities such as the skating rink
- YES to realizing Foglietta Plaza design
- WOW — could the roadway be sunken or covered, similar to the Boston Big Dig?
- WHAT ABOUT INTEGRATION — with other modes of transportation and plans for the area?
- THE FUTURE — plans must consider future changes in mobility

Next Steps

- We will share with you and with PennDOT the report Mr. Jaskiewicz is preparing. It will include feedback from the communities as well as recommendations for PennDOT.
- We will consider a petition process, informed by the report.
- PennDOT has stated they plan to re-engage with the communities in Spring 2025. We will be ready.

Thank you to SHCA I-95 Task Force members Paul Boni, Jeff Fogg, Lorna Katz Lawson, Mark Keener, and Bob Kramer.

We also thank representatives from the city and state who attended: Councilmember Squilla; Hugo Cortes, Representative Fiedler's District Office Director; State Senator Saval and his Chief of Staff Alfredo Chuquihuara; Representative Mary Isaacson's Chief of Staff Colleen McCallister; and Christopher Johnson, Regional Representative for U.S. Senator Casey; as well as neighborhood leaders Cait Allen (QVNA), Brian Donnelly (Whitman), Patrick Fitzmaurice (Pennsport), and Job Itzkowitz (Old City).

SHCA Expresses Concern About Bike Lane Proposals

Members of the Philadelphia City Council passed the "Get Out the Bike Lane" bill on Thursday, October 24. Council President Kenyatta Johnson introduced the bill on September 25, following the death of Dr. Barbara Friedes, who was killed while cycling on Spruce Street near 18th Street on July 17. The legislation bans motor vehicles from stopping in any of the city's bike lanes. Penalties for parking or even temporarily stopping in bike lanes increase from \$75 to \$125 in Center City and University City, and from \$50 to \$75 in other neighborhoods.

SHCA held a community meeting on October 29 to allow for input before the legislation was signed into law by Mayor Parker. Supporting and opposing positions were presented, then the floor was opened for attendees

to voice their opinions. Some residents living along Spruce and Pine have expressed safety concerns about losing all access to the curbsides at their homes, even for loading and unloading small children, elderly and disabled, while other residents believe the changes are needed to increase cycling safety. Following the community meeting, SHCA President Susan Burt Collins tapped some board members to analyze the needs of cyclists and residents, and their presentations were made at the November 20 SHCA Board meeting. Further resident opinions were expressed and heard at the meeting.

On December 2, SHCA's Board passed a statement objecting to the no stopping legislation and opposing added curbs, which the city has in the planning stage. The statement, which was

sent to Councilmember Mark Squilla on December 3, reads as follows: "The Board of the Society Hill Civic Association supports increased and safe cycling, but the needs of residents must also be considered. The Board objects to the No Stopping legislation as written for the bike lanes in our community and requests a delay in the effective date of the law. We also oppose physical barriers along bike lanes in Society Hill. We urge discussions, including amendments to the law, with all stake holders to find ways to address safety and accessibility for all, based on local conditions and needs."

On December 4, Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker signed the "Get out the Bike Lane" bill into law. The law will not be enforced until the Department of Streets installs new 'No Stopping Anytime' signs along the corridor in Spring 2025.

KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

The Charles Massey House

Our postcard belongs to a series by the Architectural Post Card Co. dating from sometime after 1906. I find this puzzling, because the company seems to have been prolific and yet I find zero mention of it in repeated internet searches. Their cards focusing on design details — entrances, fireplaces, columns, entire structures — are not hard to find, and there are always images I've not seen before. Some series are numbered and captioned: "Series No. 7 Old Colonial" or "Series No. 4 Philadelphia Suburban." Our card has only a serial number. The idea resulted in many beautiful and historically interesting images. Luckily their work included our #239 Pine Street. Regular readers may recall I have often mentioned that cards of our neighborhood, on which I try to focus, are rare. Stephen Large, a furniture manufacturer, was the likely homeowner when the postcard photo was taken. He bought the house in 1875 and died 1901.

We are also lucky to live among one of the largest collections of 18th and 19th-century buildings in the country, for which we largely have to thank an aggressive nationwide urban renewal movement. In 1964 there were 1,634 projects in progress on which the federal government had spent 1.2 billion dollars, \$12,378,980,000 in today's money. This activity was spurred by the Housing Act of 1949, which had made available "funds for the rehabilitation and conservation of old houses and neighborhoods."

Philadelphia was the largest spender, having combined some \$2 billion (\$20.6 billion today) from private, city, state, and federal sources. Penn Center and Society Hill Towers were being finished up. Dozens of 18th-century townhouses were being restored from the "seedy boardinghouses" they had become. Seventy-five projects were underway or had been completed. Organizing this activity and wrangling all the many parties was Philadelphia-born architect and city planner Edmund Bacon, who appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in the November 6, 1964, issue from



This card from the Architectural Post Card Co. shows 239 Pine Street.

which the above information comes. He was the father of actor Kevin Bacon.

Thankfully the current owners of the "Charles Massey House" at 239 Pine Street (formerly #65, until the house numbers changed when the city and county of Philadelphia consolidated in 1854) have a wonderful land title history report, which they allowed me to read. Written for a previous owner, it is the source of the information that follows.

The house and its twin at 237 Pine were constructed by Charles Massey ca. 1794. His Irish Quaker grandfather Samuel had founded a shipping company that became one of the largest in Philadelphia and did business around the world; appropriately his flagship vessel was christened "The Globe." The firm expanded into the manufacture of candles and soap, a bakery, real estate investments, a retail store, and a warehouse filled with consumer products brought back by his ships. It even began issuing maritime insurance policies. Charles and a brother inherited the business, but Charles became the primary owner. The houses were rented

to a series of tenants, and Charles did not move in until after the turn of the 19th century.

Charles Massey died in 1810, and we know from his will that he also owned numbers 232 and 234 Delancey Street, which were inherited by family members. A series of renters and owners, some of whose households included enslaved laborers, occupied 239 and 237 Pine from that point on. One owner is said to be an ancestor of President Lyndon Johnson. Among the dozens of owners detailed in the report are many manufacturers of various things (heavy aprons, coats, buggy whips, furniture) who maintained businesses nearby. There was a dentist, a real estate broker, a dye maker, lawyers, and a telegraphist, after it became the new miracle technology. For a while the house was divided into three apartments. Life went on. There were rocky marriages, family feuds, and one owner wound up in a mental institution. At various times #239 was foreclosed on or sold at a sheriff's sale. It was owner occupied. It was rented out by absentee landlords. Minor changes were made: the marble steps were covered with wood, a window was cut in the door, the shutters were removed. A kitchen, originally in the basement, was built on the first floor. Bathrooms and fireplaces were rebuilt.

In 1955 Earl Lovelace, a WWII veteran, purchased the house under the G.I. Bill. He worked at Lits Department Store as a decorator and is said to have been gay. He and his black standard poodle, who he kept dressed in "fancy hats, earrings and other garb and jewelry," seem to have been well-known from their walks in Society Hill. Earl died on Valentine's Day in 1978. His and his dog's ashes were interred together at the Pine Street side of St. Peter's Church under a stone "marked simply E.W.L." Seems like an interesting guy.

Frank T. Ongaro became the owner in 1982, and is the person for whom the

continued on page 15

KEEPING POSTED

*Our houses are more than structures. They harbor us; they protect and defend us.
In turn they rely on us for their care, and so we nurture them as they do us.*

land title history was written. He was well known for several reasons, and I would think some of our longer-term neighbors must have known him. A former treasurer of SHCA, he lived in the neighborhood since 1968. Frank is described as a “self-made man” who got some training at IBM in New York at age 16 and worked his way through high school. At 19 he won on Ted Mack’s Amateur Hour and toured the country as a professional accordionist. Serving in the Coast Guard during the Korean War, he then became partners with an uncle, making devices to measure a boat’s fuel consumption. They were the first to introduce a groundbreaking product advancement, which allowed them to sell the company to a larger one.

Frank then went out on his own selling marine products from Maine to Florida before he got back into designing and manufacturing them. In a nod to Charles Massey and his ship “The Globe,” at the time the report was written, Frank was doing business in Asia. To give his wife “something to do” while he was away on business, he purchased a card and gift shop for her on Headhouse Square as a wedding present. She named it Candleberry. The marriage ended in divorce. Frank owned and lived in multiple neighborhood houses: 216 Pine Street, and 104-106 Delancey Street, which he restored. The attic was reported to contain “a prison” with no further explanation. If you live there perhaps you can tell us if the prison is still exists and what it is!

Frank was conducting a major restoration of 239 Pine Street at the time of the report, which includes the building permit he got to install the basement street entrance for his marine manufacturer’s sales office.

The house built in the 18th century with maritime money was being restored by maritime money in the 20th century. Frank passed away in 2011, and his wife only this past April. Frank’s initials are in the large parlor doors he installed.

The current owners have a strong sense of stewardship. They came here from Denver in 2001, raised a family in the house, expanded the kitchen, which revealed some bones that they showed to the city (not human, as it turned out), and made repairs as one does with an old house. They said it is fun to be part of something that has had so many feelings attached to it and is bigger than themselves, adding, “One must respect the house and its history.”

They have “warm feelings” for the “old lady and her secrets” that seem to be revealed each time someone comes to work on her. A workman was in the basement. Glancing up, he caught a glimpse in the mirror of a short man wearing a nautical style peacoat. When he turned around, there was nothing there. A moment later, he saw the figure across the room, arms folded, just looking at him. They don’t know what to make of it and have not seen it themselves. But when their son was little, he says he saw it too.

Last Thanksgiving weekend, the house was packed with family and friends. On Friday there were 18 visitors. One night, nine slept over. I remarked that the other owners would be glad to see the house used in this way, centering on so much happiness. Looking forward, there is an awareness that at some point it will likely not make sense for two people to remain and grow old in a three-story

18th-century house, and it will be time to move on, as all have done before them.

In the end, one way or another, we all must leave our homes. When I left houses that I lovingly cared for, homes that comforted me and served as my safe place, I did so with nostalgic sadness. I felt as if I were abandoning an old friend, or even a parent. I was moving on and leaving them behind. If we are lucky, our houses are more than structures. They harbor us; they protect and defend us. In turn they rely on us for their care, and so we nurture them as they do us. As I said goodbye, not only to the house but to yet another chapter of my life, I remembered the words written by the late Don Herron for *The Times Herald Record* in Newburgh, New York. Don rescued and lived in a house from 1835. Here’s what he wrote when he left it:

“My salvaged and restored ruin is sold. It’s better for me and my aching back and queasy knees. And, in the long run, I know it’s better for the house and the neighborhood. But it’s still hard, this final severing of whatever bond that connects me to the house.

“So go, little house. Our bond is severed. I release you, and you release me. You’re free to create a bond with your new owners, and in doing so, free to give the neighborhood and the City of Newburgh the most valuable gifts a house can provide: the pride of home ownership and a true ‘love of place.’”



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

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general contractors, plumbers, window washers, and more. You name it, we have it. We are happy to send members the list electronically or as a hard copy. To receive a copy of the list, contact us at info@societyhillcivic.org.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRANDON ENGELHARDT

Wrapping Up December

continued from page 1

Last but not least, our neighborhood **invested** time and energy to come together at Bridget Foy's on December 11th to celebrate the year of 2024! It was fun to meet neighbors from all across Society Hill, from Hopkinson House and Society Hill Towers to Lombard Street and Headhouse Square. We got to chat about what is new in the

neighborhood, like a true Christmas miracle: The Man Full of Trouble Tavern has opened its doors once again. (Story on page 10, visit at 127 Spruce Street). And, to our collective relief, no one hurled any Scrooge or Grinch invectives over the bike lanes!



Brandon Engelhardt has been a neighbor in Society Hill since 2021. He and his wife are most famous for their spunky-spirited, red Irish Golden named Fitzgerald. Email Bengelhardt2014@gmail.com.



The Great Society Hill Clean-Up



The Great Society Hill Clean-Up was a resounding success! Thanks to Al Meinster, who worked hard to organize the event, and to everyone who braved the cold to come out and sweep their sidewalks. A special shout out to the volunteers from Philly Bike Action!, who showed up early in their pink vests, bringing coffee and donuts to Three Bears Park, and worked alongside residents to collect many bags of leaves. Our neighborhood looks clean and beautiful!

— **Bonnie Halda**



OUT AND ABOUT

PHOTOS BY BRANDON ENGELHARDT

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ON OUR SHELF

BY IZZY HALLORAN

A Review of *Didion & Babitz* by Lili Anolik

Didion & Babitz by Lili Anolik is a recently released nonfiction book exploring the relationship between Joan Didion, a pioneer of New Journalism, and Eve Babitz, most known for writing about “the scene” in late 20th-century Los Angeles. Anolik chronicles the relationship between two of the most iconic writers of their time from their first encounter in the 1960s to each of their deaths in 2021, when they died only six days apart. *Didion & Babitz* is partially presented as an exposé of Joan Didion, based on a perceived rivalry between the two, and on Anolik’s personal disdain for Didion. As a fan of both of these crucial figures, I was eager to read a well-researched account of their correspondence and collaboration, but ultimately found the concept on which Anolik bases the book faulty and distasteful.

Lili Anolik is a self-proclaimed Eve Babitz fanatic. After years of attempted contact, Anolik eventually becomes her friend in Babitz’s final years. She is an expert on all things Eve Babitz, publishing a book on Babitz in 2019 titled *Hollywood’s Eve*. The author assures the reader of her credentials, citing extensive research, first-hand accounts, and boxes of documents Babitz leaves to Anolik in her will. When Anolik discovers a scathing letter Babitz typed to Didion but never sent, she becomes fascinated with the relationship between the two prolific writers, who ran in the same circles in 1960s and 70s Los Angeles. As the book progresses, I found Anolik’s unique, insider knowledge of Babitz engrossing, while accounts of Didion contained mostly rumors and opinions. I began to question Didion’s inclusion in this book.

Didion & Babitz feels like two separate books—one about Eve Babitz, her work, and her rich inner life, and the second, a book whose purpose is to uncover Didion’s faults and show the reader another, darker side of a beloved figure. This is not a sustainable structure to explore a long, complex friendship between two important figures, especially since the author was close to one and resented the other. I found that Anolik’s bias against Didion obstructed the narrative. She often made bold proclamations with little to no concrete evidence, interjecting her opinion into a narrative that flowed well without her perspective. At certain points in the book, Anolik admits that she lacks evidence to support her claim that Didion ever acted maliciously towards Babitz. There is, however, evidence to support the fact that Didion was a good friend to Babitz throughout the years, consistently platforming Eve’s art and writing, and acting as a major advocate for her work.

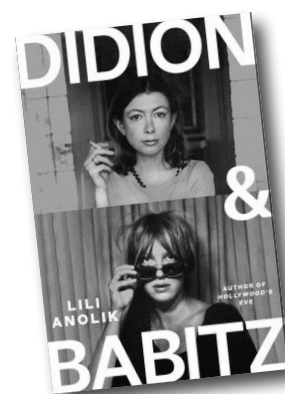
In chapter 13, “Unsent Letters,” the author discovers that Joan Didion and her husband, fellow writer John Gregory Dunne, were the original editors of Eve Babitz’s *Eve’s Hollywood* in the early 1970s, an important detail Babitz omitted from their extensive conversations on the book while Anolik was writing *Hollywood’s Eve*. This is one of the many instances that undermine Anolik’s description of the relationship between Didion and Babitz. Anolik attempts to strip Didion bare, to unveil the literary icon as a career-driven, apathetic prude. Didion’s chapters are gossip-driven, often featuring stories from friends of friends that peek into her inner circle, marriage, and her husband and daughter’s tragic deaths.

The information presented on Didion is significantly less thorough than that on Babitz, exploitative, and morally corrupt. Towards the end of *Didion & Babitz*, Anolik chastises Didion for writing *The Year of Magical Thinking* about her husband’s sudden death, insisting it was written to humanize herself to the public. This is a bold statement from an author who is writing a book about two deceased women to capitalize on their lives. Anolik admits Didion’s talent as a writer but undercuts it by trying to convince the reader of her weak moral character, often in juxtaposition to Babitz, who she paints as a liberated woman loved by many.

This book would be greatly improved by limiting the inclusion of the author’s feelings towards Babitz and Didion. The most intriguing aspect of the book lay in the stories including both figures, which gave context for each of their major works and the circumstances around the piece and the characters involved. I would have been content reading a book about Eve Babitz and her uncovered correspondences, with a chapter or two on Joan Didion and their friendship.

Even though I thought the book had a distasteful bias, I enjoyed learning about both women and looking at photographs I had never seen before. *Didion & Babitz* would have been a more pleasurable experience if the author had allowed readers to come to their own conclusions instead of imposing her views on the narrative.

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





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BY MARY STURDIVANT

Bring the Outdoors In

Gardeners probably watch weather more closely than an average urban dweller. Meteorologists using modern technology make astoundingly accurate forecasts. If a Bill Kelly or Cecily Tynan type tells you to expect snow around 2 p.m., you can look out your window at 1:55 p.m. and see snow flurries starting. But I was curious about old-tlme forecasting, the kind practiced in *Poor Richard's Almanac* or the *Farm Journal* when it was still on the Square. Just how cold is this winter going to be? Will we get enough snow or break this past fall's record drought?

For answers, I asked the squirrels, or at least looked closely at their tails. Folk wisdom claims that bushy-tailed squirrels forecast severe cold, while scrawny-tailed ones predict a mild winter. This fall, the first word to come to mind while watching the squirrels scampering around Washington Square was "luxuriant." Beautiful, thick, voluminous tails abounded. For those who remember the ominous refrain from *Game of Thrones*, "Winter is coming," ...and we are in for it.

It makes sense. If I were going to spend 60 percent of my time sleeping in a tree cavity or a drey, I would want a plush fur throw, too. The next two months will answer my questions. Meanwhile, remember: there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing. I think I recall reading that in an L.L. Bean or Eddie Bauer catalog.

Most of us do spend more time indoors during winter. So you might be tempted to "spruce" up the place with a little greenery. Bring the outdoors inside because it is too cold to go outside. Before buying a few new houseplants, slow your roll! Here are some things to consider.

First, where do you want to put this new acquisition? Now that you have your spot, what kind of light does the space get: north, south, early morning east, late afternoon west? Are there obstructions like the shadow of a high rise, another home, a wall, fence, or tree? How close to the window do you want it? Are there drafts? How close to a radiator or heat pump? While you can control water and soil, you can't control light, unless you want to install grow lights or continually move things around. Light, light, light!

Now you are ready to visit a nursery or shop, flip through a catalog, or scroll through a seller's website, and ready to fall in love. Almost. Before



you check out, click, or swipe right, there is still one more step of self-examination. I wish I had thought of it, but it comes from Baltimore-based designer Hilton Carter. In his PBS special "Living Wild," he asked the audience, "Are you a dog person or a cat person?" This test works even if you don't live with a canine or feline companion. Cat people can put out the water, leave out a couple of days' worth of food, clean the litter box, and leave for a long weekend. Everything will be fine on their return, that is, physically; emotional issues are not in this calculation. On the other hand, dog people must arrange for someone to replenish the water and food and, most importantly, to walk the dog for exercise and relief.

Plants have similar characteristics. I could water my snake plant and cacti, go away for two weeks, and return to no problems. But some of the most beautiful and blooming houseplants are also the most persnickety. A friend gifted me with a gorgeous magenta cyclamen. After a long weekend in the Poconos, I returned to flowers drooping over the sides of the pot. I just don't need that kind of guilt.

If you actually have a cat or dog, make sure your future houseplant isn't toxic to your pet. For example, cat lovers, peace lilies are not in your future. So when you are ready to buy and the clerk asks, "Do you have any questions?" ask them. You have moved beyond physical attraction and want to be in a relationship. You have questions and need answers. Enjoy!

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."

*Before
buying a few
new houseplants,
slow your roll,
and answer
this question:
"Are you a
dog person or
a cat person?"*



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NIFTY NEIGHBORS IN MY BACKYARD

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

Olympic Champion Maia Weintraub

The Olympics are always a welcome diversion from day-to-day life. Elite athletes, at the peak of their game, come from all over the world to amaze us with their skills and tenacity. The 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris featured all that plus our own neighborhood champion, Maia Weintraub. As an integral part of the U.S. Fencing team, Maia, a first-time Olympian, was subbed in during the third round of the final team foil event against #1 Italy. She managed to secure the victory for the U.S. Women's Team as they took home their first gold medal in Team Foil Competition in U.S. history! It's quite an accomplishment to reach the pinnacle of your sport at the age of 21.

Many articles have covered Maia's athletic accomplishments along with play-by-play descriptions of the fencing events. I wanted to dig a little deeper to discover what makes her tick. How does a girl growing up in Philadelphia go on to become an Olympic fencing champion?

Now a junior and NCAA individual foil champion at Princeton University, studying Ecology and Environmental Biology, Maia grew up right here in Society Hill, where her parents still reside. She generously took time out of her busy schedule to speak with me for this article. I wondered how one even gets exposed to fencing. I know it was never on my radar as a child!

As a little girl, Maia participated in more traditional activities like ballet and violin. Two of her uncles (her father's brothers) had fenced since they were young and thought Maia might enjoy it. While still in elementary school at Friends Select, she started taking lessons at the Fencing Academy of Philadelphia. Once she tried it, she was hooked. Her school didn't have a fencing team, and there are not many venues for training in our area. Having people to practice with is crucial to hone your skills. By seventh grade, Maia was traveling to New York after school three to four times per week

for training. That was in addition to another two to three days of local practice. Weekends were for rest or competitions. Homework was completed on the bus or train, and she soon learned to sleep anytime and anywhere the opportunity presented itself.

I wondered if she felt stressed with a schedule like this. Maia said she had

done it from such an early age and she enjoyed the sport so much, that it never felt like a negative to her. She very much appreciates all the time and money her parents invested for her to come this far, but she never felt pressured by them. It was her own drive, determination, and love of the sport that propelled her.

How about a social life? There are only 24 hours in a day, and hers looked to have been pretty full. Maia admits she did miss out on a lot of social events, but has maintained strong friendships both inside and outside the world of fencing. She clearly loves the community provided by her chosen sport and feels certain those friendships will be with her for many years to come. The fact that she got to see what she described as "the fully painted picture," her Olympic accomplishments, has made it all worthwhile and led to some sense of fulfillment. Interestingly, she said she was never working towards one final goal in fencing. Rather she would take on each challenge as it presented itself along the way.

What does the future hold? Maia took a gap year from college last year to prepare for the Olympics. She's eager now to get the most out of her final two years at Princeton and is ready to put fencing on the back burner for at least a little while. At the time of our interview, final exams loomed large. She struck me as a very bright, thoughtful, levelheaded young woman who is open to whatever comes her way. Right now, she's considering medical school, but she's willing to explore other opportunities that may present themselves. I'm confident that she'll excel in whatever path she chooses. Go, Maia!



Maia shows off Philadelphia City Council's resolution honoring and recognizing her for representing Philadelphia and the United States in the Olympics.



Winners of the Women's Team Foil event celebrate winning the gold on August 1, during the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. Pictured l to r, Jackie Dubrovich, Maia Weintraub, Lauren Scruggs and Lee Kiefer. (Photo by Getty Images)

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



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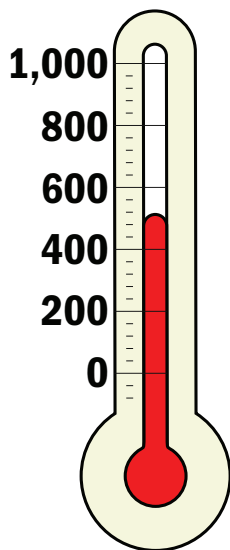
BY SAMANTHA BROWN

Your Membership Counts

Since 1965, SHCA has been dedicated to preserving the unique charm and character that make our neighborhood special. In 2025, we proudly celebrate an incredible milestone: our 60th anniversary.

Thanks to everyone who responded to the first membership mailing and signed up or renewed their membership. Whether you mailed in a check or registered online, your membership counts. As of mid-December, we had 496 members for 2025. Our goal is 1,000 members.

**2025 GOAL FOR
NUMBER OF
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1 Use this QR code to make your gift by phone.



1. Open your phone's camera.
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3. Click the link that appears on the screen, and it will take you right to our web page where you can sign up!

2 Visit this URL to make your gift on computer:

www.societyhillcivic.org/join

3 Use the form on this page to pay by check.

Mail it to: Society Hill Civic Association
P.O. Box 63503, Philadelphia, PA 19147

We salute long-time members and warmly welcome new neighbors to join us. If you haven't done so yet, sign up today!

Let's honor our history while shaping an even brighter future for Society Hill.

Samantha Brown is SHCA's Administrator and has called Society Hill home for 20 years.



Society Hill

CIVIC ASSOCIATION

2025 Membership Form

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

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BY MARTHA LEVINE, COORDINATOR

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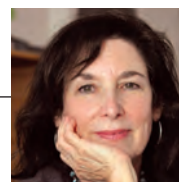
1812 All Comedy Productions, performed at Plays and Players, 1714 Delancey Street, is not to be missed for a memorable and fun evening. January and February are great months for getting out and going to theater and other live performances. Check out our list of entertainment venues.

If you purchased and reside in your first house or condominium in Society Hill in 2023 or 2024, you are eligible to receive a welcome gift from SHCA, called the Welcome Gift Bag. Each bag contains a bottle of wine, a bag of coffee, artisan chocolates and a pastry. In addition, important information about Society Hill and SHCA will be shared with you.

The gift is presented at your home by appointment and takes about 40 minutes. Please contact me at marthalev6@gmail.com or 215-629-0727 if you are interested, and we can set up a convenient time to meet.

As always, we thank our generous, long-standing contributors, as well as new ones, who make this program possible. We are always looking for new contributors to add to our list of 42 businesses and organizations. See list below.

Martha Levine is an active long-time SHCA board member.



Welcome Gift Bag

As always, we ask you to support the long-loyal business donors listed here. Without them, there would not be a 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 Buglambillas (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
Rosy's Taco Bar East, 624 S. 6th Street
Starr Restaurant Group, www.starr-restaurants.com
The Twisted Tail (Southern), 509 S. 2nd Street

Entertainment

1812 Productions (all comedy), 1714 Delancey
Arden Theatre, 40 N. 2nd Street
Ghost Tour of Philadelphia, 215-413-1997, ghosttour@ghosttour.com
Lantern Theatre, 10th & Ludlow Streets
Phila. Chamber Ensemble (at Old Pine Church), www.pceconcerts.org

Retail, Services

Adornamenti (jewelry), 1006 Pine Street
Head House Books, 619 S. 2nd Street
Judy Moon Massage, 829 Spruce Street, Suite 300
Lee's Cleaners, 241 S. 6th Street
Liberty Tree & Landscape Management, 215-725-3637
MASS F.I.T. (fitness), 401 S. 2nd Street, lower level
Naked Chocolate, www.nkdchocolate.com
Oggi Salon & Spa, 1700 Locust Street
Paper on Pine (stationery), 1310 Sansom Street
Pileggi on the Square (salon), 717 Walnut Street
Reading Terminal Market, 1136 Arch Street
Sam Shaw's Treatory (culinary & lifestyle boutique), 306 South Street
Show of Hands (craft gallery), 1006 Pine Street
Stump Plants, 622 S. 9th Street

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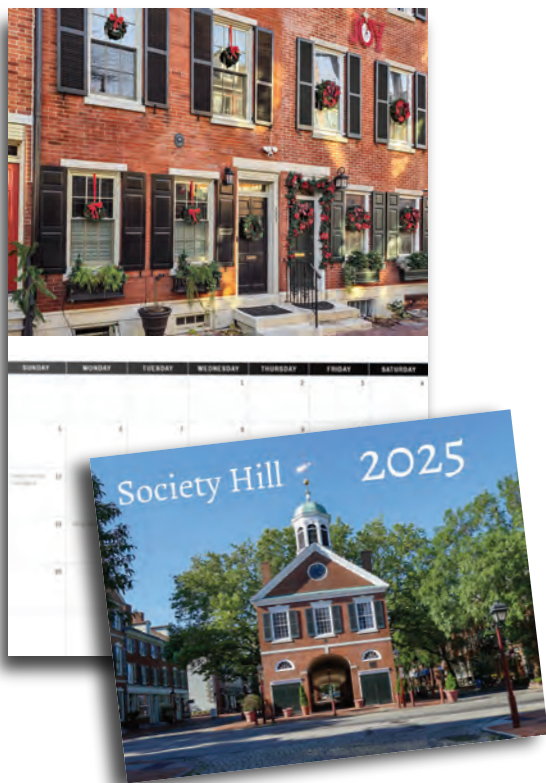
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BY BONNIE HALDA

2025 Society Hill Calendar

The 2025 Society Hill calendar is available for sale, with all proceeds benefiting SHCA. The calendar features 12 full-color, seasonal photographs of the historic buildings, streetscapes, and courtyards throughout our neighborhood, taken by SHCA board member Bonnie Halda. You may place your order with the publishing company website, using the following link. All orders are printed on demand and will be delivered directly to you.

<https://www.lulu.com/shop/bonnie-halda/society-hill-philadelphia-2025/paperback/product-65y2p5j.html?page=1&pageSize=4>

**CARD SALES BENEFITING SHCA**

BY MARTHA LEVINE

Great for Thank You Notes!

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Orders are limited to two boxes per household. To view all 12 cards and to order, go to www.societyhillcivic.org and click on “What’s Happening.” The cards will be delivered to your door.



Photographs by SHCA Board member Martha Levine.
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- Stephen G.

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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!
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KIDS KORNER

BY THE FOX FAMILY

Hole in One *Dozen?* Par for the Course!**Puttshack**

The Shops at Liberty Place
1625 Chestnut Street, www.puttshack.com

In the last Kids Korner, we promised to discuss the new indoor mini golf course in Liberty Place. The Foxes never break a promise! In September, we took Jaime's family to try the Puttshack. The place has several miniature golf courses to choose from and a nice-looking bar with large TVs. We were assigned to a course and separated into two groups of four. It was certainly miniature golfing for 2024. There are many different, challenging holes and plenty of opportunities for quality selfies. The children liked that no one could cheat since an electronic system scored for us. Even though there were eight of us, it only took about 30 minutes to play the nine holes. It was a fun activity for all ages, in this case, ages nine to 79.

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Yes, the player with the highest score wins.

**Beiler's Doughnuts**

Reading Terminal Market. 51 N. 12th Street
www.beilersdoughnuts.com, Closed Sundays

We finally made it to the last donut shop on our tour of Philly's phinest doughnut shops, and based on the most recent polling numbers, we saved the best for last! Beiler's is tucked away in the front of Reading Terminal Market near the northern corner. When we arrived at 3 p.m., the line stretched around the store. Though daunting, it proved to be fast-moving. Beiler's is clearly accustomed to their popularity and handled the crowd with ease. We tried the apple harvest, strawberry-filled, Oreo cream, Boston cream, chocolate with M&Ms, and chocolate peanut butter. Owen, Jordan, and Jordan's friend liked the strawberry cream the best while Jaime was a huge fan of the apple harvest.



Beiler's: saving the best for last.

**LaScala's Fire**

615 Chestnut Street, www.lascalasfire.com

Jaime and Mike love happy hour. It's like an early bird special for young(er) people. Mike was out of town one night, so Jaime invited Jordan and some friends along to check out La Scala's happy hour. (Note to self: nine-year-olds aren't allowed to sit at the bar, even if they do have your credit card.) Luckily, we found an empty table from which we were able to order from the happy hour menu. The menu has many affordable options, particularly for those of us who are carb-loading. After stuffing ourselves with wine (some of us), a ricotta board, truffle French fries, and three orders of cheesesteak egg rolls, all of us left full and satisfied. Happily, our nine-year-old covered the tab. Happy hour is Monday through Friday from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m.

**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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Antonio Atacan

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- Society Hill Resident for 25 Years
- Studied at Wharton Business School
- Class Parent at Society Hill Synagogue Pre-School and St. Peters School
- Society Hill Civic Association Member
- Founded Keller Williams in Center City in 2006, The Atacan Group and Venture Philly Group
- Sold almost \$1 Billion in Philadelphia Real Estate

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

"Relocating back to the US after several years in France, it was important for me to partner with a realtor with an analytical, focused and a comprehensive perspective. Antonio's Wharton background and his honest, numerate perspectives spanning decades of experience sealed the deal for me.

We appreciated his understanding of our specific brief – that reduced wasted efforts on either side. While I had accidentally spotted a particular property myself, Antonio and his team executed the various process steps superbly and speedily. Antonio's valuable guidance on pricing competitiveness, and on evaluating the specific quality parameters of the condo were most helpful and appreciated. His candor, his knowledge, his humility and his ready laugh make him an immensely trustworthy, reliable and likable partner.

I wholeheartedly recommend Antonio, and VenturePhilly. "

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kitchen and high-end bathroom.

777 sf | \$329,000

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