

# News For Members of PITTSBURGH HISTORY & LANDMARKS FOUNDATION

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## *ARTIFACT AUCTION*

*MAY 8*

*final notice*

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The long awaited artifact auction will be held on Saturday, May 8 at 11:00 a.m. at the old fire hall across from Allegheny Center Mall on the North Side adjacent to St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Circle the Mall and you will see the auction signs. The rain date is Sunday, May 9 at 1:00 p.m. Victorian mantles,

### ARTIFACT AUCTION

stained glass windows, carved wood paneling, decorative wrought iron--all will be sold to the highest bidder. Sponsored by the Landmark Associates, our volunteer group, the auction will sell the architectural artifacts that we have saved from buildings

slated for demolition and which we cannot use in the new museum at the North Side Post Office. A \$1 donation will be requested for a numbered ticket which will also serve as a bidding number. Buyers are requested to provide means for removing their purchases the day of the auction. All proceeds will benefit PHLF.

### ART PURCHASE FUND ESTABLISHED FOR THE MUSEUM

Through the generosity of Mrs. B. F. Jones, III, an Art Purchase Fund in the amount of \$5,000 has been established so that we may purchase appropriate paintings, glass, lithographs, engravings, sculpture and other works of art for the museum at the old Post Office.

The fund was started at this time in order that we might purchase from a private collector six etched glass windows of Pittsburgh industry and history that were in the stairway wall of the old City Hall on Smithfield Street where Grants' store now stands. These fine windows by J.&G.H. Gibson Glass Stainers in Philadelphia were made in 1872 and include the name of the architect of the building, Mr. J. W. Kerr, the seal of the city, the Fort Pitt Blockhouse, and four scenes of Pittsburgh industry.

Said Charles Covert Arensberg, President, "We are deeply indebted to Mrs. B. F. Jones, III, for making this donation available to us at this time so that we could obtain the windows during restoration work on the building and so that they may readily be incorporated without great cost".

Further contributions to the Art Purchase Fund are earnestly solicited because they will enable us to acquire art relating to Pittsburgh as it becomes available.



## THE TOWERS FALL



*The demolished tower: it  
"enlivened and smiled"*

There seems to be no way of stopping the engines of destruction once they are put into motion. A recent case in point was the wanton and senseless destruction of the tower of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church on Union Avenue, North Side. PHLF had received a letter of intent from the Urban Redevelopment Authority that the tower would be preserved when the rest of the church building was demolished. The officers of PHLF therefore did not feel it necessary to set a watch over the baleful ceremony of demolition. The fall of the tower and what we felt was a breach of faith was discovered only inadvertently by a member of our staff who happened to pass the site while on other business. The total absence of the tower was and is literally shocking.

After investigation we learned that URA had been unable to communicate the change in plan to the church officials, who razed it very quickly.

So passed the last remnant of one of the most historic churches on the North Side--the former Episcopal Christ Church--which was founded in 1831. The demolished church was built about 1840, but it was much changed and enlarged in 1866 when a chancel and the tower were added. For many years it was a very fashionable parish and numerous prominent North Siders belonged to it, among them Ormsby Phillips who as mayor of Allegheny City in 1892, at the time of the Homestead Steel Strike, managed to save the rich residential districts of the city from destruction by rioters. A large parish building was added in 1906.

Much later, after the Episcopal parish had moved to the North Hills in 1952 and the buildings had been taken over by the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, PHLF attempted to save the church building itself but we were less successful than Ormsby Phillips. We did however secure the promise of the salvation of the tower which was one of the landmarks of old Allegheny City.

The old church was demolished during the week of February 14, 1971, following the recent completion of its new religious auditorium at Allegheny Commons East and East Ohio Street, described thus by our architectural historian, Mr. Van Trump: "A dreary box fitted out with the faded stylistic tags of a dying Colonial revival, an ungainly structure whose irremediable dullness signally fails to ornament the new Allegheny Center it was designed to complement. For this flatulent architectural regurgitation a really charming Victorian Gothic church with the only remaining 19th century saddle back tower in Pittsburgh was sacrificed". In fact an authentic historic building was destroyed so that a new church in a pseudo-historic and long outmoded style could be erected. Could any design decision be more ironic?



*The new church:  
"faded stylistic tags"*



Of the tower Mr. Van Trump wrote: "It was one of the really delightful architectural monuments of the Pittsburgh area, and it gave to its neighborhood a friendly, piquant note of humanity. It enlivened and smiled upon a rather solemn landscape and that smile was sorely needed.

"The front elevation of the tower with its Gothic belfry windows under the broad saddle-back roof did rather resemble a smiling face that was definitely a note of grace in a worn and devastated neighborhood. It is becoming increasingly apparent that such architectural pleasantries, such evidences of our humanity, are not to be allowed to survive among the mechanistic pomposities and plastic theorizing of the modern planned metropolis."

We who knew that face for many years can now only mourn its passing and rage at the incomprehension that caused its wholly unnecessary destruction. But perhaps in memory the smile will linger as both a tragic benediction and an ironic comment on the motives of its destroyers.

### A SECOND LOSS

Another ecclesiastical tragedy will take place soon near the Mexican War Streets area. One of the last of the North Side's handsome brick hall churches--the Allegheny United Methodist Church at the corner of Arch Street



and North Avenue--is in danger of demolition because the congregation wants a new "plant". Why is it that contemporary parishes hold their historic buildings in so little regard? These Victorian structures have a religious "presence", an architectural vigor that could not be duplicated. It seems strange to us that an institution based on historical premises would have so little sense of the value of its own architectural past. Only a few months ago, the Methodist Church Union demolished Old Brimstone Corner, a downtown Greek Revival Church beloved by Pittsburghers. "Though forever reeling, the towers do not fall", wrote Rose Macauley. But they do.

In February Mr. Harold Tweedy, President, First Federal Savings and Loan Association, acted as host for a luncheon meeting and tour of the Mexican War Streets area for representatives of the major financial institutions of Pittsburgh. At the meeting Messrs. Arensberg and Ziegler acquainted the men with the immense progress that the restoration work has enjoyed for the past several years and with financial facts and figures. We then provided a tour of several of our houses and several of our members' houses. Our goal was to encourage the banks to feel more secure about making mortgage money available to those qualified persons who wish to purchase and restore houses in our area, and the meeting met with great success. The bank representatives requested a second meeting with their appraisal and underwriting personnel so that they too would have first hand knowledge of the work. Wrote Mr. Tweedy after the meeting, "without question, the beauty and interest and vitality engendered by the Foundation's work represents a contribution in which all of us can take much pride".

BANKERS TOUR  
OF WAR STREETS



## LANDMARK ASSOCIATES "WHIZ" AROUND TOWN

Despite the cold and the heavy snows the Landmark Associates have vigorously pursued their activities through the winter months. Mrs. Wilbert Alster, Chairman of the Speakers' Committee, has graciously explained PHLF and its programs to many groups throughout the area. Besides speaking in Pittsburgh, she has gone to Baldwin, Carnegie, Bethel Park and Coraopolis to talk to women's clubs, school children, academic fraternities, and civic groups. Mrs. Robert Wohleber has also given talks to several organizations and by herself has cleaned, sorted and recorded the period clothing donated for the museum.

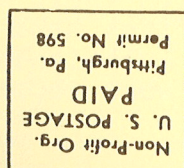
With Mrs. Kenneth Boesel as Chairman, the committee for the June tour of the Mexican War Streets has been preparing for this project. Mrs. Donald Kenagy and Mrs. David Russell are writing the brochure. Mrs. David Genter is organizing the ticket distribution in Sewickley. Mrs. William Eichleay acts as neighborhood liaison. Volunteers will be needed for staffing the houses in order to greet guests, and Sandy Kenagy will be calling to recruit. Or you could call her at 231-2539.

On March 21 about 50 people turned out for the work party to prepare for the first auction to be held May 8. They cleared space and readied the artifacts for sale. This work party, a fun time, proved a fine joint effort, with everyone pitching in. Publicity pictures were taken; promotion of the auction is now underway.

Another work party consisting of the Joseph Charneys, the Donald Kenagys and Mrs. David Russell gathered at the Benedum-Trees Building to stuff hundreds of envelopes while consuming peanuts and beer. We appreciate their lighthearted, but efficient accomplishment in getting out this mailing to recruit new members for PHLF.



These work parties were just two of a series planned for various PHLF projects. For example, we have produced gift-wrap paper printed with 19th century newspaper ads and will need volunteers to package the paper for sale. If ever you are downtown with a few minutes to spare, come in to the office and help with the packaging. Even when the work parties involve routine tasks, they turn into jolly times, with everyone laughing and working together, but each person adding his individual flair. For the tour, the auction and the work parties, Sandy Kenagy has been collecting names. If you have not heard from her, please expect to.



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