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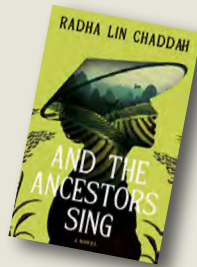
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SOCIETY HILL

Reporter

NUSA Award-Winning Neighborhood Newsletter First Place

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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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FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY ROBERT KRAMER

Midterm Message

As I write this message, we are in the holiday season, the new year 2026 approaches, and the first half of my term as president is in the rearview mirror. It is a time of reflection. When I chose to serve as president, my most important goal was to bring civility, cooperation and community involvement to the Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA). Community service and advocacy are both the goals of a civic organization, as well as its lifeblood. SHCA is a volunteer organization with only one part-time paid administrator. Active engaged volunteers are needed so that goals can be achieved. Understandably, volunteers are more available when the community believes the civic association is serving its needs.

The community is currently focused on whether concrete protective barriers should be installed next to the bike lanes on Spruce and Pine Streets. Installing concrete barriers has been a divisive issue, with many residents in favor of and many residents opposing the proposal. SHCA has been praised as well as criticized after it made a \$25,000 donation to the Friends of Pine & Spruce (FOPS) towards the expense of litigating against the city of Philadelphia, with the goal of maintaining curbside vehicular access to residents' properties on Pine and Spruce Streets. SHCA's board of directors approved the donation by an overwhelming vote of 23 to 6. The community elects the directors annually. Whether community members support or oppose the FOPS agenda, both sides cite public safety issues. One side is most concerned with bike lane user safety, and the other side is most concerned with residents having safe access to their homes and public safety services, such as fire equipment and ambulances. I leave it to others to weigh in on the merits of both arguments in the following pages.

Even though both sides are unlikely to be in complete agreement on the ways that bicyclist and residents' safety can be maximized, I urge that the advocacy groups, including SHCA, explore where their ideas overlap, so they can jointly

promote increased safety to city officials. Vision Zero strategies have been successfully used by other cities to increase traffic safety. Some of the strategies are: a lower 20 mph speed limit, clear sight lines at intersections, and some type of physical barrier for the first 20 to 25 feet of an intersection that provides protection for bicyclists and prevents parking. My hope is that the community will unify on the things all sides can agree upon while respectfully reserving the right to continue to advocate different ideas for their ultimate agenda.

Whether you support or oppose the decision of SHCA to donate to FOPS's litigation expense, I urge community members to get involved and promote the projects that you favor. Some recent initiatives that are being worked on by SHCA's officers, directors, and various committees are: advocating for reduced vehicle speed on Lombard Street; working with Queen Village Neighborhood Association (QVNA) and Philly Bike Action to place additional bicycle racks in the Headhouse area; working with the Washington West Civic Association (WWCA) to improve sightlines at the intersections surrounding McCall School working with Bella Vista Neighbor Association, QVNA, and WWCA to reduce the vehicle speed on South Street and eliminate nuisance businesses from South Street. The

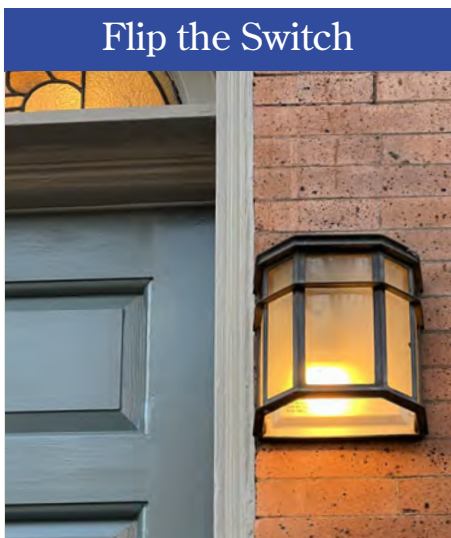
Foglietta Committee is continuing to advocate for improvements to Foglietta Square, and the I-95 Committee is working with the registered community organizations adjacent to I-95 to oppose overexpansion of I-95 into the area.

Society Hill does not exist in isolation. We are part of a larger urban ecosystem. Collaboration with nearby neighborhoods and advocacy groups is essential for increasing our impact with city officials.

As a volunteer-driven organization, SHCA's success depends on the engagement of the community. Please communicate your ideas to SHCA by emailing info@societyhillcivic.org. If you want to be involved, please join a committee. Committee membership does not require being a director or officer. SHCA exists to serve the needs and aspirations of the Society Hill community.

Thank you for your trust and support, and have a tremendous 2026.

Robert Kramer is a retired attorney who has served as an SHCA Board Member since 2015. He has acted as chair of the Legal Committee, Nominations Committee, and 5th Street Committee, and has been a member of the Finance, ZHP, I-95, Parking, Master Plan and Foglietta Plaza Committees. He and his wife have lived in Society Hill since 2012.



Turn on your front door lights after dark. The wide spacing between our Franklin lights creates gaps between the lights, leaving dark spots on our sidewalks. There is a remedy: if every house turned on their front door lights from dusk to dawn, even lighting would spread throughout the neighborhood. So flip the switch or use an electronic method such as an automatic timer or photo sensor to turn on the light. What a difference it will make! We will all feel safer, as well.

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Dappled Light in Washington Square

Yellow and green leaves dance in dappled sunlight on an early fall afternoon in Washington Square Park.

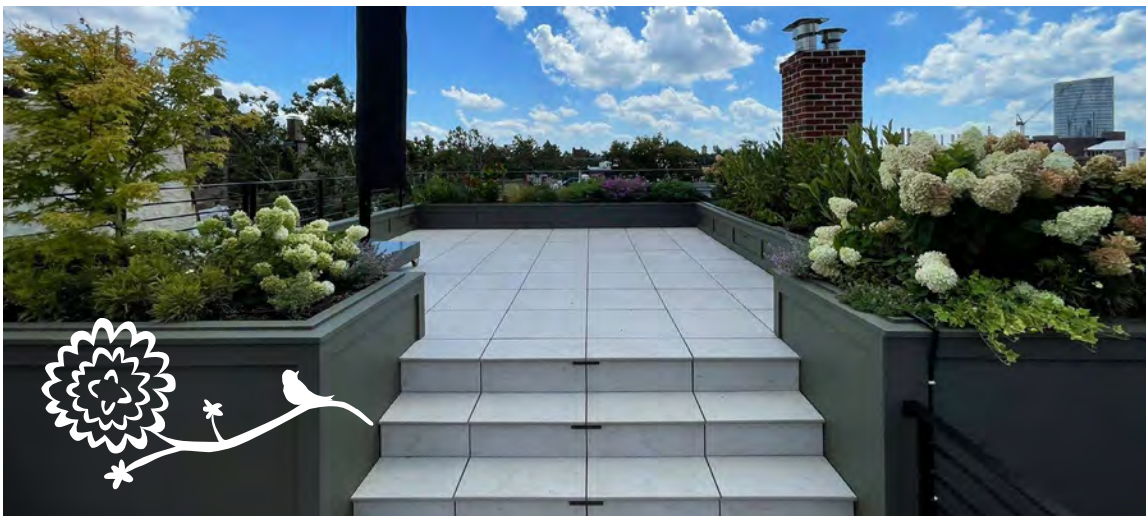
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STREET SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

What's Happening in Our Streets: A Society Hill Streets State of Mind

We hope everyone had an enjoyable holiday season. As we head into the new year, we present our second installment of “What’s Happening in Our Streets — A Society Hill Streets State of Mind.”

What would work best in a city as unique as ours? With relatively narrow residential streets, originally designed for horse-drawn carriages, how do we manage to accommodate 21st-century traffic? We have a finite amount of space within which we all need to coexist peacefully.

In an effort to learn about best practices for bike lane safety and shared streets, a contingent of city officials, bicycle groups, and civic representatives (including SHCA President Bob Kramer) recently made a trip to Hoboken, New Jersey. The city has been lauded for successful implementation of a Vision Zero program in 2019. Although Hoboken experienced few fatalities prior to 2019 (the last was in 2017), since Vision Zero began, there have been no traffic-related fatalities for bicyclists, pedestrians, or automobile occupants. Keep in mind that at one square mile, this city is significantly smaller than Philadelphia, with streets that are mostly wider than Spruce and Pine.

So, what works according to Hoboken?

The speed limit throughout Hoboken is 20 mph. It’s indisputable that the risk of pedestrian fatalities increases with speed. At 20 mph, there is a 5 percent fatality rate. Traveling at 30 mph raises it to 45 percent and at 40 mph it’s 85 percent. Lowering the speed limit looks like one simple fix that’s easy to implement. Enforcement, of course, would be crucial. If you’ve traveled Broad Street in our city recently, you may have noticed the speed limit lowered to 25 mph in hopes of improving safety along that corridor. Drivers were initially

issued warnings during a grace period that ended November 14th, 2025. Tickets are now being issued with the assistance of speed cameras.

Daylighting intersections was a priority.

Since most accidents occur at intersections, Hoboken committed to eliminating parking near corners, bumping out curbs at intersections, raising the road surface in the center so vehicles must slow down, and marking the corners with planters, bollards, or delineator posts. These changes come at some expense but seem like money well spent.

What about barricaded bike lanes?

Interestingly enough, Hoboken did not install concrete barriers for protected bike lanes. While initially proposed, they received pushback from some city officials, residents, and even their fire department. The Hoboken Fire Department was concerned that barriers could impede the movement of large emergency vehicles and their ability to operate effectively during a crisis.

Philadelphia could utilize some of these same methods to the same effect. According to a November 30 report in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the city intends to ask Harrisburg for the right to lower the speed limit within the city. That right is currently controlled by the state. This kind of flexibility would enable our city to lower speed limits to 20 mph where it would be helpful. Currently, traffic lights on Spruce and Pine are timed for 20 mph, so exceeding that rate doesn’t help you move any faster through Center City.

We will continue to keep you apprised of the city’s plans, and we remain committed to encouraging practical, data-driven, creative strategies that make our shared streets safe for everyone. Wishing everyone a happy and healthy 2026!

We have a finite amount of space within which we all need to coexist peacefully.



Bike lanes in Hoboken, New Jersey



Hoboken corner with a bump-out curb planter

OPINION

Street Safety and the Common Good

In 1973, the military draft ended, and the U.S. shifted to an all-volunteer military. Today, fewer than 0.5 percent of Americans serve on active duty, and a core civic experience has faded. Many scholars argue that this decline has weakened Americans' sense of collective responsibility and shared sacrifice.

In recent decades, American culture has increasingly emphasized individual rights and personal success. Yet many of the technologies that underpin modern entrepreneurship — including the internet, microchips, touch screens, and supercomputers — originated in government-funded research and public investment. These shared investments made private innovation possible.

With that backdrop, SHCA recently donated \$25,000 to Bochetto & Lentz, the firm representing Friends of Pine and Spruce (FOPS) in their lawsuit opposing the installation of loading zones and protected bike lanes in Society Hill. The donation and lawsuit place individual convenience

ahead of the common purpose of preventing accidents.

Why Better Street Layout is Needed

Philadelphia consistently ranks among the **most dangerous large U.S. cities** for traffic deaths per capita. More than **100 Philadelphians are killed** in traffic crashes each year. Council President Kenyatta Johnson says that “Motor vehicle violence is just as much a public health crisis as gun violence.”

Philadelphia's streets were designed long before cars, trucks, and more recent developments:

- Ride-hailing and app-based delivery traffic **rose several hundred percent** nationwide in the past decade.
- Philadelphia eBike and scooter trips are **up more than 70 percent** this year.
- Personal car ownership is declining. **Nearly half** of Philadelphia households do not own a car.

Transportation needs will continue to change, as electric

vehicles and self-driving taxis join the mix. But one fact is not up for debate: **separating people who travel at different speeds prevents injuries and saves lives.**

- In New York City, injuries to all road users declined by roughly **40-50 percent** following installation of protected bike lanes.
- Studies consistently find substantially higher cyclist injury rates on streets without protected bike lanes compared with streets that include them.
- Philadelphia doubled its protected bike lane mileage in 2021, citing clear safety benefits for all road users.

The Plan Is Not New

Philadelphia's street safety and Vision Zero plans have been in development for more than seven years and involved extensive public engagement, including surveys, neighborhood meetings, and technical studies. The resulting analyses showed that:

- On most Philly streets, emergency vehicles report **no operational delays** due to existing parking patterns.

- Delivery vehicles routinely block travel lanes on narrow streets with parking on both sides, and drivers simply wait — a normal and accepted feature of dense urban environments.

- Removing a small number of curbside parking spaces for loading zones or visibility improvements **does not measurably reduce** overall neighborhood parking availability.

Philadelphia knows how to reduce traffic deaths. Other U.S. cities have done it. The data already exist. The remaining question is whether residents and institutions will work together toward the shared goal of saving lives.

The lawsuit opposing these improvements ultimately asks **whether we will feel any collective responsibility** when the next pedestrian or cyclist is seriously injured on a Society Hill street. The data, the city's Vision Zero plan, and the experience of peer cities all point to one conclusion. SHCA should lead this movement, not block it.

David Haas is a past SHCA board member and officer.



Concrete-protected bike lane in Long Beach



Planter separated bike lanes in Toronto



Armadillo dividers in Miami



Concrete dividers in Seattle

The gold standard in street safety is parking-protected bike lanes with bikes separated from traffic by parked cars. Pennsylvania law currently does not allow this design except for demonstration projects. The next most effective solution is concrete-protected bike lanes. While dividers can be precast concrete like those in construction zones, others can be low barriers as shown in the illustrations. Least effective are flex posts, currently used on Pine and Spruce Street. They are visual indicators and do not alert, slow, or redirect a vehicle when run over. Other effective interventions include adding color to bike lane asphalt and keeping intersections clear of parked cars to improve visibility.

OPINION

Street Safety Requires Cooperation, Not Imposition

Any Plan Should Respect All Stakeholders

Years ago, the argument that “government knows best” nearly put an expressway on South Street. Today’s debate over concrete barriers on Pine and Spruce reflects the same dynamic: a rushed plan driven by political pressure rather than local realities.

When bike lanes were installed in 2009, the Nutter administration established a 20-minute grace period for stopping in front of homes — a practical compromise reaffirmed by Mayor Kenney when the lanes were completely reengineered and declared safe. Society Hill’s streets are quiet, and millions of cyclists have used them for more than 15 years without a single fatality. Last year’s tragedy in Rittenhouse involved a drunk driver traveling nearly 60 mph.

Residents support safe streets. What they oppose is a plan that places concrete barriers outside their front doors without meaningful consideration of seniors and people with mobility challenges. Politics has eclipsed sound engineering. While some opinions vary, many residents reasonably oppose a poor redesign presented as a fait accompli. Both the Society Hill Civic Association and the Center City Residents Association oppose the current proposal.

Why the Current Proposal Falls Short

Friends of Pine and Spruce (FOPS) supports innovation that recognizes local conditions. Pine and Spruce are narrow streets serving

ambulances, fire trucks, deliveries, rideshare vehicles, and residents. Elderly and disabled residents depend on curb access. Photos show what barriers might look like, but none depict a street resembling Pine or Spruce.

Concrete barriers would create a cycle track, encouraging cyclists and e-bikes to travel even faster. Other cities are removing such measures from unsuitable locations. Cycle tracks belong on wide, commercial streets like Washington Avenue, Market Street, and soon Spring Garden Street.

The Planning Process Was Not Inclusive

The Pine/Spruce proposal is a knee-jerk political response unsupported by any study. Public engagement was dominated by citywide activist groups. After decades of City Hall hearing only one

side, FOPS organized residents’ voices. Only after months of petitions, emails, and failed attempts to work with the administration did FOPS file a lawsuit. The suit is not anti-change; it seeks lawful notice, review, and neighborhood input before altering essential infrastructure.

This is happening elsewhere as well, as the city agency OTIS has been captured by extremists. A “no stopping” bike lane is proposed for 3rd Street—and perhaps soon for yours. Residents most affected should be a key part of the debate.

Real Safety Comes From Balanced Solutions

Speed is the leading cause of deaths and severe injuries. FOPS supports proven safety measures such as lower speed limits, new enforcement methods, raised crosswalks, and targeting illegal behavior

by all road users. These measures appear in the city’s new Vision Zero Action Plan 2030, published in November, and we support their application on Pine and Spruce.

Collaborative Change, Not Coercive

For many residents—especially seniors and those with medical or mobility needs—curb access is critical to safety and daily life, and in emergencies, to survival. Real progress comes from solutions that protect everyone without creating new risks.

Let us support a process that respects cyclists, residents, and pedestrians alike — and the realities of all who will be affected. That is the path to safety.

By Society Hill residents **Dr. Richard Jay, Rick Herskovitz,** and **Kim Williams,** on behalf of Friends of Pine & Spruce.

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR NARROW HISTORIC STREETS TODAY

Width conflict applies to most commercial vehicles parked anywhere within the narrow 6 feet 11 inches parking lane or loading zones



Commercial vehicles are typically 8 feet 6 inches wide with 12-15 inch mirror spans on each side, resulting in an effective width of more than 10 feet.

KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

Improving the Infrastructure of Independence Hall

It is no surprise that Americans are excited about Independence Hall, but why do people travel from around the world to find out what happened in this little Pennsylvania government building? Let's ask the United Nations.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an agency devoted to world peace through cooperation in education, arts, sciences and culture, maintains a World Heritage program to encourage the preservation of sites deemed to be of such universal importance they are worthy of protection for the benefit of all of humanity. Writes UNESCO, "What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located." Independence Hall is one of only about 1,200 such sites worldwide. We can be proud that the universal heritage of the place that spawned the Declaration of Independence is in good hands. Our National Park Service (NPS) is conducting a historic preservation project to spruce up the old family home.

Prompted by next year's 250th year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Independence Hall and most adjoining buildings on Independence Square have been going through a spectacular series of improvements and preservation work since March 2025. The interior of Independence Hall is currently closed until January 28, 2026, but the park intends to provide extra interpretive tours conducted outside on the square. Check Independence National Historical Park's (INHP) website for updates: www.nps.gov/inde/index.htm.

In our September/October 2025 issue, we reported on Executive Order 14253, titled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History." This was the presidential action that required the Department of the Interior to ensure NPS interpretive displays "do not contain descriptions, depictions, or other content



Independence Hall's interior is currently under wraps. Photo Credit: Independence National Historical Park

that inappropriately disparage Americans past or living (including persons living in colonial times)." As a result of this process, interpretive displays in the Liberty Bell Center and the President's House at 6th & Market Streets have been flagged for possible removal, because they tell stories about slavery and of Jim Crow era discrimination. These stories are relevant to the concept of liberty or lack thereof.

But, Executive Order 14253 did contain a positive section: "Sec. 3. Restoring Independence Hall. The Secretary of the Interior shall provide sufficient funding, as available, to improve the infrastructure of Independence National Historical Park, which shall be complete by July 4, 2026, the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence." According to the park website, "The National Park Service has been making infrastructure repairs and improvements to historic structures and features on Independence Square... Key elements of this project include the construction of accessible ramps; repair and restoration of wood elements, masonry, plaster, and metal finishes; and application of historically accurate paint finishes to the ceilings, walls, and trim."

To complete this work, NPS brought in from locations around the country a special traveling crew with diverse talents and knowledge. The preservation technicians are artisans with expertise working on historic structures. The conservators are scientists with advanced degrees in chemistry and

physics, useful in solving building problems at the molecular level. These masons, carpenters, painters, and other personnel have swarmed over the buildings, carefully grinding and tap-tap-tapping away at old mortar, stripping old paint and replacing or chemically filling rotting wood. They have been quite fun to watch and very generous in explaining their work to visitors. I loved watching the guy 25 feet in the air working on matching mortar color. The result is stunning. The building exteriors shine with all the restored trim and masonry.

The work has now moved inside. Go to www.facebook.com/IndependenceNHP and see the photos INHP posted showing the work in progress. This moment is historic because the rooms have been emptied for the first time since 1997 and for one of the few times in history. We are used to seeing the Assembly Room where the Declaration of Independence was born packed with things meant to transport us back in time to the very busy 18th-century chamber of the Continental Congress.

What process is used to safely account for, pack, and then move 757 historical artifacts, some of which cannot be replaced? Most of us who have moved know what it is like for things to go missing. The project called for both extreme caution and organization. A professional art moving company was hired to pack, monitor, and transport the items. Everything had to be tagged with a serial number and tracked. Keep in mind the inventory consists of delicate feather pens, rare books, and small breakable things, as well as furniture pieces.

In the 1960s Independence Hall became what some have called "the most researched historical building in the country" when NPS transformed it. The goal was to return its rooms to their appearance in 1776, which is how we are used to seeing them today. But prior to NPS involvement, the rooms had become simply museum gallery space where old things were put on display.

continued on page 9

KEEPING POSTED

continued from page 8



Readers of this column will know I find postally used cards more fun than mint uncirculated cards. This one seems to have been postmarked in Philadelphia on Oct. 25, 1905, and to have arrived in New York City that very same evening! All the sender wanted to know from Louise is if sandpaper wouldn't do. This is yesteryear's version of texting. It only cost a penny, and allowed someone to attach an image.

The NPS approach was different. It was to use the power of place and the ability of historical artifacts to take us back to someone else's world. Today, visiting the Assembly Room is like stepping through a time portal and landing on the floor of the Continental Congress in mid debate. INHP supplies the artifacts. You supply the imagination.

You can see the difference in this month's postcard, which shows the Assembly Room in 1905. Looking around the room we see some familiar artifacts. The rising sun chair, used by George Washington when he presided over a meeting we now call the Constitutional Convention, is easy to pick out, but notice the desk placed before it. That is one of the desks that we can today see exhibited on the second floor of Congress Hall. In 1905 when the city of Philadelphia, which owns all of the park buildings except the American Philosophical Society, operated the Hall, visitors were mistakenly told that this was the desk on which both the Declaration and the Constitution were signed. Look carefully on the pedestal in front of the left hand fireplace. In the little glass case is the Synge Inkstand, used while signing both the Declaration and the Constitution. It is normally on display in the Hall's West Wing, which is currently closed for construction. The portrait paintings you see in the card are now on display in the Second Bank Portrait Gallery building on Chestnut Street, but that building is long closed due to staffing shortages.

Around the edge of the room are the chairs from the Senate chamber in Congress Hall. The chandelier is the one purchased in 1824 when the room was spruced up for Lafayette's grand farewell tour around the states. A period correct chandelier from the 1740s now hangs there, which was purchased in London in the 1960s. The paneling and woodwork in the room today, chosen based on NPS research, are different from what you see in the card.

Some time ago NPS had a team from the Organization of American Historians (OAH) conduct a review of its interpretive programs. All four members of the team stressed the importance of expanding the content of park programs to demonstrate the significance of our sites to all visitors and to "[embrace] a wider range of Americans, a broader story of the revolution." Ironically INHP has done such a good job in following the OAH recommendation at the Liberty Bell Center and at the President's House that it has run afoul of Executive Order 14253. But there is good news too! Let's turn to an event that happened in this room, one that does not "inappropriately disparage Americans past or living."

The great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, was the first state in the nation to pass an abolition law. An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery came out of the Assembly Room in 1780. Knowing about it creates an opportunity to expand the universal connection of Independence

It is not for us to enquire why, in the creation of mankind, the inhabitants of the earth were distinguished by a difference in feature or complexion.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1780

Hall to people everywhere. The text of the law contains glorious language. Here is one small piece: "It is not for us to enquire why, in the creation of mankind, the inhabitants of the earth were distinguished by a difference in feature or complexion. It is sufficient to know that all are the work of an Almighty Hand... we are enabled this day to add one more step to universal civilization by removing as much as possible the sorrows of those, who have lived in undeserved Bondage."

Note the law's phrase "Universal civilization" and think of UNESCO's statement: "What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application." These ideas go together. I have long believed that everything we really need to know about peace on earth can be learned in the buildings of Independence National Historical Park.

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

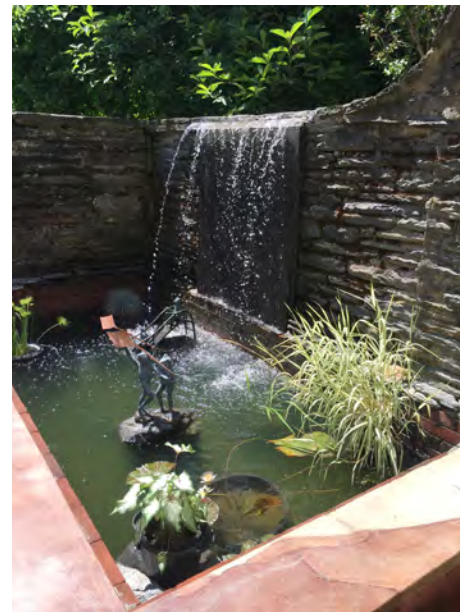


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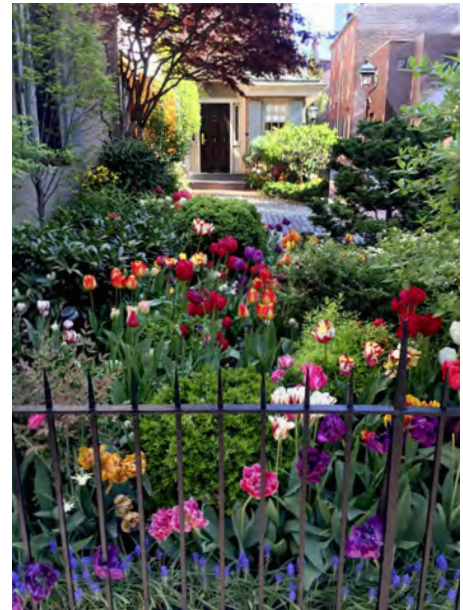
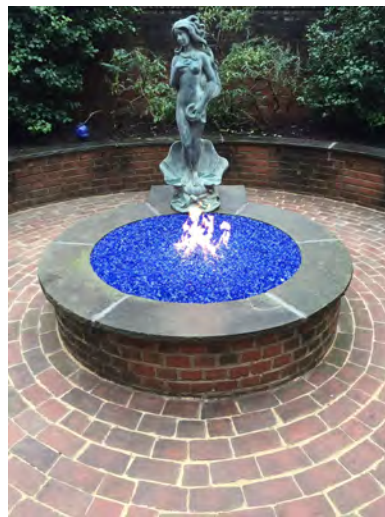
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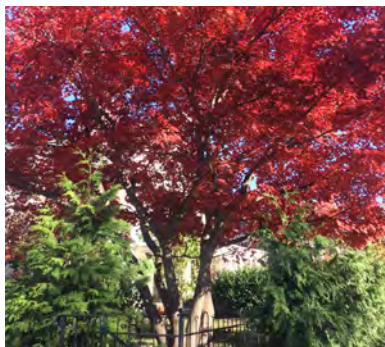
Hardscape projects include Pennsylvania bluestone walkways, decks, and patios, brick sidewalks, fire pits, and water fountains.



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INDEPENDENCE HISTORICAL TRUST

BY JONATHAN BURTON

Embracing the Moment: Society Hill and the Spirit of 2026

In just a few short months, Philadelphia will take its place on the world stage in a way not seen in decades. As we welcome the nation's 250th birthday, our city will host an extraordinary lineup of global events. College Basketball's March Madness will tip off here. The PGA Championship will challenge the world's best golfers at Aronimink golf course in May. The planet will pause for the biggest sporting event on earth, soccer's World Cup, which starts in Philadelphia on Flag Day, June 14th. The eyes of baseball fans everywhere will turn to Philadelphia for the Major League Baseball All-Star Game in mid-July. I personally can't wait for that.

Why Philadelphia? Why now? Because of what happened here 250 years ago.

Our city is the birthplace of the American democratic experiment. It is where bold ideas were debated, where a nation took shape, and where a group of imperfect people dared to articulate a vision of freedom that continues to challenge and inspire us to this day. At the heart of that story sits your neighborhood and our national park.

Independence National Historical Park is preparing for millions of visitors in 2026. Independence Hall is undergoing a full restoration so that when the world arrives, the home of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution shines with dignity. The First Bank of the United States is being meticulously restored and brought back to life and will eventually be a museum devoted to the foundations

of our financial system. Soon, a new landmark, the *Join or Die* sculpture, will rise on Independence Mall. Benjamin Franklin's iconic 1754 message urging the colonies to stand together still resonates. Join. Unite. Form a team. He understood that we are strongest when we work together, and that spirit remains our city's quiet superpower.



At the Independence Historical Trust, we are working every day to ensure Philadelphia looks and feels its best for this historic year. We are installing solar panels on the Liberty Bell Center as part of our effort to make our national park more sustainable. We are partnering closely with the National Park Service (NPS) to maintain and elevate the beauty of the park's gardens and green spaces. The extraordinary volunteers of the Washington Square gardeners and so many others across our neighborhood have stepped up to make sure our city welcomes visitors with pride.

One of the clearest examples of what we can accomplish together is the Benjamin Rush Garden at 3rd and Walnut Streets. This space, built around the Bicentennial Bell gifted to the United States in 1976, is a legacy project that the Independence

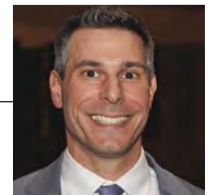
Historical Trust and NPS completed hand in hand. It stands as a reminder of what partnership, dedication, and community spirit can achieve.

Society Hill has always been a neighborhood that carries history with grace. You live next to the buildings, parks, and streets where America took its first steps and where it continues to evolve. Our country's story has never been finished, and it is far from perfect. But that ongoing effort to improve, to push forward, and to strive toward our ideals is what makes America so beautiful.

So as 2026 arrives, embrace the moment. Celebrate the privilege of living in a place where history isn't just remembered, it surrounds you. Be proud of your city, **your** national park, and your neighborhood's role in shaping the world's democratic tradition.

The world is coming to Philadelphia this year. Let's welcome them with the same spirit of unity and optimism that guided Ben Franklin's call all those years ago.

Join. Unite. Stand together. Let's show the world what Philadelphia can do.



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





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OUT AND ABOUT

PHOTOS BY BRANDON ENGELHARDT AND MARY PURCELL



Celebrating the Season at Bridget Foy's

SHCA members and supporters gathered at the festively decorated Bridget Foy's on December 3 to greet old friends, make new ones, and enjoy tasty charcuterie, salads and sliders. There were special holiday cocktails, and Bridget, John and Bernadette were there to make sure all of the guests had a great time. Thanks to event organizers Samantha Brown, Jay Borowsky and Mary Purcell and all of the attendees for supporting our neighborhood business and joining in community to toast the season.



Mary Purcell, Bob Kramer, Antonio Atacan



Rich Temple, Alyne Barnard, Brandon Engelhardt, Carolyn Caveness, Priscilla King



Jay Borowsky, Linda Skale, Nace Mullen



Nancy Lanham, Barbara Gelman, Paul Boni



Judy Lamirand, Bob Kramer, Georgine Atacan



Jane Joseph, Nick Remple, Gilda Sedgh

OUT AND ABOUT

BY BRANDON ENGELHARDT

Society Hill's New Front Door for Halloween

October 2022 was a series of firsts for our family. It was our first year in Philadelphia, our first time as homeowners, our first holiday in Society Hill, and our first Halloween with a front door. How much candy do you buy when you have no front-door baseline? The answer: a Costco amount.

I remember we filled bowls of candy, notice the plurality. Cheesy greeting costumes were donned. The dog was taken on an extra walk to calm him, in preparation for what surely would be a series of cascading doorbells and Ring notifications telling us, "Somebody is at your front door." All that anticipation... and then... nobody was at the front door. I started thinking immediately about who would be eating all that leftover candy.

Turns out the trick-or-treat thoroughfare was a few streets over. I was disappointed for a minute, but the feeling faded fast. A walk down Delancey Street gave me another first instead: my first real sense of neighborhood community as an adult.

As many are aware, the Delancey Square Town Watch has enhanced the safety of our longstanding annual Delancey Street Halloween event by closing Delancey Street to traffic from 2nd to Three Bears Park. With some of the best decorations in the city, thousands of families visit to enjoy the spooky, family-fun atmosphere, while having peace of mind as their kids go trick-or-treating in a car-free zone.

Halloween at Head House

So when Tanya Brassie, Quadrant Director and our neighbor, suggested Halloween at Head House, it just made sense as an addition to broaden the scope of who could get involved. The idea was that we could activate an under-used public space and create a shared space where more neighbors could decorate tables as if they were their own front doors, dress up, and be part of the party. One of the event inspirations was a couple seen the year before. They had propped up lawn chairs outside, handing out candy to the folks walking by, rather than waiting for trick-or-treaters inside.



Head House was decorated to welcome trick-or-treaters. Photo by AnA Photography

The event started with a two-woman volunteer team: Tanya and her neighbor, Tara Anantharam, who is also my wife. They then shot expectant looks at their partners, and the volunteer committee became four. We had less than 30 days to transform a 10,000 square foot space. Like any lean startup, we had to get scrappy. Eleanor Ingersoll at the South Street Headhouse District kindly waived the rental fees. I collected signatures for the street closure permit, and Lt. Rodgers and the city helped us secure final approval. On the day of the event, Tara and I personally cordoned off the street with barricade tape. We teamed up with Samantha Brown on marketing and Mary Purcell on outreach, and hit our goal of ten decorated tables for kids plus one SHCA table.

Setting up the event came with its first-time lessons. We had to rehang the banners the morning of thanks to high winds and Shambles rotting wood. Tara and I drove a U-Haul to a New Jersey nursery where we discovered hay and pumpkins are evidently priced like eggs

in 2024, thinning our decoration budget fast. Tanya personally stuffed clothing with straw for scarecrows, and Val artfully constructed spider webs throughout the space. The wind prevented the Halloween movie from being projected (RIP Halloweenie), but we were able to repurpose the photo backdrop and still delivered family photos to visitors.

The little mishaps didn't matter. By 4 p.m., volunteers had transformed their tables. By 5:30 p.m., the space was full. All told, close to 1,000 children and families from Society Hill and our surrounding neighborhoods walked through Head House. A local news videographer even stopped by to get B-roll shots, although I don't know what ever came of that footage. Parents told us how grateful they were to have a weather-protected, safe gathering space before or after their walk down Delancey.

What is Halloween really about?

Halloween is not really about receiving the candy. It is about giving it. It is about offering a small kindness to someone you may have never met, which too often we're too busy to do. What I learned is this: community events don't need to be planned perfectly. They just need to start. To think, a family moved in from out of town and decorated their house. Then another household did, and another. Then a few took leadership and organized it a bit. Then a couple set up a lawn chair nearby and another few people observed that and said, "Hey, I think we could organize this too." One neighbor lent a ladder. Another lent their time. Neighborly compound interest starts when one raised hand becomes two.

From my point of view, if even one family experienced Society Hill for the first time, and felt what I felt back in 2022 — that this is a neighborhood to be proud to live in and raise a family in — then all those efforts are well worth it. So, who is raising their hand next? Just as important, who is rolling up their sleeves to join them? I'd love to see Head House activated for even *continued on page 15*

OUT AND ABOUT

PHOTOS BY TARA ANANTHARAM



Olivia Patton and her partner from Queen Village



Lexi Peskin handing out FULL-SIZE candy bars



Eve Maynard and Britt Smith as witches



Antonio and Georgine Atacan as Wild West outlaws



Bob Kramer showing off the spooky photo-op backdrop



Brandon Engelhardt with Fitzgerald the velociraptor

continued from page 14

more community events throughout the year. Send SHCA your thoughts and ideas at info@societyhillcivic.org.

Halloween at Head House would not have been possible without the volunteers who showed up to make it happen. A special thank you to Tanya Brassie,

Tara Anantharam, Val Geyvandov, SHCA president Bob Kramer, SHCA administrator Samantha Brown and table volunteers Antonio and Georgine Atacan, Lexi Peskin, Olivia Patton, Fern Rosen, Nancy Eagen, Eve Maynard, Jane Joseph, Maureen Burke, Betta Kolansky, and Alida Lefebvre, who with her husband has been

handing out candy under Head House on Halloween since 2022.

Want to get involved next year? Email halloween.at.headhouse@gmail.com to be put on the volunteer list.

Brandon Engelhardt has been a neighbor in Society Hill since 2022. He and his wife are most famous for their spunky-spirited, red Irish Golden named Fitzgerald.

ART CRIME AND THE FBI

BY MARC S. RASPANTI, ESQUIRE

Crime is in the Eye of the Beholder

As a former prosecutor and now private defense lawyer, I have had the opportunity to work with and against the FBI in a wide variety of criminal and civil cases over my career. My encounters have been what you might expect when dealing with the country's premier law enforcement investigative agency — all types of federal procurement fraud, healthcare fraud, organized crime, political corruption cases, criminal conspiracies, drug-related offenses, extortion, cybercrime, and investor fraud issues. Recently, I learned of an area of investigation that few people may be aware of but in which the Bureau is heavily involved: the FBI's Art Crime Team. At first, it operated as a loosely knit handful of agents, in different parts of the country, who devoted portions of their varied caseload to Art Crime Investigations and prosecutions. Special Agent Robert Wittman formed the Team in 2004 as the Bureau realized that art crime was on the rise. All these agents pursued their more traditional FBI agent duties while starting to focus and develop their now considerable expertise in the area of art-related crime. It has grown to a small group of highly experienced specialists, the majority of whom still all work on more traditional FBI duties, but possess subject matter expertise in this complex area.

What Is Art Crime?

The international art crime market involves the trafficking of billions of dollars of stolen works per year. But what is art crime exactly? Even within the FBI, that classification seems somewhat fluid and subjective by design. It has expanded over time to include theft or trafficking of fine art, sculptures, coins, paintings, religious items, antiquities, historical documents, manuscripts, old weapons, artifacts, sports memorabilia items, art forgeries of all types, and many areas in between. The Bureau is committed to hunt down all manner of art theft, trafficking, and fraud that fall within their jurisdiction.



FBI Special Agent Jake Archer of the Philadelphia Field Office.

The FBI Art Crime Team

My interest was ignited by accident when I attended a lecture at the Museum of the American Revolution located in Old City. The featured speaker was FBI Special Agent Jake Archer of the Philadelphia Field Office. I did not know what to expect, or why a seasoned FBI agent would be speaking that evening about the theft of early American antiquities. I waited for him to take the podium in a surprisingly packed amphitheater. I thought to myself that he looked like many agents I had dealt with over 41 years — well dressed, sporting a quasi-military haircut, broad-shouldered, highly professional, and obviously, fit for any type of duty. However, when he began his lecture, he sounded more like my former college history professors than an FBI agent. I waited to chat with him after the lecture, to tell him how impressed I was with his stories of the repatriation of stolen Revolutionary War era historic rifles to local museums. These weapons were stolen in the 1960s and 1970s from area homes' private collections and museums. However, a crowd of local residents beat me to the punch.

I left the lecture eager to know more about this unusual group within the FBI, as well as this special agent, so enthusiastic and knowledgeable about his work. I approached the Philadelphia Field

Office of the FBI to obtain permission to interview Special Agent Archer. I was granted permission, under appropriate conditions, to conduct several hours of interviews. I found the results of my efforts utterly fascinating.

Special Agent Archer

Jake Archer is 44 years old. He is a fast-talking central New Jersey native. He is engaging, energetic, knowledgeable, and undeniably passionate about his work. He was willing to share time out of his busy schedule to discuss what he and his team have done and do on a daily basis. Of course, we were only permitted to discuss closed cases. His tenure with the FBI was similar to many agents, with an interesting twist in his background, which fueled his passion for art crime. After attending college in New Jersey, he spent seven years in nearby Bordentown, New Jersey, serving as a local police officer. Over time, he finished his law degree at Seton Hall University, practiced law for a few years, and then obtained his master's in art history from Rutgers University, an unusual educational detour for an FBI agent. But Archer was profoundly moved by his childhood memories of his beloved grandfather, a gifted local artist in Bordentown, crafting unusual items from shells, as well as mastering the genre of pen and ink drawings. His time with his grandfather seems to have left an indelible imprint that continues to fuel his current activities.

Special Agent Archer joined the Bureau in 2009. He went through traditional academic, physical, psychological, and firearm training befitting a highly trained FBI Special Agent. While I sense he quietly hoped to pursue his passion of art theft, he worked all traditional FBI duties, including gang cases and other violent crimes in the Camden area for six years. His supervisors were impressed with his body of work and knew of his interests. To date, Agent Archer regularly assists his colleagues in other non-art crimes when and where needed.

continued on page 17

ART CRIME AND THE FBI

continued from page 16

How are these Cases Made?

The FBI Art Team receives its tips in conventional and non-conventional ways. Local law enforcement, throughout the United States, contacts the Bureau when they have or may know of an art crime worthy of federal pursuit. Moreover, and this too was a surprise to me, the FBI regularly interacts with agencies all over the world that are similarly tasked with investigating and prosecuting art crimes. The list of national and international agencies that work daily with the Bureau is lengthy, detailed, and impressive, including Interpol, Europol, MI6, and other elite law enforcement agencies. Antiquities cross state, national, and international borders on a regular basis. The Bureau also connects with an international network of legitimate art dealers, museums, appraisers, art galleries, concerned citizens, and auction house owners who routinely provide meaningful tips.

Art theft is and has become a huge and growing business perpetrated by domestic and international thieves. Some of these art theft rings are made up of well-known transnational organized crime organizations; others are clever one-off thieves. The former Nazi regime knew the commercial value of art and looted the finest art galleries in Europe. Many of those valuable items have still not been recovered, although many are believed to still exist. Former high-ranking Nazi officials not only engorged their own pockets with priceless pieces of art they plundered, but hoped to help finance the rebirth of a Fourth Reich on the currency of stolen art. The movie, *The Monuments Men*, depicts a small Allied group of military personnel with specialized knowledge who were given the task of finding and saving pieces of art before the Nazis destroyed or sold them. Many years after WWII, the FBI now deploys a more modern host of known and confidential investigative techniques to recover items, some of which are thousands of years old.

The Philadelphia Connection

To many, Philadelphia and its suburbs are the epicenter of American history, as well as art, culture, and many things in between. It is home to some of the world's most impressive private and public collections such as the Barnes Foundation, the Philadelphia Art Museum, the Rodin Museum, the Museum of the American Revolution, the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, and scores of public and private libraries and universities jammed with antiquities that date back to before our formation as a nation. Of course, the National Archives and the Smithsonian Museums all cooperate regularly with the Bureau when their expertise is needed. All these local institutions have likewise served as technical consultants to the FBI when called upon. Why do I mention these? The FBI, in building any art-related prosecution, is required to determine the authenticity and provenance of the stolen item, as well as to make sure its value meets all the enumerated thresholds of the Federal Crimes Code. Due to the unique nature of these stolen items, the FBI routinely relies on national and international subject matter experts, as well as technical and scientific expertise that has long existed within the Bureau. While the FBI may at times simply repatriate items to their natural owners, they also routinely prepare these theft cases for trial before judges and juries all over the country.

Art Theft Is on the Rise

Perhaps one of the best examples of the brazen criminal activity in art crime is the famous and still unsolved case of the Gardner Museum heist in Boston. In the early morning hours of March 18, 1990, two men disguised as police officers handcuffed two security guards, navigated around the museum's security cameras, and within an hour stole 13 priceless works of art. Some estimates put the collection's worth at nearly a billion dollars. The FBI has been actively working this case. There is a whopping \$10 million reward for its return. In the

more than 35 years since the heist, none of the pieces have been recovered. Assuming the perpetrators are still alive, no arrests have been made. According to published reports, organized crime is involved, and the trail has led to Ireland, Corsica, and even Philadelphia. It remains the world's largest art heist.

More recently, a stunning broad daylight heist occurred at the famous Louvre Museum in Paris. A handful of thieves made quick work of the theft of over \$100 million of Napoleonic era jewels. According to published reports, the thieves took advantage of security breaches within the museum. The robbery took less than ten minutes. Many, but not all, of the suspects have been caught. Some of the items have been recovered, but most of the jewelry is still missing. According to published reports, the French version of the FBI's Art Crime Team is vigorously working the case. I am confident the FBI is providing French authorities with any information it may come into on this theft.

Dozens of artifacts stolen from Philadelphia collectors and museums have been recovered and repatriated to local museums and collectors located in different states, including Pennsylvania. But what are some of these items? An 1847 Mississippi rifle; a World War II pistol belonging to General Omar Bradley; all types of firearms dating back to the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War and thereafter; Native American art, Monet, Rembrandt, and even Andy Warhol paintings. For those whose interest may have been piqued, there is a free FBI National Stolen Art File app maintained by the Bureau, which includes a database of thousands of stolen items, and it is fascinating to peruse.

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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LIST OF CONTRACTORS

BY MARTHA LEVINE

Important Safety Information for Chimneys and Fireplaces

If you have a working fireplace, gas or wood-burning, make sure you have a liner in the flue. Chimneys need to be lined to prevent fires, reduce carbon monoxide exposure and improve heating efficiency. The Philadelphia code follows the state and national standards. Masonry fireplaces must have a code compliant flue liner (clay or stainless steel) compatible with the appliance. The liners prevent gas and creosote, a highly flammable substance that builds up from burning wood, from escaping and also prevent degraded masonry particles from falling into the flue and causing a fire. In addition, it's best to have your chimney cleaned every few years.

Need a chimney expert to install a liner or clean your chimney? We have chimney contractor recommendations, as well as many other types of contractors, on our List of Contractors, free to all current 2026 members. Go to societyhillcivic.org and click on membership to join. When you join, you have the option of getting the list online. We ask that the list not be shared with non-members, as the list is a perk of SHCA membership. If you have a contractor of any specialty to recommend for the list, please email your suggestion to Martha Levine, at marthalev6@gmail.com.

Martha Levine is a long-time, active board member who chairs several committees and programs.



The broken clay liner inside this chimney needs to be replaced.

THE GREATEST SOCIETY HILL CLEAN UP DAY YET

BY AL MEINSTER

Time for the Leaves to Leave

I've been approached by so very many neighbors who've said, "This has been our most effective Great Society Hill Cleanup Day yet!"




Yes, thanks to our city's Sanitation Department for sweeping, vacuuming, and blowing leaves from under parked cars, and thanks to the many, many neighbors and Philly Bike Action volunteers who together filled over 300 leaf bags. And of course, our Councilman Mark Squilla, who facilitated our communications with the city. All did indeed make it the best effort yet.

I'm looking forward to the spring and fall efforts of 2026. Send your suggestions on how we can do even better to k3eax@yahoo.com!




Al Meinster is the Society Hill Clean Up Day coordinator.



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ON OUR SHELF

BY IZZY HALLORAN

HeadHouse Books Selects

Browse our curated selection of fiction, memoir, illustration, and local author picks!

Fiction

The Hounding by Xenobe Purvis, \$26.99

The Hounding by Xenobe Purvis is a debut novel set in the small village of Little Nettlebed in 18th-century England. The Hounding follows the five Mansfield sisters: Anne, Elizabeth, Hester, Grace, and Mary, who have been orphaned and left in the care of their grandfather. The sisters are fiercely independent and insular, separate from the people of the village. When the village ferryman starts a rumor that the sisters can transform into dogs, the story quickly spreads and instills fear in the townspeople. As fear turns into frustration and rage, the townspeople begin to blame all their misfortune on the Mansfield family. Tensions mount, rumors evolve into first-hand accounts, and the town finally erupts into chaos. *The Hounding* is a clever and engaging tale of the confines of womanhood.

Memoir

Bread of Angels by Patti Smith, \$30

Bread of Angels is a moving memoir by prolific writer and musician Patti Smith. Smith weaves a vivid, propulsive narrative of the story of her life from childhood to recent years. *Bread of Angels* begins with Smith's turbulent childhood in a working-class family post World War II. Smith is a unique child with an excellent imagination, a strong sense of independence, a love for books and her siblings, and a tendency for illness. As Smith approaches adulthood, she moves to NYC and spends her days writing, performing, and meeting renowned artists of the 1970s. She forays into the music world as she sets her poetry to music, forms a band, and tours the world. Along the way, Smith meets her future husband and father to her children, fellow musician Fred "Sonic" Smith.

Smith writes of a period spent outside the spotlight, settling down in Detroit and starting a family. When her life is uprooted by the devastating loss of her husband, her brother, and her best friend, Smith pulls herself from the depths of despair, finding the ultimate respite in writing their stories and memorializing them on the page.

Her words are infused with small, intimate details of a life well lived, one complete with huge triumphs and overwhelming loss. *Bread of Angels* is a must-read tale of an artist's journey.

Illustrated Children's Book

The House That Floated by Guojing, \$18.99

The House That Floated is a vibrant illustrated children's book about a family whose home is perched on a cliff above the sea. In this wordless story, Guojing skillfully manipulates color by saturating the narrative with bold, warm shades and pale, cold hues to set the tone. The family spends their days exploring the wondrous sea below and enjoying cozy moments in their house. As time passes, the water level beneath them rises, inching closer to their home. When a dangerous storm threatens to engulf the property, the family must work together to save their beloved house. Rich with stunning illustrations, *The House That Floated* by Guojing is an important, page-turning narrative for children about resilience and climate change.

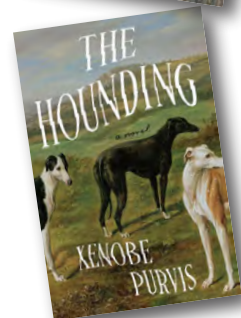
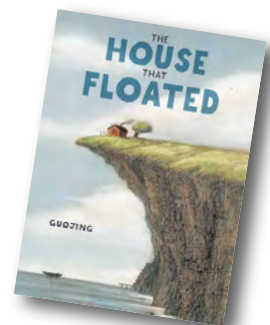
Support Local Authors

And the Ancestors Sing by Radha Lin Chaddah, \$19

And the Ancestors Sing is a work of historical fiction by Philadelphia author Radha Lin Chaddah. Set in China, post-Cultural Revolution, this multi-generational novel follows two families as they navigate the changing landscape. In 1978, Lei is married off in exchange for goods, forced to carve out a life for herself and her family in a foreign environment. In Shanghai, a sixteen-year-old girl named LuLu is tasked with providing for her family. Faced with life-altering choices, sacrifices, and risks, the desire for a better life propels every decision.

Pre-order *And the Ancestors Sing* by visiting www.HeadHouseBooks.com or visiting us in-store! Then, please join us at Head House Books on February 3 for An Evening with Radha Lin Chaddah.

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



See Graffiti? Report graffiti locations to Al Meinster at k3eax@yahoo.com. He will submit a photograph and a request for its removal to the city's CLIP program.

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Fred Manfred is a real estate licensee affiliated with Compass RE. Compass RE is a licensed real estate broker and abides by equal housing opportunity laws

“kYd listened carefully to our vision, worked well with the contractor, designed the space exactly to fit our needs, and especially focused on the artwork and showcasing it throughout the condo; I would recommend them without reservation.”



Independence Place Condo images © Jeffrey Totaro

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WELCOME GIFT BAGS

BY MARTHA LEVINE

2026 Society Hill Welcome Gift Bags Program



Lisa & David



Mark & Laurie w/Hazel



Sandra & Barry



Vincent



Madis Coffee



It is a new year, and hopefully we will get back to our usual schedule of presenting 40-45 Welcome Gift Bags to new first-time homeowners here in our neighborhood. It is not an easy task for us to identify those who are new. We rely on you to reach out to us, as so many have done, to say you're here. If you purchased your first house or condo in 2025, and you would like to have a gift bag presented to you, please contact me at marthalev6@gmail.com. The presentation takes about 45 minutes in your home.

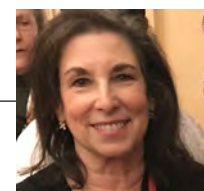
We welcome a new donor to our family of businesses supporters, **Madis Coffee Roasters, 601 Walnut Street** (entrance on 6th Street). Madis marketing director, Eleni Navraosidis says, "Madis Coffee Roasters is proud to welcome new neighbors to Society Hill with a taste of our specialty coffee. Born and roasted right here in Philadelphia, Madis sources seasonally harvested

beans from farms around the world and roasts each batch with care to bring out the most expressive flavors. If you enjoyed the coffee in your Welcome Gift Bag, or at the café, you can explore our full selection of blends and single origins, at madiscoffeeroasters.com and have them shipped straight to your home. We are thrilled to be part of your neighborhood and can't wait to fuel your mornings."

Madis also offers a full lunch menu of omelets, sandwiches, and pastries, amid sparkling, modern décor and nestled in the historic Curtis Building. It is a great addition to our neighborhood.

As always, we thank all of our loyal business contributors who make this program possible. Let's really thank them by patronizing their establishments.

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



We ask you to thank our loyal business donors who make this program possible by patronizing their establishments.

Restaurants

- Bistro Romano**, 120 Lombard Street
- Bloomsday Cafe**, 414 S.2nd Street
- Bridget Foy's**, 200 South 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
- Las Buglambillas** (Mexican), 15 S. 3rd Street
- La Colombe Coffee Roasters** 100 S. 6th Street
- Madis Coffee Roasters**, 601 Walnut Street
- Mahalo Hawaiian BBQ**, 117 South Street
- Malbec Argentine Steakhouse**, 400 S. 2nd Street
- PJ Clarke's**, 601 Walnut 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, Retail, Services, and Museums

- Arden Theatre**, 40 N. 2nd Street
- Ghost Tour of Philadelphia**, ghosttour@ghosttour.com
- Head House Books**, 619 S. 2nd Street
- Independence Seaport Museum**, 211 S. Columbus Boulevard
- Judy Moon & Associates Massage**, 829 Spruce Street, Suite 300
- Lantern Theatre**, 923 Ludlow Streets
- Lee's Cleaners**, 241 S. 6th Street
- Museum of the American Revolution**, 101 S. 3rd Street
- Naked Chocolate**, www.nkdchocolate.com
- National Liberty Museum**, 321 Chestnut Street
- Paper on Pine** (stationery), 1310 Sansom Street
- Phila. Chamber Ensemble** (at Old Pine Church), www.pceconcerts.org
- Physick House & Powel House** (museums), 321 S. 4th Street
- Pileggi on the Square** (salon), 717 Walnut Street
- Stump Plants**, 622 S. 9th Street
- The Athenaeum of Philadelphia**, 219 S. 6th Street
- Triad Wellness**, 507 S. 4th Street



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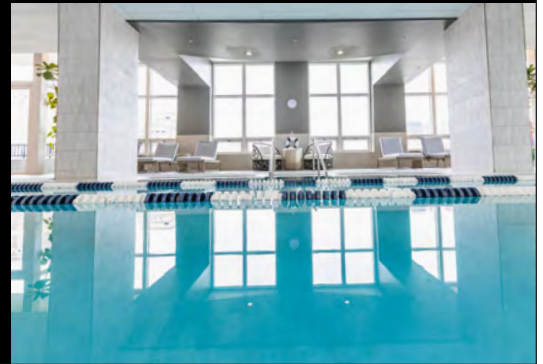
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WASHINGTON SQUARE

BY ANNE KULLAF

An Oasis of Inspiration in the Heart of the City

Dappled light filters through the trees on a summer morning in Washington Square. The brick buildings on the square are bathed in the warmth of the gentle, filtered sunlight, giving their surface a dusty terra cotta patina. The globes on the iconic gateposts frame the shaded path that leads into the park. From the moment I saw this scene, I knew immediately that this was the spot where I would set up my easel.

I had just returned to Philadelphia after living out west for four years, and I was excited to create the first oil painting in my new neighborhood since my return. When planning our move back to Philly, my husband and I chose to move to Society Hill, because we always enjoyed walking in Washington Square and Independence National Historical Park. There is something intangibly special about being so close to the places that shaped the birth of our nation. The brick sidewalks, the architecture, the tall trees of the parks, and the feeling of stepping back in time are just a few of the elements that make Society Hill such a perfect place to live. As a visual artist, it is a treasure trove of subject matter that will inspire many future paintings.

Painting on the Edge of the Park

Some of my favorite spots to paint are along the perimeter of the park. I have always loved painting architectural subjects, and looking out from the park is a perfect vantage for capturing a glimpse of historic architecture framed by the park's stately trees and greenery.

I enjoy painting near the park's surrounding wall, so that passersby can see what I am working on. I have found it is a great way to engage with the community and give them a glimpse into my methods.

I meet all types of people and get asked all sorts of questions, from tourists and neighbors alike. Many people like to stand behind me and watch as I paint. I've taught many museum classes and done a lot of demonstrations, so this doesn't bother me at all. In fact, it's one of the things I enjoy most about working outdoors. Sharing my approach to painting with the community is a great way to get to know my neighbors who have an interest in fine art, either as collectors or artists themselves.

Venturing into the Neighborhood

In addition to painting in the park, I love venturing into the surrounding neigh-

borhoods and public spaces beyond Washington Square. One of my favorite spots for both sketching and painting is St. Peter's Churchyard.

On a beautiful day in early October, I set up my easel and painted the shadows on the Old Pine Street Church as viewed from the St. Peter's Churchyard. It was interesting to paint one old church from the grounds of another. I plan to do the opposite one day and paint St. Peter's from the grounds of Old Pine!

Hope to See You

As the weather gets colder, I will spend more time painting in my studio and less time outdoors. But I will still bring my sketchbooks out and do some quick studies whenever we have warm days. I hope you'll stop by and say hello if you see me in the park or the neighborhood. I love engaging with others who have an appreciation for all the beauty surrounding us in Society Hill!



Anne Kullaf, a professional artist, moved to Society Hill in June 2025. Learn more about Anne and her work at www.annekullaf.com.



Painted on location in Washington Square, this oil painting is inspired by the dappled light and the bright colors of the crepe myrtle and hydrangea in full bloom in late July.

Anne Kullaf ©2025



Afternoon sunlight on the yellow stucco of the Old Pine Street Church caught my eye as I painted this oil painting from the churchyard of St. Peter's.

Anne Kullaf ©2025

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

BY PRISCILLA LO

Welcome the New Year With SHCA

Join or Renew Today

A new year brings a fresh start, and there's no better moment to join or renew your membership with SHCA. With America's 250th birthday approaching, 2026 will be a historic year for Philadelphia, and Society Hill will be in the spotlight. Your support helps our neighborhood to be ready.

For more than 60 years, SHCA has worked to advance our mission, serving the community through beautification, safety efforts, advocacy, and programs that bring neighbors together. We couldn't do any of it without our members.

By joining or renewing now, you help SHCA begin the year strong — funding sidewalk cleaning, tree planting, "Fix the Brix" sidewalk repairs, historic preservation efforts, community meetings, and more. Members also receive our curated List of Contractors, a trusted resource for home maintenance needs.

Make 2026 a year of connection, pride, and community impact.

3 Easy Ways to Join or Renew Today

1 Use this QR code to make your gift by phone.



- 1. Open your phone's camera.
2. Point at the QR code.
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

Together, we will both reflect on our past and build our futures, serving our community in this historic year and beyond.



Priscilla Lo, an advertising executive, has lived in Society Hill with her family for 17 years. She chairs the SHCA Membership Committee.



2026 Membership Form

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

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

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City, State, Zip _____

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Residential Memberships

- 50 Basic Household Membership
40 Senior/Student/Single
150 Georgian Grantor
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500 Washington Benefactor
\$1,000 Benjamin Franklin Benefactor

Business Memberships

- \$100 Institutions - 5+ employees
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Total Membership \$ _____

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

Donations to Society Hill Preservation Foundation

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.

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\$ _____ Cleaning

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\$ _____ McCall School

\$ _____ Starr Garden Playground Renovation

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