



# SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

An independent newsletter published by the Society Hill Civic Association  
in cooperation with the East Philadelphia Sun

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## NOTES from SHCA President

Time really does fly when you're having fun! By the time you read this, the tall ships will have set sail again and the fireworks of July 4th a pleasant memory. Midsummer feels like it's here already!

I've been impressed with the number of decorative plantings on the streets, in window boxes, and on door baskets. I walked from Front Street to 7th Street last week. The total as I meandered through was 114—not counting the perennials and shrubs. GOOD GOING, GANG! It's an impressive and colorful display with the 600 block of Addison, two blocks on Delancey, and Lawrence Court



having as many as 20 miniature Edens. Please remember to water those stressed trees at least once a week, too. Maybe your inspiration will get the mostly unplanted blocks going next spring. It's clear that where two or three people plant, others soon participate.

Wave a sad farewell to the last of the street sweepers who moved out forever (or at least until the city finds a money tree) on June 30. That puts more pressure on all of us to pickup our sidewalks and curbs. Make sure the corner litter baskets are properly used—

NO HOUSEHOLD TRASH, PLEASE. Wednesday, July 15 at 7:30 PM, the board will meet at Old Pine Community Center. VP Maggie Schultz will update us on the concerns about the Three Bears Park. I'll have the latest on the South Street traf-

fic control, noise, and other proposed changes in city ordinances from Councilman Vignola, information about the South Street District and the meeting of the presidents of the five concerned associations. This pot will continue to bubble for some time.

Come to the OPEN meeting on the 15th and share your input. We'll even try to finish our June agenda, which had to be delayed as the debate raged on these matters.

—Dick Ostrander

## RESULTS OF TOWN MEETING

### Re: Police Station at Head House

More than 50 neighbors showed up at the Town Meeting held on June 18 regarding the possibility of adapting the Head House (at 2nd and Pine Streets) for a police sub-station. The meeting was organized by the Head House Conservancy so that the police who propose this plan could describe their needs to the community. Captain Melvin Blake and Lieutenant Robert J. McCarthy of the South Street Detail, 3rd District, were invited to speak to the group.

The meeting began with a brief presentation of the building's history by Society Hill neighbor Penelope Batchelor, preservation architect at Independence National Park, and was followed by a progress report on the current restoration work by architect Roland Davies. The preservation effort was praised and unanimously supported.

Police use of the building raised several issues, including parking around the site, the size of the police force, and questions about how the building could accommodate the number of patrolmen. Many of these concerns were resolved by Captain Blake's explanation that the building would serve primarily as a site for roll call for the 30-odd police force of the South

Street Detail. Captain Blake assured the group that there will never be any holding cells for apprehended suspects at Head House.

Several people who could not attend the meeting telephoned the Conservancy or sent notes stating their opinions about police use of the building. William A. Creasey of the Society Hill Towers sent a letter suggesting that his first choice for the building's use would be for "a small museum of fire-fighting, perhaps with an old-time fire engine (or reconstruction) inside." But he concluded that "At least a police station would be in keeping with the original purpose of protecting the community." One caller from Society Hill Towers expressed her opposition "because it would be an inappropriate use of an important historical site." She said, "it would be like installing the police at the Liberty Bell."

Most neighbors, however, have expressed that their primary concern is the improvement of local security. Therefore, many believe that police use of Head House would be an acceptable use of the building, providing that the structure would not be compromised in any way.

A question raised was, "Who

will pay for the cost of renovating the building for this purpose? Clearly, the Conservancy, involved in preserving the building's exterior, will not spend private funds for the requirements of the police. The proposed South Street/Head House Special Services District may play some part for funding police use of the building, but their representative at the meeting could not be specific about any details.

Another point raised at the meeting is that Society Hill is under the 6th District Police area, where the South Street Detail is covered by the 3rd District. A coordination effort by both districts would be required so that Society Hill does not fall between the cracks, should the police proposal become a reality.

Many unanswered questions at a great deal of coordination with all agencies and interested parties including the city agency currently responsible for the structure, the Department of Public Property, will be necessary before this proposal can move ahead. In any case, a plan is unlikely to take effect for at least another year. Meanwhile the South Street Detail is shopping for a site close to South Street to be nearby for the summer's high level of activity.

## THE THREE BEARS PARK CONTROVERSY

Wednesday, June 17, the heated barbs flew back and forth in the overheated room at Old Pine Community Center for the Standing-Room-Only crowd at the SHCA board of directors meeting. Neighbor insulted neighbor. The controversy swirled around the Department of Recreation's installation of new playground equipment at the small Delancey Street park. (Readers of the Society Hill Reporter may remember that the history of the hard work, fundraising, and maintenance of the park by the Friends of Three Bears was detailed in last month's issue.)

The Friends of Three Bears maintain that the old equipment was dangerous and decrepit. This was not the debating point, as most would agree that the playground equipment did need to be replaced. The issue that raised the temperature in the room had more to do with the fact that most of the nearby neighbors feel that the new equipment is visually out of scale for the setting. They complained that the park, originally installed at the time of Society Hill's renewal, was designed to be a green space connected to other area walkways which would have some playground equipment in it. The park was not intended to be

simply a playground, but to be a Society Hill sanctuary for people of all ages. The neighbors also argued that they were never informed about the park's changes prior to the fact.

In addition to the "inappropriate" appearance of new equipment, some of the Delancey Street neighbors are now concerned that the new, large scale equipment will attract older, rowdy teenagers to the park. They presented to the board a petition protesting the installation of the new equipment.

At the board meeting, Dick Ostrander appointed SHCA Vice-President Maggie Schultz to try to iron out some

kind of agreement with the warring factions. Maggie will report back to the association at the July 15 meeting.

Meanwhile, the city has spent \$50,000 on the new equipment, and children in the neighborhood seem to be enjoying it, and some valuable lessons will have been learned by us all. For instance, some of the volunteers at Project Street Trees (see article in this issue) represent both sides of the Three Bears debacle. They stressed the need for communication as a critical success factor for any project.

So the flyer that will be stuffed in your mailbox is a direct result of the Battle of the Bears. That's n...!!!

## SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

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**SHCA Calendar**  
(clip & save)

- Saturday,  
July 11, 10 AM  
**Project Street Trees**  
Tree Census Workshop  
Old Pine Community Center  
NW corner 4th & Lombard
- Wednesday,  
July 17, 7:30  
**SHCA Board Meeting**  
Old Pine Community Center  
Board Meetings  
are open to all
- Runs until Jan 2/93  
10-4 Mon-Sat  
**"Rites of Passage in  
America: Traditions of the  
Life Cycle"**  
The Balch Institute for  
Ethnic Studies  
18 S. 7th Street

**NEXT WORKSHOP ON SATURDAY**  
**Project Street Trees Branches Out**

The SHCA is sponsoring Project Street Trees to help neighbors maintain, extend the life, or replace the trees growing on the sidewalks of this shady community. Sidewalk trees are the responsibility of the property owner. While the city would remove a dead stump in the past as a courtesy, they can no longer afford to do so. Removing stumps can be expensive. At the organizational meeting last month, one neighbor reported spending \$425 to have a root removed. Replacing a tree of a quality and size to survive urban life averages about \$200. The normal life expectancy of a city tree is only seven to ten years.

Yet trees are lovely to look at, help energy bills in the summer by providing cooling shade, generally help the environment, and improve property values. For these reasons, Jean Bodine has organized Project Street Trees. She has enlisted the services of the Fairmount Park Commission and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society to share their expertise with neighborhood vol-

unteers. The first task is to conduct a tree census. Chris Leswing, neighbor and landscape designer,



*Philadelphia Vireo*  
**This drawing of the Philadelphia Vireo, done by Sally Buell, was found in our files. Project Street Trees wants to make sure the birds don't join the homeless population of our city.**

will conduct two workshops for volunteers to learn how to take a tree census.

*Tree Census Workshop*  
Wednesday, July 8  
7:30 to 8:30 PM  
Saturday, July 11  
10:00 to 11:00 AM  
Old Pine Community Center  
NW Corner 4th and Lombard  
Streets  
(call 629-1288  
to confirm attendance)

The volunteers in groups of three will tally the tree population for variety, general condition, and environmental factors such as pit size, ground cover, and sidewalk condition. With this information, a plan will be developed on what trees thrive in the area, what varieties could be successfully introduced, and where new trees are needed. The committee members will contact neighbors and property owners who have diseased or imperiled trees or just empty pits to see if they would like assistance with care or pruning their tree, or assistance with replanting their sidewalk area. This is a totally volunteer and cooperative effort.

The committee also wants to provide education to neighbors and the students in the community schools about the care of trees and their value. Look for future free workshops on the care, feeding, pruning, and choosing of trees for the city. This is an ongoing project which will probably last at least two years. If you would like to assist any of the committees in public relations, funding, grant writing, educational workshops, fall and spring plantings, volunteer pruning and cleaning, please call the SHCA at 629-1288.

**RECYCLING**

The Starr Garden RECYCLING for SHCA recently received a cash payoff with a \$168 check for aluminum collections from 1991. A similar amount is due June 30 but will probably not arrive until late summer. The site collects about two to two-and-a-half 44-gallon barrels each week. That's even with street people regularly "mining" our site. (One man's garbage!)

The site also collects one ton of paper weekly. The bins for glass fill up every three days now that we have extra space for clear glass. There are containers for clear glass to one for green and brown glass.

Site maintenance would be made easier if all users bagged or bundled newspapers and crushed aluminum. Newspapers in bundles brown grocery bags are easier to handle. Each bag must be handled at least once, if not more often, keep the shed in order and pickup on Saturday morning. Ostrander could use help during the week—just fifteen or twenty minutes would suffice. The 9 AM Saturday morning chores done by Dick, Ted, and Ken Klass could use one or two more hands. If you can help call 922-6179 or 629-1288.

More recycling notes: Food and vegetable scraps are NOT aluminum and are NOT to be deposited at the site. Plastics are NOT collected here. Household trash or garbage should be deposited here. If such items continue to mess up the area, Department of Recreation invite us OUT. They have problems keeping the park clean and reasonably clean without the recycling violations.

**THE SOCIETY HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

If you didn't receive a 1992 membership renewal letter... it means, naturally, that you were not a SHCA member last year. **WE WANT YOU TO JOIN US THIS YEAR!** Your membership and your voice will make a difference in our neighborhood. Tear off and mail to:  
**Society Hill Civic Association**  
P.O. Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105  
Attention: Treasurer

- New Member
- Household \$25
- Membership Renewal
- Business/Corporate \$50
- Corporate Sponsor \$100

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (eve) \_\_\_\_\_

- (We) would be interested in working with the following committees:
- Membership
  - Liquor Control
  - Neighborhood Maintenance
  - Town Watch
  - Recycling
  - Reporter/Sun newspaper
  - Zoning
  - Legislative
  - Preservation
  - Other (please specify)

**YOUR HOME IS YOUR PRIMARY INVESTMENT. PROTECT IT!**

**NOTES**

Associated Services for the Blind at 919 Walnut has asked for volunteers to transcribe educational materials into braille for children and adults. Training will start in the fall for one morning a week for eight months to learn how. To volunteer, call 627-0600 extension 330 Monday to Thursday.

Philadelphia Trivia, a board game based on Trivial Pursuit, is only a few months away from distribution, but it is not too late to submit questions for inclusion in the game. Send entries to:  
Jim Gallagher  
Pro-Spec Incentives  
4502 Derry Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17111.

Questions should be in a category of Entertainment, General, Arts, History, or Sports with the question then the answer. Example, what railroad company had its headquarters at the present site of The Willings at Fourth and Walnut Streets? Answer: The Reading Railroad.

**OBITUARY**

Elizabeth "Tillie" Speck, a past president of the Society Hill Civic Association, passed away recently. She lived on 3rd Street near Lombard, and was well-known and loved in this neighborhood.

**TREE WORK**

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## THEN AND NOW Washington Square

Since this is the month we celebrate independence from England, we thought we would give you the background on Washington Square, the square ground for many who fought in a long ago conflict. This information is excerpted from a speech by Anna Marie Marshall, president of the Washington Square Association.

In 1682, Washington Square, then known as Southeast Square in accordance with the Quaker tradition of not naming places after people, was one of the five original squares laid out in William Penn's plan for the city. It was a peaceful place, measuring five and a quarter acres... It had a deep stream through which a creek flowed and in which crawfish abounded. A grassy place, it was surrounded by a velvet hedge and enclosed by a post and rail fence. In 1706, the city decided to use the space as "a burial place for strangers or others who might not so conveniently be laid in any of the particular closures appropriated by certain religious societies for that purpose."

Joshua Carpenter leased a part of the Square as a pasture. When his

daughter committed suicide, she was buried in the square. When Joshua died, he was buried beside her under an apple tree at the center. Still, this was a gentle, peaceful time for the square.

It was soon 1776, and the gentle peaceful times had come to an end. The square now stood on the corner of the Walnut Street Prison which was built across from the elegant Pennsylvania State House. From there the colonies declared their independence... Sadly, not long after, the pastures of Southeast Square would be opened to receive those who were among the first to give their lives for their country. On January 1, 1777, Sally Wister wrote in her journal, "You can scarcely walk a square without seeing the shocking sight of a cart with five or six coffins... large pits are dug in the square... forty to fifty coffins are put in the same hole."

John Adams wrote in a letter on April 13, 1777, "...disease has destroyed ten men for use where the sword of enemy has killed one." This was before the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, and the British occupation of Philadelphia... A decade later, mass burials would resume

as those who survived the war of the revolution were felled by the yellow fever epidemic.

Well, the century turned. It was now the beginning of the 1800s and the people of Philadelphia seemed to want to forget the war, the fever and the pain of the past decade. The Square was closed to burials. The stream was covered over. A white picket fence was erected, gravel walks forty feet wide were laid in a circular configuration, one within the other. George Vaux ordered trees from Bartram Gardens... the ground was covered in clover and John Haviland designed benches and lamps... even replaced the white picket fence with an iron with grand gates at the entrances supported by large blocks of marble topped by marble urns...

On February 22, 1833, a cornerstone was laid at the center of the renamed square... An elegant residential community grew around the Square, with churches—the First Presbyterian and Friends Meeting House, then a bank—Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, and a library—the Athenaeum.

It was now the end of the 1800s... the north had fought the south—freedom vs. enslavement again. ...was

erected a monument of the Washington Grays—the Pennsylvania militia which mustered at the southeast corner of Washington Square and had distinguished itself during the Civil War. The Daughters of the American Revolution set a monolith at the Northeast entrance... the promenades of the Square were reconfigured and paved with flagstone. The Haviland fencing and gates were removed.

Washington Square lost its residential character as it became the crossroads of Philadelphia's publishing community which grew and flourished. The Pennsylvania Bible Society started in 1808; Lea and Febiger in 1785; J.B. Lippincott in 1792, celebrating 200th anniversary; The Farm Journal, 1877; W.B. Saunders, medical books; Curtis publishing with the Saturday Evening Post and the Ladies Home Journal. N.W. Ayer, Penn Mutual, and Rohm and Haas

joined together to form the Washington Square Association and planted the curbside Gingko trees...

G. Edwin Brumbaugh, an architect noted for his knowledge of colonial design, added new trees to the surviving one hundred year old trees, the brick wall, Franklin lamps, the foun-

tain, flags of the thirteen colonies and at last, the monument. The state exhumed the body of an unknown revolutionary war soldier from the northwest corner of the Square.

The Pennsylvania flag used belonged to the Philadelphia Light Horse troop that escorted Washington to New York... The statue of George Washington is a bronze casting of the only standing statue of him done from life. It was by the famous French sculptor Jean Antoine Houdon. Its granite backdrop carries the words of John Pullen, an employee of N.W. Ayer Company "Freedom is a light for which many men have died in darkness." ...Continental Bank contributed the eternal flame...

One hundred years after the Civil War, the character of the Square had changed again. Hopkinson House and Independence Place have added 1,000 residences to the Square. N.W. Ayer, Curtis Publishing, and Penn Mutual have merged into the Curtis Center. The fate of the PSFS building which is currently owned by Samuel Rappaport remains to be seen. The Square needs several millions of dollars to repair to bring it up to a standard that the National Park Service can take over its maintenance. For more information or to help, contact the Washington Square Association at 923-1776. Now you know why the Square always seem so peaceful. Many thousands of souls are laid to their final rest there.

**The Square needs several millions of dollars in repair to bring it up to a standard that the National Park Service can take over its maintenance.**

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