November/December 2026

The Newsletter
of the Society Hill
Civic Association

SOCIETY HILL Reporter

www.societyhillcivic.org

2027 Membership Drive Kickoff

BY PRISCILLA LO

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

In 2026, Society Hill took center stage as Philadelphia and the nation celebrated America's 250th birthday, and your Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) membership made sure our neighborhood was ready to welcome the world. From breaking ground on Starr Garden's playground to keeping our sidewalks clean to promoting what makes Society Hill special, this was a milestone year for our community, and all of it was possible because of you. Please join or renew for 2027 to help us keep going.

Everything SHCA does begins with your support. Neighbors like you keep Society Hill historic, safe, beautiful, connected and welcoming, while always moving forward.

Here are the exciting things you made possible this past year:

Preserving Society Hill's Historic Character

Because of your support, SHCA contributed $20,000 toward the long-awaited renovation of Starr Garden playground. Society Hill Preservation Foundation was a conduit for a private donation of $10,000 to Starr Garden. We helped secure $1.5 million in city funding for the restoration of the historic Head House and Shambles. SHCA also helped ensure the St. Peter's School expansion received appropriate historic review and joined 25 other Philadelphia community organizations to help stop a City Council bill that would have weakened the city's Historic Preservation ordinance.



Join at the Georgian Grantor level or above, and receive a special thank you — a Society Hill Civic Association tote bag.

Improving Safety & Quality of Life

SHCA advocated for a safer South Street corridor, including additional police staffing to help improve security throughout the neighborhood.

Keeping Our Neighborhood Beautiful

Your membership dues helped fund weekly side-walk cleaning through the Center City

continued on page 3

Wednesday, November 18

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Hill Civic Association Meetings
Wednesday, November 18, 2026

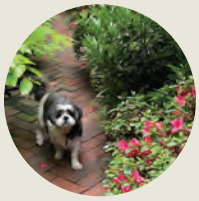
Pennsylvania Hospital, 8th & Spruce Streets
Zubrow Auditorium

5:45 p.m. **Board Meeting**
7:30 p.m. **Community Meeting**
Speaker: **Mark Atwood**
Topic: **Old Pine Community Center Is Now The NeighborHub**



Mark Atwood is the Executive Director of The NeighborHub (formerly Old Pine Community Center). He will share exciting information about the organization's programs and partnerships, recent rebranding, and plans for upcoming 50th anniversary in 2027.

In This Issue...



Page 5
We have a Winner!
Inaugural Citywide
Gardening Challenge



Page 7
Our Society Hill Blog:
Society Hill Residents
Guide to South Street



Page 10
Samuel Gritz Public House:
Feels Like A Pub But
Eats Like A Bistro



Page 13
Urban Eden:
Bountiful and Beautiful
Blooming Hydrangea



Page 14
Your Membership Dollars
at Work: Our History,
Our Home, Our Future...



Page 16
Keeping Posted:
One Hundred Years Ago:
The 1926 Sesquicentennial

Page 21
Head House Books
Your Guide to Holiday Reading





Page 25
Welcome Gift Bags:
We Welcome New First Time
Owners to Society Hill



Page 27
Holiday Gifting:
Lift Your Spirits with Beautiful
Society Hill Floral Note Cards

SOCIETY HILL Reporter

NUSA Award-Winning Neighborhood Newsletter First Place

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Website
Find past issues dating back to
1950 at www.societyhillcivic.org

The views set forth in the opinion articles are the views of the authors and are not necessarily those of SHCA.

Submissions
If you have news that would be of interest to Society Hillers, email the editor, Judy Lamirand, at judy@parallel-design.com. Materials must be submitted in writing and include the name of a contact person. Edited submissions will be considered for publication if space permits.

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

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*non-voting courtesy representatives

2027 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE KICKOFF

continued from page 1

District, which costs roughly $35,000 a year, as well as our "Fix the Brix" sidewalk-repair subsidy and new trees planted through our Tree Tenders program.

Giving Residents a Stronger Voice

SHCA represented residents at zoning, preservation, and transportation hearings throughout the year, including sustained engagement with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and neighboring community associations on the South Street "Remapping" zoning proposal.

Building Stronger Community Connections

Through our weekly Spotlight emails, the bimonthly *Reporter*, Community Meetings, the Gardens of Society Hill Tour, Halloween at Head House, and our Welcome Gift Bags program (which welcomes more than 50 new owners each year) we worked hard to connect neighbors all year long.

When you join SHCA or renew your membership, you help shape Society Hill's future. Your support builds momentum, strengthens the voice of the community, and helps advance our neighborhood for generations to come.

Household membership is just $50 per year, or $40 for seniors and students, and includes access to our curated **List of Contractors**, a trusted resource for general contractors, painters, plumbers, electricians, handypeople, and more. Those able to do more are invited to join our $150 Georgian Grantor circle. **Grantor members and above receive a Society Hill tote bag as a special thank you.** Visit our website at www.societyhillcivic.org/join.



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

Society Hill CIVIC ASSOCIATION

2027 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 _____

Phone _____

Email (print clearly) _____

Residential Memberships

- ○ $ 50 Basic Household Membership
- ○ $ 40 Senior/Student/Single
- ○ $ 150 Georgian Grantor
- ○ $ 300 Jefferson Benefactor
- ○ $ 500 Washington Benefactor
- ○ $1,000 Benjamin Franklin Benefactor

Business Memberships

- ○ $100 Institutions — 5+ employees
- ○ $60 Institutions — fewer than 5 employees

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

- $_____ Unrestricted — Where Most Needed
- $_____ Weekly Sidewalk Cleaning
- $_____ "Fix the Brix" and Tree Tending
- $_____ McCall School
- $_____ Starr Garden
- $_____ New Market & Head House Conservancy

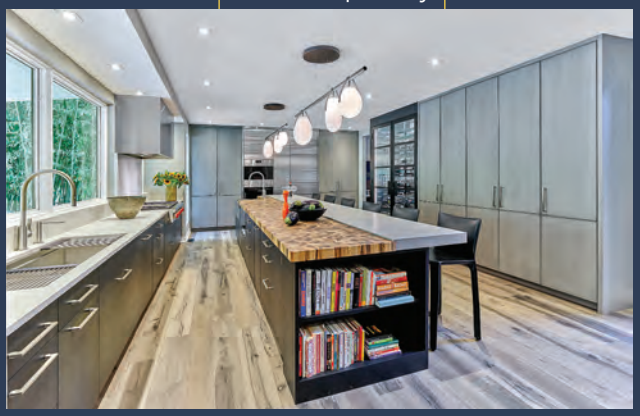
Total Donations $_____

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A PRIZE-WINNING GARDEN ON PINE

BY CLAUDIA CARABELLI

We have a Winner! Inaugural Citywide Gardening Challenge

Behind many of our neighborhood's row homes are beautiful rear gardens. If you've participated in the annual Society Hill Garden Tour, you've no doubt enjoyed a sampling of them. Our Pine Street neighbor, **Linda Skale**, has one such garden alongside her home. She's won many prizes over the years. This year she captured **2nd place in The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's 2026 Inaugural Citywide Gardening Challenge, Flower Garden Category.** This was a new contest limited to Philadelphia residents, with no professional help permitted.

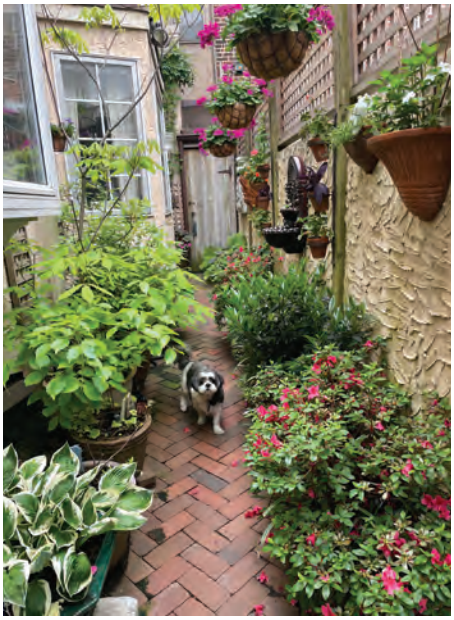
Linda's garden runs alongside the back of her home and is visible from both the dining room and kitchen windows. It gives the sense of bringing the outside inside, even making the rooms themselves appear larger. A birdfeeder attached to the dining room window invites the wildlife to perch nearby. The garden itself is lush and green with flowering pops of color. Interspersed among the plantings are decorative pots, wall sculptures, and figurines. An old, but regularly repainted, wall fountain offers bathing for birds and soothing sounds for humans. It's an idyllic little retreat that extends the living space outdoors. A small café table at the far end provides an ideal spot for morning coffee or afternoon wine, with her little dog Enzo nearby. Even Linda's young grandchildren have their own tiny gardening gloves, tools, and watering can so they can help care for the garden they consider their own.

I think the area is best described by Linda herself in this narrative she wrote for entry into the competition.

Visiting this idyllic little respite has definitely inspired me. Kudos to Linda.



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



Linda's dog Enzo enjoys his time in the garden.



One of Linda's young grandsons does his part to help maintain the garden.

My Garden By Linda Skale

More than forty years ago, the space beside my 200-year-old house was just a narrow, awkward strip of concrete and cinderblocks. Today, after four decades of trial and error, that irregular alley has quieted into a thriving indoor-outdoor sanctuary. It has been a lesson in patience (and passion!) proving you can cultivate a vibrant ecosystem of flora and fauna anywhere—even in a concrete alley.

Because sunlight is scarce, I've learned to work with nature rather than fight it. Shade-loving natives like bottlebrush buckeye, Virginia sweetspire, Solomon's Seal and coral bells thrive here alongside varied hostas and astilbe. A narrow in-ground bed of azaleas and cherry laurel with liriope borders keep the space green all winter, while Virginia creeper softens the brick and stucco walls. Lately, I'm experimenting with gifted fig tree cuttings, moving them around to chase the shifting sun. I always look forward to planting my culinary herbs in containers and I can always count on impatiens to provide color up to autumn.

The design itself is gently inspired by Roman gardens. I love blending weathered stone and terracotta elements with a bit of living art—like styling potted impatiens to look like colorful "hair" blooming from my Athena and Zeus wall planters, Classical plaques depicting Roman deities and small cement and terracotta animal figures sit nestled among the containers on the brick patio. At the north end of the space is a cedar arbor equipped with tiny solar lights and a four-chair wrought iron dining set.

Creating a welcoming habitat for local birds and wildlife is also a core inspiration. My favorite spot is the large dining room window where an exterior bird feeder, and interior sill plants, blurs the line between inside and out. Watching the birds splash in the wall fountain or gather at the bird feeder brings the whole garden to life.

Maximizing my little yard has been, and continues to be, a deeply rewarding adventure.


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OUR SOCIETY HILL BLOG

BY GEORGINE ATACAN

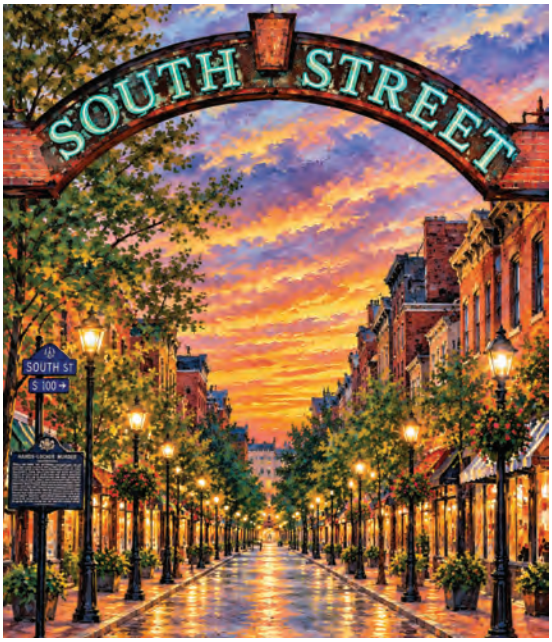
Society Hill Residents Guide to South Street

One of the great pleasures of living in Society Hill is having South Street just steps away.

I know, I know! I've heard all the complaints, concerns, and laments. But while there are challenges, there also are true gems.

Could it be better? Yes! But even as it stands, this lively corridor is home to some of Philly's most creative indie restaurants, shops, and gathering places.

I truly believe South Street is worth exploring, so try a few of the places on my list, and tell me what you think or share your favorite place in a comment on my blog or at Georgine@atacangroup.com. I promise to reply!



YOWIE Hotel & Shop at 226 South Street is part boutique hotel, part design studio, and part lifestyle shop, with individually designed guest rooms upstairs and a curated collection of clothing, jewelry, books, and objects from emerging designers. Also there is **FORÎN**, which offers coffee, breakfast, and lunch in a bright, modern setting. Founded by a local, it feels distinctly Philadelphia and a perfect place for couples to enjoy their evening.

South Street is also home to an eclectic collection of shops. **Eye's Gallery** is a longtime favorite for colorful folk art, jewelry, textiles, and handcrafted pieces from around the world. **The DreamEerie** offers vintage inspired décor, curiosities, and wonderfully unexpected finds, while **Repo Records** remains a destination for music lovers searching for new and used vinyl. There are also many vintage stores carrying everything from Gucci bags to Go Birds shirts.

When it comes to dining, the choices are equally varied. **Bridget Foy's** is a South Street classic for brunch, cocktails, and a fantastic Happy Hour. **Shiso Noodle and Sushi Bar** offers Japanese inspired dishes and fresh noodles, while **South Street Souvlaki** is a longtime favorite for gyros, souvlaki, and falafel and they still have prices from the turn of the Century. Really! **Lorenzo & Sons** remains a quintessential South Street stop for a HUGE slice of pizza, and **Brauhaus Schmitz** brings authentic German food and an extensive beer selection to the neighborhood.

For an evening out, **MilkBoy South Street** combines food, drinks, and live music, while **Tattooed Mom** offers a wonderfully unconventional bar experience with colorful artwork, creative drinks, and casual food. **Queen & Rook Game Café** provides another entertaining option, pairing food and drinks with an extensive collection of board games. Don't forget the **Theatre of Living Arts (TLA)**, where touring musicians perform in an intimate concert setting.

At the center of it all is **Headhouse Square**, where the historic Shambles and **Sunday farmers market** create one of the city's most charming gathering places. For coffee and pastries, **Loretta's** is delightful! This stylish café and bakery has an impressive selection of sweet and savory pastries. Their TikTok makes everything look absolutely irresistible. For a special occasion, **Provenance** brings a remarkable level of fine dining. This intimate 22-seat restaurant earned **one Michelin Star** in Philadelphia's 2025 Michelin Guide. Its tasting menu combines French technique with Korean influences and local ingredients. It's under $300 all-in for about 20 courses in 2.5 hours. Unfortunately, they do not offer a vegetarian menu.

The beauty of South Street is that there is always something fun to discover. For Society Hill residents, having this much creative independent shopping, dining, and entertainment just steps away is truly a neighborhood asset.

continued on page 9



Bridget Foy's
200 South Street



YOWIE Hotel & Shop
226 South Street



MilkBoy South Street
401 South Street



Lorenzo & Sons
305 South Street



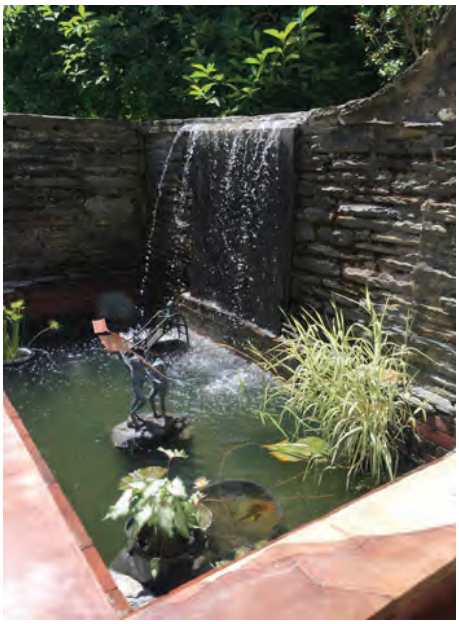
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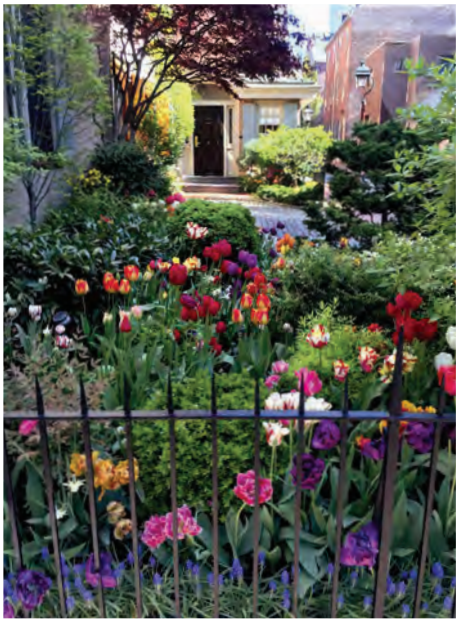


Add a peaceful water feature.





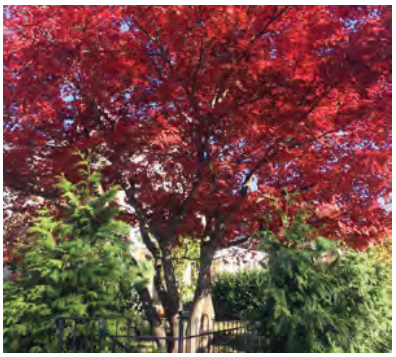
Hardscape projects include Pennsylvania bluestone walkways, decks, and patios, brick sidewalks, fire pits, and water fountains.



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Fix your Bricks. Society Hill sidewalks should provide smooth, safe walking surfaces. The upheaval caused by tree roots can be corrected without removing or killing trees. Call McFarland to inquire about fixing your bricks.



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OUR SOCIETY HILL BLOG

continued from page 7

Places to Explore Checklist

- ☐ **YOWIE Hotel & Shop:** Boutique hotel, design forward shop, and creative destination featuring independent designers, artists, home goods, jewelry, and gifts. YOWIE's 13 individually designed suites are upstairs, with the shop and Forîn café below.
- ☐ **FORÎN:** Stylish daytime café at YOWIE serving coffee, pastries, and brunch.
- ☐ **Loretta's:** Specialty coffee, creative pastries, breakfast, and lunch in Headhouse Square.
- ☐ **Provenance:** A Michelin Star fine dining in an intimate Society Hill setting, with a tasting menu combining French technique, Korean influences, and MidAtlantic ingredients.
- ☐ **Eye's Gallery:** Colorful folk art, artisan jewelry, clothing, textiles, and handcrafted home décor from artists and makers around the world.
- ☐ **The DreamEerie:** Vintage and gothic inspired home décor, lighting, furniture, jewelry, curiosities, and wonderfully unusual finds.
- ☐ **Repo Records:** Independent record shop offering new and used vinyl, CDs, and cassettes, with in store events and album signings.
- ☐ **Bridget Foy's:** A South Street institution for 50 years, known for brunch, cocktails, American cooking, and its welcoming neighborhood atmosphere.
- ☐ **Shiso Noodle & Sushi Bar:** Japanese restaurant specializing in handmade noodles, ramen, sushi, sashimi, and other freshly prepared dishes at 604 South Street.
- ☐ **Lorenzo & Sons Pizza:** The legendary place for enormous slices of yummy thin crust pizza.
- ☐ **South Street Souvlaki:** Longtime South Street favorite serving surprisingly delicious Greek, Mediterranean and Vegetarian specialties with the best prices in Center City.
- ☐ **Brauhaus Schmitz:** Authentic German bierhall with traditional food and an extensive and impressive selection of beer. It's like a trip to Germany, and they know how to host a party!
- ☐ **MilkBoy South Street:** Very cool restaurant, bar, and live music venue serving great bar food, drinks, and hold intimate performances on the corner of 4th and South.
- ☐ **Tattooed Mom:** Eclectic South Street bar known for colorful street art, creative drinks, casual food, and a constantly changing upstairs art space.
- ☐ **Queen & Rook Game Cafe:** Restaurant, bar, board game café, and retro arcade with more than 2,500 games at 123 South Street. A super fun place for families!
- ☐ **Philadelphia's Magic Gardens:** Isaiah Zagar's extraordinary mosaic environment at 1020 South Street, featuring indoor galleries and a two-level outdoor sculpture garden.
- ☐ **Theatre of Living Arts (TLA):** Historic concert venue known for bringing touring musicians in an intimate setting. Radiohead, Iggy Pop, Moby, Snoop Dog & other legends all played here!



Georgine Atacan has lived and worked in Society Hill since 2002. She is a PA & NJ licensed Psychotherapist and Realtor.



Tattooed Mom
530 South Street



Eye's Gallery
327 South Street



Brauhaus Schmitz
718 South Street



SAMUEL GRITZ PUBLIC HOUSE

BY MARC S. RASPANTI, ESQ.

Feels Like a Pub But Eats Like a Bistro

If you have not visited the Gritz Public House for a drink, snack, or dinner, then you must.

Nestled at 629 S. 2nd Street in Philadelphia, far enough from South Street for my taste, is a relatively new corner pub and restaurant in Queen Village known as the Samuel Gritz Public House. It was named after a Polish immigrant who arrived in Philadelphia in 1906. By the 1920s, he was a prominent figure in the city's wholesale grocery business. His career included a notable legal battle. In 1920, federal authorities prosecuted him under the Lever Act for "sugar profiteering," but through excellent Philadelphia legal counsel, he prevailed. In 1926, Gritz and his wife Fannie bought the building at 627-629 South 2nd Street. Like many immigrants, he lived upstairs and operated his grocery business downstairs, making the property a working commercial space for nearly a century. Upon close inspection, the building's name plate still bears "1926 S. GRITZ," a remnant of its original identity.

The Public House looks and feels like an old pub, but very much acts like a bistro. I predict it is sure to surprise and impress you the more you visit. The space remained vacant until the Public House opened on June 21, 2024, after undergoing an extensive inside and outside facelift. For many years, the property was occupied by the Irish Times, which closed in 2020.

The building is warm, inviting, and cozy on both the main floor and the smaller second floor. Although newly renovated, it maintains by design the charm and character of a 19th century establishment, with exposed brick tile and a tin ceiling. The current owners of Samuel Gritz Public House, Frank Bell, Neil Campbell, and Charlie Collazo, did a complete 15-month top to bottom renovation of an over 100-year-old building. The owners are proud of the fact they did much of the work themselves, although I am not sure they would want to do it again. Charlie Collazo and Neil Campbell have been Philadelphia residents for quite some time. The renovation exposed historic space that allowed for modernizing the dining room, the kitchen, the bar area, the restrooms, and the intimate, albeit small, first floor dining area. The second floor has an old non-working fireplace that I am told is on the renovation list. All the key systems are now updated or brand new.

If you have not visited the Gritz Public House for a drink, snack, or dinner, you must. Let me start with the bar, where I often start. It comfortably seats about 12. It is friendly, inviting, and unpretentious. You can either dine at the bar and/or enjoy a cocktail. The feeling you get from the Public House is a safe and inviting neighborhood spot with a growing family-friendly clientele. Frankly, I am looking forward to winter snow days which will lend themselves to the Dickens-like feel of the Public House. In addition to five Philadelphia-centric craft beers on tap, and one cider, their wine list is ever changing and expanding. They have an ambitious and creative cocktail menu that is also evolving.

continued on page 11





SAMUEL GRITZ PUBLIC HOUSE

continued from page 10

The restaurant area has both indoor and outdoor seating. The outdoor seating is perfect for pets and rambunctious toddlers. Total downstairs seating can easily accommodate more than 60 people. A small cozy area on the second floor, near the fully renovated bathrooms, will accommodate another 12. While there are four televisions set up to enjoy sports or other events throughout the restaurant, I would not call it a sports bar, and I would not call it a pub. Somewhere in between is where the Public House hopes to secure its sweet spot. In my opinion, the space is the perfect size to accommodate holiday parties, birthday parties, and all kinds of special events.

The menu is a combination of old favorites like excellent burgers and chicken wings but with a creative and regularly changing sampling of new dishes, including, but not limited to, coconut shrimp, chicken and waffles, grilled tofu, pork ribeye, and several outstanding fresh fish dishes. Soups change regularly. I am told fresh chili season will soon be emerging. It is clear the chef likes to experiment with innovative cuisine and it shows. Indeed, their head chef, George Schofield, has been working in kitchens for over 30 years in myriad restaurants with various styles. He has put together a fantastic team. Romeo Cedillo is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the kitchen. I like the kitchen's willingness to experiment with new tastes, dishes, and textures on a weekly basis.

I also like the brunch options very much. Brunch is served from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. It is delicious, it is creative, but more importantly for my appetite, the portions are not gigantic. They are fresh, updated versions of traditional brunch options, and just right. You can enjoy it with coffee or a cocktail or both. I happen to believe it is one of the better new brunch places in the Queen Village/Society Hill area.

The Public House stays open from 11:30 a.m. to 2 a.m., from Monday to Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m. on the weekend, and attracts a nice crowd of neighborhood people as well as area industry people who often work late. There are not many places in our neighborhood with such generous hours. A full menu is available seven days a week from 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday and until midnight on Friday. I have been there many times, and I have always found the service to be extraordinary, both at the bar and on the floor of the restaurant. The wait staff are attentive and friendly. The food is fresh and inviting, with vegan and fresh fish options that are unusual. Happy hours are offered five days a week. Try it, so you can fully understand the charm of the Samuel Gritz Public House.

The website for Public House is www.gritzplace.com. Their Instagram handle is @gritzplace.



Marc S. Raspanti Esq., an active Center City trial lawyer, resides with his wife in Society Hill. In addition to the law, he considers himself an amateur historian and is now a Certified Philadelphia Tour Guide.





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URBAN EDEN

BY MARY STURDIVANT

Bountiful and Beautiful Blooming Hydrangea

If you weren't born here, can you still be a native Philadelphian? Ben Franklin was born and raised in Boston. Yet who is more a native son of Philadelphia than he? Many people think it is Ben atop City Hall, not William Penn (who also was not born here).

What about plants? I have vented my frustration before with the purists at the Independence National Historic Park Service (INHP) who have banned non-native species from Washington Square. Yes, natives have evolved with the climate and know how to survive drought and wildfire and whatever the climate throws at them. But I like to think of some non-natives as being like the Quakers who settled Penn's land grant. They came to do good and did quite well. It's only when the plants don't understand boundaries and invade that there's an issue. Yes, I am name checking the Kudzu who makes trees look like bilious Gumby monsters.

Nature teaches us so much. Observe the gingko. The dinosaurs dined on its fan shaped leaves. Six even survived the nuclear blast at Hiroshima that ended World War II. Then there is its fruit. What better way to assure survival than produce a small green ball that smells like baby vomit when broken on the ground? To avoid that menace, the INHP planted all male gingkoes around the Square. But the gingko has had the last laugh. After several barren years, a few males have started to produce fruit. Life finds a way.

If I had to name one favorite now, and I admit to being promiscuous in my affections, it would be the hydrangea. First of all, it favors Monet's color palette from pinks to blues and lavender to purple. Lots of white, too. Then the big heads dry beautifully to create wreaths that can be sprayed gold or silver in winter. It doesn't beg to be cut and put in a vase. It just is.

Ventnor and Margate in New Jersey used to have a summer hydrangea festival. Some things need to be brought back. The shore communities must provide the perfect conditions of light, soil, and rain for the many varieties. The median strips greet drivers with their diversion.

When should you prune back your hydrangea? If you venture naively onto the internet, you will find advice and directions offered by experts in opposition to one other. You must know what kind of hydrangea you are dealing with. There are over 70 species. Some are bushes and some are trees, so you start to see the problem. YouTube is a gift from the universe, with topics like pruning, to show you what to do. Sources such as the Morris Arboretum offer an antidote to those who have more confidence and presence than knowledge and experience. My own exuberance caused an almost two-year recovery period for our bushes in flower bed 5. How much time do you have?



The photo shows me beside a blue hydrangea at my grandparents' home in East Lansdowne. My parents came down from New London to buy a home in Delaware County so my sister and I could attend one school and not be Navy brats. It was not a special occasion. Children were sent out to play dressed like that. Bless the innovators and adopters of play clothes.



My sister and I pose in front of the hydrangeas in Flower Bed 5 which provided a backdrop for many a wedding photo shoot. May we all enjoy precious memories of the bountiful and beautiful blooming hydrangea.



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

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DOLLARS AT WORK

Our History, Our Home, Our Future…

In 2026, SHCA proudly joined our city and country in celebrating America's 250th birthday. For more than 60 years, SHCA has been at the heart of Society Hill — preserving our historic neighborhood while serving the community we love.

Breaking ground on Starr Garden's playground, helping to restore the historic Head House, defending our Historic Preservation ordinance, and advocating for a safer South Street, SHCA is about more than just stewardship of the past — it's about building a thriving, community-driven future together.

None of this happens without you. Your membership fuels everything we do: enhancing public spaces, strengthening community connections, advocating for residents' needs, and making sure Society Hill shines as a welcoming, vibrant neighborhood.

As we carry this momentum forward, help us ensure Society Hill continues to stand out as a model of beauty, history, and community spirit.

Please join or renew for 2027. Household membership starts at just $50 per year, with discounts for seniors and students. Those able to do more are invited to join our $150 Georgian Grantor circle; **Grantor members and above receive a Society Hill tote bag as a special thank you.** Join or renew today at www.societyhillcivic.org/join.



SHCA community meetings provide information about neighborhood issues and foster community involvement.



On Clean-Up Days, volunteers clear leaves with the help of city trucks. Shredding and e-recycling services are also provided.

Kasia Stein



Beth, Alex, Paul and Marth are a family of new first-time Society Hill owners SHCA presented with Welcome Gift Bags. Each bag contains a bottle of wine, coffee, chocolates, and gift cards to restaurants, retail, services, museums and entertainment. What a great welcome!



Help us maintain the 500 Franklin Lights keeping Society Hill a brighter and safer neighborhood. For light issues, call 311 or go to philly311 online to report outages or damages.



Our popular, helpful, FREE List of Contractors contains 11 pages of contractors under all categories, such as general contractors, handymen, electricians, plumbers, window washers, HVAC and more. You must be a current SHCA member to receive one.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DOLLARS AT WORK

Thank You for a Milestone Year!



The Gardens of Society Hill Tour has become an annual peek into private green spaces. This popular fundraiser shows visitors, who come from far and wide, the special gardens we create and tend.



Our volunteers plant trees each spring and fall as part of the citywide Tree Tenders program.



Over 4,000 households are informed of important issues through a copy of the national-award-winning *Society Hill Reporter.* Our email newsletter, Spotlight, keeps us up to date on a weekly basis.



The "Fix the Brix" program offers homeowners a subsidy for the repair of uneven brick and concrete sidewalks. The repairs have made our community safer and more attractive.



More than 40 parking spaces on Front Street below South, overseen by Park America are available for neighbors to lease on a monthly basis and for guests and visitors to use on a short-term basis. Use of the lot generates income for SHCA.



SHCA advocates for the preservation and restoration of its historic buildings and keeps tabs on current issues. For more information about Head House restoration, visit www.headhousesquare.org.



Your membership gift pays for weekly sidewalk cleaning. This essential service enables us to have clean sidewalks and a better quality of life in our neighborhood for our residents and visitors alike.



Halloween at Headhouse: For the second year in a row, neighbors set up tables to welcome trick-or-treaters and their parents to this decorated neighborhood icon.

Scan this QR code, or visit www.societyhillcivic.org/join to begin or continue your SHCAmembership.

KEEPING POSTED

BY AL CAVALARI

One Hundred Years Ago: The 1926 Sesquicentennial

With past successes and six years to plan, Philadelphia seemed poised for another great world event.

As we bring our United States Semiquincentennial, America 250, to a close, I'd like to give you a short review of our 150th anniversary, the 1926 Sesquicentennial. In November of 1920, Mayor J. Hampton Moore formed a committee to put on what was intended to be another world's-fair-style event. There had been the success of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. With six whole years to create the required concept, buildings, and infrastructure, Philadelphia seemed poised for another great world event.

Despite a promising start, things did not go well. Two factions developed. One wanted to focus on industry and business, while the other wanted the emphasis to be on Philadelphia's cultural and historical importance. A plan to have the public pay for the event through the selling of shares failed. Taxpayers raised objections fearing that tax hikes would be needed to fund a party, while human needs were neglected. Fairmount Park was the intended venue, which caused opposition in surrounding neighborhoods due to fear of crowds, criminal elements, and rising prices in the cost of living. Ultimately an Antisesquicentennial League sprang up. The mayor himself resigned as president of the Sesquicentennial Exhibition Association after an attempt was made to remove him. W. Freeland Kendrick became mayor in 1924, and he took over the project late in 1925. For "business" and political reasons, he moved it to South Philadelphia where an old school political machine boss, William Scott Vare, and his brothers, "The Dukes of South Philadelphia" reigned with scandal and corruption.

The fair's official opening to the public was on May 31, 1926. But the swampy land had to be filled in first, and construction did not begin in earnest until January of 1926! An October 2, 1926, *New York Times* article "Philadelphia Fair Never Had a Chance" tells us there were calls to postpone the event for at least two months and preferably for a year as had been done with the St. Louis fair. Mayor Kendrick pushed on. There would be five months to build all those streets, other infrastructure, and great buildings.

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KEEPING POSTED

continued from page 16

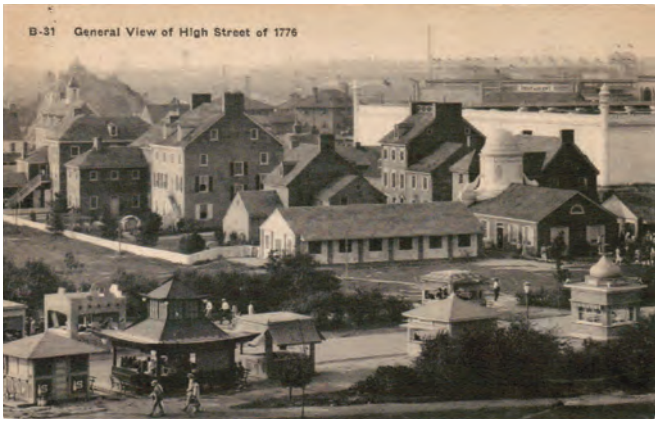
Into this fray waded Elizabeth Price Martin and the Woman's Committee of the Sesquicentennial Exhibition Association. Under her leadership the ladies would provide one of the most popular attractions of the event. I wondered about this woman who was able to lead her committee to create one of the only success stories within a failed world's fair built by powerful politicians and big money investors. Much of what I learned comes from "The Women's Committee and Their High Street Exhibit at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exposition of 1926," a master's thesis published in 1988 by Ellen Freedman. (Email me to get the PDF plus the official report on the event with two chapters written by Elizabeth Price Martin.)

Ellen Freedman writes, "Mrs. Martin was noted for her activism in civic philanthropy and emergency organizing. She spoke out often on issues ranging from the women's party politics, welfare, and crippled children to such things as the garden clubs' concern over the quarantine of foreign bulbs. Her family genealogy describes a typical day in her life as one of speech making, meetings and luncheons. In 1925, for example, Mrs. Martin worked on the new buildings of the Trades School for Girls, spoke at a luncheon of the Lancaster County Republican Committee, presided at the Pennsylvania Council of Republican Women, was involved with the Nation's Immigration policy which resulted in the Quota, and was a member of the Theater Control Board, which censored plays. She was a friend of the Governor and Mrs. Pinchot and paid many visits to the Mansion House in Harrisburg there when she went up to see members of the legislature about welfare and prison problems, or official business…" She worked under five city administrations.

I think you get a sense of with whom we are dealing. Ms. Freeman points out too that by this time there had been a string of successes with women organizing around large public projects. The first was The Mt. Vernon Ladies Association formed in 1853 under the leadership of Pamela Cunningham to purchase and rescue Washington's homestead from ruin. "It was one of the first

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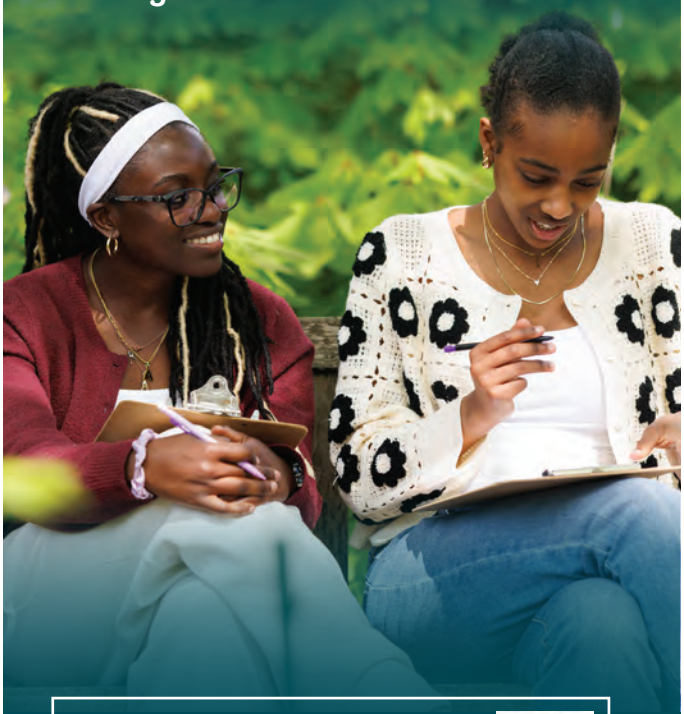




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COMPASS RE



continued from page 17

successful women's organizations in the country; it introduced women to the political arena—in early meetings, the women were amazed to find themselves for the first time 'making speeches and passing resolutions like men!'" During the Civil War, women led by Elizabeth Duane Gillespie led the effort to create the Sanitary Fair on Logan Square in 1864, raising over $1 million ($21 million today) to support sick and wounded soldiers. Then Congress created the Board of Lady Managers to construct their own building and represent the interest of women in all other buildings at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Writes Freeman, "It followed that the women of Philadelphia on the occasion of the Sesquicentennial Exposition in 1926 drew from the successes of the past to create an exhibit appropriate to their age."

It took some pleading. By 1926 women were reluctant to get involved in what had become a dysfunctional project plagued with mismanagement. It took active effort by the Sesquicentennial administration "which recognized the value of the women's proven expertise to help rally popular support." Their project became a conceptual reproduction of Market Street in 1776, which then was known as High Street.

The High Street Exhibition was widely considered to be a star in an otherwise dismal celebration. Rather than have a women's building, as there had been at the Centennial, they would build a colonial village of twenty one replica 18th-century buildings. "They envisioned the street as one not only of homes, but one with a market, a meeting house, jail, printing establishment, shops, theatre, inn and coffee house, school, factory and other civic institutions which had to do with the town family life of that period and under modern conditions are still part of civic life today."

There would be 22 buildings in all, which would cost an estimated $400,000 to construct ($7,000,000 today). In the end they did it for $260,000. They asked the Mayor for $200,000 and they got it. They created a nationwide membership organization and collected dues. They solicited donations in theaters, movie houses, hotels, train stations. There was house to house canvassing. Letters were sent to women's organizations nationwide. The DAR wrote a big $5,000 check. In all some 40 organizational and corporate sponsors were found who contributed to finishing and furnishing the insides of each building with replica or vintage pieces and then to operate them. There was income from the replica tavern and vendor stalls at the market place. They sold postcards, likely the very ones you see here! "In the end, the Street was financially sound, a fact that the women tended to boast about, given the state of finances of the Exposition in general."

This was a functioning street scene with daily and weekly activities. A pageant was held every Wednesday. There were movies and children's puppet shows. A town crier roamed the street as did an army of costumed interpreters. There were untold numbers of special events such as visits by dignitaries and ceremonies in which a delegation from each state presented their flag for display. President and Mrs. Coolidge visited on the 4th of July.

Strawbridge and Clothier adopted the house where Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence at the corner of 7th and Market Streets. The Park Service built its own replica for the 1976 Bicentennial which you can still see. Working with the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation at Monticello, reproduction pieces were produced from originals. These not only furnished the house; they were available for purchase in the Thomas Jefferson Room of the Strawbridge and Clothier store on the modern Market Street.

Overall the Sesquicentennial was a disaster. The Exposition officially opened to the public on May 31, 1926. Despite round the clock construction, according to Thomas H. Keels writing in hiddencityphila.org, "Only two minor exhibits were open for business." The inaugural parade marched under an 80-foot-tall Liberty Bell still covered in scaffolding. Perhaps the only thing more powerful than positive word of mouth is negative word of mouth, and here it comes. Mayor Kendrick was an important Shriner and he hosted their 52nd Annual Imperial Council Session in the fair's newly constructed stadium, later known as Philadelphia Municipal Stadium and, after 1964, John F. Kennedy stadium. Two hundred thousand Shriners spent three days in a muddy construction site. Writes Keels, "After three days of searching in vain for any amusements, they returned home and spread the word that 'Kendrick's Karnival' was a bust. It was a public relations fiasco from which the Sesqui never recovered. Fewer than 300,000 people visited the fair during its first full month instead of the anticipated five to eight million.

Of the 36 million total expected visitors there were only 4.6 million paid admissions before it closed on December 1. Of the fair's 184 day run it rained for 107 days. Some construction and amenities were never completed. The event faced severe financial difficulties and organizational problems. Vendors eventually sued for non-payment and the Sesquicentennial eventually declared bankruptcy. The city had to cover over $5,000,000 (over $90,000,000 today) to make up the shortfall.

A newspaper editorial in *The Record* went even further to say that they "...cannot refrain from observing that if the men of Philadelphia had undertaken to serve their city with half of the zeal, enterprise and efficiency manifested by the women of this group during the Sesqui period there would be a different story to tell of the celebration of the nation's birthday." Abigail Adams, who wrote the famous letter to her husband admonishing him to "remember the ladies" and be sure to include them in the new nation he was building in 1776, would have surely been on the Women's Committee at Philadelphia's Sesquicentennial International Exposition of 1926.

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

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ON OUR SHELVES

BY IZZY HALLORAN

Your Guide to the Holiday Season

Looking for the perfect holiday gift or your next wintertime read? Browse Head House Books' selection of fiction, nonfiction, visual art, and children's books!

NYRB Classic/Fiction

I Liked Rex by Diane Williams, $16.95



This collection of short stories was the September 2026 selection of *The New York Review of Books*. In *I Liked Rex*, Williams crafts a uniquely strange collection of 36 vignettes ranging from two to four pages long. Each chapter is told from a first-person point of view and centers on sex, love, and relationships. Williams manages to take these ordinary topics and contort them into wholly original, compelling observations on the often overlooked, minute details of life. The connecting thread throughout *I Liked Rex* lies in Williams' writing style. Her masterful ear for dialogue combined with an ability to unfold a character's psyche in a single page makes for an enthralling, unforgettable read.

Nonfiction

How it Feels to Be Alive: Encounters with Art and Our Selves by Megan O'Grady, $29



A spectacular combination of autobiography and art criticism! O'Grady structures her book around five impactful works of art and the artist who crafted them. *How it Feels to Be Alive* focuses on Barbara Kruger's "Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)," Agnes Martin's "Friendship," Carrie Mae Weems' "Kitchen Table Series," Pope.L's "Flint Water Project," and Beverley Pepper's "Dallas Land Canal and Hillside." O'Grady explains how these artworks, varying in medium, subject matter, and cultural impact, have shaped her awareness of self and the outside world. An accessible read for those unfamiliar with art writing and a fresh perspective for even the most seasoned reader, *How it Feels to Be Alive* serves as a necessary reminder that creative expression helps us understand ourselves, each other, and our ever-changing landscape.

Visual Art

The Surrealist Menagerie by Desmond Morris, $39.95



Morris explores the diverse cast of creatures represented in works of Surrealism, a 20th-century cultural movement that highlighted the unconscious mind. Zoologist and Surrealist artist Desmond Morris divides the book into seven chapters, each of which examines a different category of animal: the Invertebrates, the Cold-Bloods, the Winged Animals, the Carnivores, the Elephants, the Hoofed Animals, and the Primates. Harris theorizes that each animal serves three distinct purposes: factual, visual, and symbolic. Alongside a thorough study of the creature, Morris inserts colorful, high-quality pictures of Surrealist works. *The Surrealist Menagerie* makes an ideal gift for anyone fascinated with the range of the human imagination.

Illustrated Children's Book

The Way Home in the Night by Akiko Miyakoshi, $16.95



A children's book written and illustrated by Akiko Miyakoshi, this work tells the story of a young bunny's nighttime journey home through the streets of their neighborhood. Drawn in black-and-white with luminous light yellow hues, Miyakoshi's colored pencil style creates a soft, sleepy atmosphere. As we follow the family through the city streets, the bunny smells freshly baked pie, overhears conversations, and observes scenes through illuminated windows. Later, as the bunny falls asleep in bed, they imagine their neighbors' nighttime routines. The narrative concludes with the comforting thought that each person, regardless of the day's events, ends their night by falling asleep. *The Way Home in the Night* is a wonderful, cozy book to read at bedtime.



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

Society Hill Spotlight
Society Hill Civic Association eNews

The Society Hill Spotlight, our weekly newsletter distributed via email on Thursdays, is an important source of information about current news, upcoming meetings, things to do, and resources and services of interest to our community.

To sign up for the Spotlight, visit societyhillcivic.org/publications and click the Get Our Newsletter button.

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'FIX THE BRIX'

BY MARTHA LEVINE

A Good Neighbor Story

When neighbors, Al and JoAnne deSanto of the 600 Pine Street block noticed that the sidewalk near a Franklin light on their block was sinking and in urgent need of leveling, they got on it. As JoAnne said, "One of our greatest concerns was the potential danger the sunken bricks presented to pedestrians using the sidewalk." Utilizing SHCA's "Fix the Brix" subsidy program, they contacted and hired one of the masons on our List of Contractors. Although the hazardous sidewalk was not on their own property, but near a common walkway with no houses on it, they wanted to make it safe. As current SHCA members, they will receive 40 percent up to $500 for the repairs. (Non-members receive 40 percent up to $400). It pays to be a member. Thank you to Al and JoAnne for looking out for all of us. See before and after photos here.

Fill out the form online:

Take a good look at your own sidewalk, and if you think someone might trip and fall, please consider having it repaired. We have a masons section on our members-only SHCA List of Contractors to help you. To find the online form to fill out, go to: societyhillcivic.org/what-we-do/fix-the-bricks-trees.

The takeaway: Being a current SHCA member helps in two ways. One, you get $100 more on your "Fix the Brix" subsidy, as well as Tree Tenders. Two, you get a free List of Contractors electronically when you join.



Martha Levine in addition to chairing the Welcome Gift Bags program, also chairs the Block Coordinators, the "Fix the Brix" Program, and curates the List of Contractors.



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SHCA'S ICONIC WELCOME GIFT BAGS PROGRAM

BY MARTHA LEVINE, COORDINATOR

We Welcome New First Time Owners to Society Hill

Society Hill Welcome Gift Bags just got better. After a long summer break, we welcome back these local theater and entertainment contributors for the 2026-27 season: Arden Theatre, Lantern Theater, and The Philadelphia Chamber Ensemble. More are coming soon. Philadelphia is blessed with an array of theaters and music groups just steps away from Society Hill. To see their lineup of this season's productions, go to: Arden Theatre at www.ardentheatre.org; Lantern Theater at www.lanterntheater.org, and Philadelphia Chamber Ensemble at www.pceconcerts.org.

New Owner? If you are a new, first-time property owner here in Society Hill and wish to have a Welcome Gift Bag presented to you, please email us at marthalev6@gmail.com. We'll set up an appointment for a 45-minute presentation at your home. Each gift bag provides a bottle of wine, a bag of coffee, a chocolate sampler, and important neighborhood information, plus gift cards to area restaurants, entertainment, retail, services and museums. As one recipient said recently, "Wow, I feel like it's Christmas or my birthday."

As always, we ask you to thank our many generous (and some long-time) donors by patronizing their businesses and organizations. Without them, we would not have this great program.

Martha Levine in addition to chairing the Welcome Gift Bags program, also chairs the Block Coordinators, the "Fix the Brix" Program, and curates the List of Contractors.



Grant and Jen



Melinda and Mark

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

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1470 SF | $850,000



2 BEDROOM, 2 BATH
1475 SF | $950,000

SOCIETY HILL TOWERS



STUDIO, 1 BATH
504 SF | $189,900



1 BEDROOM, 1 BATH
712 SF | $295,000



3 BEDROOM, 2 BATH
1814 SF | $729,900

Hopkinson House



STUDIO, 1 BATH
450 SF | $149,900



1 BEDROOM, 1 BATH
843 SF | $249,900

PIER 5



3 BEDROOM, 2.5 BATH
2016 SF | $575,000

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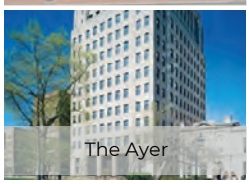
Rarely available three bedroom plus den, four and a half bathroom duplex penthouse with 1,800 square feet of private outdoor space, included garage parking spot, chef's kitchen with premium appliances, luxurious primary suite with private balcony and dual marble baths, internal elevator, hardwood floors, and sweeping south, north, and east views.
3154 sf | $2,950,000

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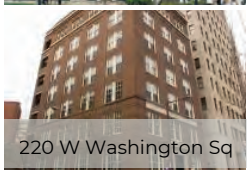














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