

# News For Members of PITTSBURGH HISTORY & LANDMARKS FOUNDATION

NUMBER 27 - MAY JUNE 1971

## IT'S HAPPENING IN THE MEXICAN WAR STREETS

A TOUR OF THE  
HOMES AND PEOPLE  
THAT MAKE A  
NEIGHBORHOOD

PRESENTED BY THE  
PITTSBURGH HISTORY & LANDMARKS FOUNDATION  
WITH THE COOPERATION OF  
THE MEXICAN WAR STREETS SOCIETY

SUNDAY, JUNE 20, 1971  
11:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M.

DONATION: \$3.00

Restorations completed and underway by PHLF and a number of our members will be on view on Sunday June 20. Included on the tour will be the splendid new restorations by Mr. & Mrs. J. C. Oliver, Jr. and Mr. & Mrs. David Genter as well as several houses never before opened to our members owned by Mr. & Mrs. Carl Detwiler. "The house with the lookout" restored several years ago by Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Boesel has been newly decorated as has the PHLF master house at 1233 Resaca Place and both will be open. An unusual basement apartment that has just been completed is included as are the restorations-in-progress by Mr. & Mrs. David Russell and Mr. & Mrs. Donald Kenagy. Also the Wickersham Music Studio on North Avenue, which was recently sandblasted and painted, will be open.

All the churches in the Mexican War Streets area are going to be open and they will be providing refreshments and a number of gardens will also be available including the lovely garden and house of Mr. & Mrs. William Eichleay. Guides will be stationed in each house and Mr. Schweitzer, our restoration superintendent, will be on hand to answer technical questions.

Tickets may be purchased for \$3 by sending your check to our office at 900 Benedum-Trees Building, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222. Please purchase your tickets early and include as many of your friends as possible as the proceeds from the tour will be used to further our work in the Mexican War Streets area. Tickets are also available at Kaufmanns and Hornes and a limited supply will be available in the houses on the day of the tour. We would prefer that you order your tickets as early as possible so that we can make adequate provisions for the tour. This tour will be unlike earlier tours we have had because we will be admitted to so many apartments and houses that we have never seen in finished form.

We advise that you park in the parking lots of either A&P or Keystone Plumbing on Brighton Road or the Allegheny Center Mall garage. Courtesy cars will be circulating from these lots to the Mexican War Streets area and are being provided by Auto City Used Cars, Brant Oldsmobile, and McKean Oldsmobile.



## HISTORIC ZONING ENABLING ORDINANCE PASSES CITY COUNCIL

After four years of strenuous effort and an infinity of complications and frustrations, we are extremely pleased to report that our ordinance, *"providing for the designating of certain districts or structures within the city of Pittsburgh as districts of historic or landmark importance and regulating the reconstruction, exterior alteration, restoration, or demolition of structures within districts so designated"* has passed City Council unanimously and Mayor Flaherty has signed it.

This ordinance (128) does not establish any districts or landmark buildings in itself; it grants the power to City Council to designate such districts or landmarks upon the recommendation of the City Planning Commission and PHLF.

We will be submitting a list of structures and districts to Council in the very near future and we will be calling upon our members to attend the Council meetings when they are under review.



*Frank J. Lydick, vice president administrative, People's Gas Company and his wife Bette discuss the exhibit with Mrs. Louise Boesel, member of PHLF board of directors and Charles Covert Arensberg, PHLF president.*



*The opening day audience and our exhibit in Gateway Two.*

The pictures above recap the recent opening of our exhibit in the People's Gas Company reception display center in Two Gateway Center. Sponsored by People's Gas, the exhibit is certainly the most impressive ever prepared for us. Artifacts rescued from doomed buildings, illuminated photographs of projects, and three large color transparencies showing the Burke-Meyer Building, our house 1233 Resaca Place, and the old North Side Post Office comprise the impressive display. Prepared under the direction of Charles Weber, People's News Service Representative, with assistance from Joan Teichart, People's Display Coordinator and Appliance Consultant, and our staff, the exhibit very effectively shows the scope of our work. As an added feature, live programs are provided every Wednesday from noon to 1:00 p.m. for six weeks. The programs include: building and planting a flower box for windows, restoring a deteriorated, ornate roof bracket, drawing board work for architectural restoration, room design and decor, and on the final Wednesday (June 9) a walking tour of the Market Square environs. We wish to thank the People's Gas Company, and their public relations department headed by John Schreiber for this informative and impressive exhibit.



## PLAQUE PROGRAM ENLARGED

In recent weeks we have awarded plaques to the following:

Beulah Presbyterian Church 1837  
Eggers House c. 1860  
First Baptist Church of Pgh. 1909  
Immaculate Heart of Mary  
Church 1904-06  
James Miller House 1808

Old Heidelberg Apartments 1905  
Pgh. Athletic Association 1909-11  
Sacred Heart Church 1924-53  
Walker-Ewing Log House 1855  
Thomas Wilson Shaw House 1824  
Wyckoff Mason House 1774-75

However, an unusual civic contribution by a local group will enable us to enlarge the plaque program in the northern area of the county. The North Boroughs Rotary Club has donated \$200 to PHLF to enable us to prepare five plaques for structures in their area. There are many buildings in Allegheny County to which we want to affix plaques but for which we lack funds under our original grant from Alcoa Foundation. If other civic organizations were to follow the excellent precedent established now by the North Boroughs Rotary Club and donate funds for preparation of plaques for buildings in their area, the plaque marking program could move rapidly ahead. We are grateful to the North Boroughs Rotary Club and to its community service chairman John J. Ross for making this commitment to the heritage of their area.

Two recent additions to the list of county structures that have received PHLF historic landmark plaques were Holy Rosary R.C. Church in Homewood and the old Oyster House on Market Square, downtown.

Shown on the right is Msgr. Charles Owen Rice, pastor of Holy Rosary, looking on as PHLF president Charles Covert Arensberg unveils the plaque. Designed by Ralph Adams Cram and built in 1930, the church is a handsome stone structure. The Oyster House plaque reads, "Site of Bear Tavern 1827, Oyster House, c. 1871-1971. The ceremony was attended by county commissioner William R. Hunt, numerous county judges, and other city dignitaries. In giving the plaque we specified that the owner, attorney Louis J. Grippo, must restore the facade of the building to its original appearance, and he cordially agreed.



*Looking on at the plaque ceremonies are Robert H. Burt, president of Robert H. Burt Associates, Mrs. Mary Americus, whose husband owned the Oyster House from 1916 to 1970, and attorney Louis Grippo.*



Although it was a cloudy day, the spirits of our 350 attendees at the artifacts auction were bright and lively. The co-chairmen of the auction, Mr. & Mrs. Donald Kenagy and Mr. David Russell, had spent weeks recruiting innumerable volunteers to help with the work including the very heavy duty of moving the artifacts out to the front as they were auctioned. A large committee of women under the chairmanship of Mrs. Mary Wohleber provided more than 30 pounds of hot dogs, gallons of coffee, and cases of soda pop and doughnuts. Mr. & Mrs. Nathaniel Silon very diligently recorded every item auctioned throughout the afternoon. Others volunteered to help sell the tickets and keep track of sales, and collect the proceeds. Mrs. Helen Shane's publications committee sold plaques and

ARTIFACTS      notepaper and books that we  
AUCTION        have published, including  
ENORMOUS      our new wrapping paper, to  
SUCCESS        the tune of \$75 in four hours.  
But the highlight was the

zesty bidding by the 200 persons who paid \$1 for the privilege of participating. Shutters, stained glass, mantels, light fixtures, woodwork, and some handsome interior fittings of the old post office that will not be needed in the restoration work all went to the



*The large gathering  
at the sale*



*Time out for  
a busy little observer*

highest bidder and at times the prices were high indeed. People bid up to \$30 for a pair of shutters and \$50 for some mantels, and even \$25 for carved wooden ornaments. There were some real bargains, too, as some items were auctioned off for only \$ .50 or \$1. By and large the competition for the artifacts was very keen, so keen in fact that at the end of four hours of bidding, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation had grossed \$4,500. Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation member, David Russell, serving as an auctioneer for the first time in his life, was so polished and adept that many people in the audience felt that we had imported a very experienced man. Still, we have many artifacts left and a second auction is scheduled for July and a third one for September. At the next auctions we hope to add some even finer artifacts because by then we will have a clearer idea of which ones we

can sell. Thanks be to the many, many volunteers who lent both brains and brawn to this immensely successful day for us and for our membership.



We reported earlier that we still need \$91,000 to complete the work on the old post office. Since then several members and friends have contributed to the museum campaign and we announced a gift of \$25,000 from the Howard Heinz Endowment. We are now pleased to announce that the Alcoa Foundation has granted us \$10,000 toward closing the gap. We are very gratified to have this fine gift from Alcoa, particularly in light of the fact that their subsidiary, Alcoa Properties, Inc., is the primary sponsor of Allegheny Center where the post office is located. We hope to be working with Alcoa Properties, Inc. and our other neighbors in the development of a promotional program for the cultural and historic installations in central North Side.

On the evening of April 6, the Pittsburgh Playhouse was the scene of a benefit performance of "Luv" sponsored with proceeds to be used to establish and maintain costume displays in our new museum. The organization is composed of Pittsburgh area women who work in the field of fashion. Throughout the year, Fashion Group members will volunteer their time and services in soliciting, collecting, cataloging, and storing fashion items. Already

Fashion members plan to donate a dress of antique lace and several old fashioned purses. A lively after-theatre party in the Lillian Russell Room followed the performance where more than 40 door prizes were awarded. The interest and talents of this group insures the success of our costume displays when the museum opens.



*Fashion Group members l. to r. are Betsy Ratner Levitt, Alice McKenzie, Libby Palmer, Dorothy Bates, Ruth Crandall, chairman, Hester Munden, regional director, Margaret Ann Zimmerman, Mary Francis Davin, and Virginia Trimble.*

We are very pleased to announce that the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Institute of Interior Designers has undertaken to provide complete interior specifications for some of the houses that we are restoring. The chapter delegated Mr. John J. O'Keefe to undertake the first house, one that we are doing for a low income family on Jane Street in Birmingham. Mr. O'Keefe selected all interior paint and floor coverings and bathroom tile, and these have now been applied and are very pleasant. Mr. O'Keefe and Mr. Chester Le-

AID HELPS Maistre were given the responsibility of providing specifications for paint, floor, tile, carpeting, and bathroom tile as well as light fixtures for the large two unit house we are now completing at the corner of Monterey and Eloise Streets in the Mexican War Streets. Basic work in the house is now being completed and we will be implementing their interior specifications within the next several weeks. We thank the AID for this very useful contribution to our organization and the people who will be renting these houses.

In our new museum we will have seven newly appointed offices for rent preferably to other civic organizations. These organizations could use the offices for their personnel and then could share conference rooms and office equipment including Xerox and postage meter with our organization thereby reducing overhead for all concerned. If you know of an organization that needs space and might like this arrangement, please call Mr. Ziegler's office, 281-6207. The cost will be about \$5 per square foot.



We are pleased to announce that restoration work of the splendid Romanesque building at the corner of Buena Vista and Eloise Streets, owned by Mr. & Mrs. J.C. Oliver, Jr., is now complete. The house has been painstakingly restored and all woodwork has been brought back to its original condition. A spectacular feature of the house

**TWO HOUSES COM-  
PLETED IN MEXI-  
CAN WAR STREETS**

is a third floor front room in which we have removed the ceiling and exposed the frame and beam construction of the turreted roof. The interiors have been beautifully appointed, and we are pleased to report all four apartments were rented within three weeks of completion. Among the new tenants is a newscaster from one of our radio stations and his wife. Mrs. Oliver is now casting an experienced eye on the brick and shingle coach house at the rear of the property and hopes to restore it this spring as a single apartment. On Monterey Street Mr. & Mrs. David Genter several months ago acquired a dwelling that still had many of its original Victorian features and they have restored it as a very elegant two-unit apartment building. Both units were rented soon after completion and they too have now begun to restore a very fine little brick building at the rear of this property. This will be the first major restoration of one of the little houses that face the alley since Mr. & Mrs. Carl Detwiler restored the coach house on their property as an architectural studio for Mr. Detwiler. All of these houses will be on view for the Mexican War Streets house tour.



In view of the destruction of the old Christ Church tower and the proposed demolition of the Allegheny Methodist Church in the North Side recently, it is pleasant to report that there are some bright spots on the ecclesiastical front.

The most refulgent of these is the recent splendid restoration of the exterior of the R.C. Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Polish Hill. Built in 1904-06, the great green copper domes of this fine church have long been a landmark in Pittsburgh. Having narrowly escaped removal because of their deteriorated condition, the domes are now completely refurbished, due largely to the devoted efforts of the pastor, Fr. John Jenzura, and his congregation.

**THE TOW-  
ERS STAY**



We have been pleased to report steady growth in our membership over the years and last year we reached 1271 members. However, although our memberships increased by 150 in the last year, the amount members have been giving increased considerably more, almost \$4,000. In order to conserve funds MEMBERSHIPS we do not send acknowledgement letters for renewals each year. We hope our members understand that we are very grateful for their continued and increased support and that we are saving a considerable cost by not mailing out special acknowledgement notices. Your cancelled check should serve as your receipt; if you wish a formal receipt, enclose a note with your membership renewal.

The Foundation has recently acquired a large oil painting "Steel Mills, Early Morning" by Aaron A. Gorson (1872-1933). It was given in loving memory of PAINTING Viola C. and Harry O. Eichleay by their daughter Helen E. ACQUIRED Siegwarth. Gorson was born in Lithuania, studied in Philadelphia and Paris. He opened a studio in Pittsburgh about 1905 and he assiduously painted the local industrial landscape until his removal in the early 1920s to New York where he died some years later. He was particularly devoted to depicting Pittsburgh steel mills, and his paintings are to be found in many local collections.

On April 16-17 the Pennsylvania Federation of Junior Historians held its annual convention in Pittsburgh, and PHLF assisted the 400 junior and senior high school students by providing a walking tour map and information for Oakland and by furnishing three of the four members of the awards jury, Mrs. Donald Kenagy, President of Landmark Associates, Ellis Schmidlapp, our Staff Assistant for Design Programs, and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr., our Executive Director, as chairman of the jury.

Recently the White Cross Stores, Inc. purchased the old Donahoe property on Forbes Avenue, downtown. All of our members will remember that Donahoe's has been an institution and tradition in Pittsburgh for many years, and we were sorry to learn that it could no longer sustain its food store and cafeteria. White Cross plans to install a very large discount drug store. We immediately wrote a letter to the firm asking that they in no way change or damage the facade on Forbes Avenue above the street level. It has a particularly fine procession of pilasters covered in terra cotta and makes a very handsome and unified large facade for this block. We are pleased to say we were notified on 5 January that "our present plans for this property call for retaining the Forbes Avenue facade on the second floor level in its present state."

Pgh. History & Landmarks Foundation  
900 Broadview - Tower Bldg  
Pgh. Pa. 15222

Tour Application

Please send me — Tickets  
for the Mexican War Streets  
House Tour @ \$3.00 each.  
My name & address on the reverse  
side of this form.



*List of summer tours announced*

June 9th noon.....Market Square Environs  
Meet in lobby of Gateway Center Building No. 2

June 20th 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ....Mexican War Streets House Tour

July 25th 2:00 p.m. ....Elizabeth, Pennsylvania  
Meet along waterfront

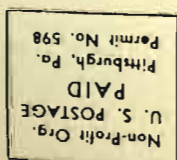
August 22nd 2:00 p.m. ....Shadyside East  
Meet at Union Presbyterian Church parking lot

September 25th 10:30 a.m....Bus tour of houses designed by Peter Berendston  
Details to be announced later

## BY-LINE: LANDMARK ASSOCIATES

Many thanks to loyal and definitely hard-working members of the Landmark Associates for making our first project a success. There will be a meeting on June 10th at 8:00 p.m. at the Trinity Lutheran Church (corner of Buena-Vista and West North Avenue) to disclose the financial gains of our auction and to elaborate on the upcoming June 20th Mexican War Streets house tour. We will be signing on new and seasoned helpers for both the tour and the next auction, so be of strong body and mind and let us determine to make this summer a complete success in everything we undertake. I think the goodwill and camaraderie evidenced so far has determined that work parties and solid functions are the stuff that a good volunteer group are made of. I for one am delighted with and proud of all Landmark Associates. See you June 10. Sandy Kenagy

LANDMARK  
ASSOCIATES  
NEWS



PITTSBURGH HISTORY &  
LANDMARKS FOUNDATION  
900 BENDUM-TREES BUILDING  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15222



*Mexican War Streets tour June 20  
Landmark Associates to meet  
June 10*