

NEWS
FOR
MEMBERS



The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

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After a year and a half of cramped and crowded offices in an old--but very uninteresting--building, we have moved into completely renovated quarters in the Benedum-Trees Building. The new area provides separate offices for Mr. Van Trump and Mr. Ziegler as well as the secretary. We also have a workroom, and we are in the process of installing our library for the use of both members and staff. Through the generous loan of Mr. Van Trump, we have one of the finest architectural libraries available, and members are invited to use it for reference work when our cataloging is complete in about six weeks. Fresh paint, carpeting, and shined brass make these rooms very handsome, and members should feel free to stop and see them. We have a new phone number: 281-1627.

Last issue we announced that together with the Junior League, we are establishing a lecture on Pittsburgh history in the public schools. The ladies of the League have now completed the lecture and gathered all the slides, and in the fall the series will begin. Each lecture will be delivered by a team of three, and the Junior League would welcome any members who wish to participate in delivering the lecture to one or more fifth grade classes. We hope that some of our members will have time available. They should contact our office. All materials are provided, and the talk runs about 40 minutes.

Several years ago a swath was cleared paralleling Chateau Street on the North Side. By the mid-1970's a six lane elevated highway will slice along there, swing down near the West End Bridge, divide into two roads at the stadium, push east toward the Heinz plant, and then cut north, annihilating East Street. Scheduled for demolition are a fine row house at Ridge and Allegheny Avenues, the German settlement and Avery College near Lockhart Street, and St. Boniface Church with its monumental Guastovino tile vaulting (East Street). Nothing, it would seem, can be done but we are trying nevertheless.

Penn Park, the answer to the suburban drain on the city (put the suburb in the city) sacrifices the Rotunda of the Pennsylvania Station - perhaps the most dramatic space of its kind - to the new green and "Grand Avenue". We are proposing alternatives to the projected demolition of the Rotunda.

Gone forever: the North Side Market House, the Fourth Avenue Post Office, the Lovejoy stable in East End, a fine Second Empire house at Lincoln Avenue near Brighton Road and one at Allegheny and Ridge Avenue....St. Luke's Episcopal Church, one of the oldest extant church buildings west of the Alleghenies, is now being restored....Helpful residential zoning has been passed by City Council for parts of Manchester and South Side, and we are working on further protective legislation.

The excuses were for the birds, and we all cried "fowl". By now you have no doubt read the lengthy stories in the Pittsburgh Press about our rescue of four of the seven eagles from the Fourth Avenue Post Office, now being demolished. Early last fall the Pittsburgh Parking Authority generously donated the carved wooden birds to us to preserve. However, the General Services Administration of the Federal Government, which was selling the building to the Authority, barred our admission until the latter took possession. During the interval G.S.A. stripped out some of the ornaments of the building, including our eagles, and quietly shipped them off to New York. Our officers and staff flapped their wings over it, and began to probe the matter. They informed the New York and Washington offices of G.S.A. as well as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, and several Congressmen. After reams of letters and hours of conversations, the battle was won, and G.S.A. returned four of the eagles -- uncrated -- to us. Now together with the Mayor we are looking for some permanent nests.

Our bus excursion to Old Economy in May, in spite of rain, was an unusual and pleasant experience. Taken through many areas of the buildings off limits to other tour groups we were also the first group in many years to participate in a "love feast". Next on the list is a late summer bus tour to Latrobe and Greensburg, and then a spring picnic trip to Evergreen Hamlet.

A recent letter to the Pittsburgh Press reads as follows: "We have heard Renaissance talked about so much in Pittsburgh that we believe it the only thing worth striving after here. What makes old cities attractive? All this new construction? No, it is the blending of the old and the new which captivates. This is what makes Washington so alluring: the architecture of every era of our national life is represented there -- and diligently cared for. Not so our materialistic community. Here everything that in any way smacks of old age, no matter how noble, must be done away with. We had a lovely City Hall on Smithfield Street with famous windows and staircase. We had to destroy it. In our Fourth Avenue post office we had one of the most charming edifices of its kind in the nation: the wood panelling, wrought ironwork and marble were an inspiration to look upon. Why couldn't the Mayor or the County Commissioners have converted this building into a headquarters? Do we fear the atmosphere of our great past might influence some of our officials to more ennobling behavior? No, we are too much involved with tearing down, building and relegating the labor and money investment of the past to the dump heap. We have no reverence for what has gone before. Are we a people of culture who so imperturbably practice such wantonness? I think we are the only old city in the nation which does not maintain a venerable building in its Downtown as a reminder of its historic heritage. With all our money, how woefully immature we are!"

IN THE ANNUAL GOLDEN QUILL AWARDS, OUR PUBLICATION LIVERPOOL STREET TIED FOR SECOND PLACE AS THE BEST SINGLE PUBLICATION IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA LAST YEAR. THE AWARD WAS BASED ON RESEARCH, WRITING, DESIGN, AND PRINTING.

The Fourth Avenue Post Office is now rubble. But having retrieved the eagles, we are now trying to save the "Ladies of Stone" that stood on the high pediment of the Third and Fourth Avenue elevations. It seems fitting to us that at least one set of the two groups of three be placed in the new park that will replace the Post Office. We have yet to decide what public area the other set should be ensconced in. First, however, we must raise the cost of hoisting them with a special crane: \$6,977.68. A flyer enclosed explains our mission.

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