

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

NEWS FOR MEMBERS

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Several years ago we asked Urban Design Associates under the direction of David Lewis of our Board of Directors to produce a rendering of a group of fine Italianate 1870 structures standing contiguously in the 1700 block of Carson Street in South Side. Since they completed their imaginative study, we have been trying to obtain voluntary restoration of the block, but without success. Therefore we have purchased one of the buildings, #1705, and we plan to restore it. Funds have been provided under the grant from the Sarah Mellon Scaife Foundation announced in our last newsletter. Our purpose will be to show businessmen and landlords of Carson Street that these structures can be economically restored for shops with apartments on the upper floors and can contribute to creating an historical commercial area on Carson Street. Our president, Charles Covert Arensberg, researched the deed and filed this report:

PHLF ACQUIRES CARSON STREET STRUCTURE

Before the Estate of Jacob Frank owned it the beautiful Salomea Arnholt waltzed through its hallowed halls until 1919. She was the married daughter of Johann Michael Ernwein who got the property from Sarah M. Phillips and Charles Espy in 1857. When Sarah Phillips and Charles Espy sold it to Ernwein in 1857 it was a vacant lot in the Borough of East Birmingham 48 feet from Harmony Street (now 17th Street). Ernwein paid \$700.00 for it in 1857. (Deed Book Volume 130, page 68). The next street, apparently 18th Street, was then called Meadow Street. Sarah M. Phillips got the property in 1850 from John H. Page as part of a large number of properties in South Birmingham "near the Monongahela Bridge and along the Pittsburgh and Brownsville Turnpike Road". Sarah Phillips was the wife of Asher Phillips and the daughter of Oliver Ormsby (see partition in Orphans' Court at 32 March Term 1841, No. 63 October Term 1844). Asher Phillips and Sarah Phillips were then living in Louisville, Kentucky and apparently disposed of all Pittsburgh properties in the 1840's to purchase the house they were living in in Louisville, Kentucky.



ANOTHER GRANT

We are pleased to announce that PHLF has received a grant of \$5000 from the Anne L. and George H. Clapp Charitable Educational Trust.

The money will be deposited in the general fund to be used for the day-to-day needs of our organization. We are heartened by this vote of confidence in our work and wish to publicly thank the Clapp Trust for their support.

The current expansion of Greater Pittsburgh Airport has resulted in the loss of three more landmarks in Allegheny County; the R. Byers Neely, the Claire W. McElhaney, and the Robert Schmertz houses. The Neely and McElhaney houses, both listed in LAAC, stand in a beautiful rural area in Findlay and Moon Townships while the Schmertz house is located not far from the airport. The McElhaney house, built in 1824, is an early Western Pennsylvania vernacular stone house while the Neely house, c. 1850, is built of brick in the simplified vernacular Greek Revival style. The Schmertz house was built about 1820; a frame house it was also in the local Greek Revival style. In the 1920's it was restored for sympathetic clients by the architect H. D. Gilchrist. But all this restorational piety did not save it; the airport ate it up. PHLF did save some of the fine interior Edwardian woodwork from this structure.

Attempts by the South Side Chamber of Commerce, the South Side Community Council, and PHLF to prevent the construction of a service station on East Carson Street have failed. We presented arguments to the city's Board of Adjustment saying that the station would interrupt the architectural continuity of the street and be detrimental to the Birmingham restoration program. Although the Board ruled against us because there was no legal basis for our request, the South Side organizations did win certain design considerations from the owners of the station, the Mobil Oil Corporation. The company agreed to build a good modern building rather than an anachronistic Colonial one, and to eliminate all banners and pennants, to install a brick sidewalk to conform to the Birmingham Program requirements, to install a planter and to do other landscaping to enhance the property. The Foundation was appointed by the Chamber and Community Council to recommend the design changes.

mark your calendar!

Our annual mid-winter meeting will be held on January 20, 8:30 p.m. at the Fort Pitt Museum in Point State Park. Our speaker is Alan W. Eckert, a writer whose interests in history, nature, and wildlife preservation should provide for a very interesting evening. Mr. Eckert attended the University of Dayton and Ohio State University. He has written about 200 non-fiction magazine articles on a wide variety of topics as well as short stories. Some of his verse has appeared in nature magazines. His latest book, Frontier Wilderness is a historical narrative that touches on the history of Pittsburgh. The other major item of interest will be the election of the board of directors. Everyone is urged to attend this important meeting.

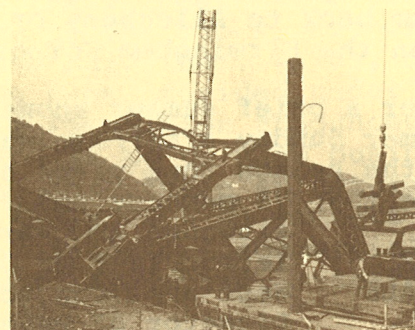
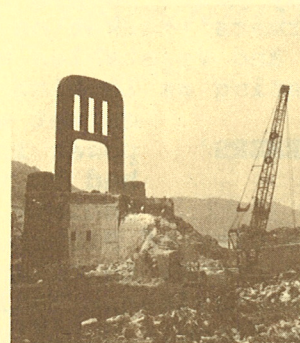
We were very pleased to learn that the Hillcrest Garden Club won the Silver State Award in education-conservation for their landscape treatment of the gardens they planted in the yards and rear courts in our houses in the Mexican War Streets and for the window boxes that they placed on the front of some of these structures. During the course of the summer we received many favorable comments from tenants and neighborhood residents, some of whom requested window boxes for their own houses.

Mrs. Kenneth M. Boesel and her committee deserve high praise for their willingness to donate their time. We also are gratified that the Club was willing to invest its funds in this project. Next year we hope the program will be extended to more properties that we hope to acquire in the next few months.

The Pennsylvania Department of Highways has nearly completed the dismanteling of the magnificent Point and Manchester bridges. A few voices were raised at the last minute for their preservation, but the wrecking crew was inexorably on the way. Shortly after our organization was founded, we met with all parties concerned in the development of Point State Park and attempted to persuade them to save the bridges. We were unsuccessful in the effort. We did persuade the authorities to remove and deliver to us all of the sculptures, medallions, and

plaques from the Manchester bridge. We were instrumental in seeing that the great sculptures from each portal are to get a new

home on the northern pier of the bridge, which will remain. Under a new program of the Department of the Interior called the Historic American Engineering Survey we have undertaken to record the two bridges as well as the Brady Street bridge with photographs, measured drawings, and research. This is the first such project in the nation and it will be published by the Department of the Interior as a model of its kind. The project is being paid for by matching grants from that Department, the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers and PHLF. Costs will be approximately \$1,600. Photos shown have been taken for that project by Charles W. Shane.



On 18 October Landmark Associates elected new officers for the coming year. They are: Mrs. Donald Kenagy, President; Mrs. Nathaniel Silon, President Ex Officio; Mrs. Alan Wohleber, Vice President; Mrs. Geraldine Dellostretto, Secretary; Mrs. Louis Goldszer, Treasurer. LANDMARK ASSOCIATES The members then adopted a resolution of gratitude for the work of the past officers. Mr. Ziegler praised the extraordinary efforts and accomplishments of Doris Silon, past president, in organizing the Associates and getting the group on a productive course.

On December 3 and 4 a special seminar will be held at Tulane University in New Orleans on "The Social Implications of Historic Preservation". Attendance is restricted to fifty invited professionals in the field. The two instructors will be George Stephen of the Boston Rehabilitation Corporation and our executive director, Arthur Ziegler. . . .Beginning in February our research director, James D. Van Trump, will teach STAFF TEACHING a course in the informal studies program (non-credit) at the University of Pittsburgh on Pittsburgh's architecture as an expression of both American and local life and history. The class meets on Thursday evenings. His regular credit course on "The History of American Architecture with emphasis on Western Pennsylvania" will begin in early January. Contact Pitt for details.

For many years people have come from throughout Allegheny County to visit the Farmers' Market on certain evenings each week in Allegheny. Flowers, fruit, and vegetables were farm-fresh, and visiting with the farmers was as interesting as looking over the produce. However, the land on which the market was located is going to be developed for other purposes in conjunction with the new stadium, and the farmers had to relocate. We worked with the Mexican War Streets Society, Mr. Steven George, Director of Lands and Buildings for the City of Pittsburgh, and the Urban Redevelopment Authority and Allegheny Center to relocate the farmers on the site of the recently demolished Pennsylvania Railroad warehouse building near the Sixth Street bridge. Then the farmers notified us that they had located themselves in the dusty plain by the Heidelberg raceway. We are still working to bring a group of them back to Allegheny or to locate them in the South Side Market House when the Birmingham Corporation completes its restoration there.

After a brief summer shower, the final summer Sunday afternoon walking tour of the season took place on August 30th. More than 75 members and friends of PHLF attended and were treated to a leisurely tour of the Shadyside West area conducted by PHLF Director of Research, James D. Van Trump. A particularly interesting part of the tour was a brief stop at the home of Charles Covert Arensberg, PHLF President, for a cold drink and a visit to the garden of A. Douglas Hannah on Caseleman Street. The walking tours have again proved very popular this summer and will be continued next summer.



A good friend of the Foundation, KDKA-Radio, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The building from which the world's first commercial broadcast was made is still extant in East Pittsburgh. It is the former home of Frank Conrad, "father of broadcasting". We congratulate KDKA-Radio on reaching this milestone and also publicly thank them for their support over the years.

A Pencil in Penn

Sketches of Pittsburgh and Surrounding Areas

Edward Brown Lee and His Son

For many years these unique sketches of the architect E. B. Lee lay in old notebooks in a remote Vermont attic. Fortunately they were discovered and have now been faithfully reproduced in fine-screen offset lithography in this book as a tribute of the son to the talents of his father.

Residents of Pittsburgh and its surrounding area will recognize most of the scenes and will enjoy reading about them. This book is a sensitive and imaginative expression in art and words of Western Pennsylvania's heritage.

Readers will be surprised at the modern quality of the pen strokes and delighted to find that they have been provided with an insight into the beauty that can be found everywhere in and around our rivers, lighted with some philosophy, history, and humor.

This will make an excellent and tasteful gift as well as a reference source for those who, like the artists, may have a desire to exercise a pencil.

124 pages
50 illustrations, frontispiece in color

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