

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

NEWS FOR MEMBERS
NUMBER 18 - MARCH 1970

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD STATION ROTUNDA TO BE PRESERVED PHLF EFFORTS TO SAVE IT REWARDED

We have been notified by the architect for the Penn Central Railroad Company, Vincent G. Kling & Associates of Philadelphia, that the Rotunda of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station here in Pittsburgh will be preserved. Under the planning for the new Penn Park real estate development in that area of the city the initial plans called for demolition of the unique structure. We promptly met with officials of the railroad and with the architect to present our opposition.

We also explored the history and importance of this structure and proposed some feasible uses for it in our booklet on the Rotunda that we published two years ago. We also prepared a national public relations campaign on behalf of saving the Rotunda and our stories were carried by *Architectural Record*, *Progressive Architecture*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The London Architectural Review*, *The St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *The Pittsburgh Press*, *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and of all things, the *Wrecking and Salvage Journal*.

The officials for the railroad did agree to restudy the possibility of using the Rotunda in the new plan.

Four problems stood in the way. The first was that the Rotunda is built on an elevated platform which, in the new development, will be removed. Second, a complex interchange of highways and transit systems will isolate the area in which the Rotunda stands. Third, a use had to be found for this structure and an owner who would maintain it, and fourth we faced the question of how to relate the Rotunda to the high rise office buildings that will surround it.

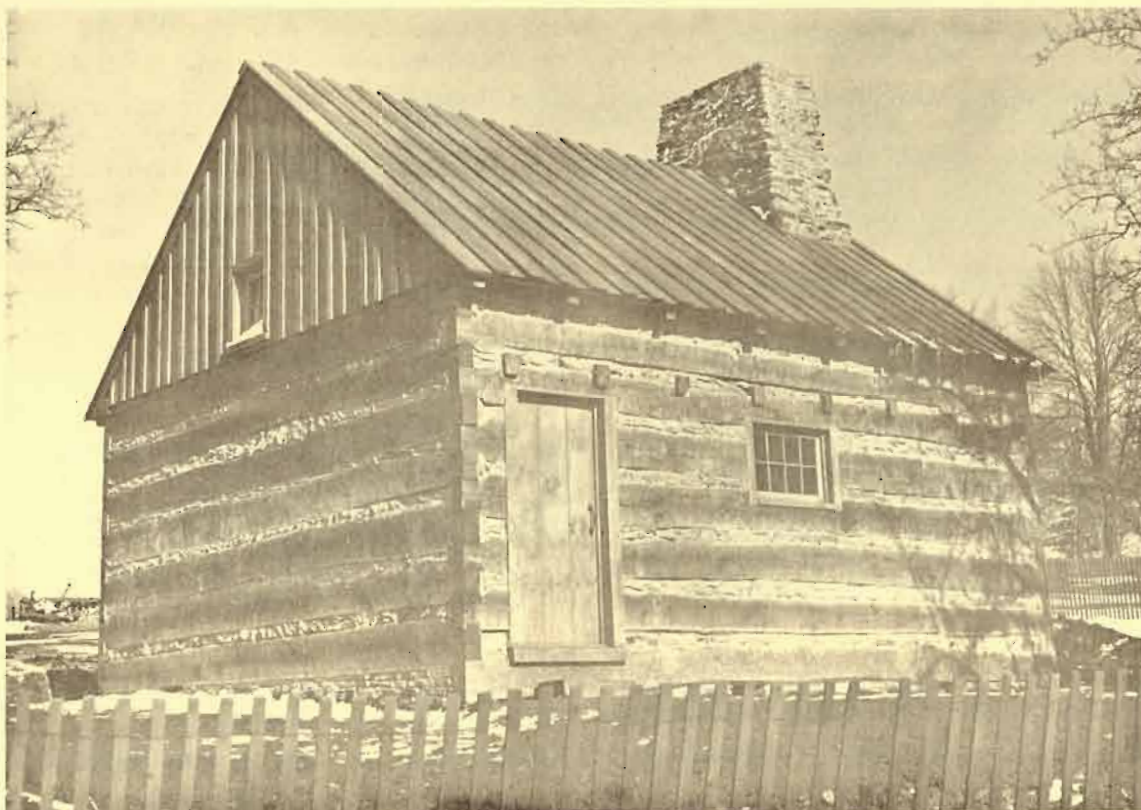
Recently Miss Ada Louise Huxtable in the *New York Times* severely criticized the Railroad for being unwilling to retain the Rotunda and in a letter to Miss Huxtable, Mr. Dan P. Kopple of Vincent G. Kling & Associates, wrote as follows:

"It is our intention to retain the Rotunda and use it as a central point for a transportation interchange facility... The present Pittsburgh plan calls for the development of a mass transit corridor along the present railroad right-of-way which serves the existing station. One of the few mass transit stations in downtown Pittsburgh will be at the Rotunda site. Pittsburgh authorities dealing with a selection of mass transit systems have not finished their plans. It is my understanding that a demonstration route terminating at the existing station is to be developed at the south to interface with the bus system to the east of the Rotunda...We envision the Rotunda as the joint between the mass transit station and the major pedestrian concourse which is the spine of Penn Central Park."

It would seem that our intense efforts to save this building have borne fruit and that this great monument will be saved and used.

Our request in a recent newsletter for suggestions for a name for the new museum has brought the following names: Allegheny Center Museum, Allegheny County Landmarks Museum, Allegheny County Museum, Allegheny Restoration Museum, Allegheny Square Museum, Historical Museum of Pittsburgh, Museum of Pittsburgh and Old Allegheny, The North Side Museum, Old Allegheny Museum, Old Post Office Museum, The Pittsburgh Heritage Museum, Pittsburgh Historical Museum, Pittsburgh History Museum, Pittsylvania Historic Museum, The Pittsylvania Museum. Have a name to add? Just send it on a postcard to the Foundation offices in the Benedum-Trees Building.

Progress is being made on the conversion of the old North Side Post Office into our museum. Preliminary designs have been approved and we are now proceeding to obtain firm cost estimates and working drawings. A new heating system has already been installed. Williams/Trebilcock/Whitehead, architects, are in charge of the project.



As announced in an earlier newsletter, the Pittsburgh Junior League is seeking furniture for the Neill Log House, shown here nearing completion in Schenley Park. Among the items needed are a spinning wheel, a Pennsylvania long rifle, fireplace equipment, an assortment of iron pots, kettles, and cooking utensils. Anyone wishing to donate or lend furnishings, please call the PHLF office.

NEILL HOUSE
FURNITURE



SPECIAL TOUR

FOUR EAST END HOUSES OF WORSHIP

The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation is sponsoring a tea and a guided tour of Calvary Episcopal, Sacred Heart R.C., and Shadyside Presbyterian churches and Rodef Shalom Synagogue on April 5. The tour is open to the public. The Madrigal Singers will also offer a brief recital.

The tea will begin at 1:30 p.m. at Calvary Episcopal, 315 Shady Avenue and the tour will begin at 2:00 p.m. and conclude at approximately 5:00 p.m. The tour will be conducted by James D. Van Trump internationally known architectural historian and Vice President and Director of Research of the Foundation. Transportation is provided. Cost of members is \$2.50; non-members \$3.50. Reservation deadline is April 2nd.

Please bring this program to the attention of organizations to which you belong.

Enclosed is \$ _____ for _____ reservations for the Houses of Worship Tour. Make checks payable to:

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation
900 Benedum-Trees Building
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222


Name _____

Address _____

The volunteer workers for PHLF, organized last October as "Landmarks Associates" are involved in a number of projects for the coming year. The first, a fund raising event open to the general public, will be a tour of some of the architectural significant places of worship in the East End. Committees, under the direction of Mrs. Alan Wohleber and Mrs. Edward Leckey, co-chairman, for the April 5th event are as follows: Tickets and Program: Mrs. Howard Bruschi, chairman; Miss Margot Barbour, Mrs. Wilbert Alster, Mrs. William Reed, Dr. Ludwig Schaefer. Publicity: Mrs. Donald Kenagy, chairman; Miss Margaret Plutnicki, Mrs. Louis Goldszer, Mr. Roger Campbell. Transportation: Mrs. G. Dellostratto, Mrs. Ralph Leo. Refreshments: Mrs. Oscar Shefler. An event scheduled tentatively for the late summer is an auction of

"excess" artifacts. Co-chairman for this event will be Mrs. Wm. LANDMARKS Reed and Dr. Ludwig Schaefer. We anticipate a need for "work ASSOCIATES parties" to list and move the mantels, panelling, stained glass, and other articles. The continuing volunteer efforts have resulted in completing the labeling of all artifacts stored in the old Allegheny Post Office of the North Side, typing and "stuffing" for mailing 9,000 membership envelopes; supplementing the PHLF office staff with typing, filing, and library cataloguing; providing Mr. Van Trump with chauffeurs as he conducts interviews or inspects artifacts. The Speaker's Bureau is filling several engagements each month, using slides and a prepared talk depicting PHLF work, activities, and philosophy. A similar program is underway, utilizing volunteers in a presentation in elementary schools. The research group is presently conducting deed research on all of the houses in the Mexican War Streets and is planning to begin soon completing the state registry forms necessary for entering our LAAC buildings on the State Register of Historic Sites and Buildings.

A member of the Foundation recently donated a number of trading stamp books to us with the suggestion that we redeem them for items we might need for the Landmarks Museum. She also noted that perhaps many of our STAMPS WANTED members had stamp books that they either no longer saved or would be willing to part with and would be happy to send them to us. We feel that it is an excellent idea and would appreciate it if these books were sent to us. We can certainly make good use of them.

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SPECIAL TOUR COMING

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Make reservations now.