

News For Members of PITTSBURGH HISTORY & LANDMARKS FOUNDATION

NUMBER 33--March-April 1972

BUHL FOUNDATION MAKES MAJOR GRANT FOR PERMANENT EXHIBITION MATERIALS AT OLD POST OFFICE

The trustees of the Buhl Foundation several weeks ago awarded us \$60,000 to provide necessary basic materials and related costs to initiate our exhibition program and to acquire exhibition equipment for our museum at the Old Post Office.

The grant provides for the acquisition of modular exhibition panels, light boxes, certain recording devices for use in exhibits, and staff education.

Mr. David Henderson, Director of the Buhl Foundation, said, "We of the Buhl Foundation hope that the grant will provide a base for the on-going exhibitry program of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, and that from this experience, an outstanding program will develop."

Our president, Mr. Arensberg, pointed out that, "Without this gift from the Buhl Foundation we would simply have a beautifully restored but empty building! In order to make the Old Post Office 'the lively landmark' we were in urgent need of funds so that we could proceed with our varied exhibition program. We are acquiring the kind of permanent exhibition materials that can be used in many different ways so that we can continue to create a variety of exhibits for the people of Allegheny County to enjoy."

This grant is an extremely significant one for getting our museum off to a firm start, and we are deeply grateful to the trustees of the Buhl Foundation for supporting us financially and giving us this form of initial encouragement as we get the museum underway.

WILLIAM PENN HOTEL TO REMAIN

It is with considerable relief and gratitude that we report that the William Penn Hotel will not be demolished. The status of the hotel has for so long been dubious that we had come to feel that ultimately it would be demolished. Upon learning that Alcoa Properties, Inc. had acquired the building, we met with officials there who told us that it will continue to function as a hotel and that the rooms will be refurbished. The restaurant facilities will also be improved and the grand lobby will be retained.

A moderate high-rise built in two sections between 1916-29, the hotel with its discreet Italianate surfaces in red brick and terra cotta consort pleasantly with the green ordered spaces of Mellon Square. The design ability of Benno Janssen, who was the architect most responsible for the building, provides urban amenity and grace. It is an essential urban ingredient in our central downtown area and together with the Union Trust Building and the Oliver Building it provides a pleasant interplay of old buildings amid the modern structures of 525 William Penn Place and the Alcoa Building. We commend Alcoa Properties, Inc. for this enlightened and useful commitment to our city.

ANNUAL MEETING DATE SET
DIRECTORS NOMINATED

The annual meeting will be held at the Old Post Office on April 24th at 8:30 p.m. We will elect new directors and we will have a report on progress from our president, Mr. Arensberg, and our executive director, Mr. Ziegler. A very special and important announcement will be made at that time concerning The Restoration Fund, and we will discuss our plans for future developments.

The nominating committee consisting of Julian Miller and James Bibro have nominated the following:

Directors For Reelection With Terms Ending In 1977

Henry Chalfant
Mrs. George L. Craig, Jr.
John P. Davis, Jr.
Russell O. Deeter
Richard D. Edwards
Mrs. James H. Elkus
Mrs. Paul B. Ernst

Alfred M. Hunt
Mrs. Roy A. Hunt
David Lewis
Mrs. Dorothy M. Richardson
S. Murray Rust, Jr.
Richard M. Scaife

New Directors For Terms Ending In 1976

Miss Bertha Evosevic
Mrs. Clifford S. Heinz

Mrs. Paul Sheldon
Harold L. Tweedy

For term ending in 1973 to replace Mr. Samuel Golden, the representative of the Western Pennsylvania Research & Historical Society, whose recent passing we deeply regret, Mr. Gilmore Williams.

The committee also recommends that section 4.01 of article 4 of the by-laws be amended to delete the sentence "Directors may not be elected more than one consecutive time".

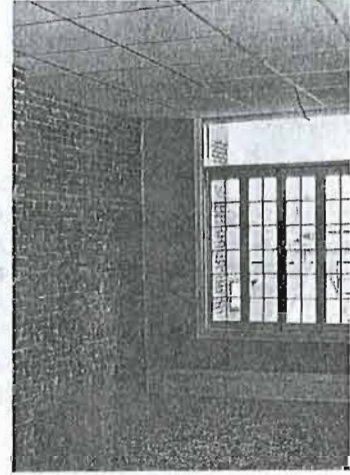
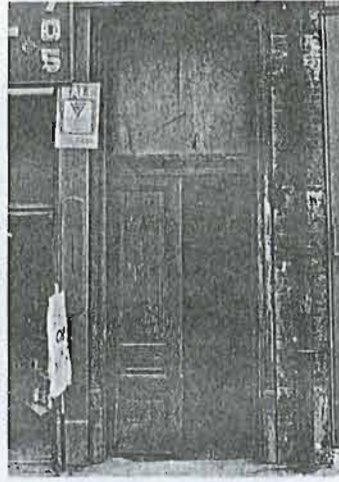
MEMBERS ARE URGED TO ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT MEETING

MARKET SQUARE STUDY APPROVED
DESIGN CHANGES EFFECTED IN NEW RESTAURANT THERE

Since 1966 our organization has been working with the Junior League, the Department of City Planning, and the Pittsburgh Parks & Playground Association to develop plans for the public area of Market Square. We are pleased to say that on March 17th these plans received formal approval by the Market Square Association; and they are now going to be submitted to the City Planning Commission and City Council.

The plans call for laying brick sidewalks throughout the area, closing Market Street through the Square, and planting a number of trees.

Only two days after the plans were approved, a new restaurant was proposed for the corner of Fourth Avenue and Market Street, next to the historic Burke's Building. We worked with the owners and the Department of City Planning and effected some useful design changes in the building to quiet it down and make it more congruous with the older buildings in the Square. The owners, Lums, Inc., were very cooperative.



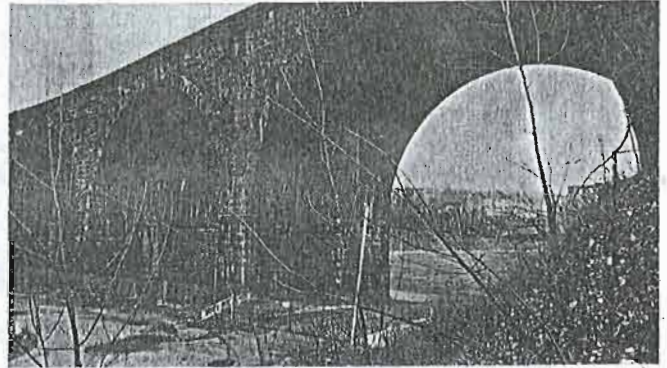
Our open house for our restored apartments at 1705 East Carson Street was a larger success than we anticipated; over 400 residents of Old Birmingham came to have a look, (including a man who was born on the third floor in 1898) and their response was very enthusiastic. Currently we have three lovely apartments for rent in the building. We restored this structure to set a model before the community to show how East Carson Street could be restored in its entire 18 blocks to create a lively and historic shopping district.

We were dismayed recently to see two houses being remodeled in the Mexican War Streets area in what we considered to be a fashion unsympathetic to the Victorian architecture. We were even more dismayed when we learned that the sponsor was AHRCO (Allegheny Housing Rehabilitation Corporation), a group that we have ardently supported in its efforts to rehabilitate houses in Pittsburgh on a mass production basis. We contacted officials at AHRCO and are very pleased to say that they have been very cooperative with us and have removed the offending aluminum windows and steel front doors and have ordered Victorian two over two sash windows and we have donated doors to them. Now we are reviewing all other properties in central North Side-Manchester areas to see if we can work out a feasible solution to this problem.

HOUSE FOR SALE The Muse House in McKeesport is for sale. The house is described on page 206 of our book Landmark Architecture. The house is located at 4222 Third Street. Built about 1820, this two story stone house has been well maintained and is in very good condition. Interested parties should contact Attorney Jerome M. Adams at 672-9644.

THE PRESIDENT'S RAMBLE

Many people ask: What's next on the list now? You've "saved" the old Allegheny Post Office--you've got a permanent home now. What is there left for you to do? Fat cat, why not sit by the fire?



Mountains! The Bonhomme Richard may be sinking still but we've "just begun to fight." The Rotunda, Liverpool Street, the South Side Market House, the Baths of Caracalla in the Pennsylvania & Lake Erie Railroad Station, the magnificent twin masonry bridges out on Washington Boulevard, Lawrenceville and its street after street of picturesque and honest housing, Troy Hill, Spring Hill, South 12th Street and the Slavic Hills to the south, Millvale and parts of old Etna, Beech and Sheffield and North Avenue on the North Side, the Inclines, Manchester Bridge ornaments as promised by the city on the old pier, the fight against faceless architecture and for sculpture, the fight for human scale and humble values--all these things should be enough to provide a full portfolio for the last quarter of this brilliant century.

Our staff is up to it. The people are aroused all over the country. Never has there been such a drive to preserve our values in architecture, ecology and cityscape, even in the face of the tremendous odds of legitimate--and illegitimate--expansion.

The wounds are gaping all over the land--Sullivan's Stock Exchange in Chicago, the Benjamin Rush House in Philadelphia, the Court House in Indianapolis, Coulton Court in Cape May. Lost America is a best seller on the bookstands.

What does it all mean? The great national threats, Burnham and Root's Reliance Building, pride of the Chicago school, the Traymore in Atlantic City, Lafayette Square in New Orleans, all those structures are only symptoms of the burgeoning pride the Americans have in their rich past. Every city, every town has its rallying point against mass straight-jacketing, against the tyranny of the engineer and his highways, the polluters of all kinds--visual, noise, olfactory, atmospheric and congestional.

We need to see our cities again as places to walk in, to look up to the sky in harmony with our surroundings, to see ourselves as others have seen us, masters of our elements in the scientific, technical and aesthetic sense, yet paying honor to nature and things of the spirit.

We have many examples in Pittsburgh and Allegheny, our home, to give us pride and strength to go on. The North Side river embankment for one, the United States Steel-City alliance of the small parklet at the end of Bigelow Boulevard (why can't there be some sculpture there?), the great Lawrence estate and park in Indiana Township, North and South Parks, the murals in Oliver Plaza, John Kane in the Pittsburgh National building, plans for South Side, the great experiment in East Liberty.

All of these things are hopes for the future. We must nurture them carefully, watchfully, and with confidence that our fourth-quarter century will give us something good to live for.

Charles Covert Arensberg

RIDGE AVENUE AGAIN

We were alarmed recently to read in an issue of the student newspaper of the Allegheny Campus of Community College of Allegheny County that the administration has suggested that the Byers house at Ridge & Galveston Avenues should possibly be demolished for a student parking lot. Already deeply distressed by the College's destruction of much of Ridge Avenue, we wrote to the Allegheny County Commissioners, in part, as follows:

If this plan (of demolishing the Byers house) should be implemented, it would be the last sorry act in a mish-mash of ill-considered demolitions and unfortunate planning on the part of the College administration.

This administration has literally laid waste the landscape on which the College stands, demolishing in the name of "progress" some of the finest of Pittsburgh's mansions in the late nineteenth century--the Denny and Oliver houses--among others. The Denny house had interiors by Tiffany in New York and some of the Oliver woodwork was as fine as anything produced in America during the 1890s. Several years ago we pleaded for the preservation of these remarkable houses, but the administration turned a deaf ear. As a last resort we had to salvage the interior woodwork. In the case of the Denny house we had to go to court to do it. The houses themselves which should have been cherished by any institution with a proper regard for the city's history were ruthlessly sacrificed in the interest of "clearing" the land. The city and county are by that much impoverished.

And now we are told that the Byers house may also be sacrificed to expedience to provide a parking lot. Why should a grand house of this type, which if it were properly used could be a real asset to the College and an inspiration to the students, be leveled for a parking lot in order to satisfy a desperate need created by the very same plan that seeks to destroy the house? We must protest that the established assets of the land are being sacrificed for a nebulous and hypothetical future amenity that seems to suffer infinite delay. It is now three years since we were told that "in six weeks" work would begin on the new campus. So far only dirt, debris, and ruin have marked Ridge Avenue, the erstwhile "grand street" of Allegheny County.

Months ago we offered to put an historic landmark plaque on the Byers and Jones houses. The offer had been ignored and now we begin to understand why.

One quick response that came to our letter was a missive from Commissioner William R. Hunt, M.D., to the chairman of the board of trustees at the College in which he said, "I readily concur that to lose this wonderful building would be a tragic loss and do most sincerely hope some way can be found to incorporate it as one of the useful buildings to be associated with the Allegheny campus. Surely we can find some use for this marvelous building which has played so much part in the history of the community. If at all possible, please save Byers Hall and any other buildings that can serve as physical evidence of our heritage as a community."

Presently we received notice from College President Sussman and System President Morrissey that the College will not destroy the Byers House--but also that they will not permit us to mark it with a landmark plaque.

NOTES FROM THE OLD POST OFFICE

We are very pleased to announce that we will have a special show of the paintings of Lee Dittley. Recently his work was written up in the Roto section of the Sunday Pittsburgh Press where he was described as a primitive painter who really began his work when he retired. Mr. Dittley is now 77 years of age and is still painting his charming scenes of South Side. We are particularly honored that we will have a full one-man show of his work with an opening on the 9th of April ... and on the 13th of April we will open another very interesting show of photographs by the Lilley brothers. From 1895-1907, Charles James Lilley and Sherman Lilley photographed the Pittsburgh area extensively. Their negatives which numbered some 800 passed through several hands and finally were lost. But in December of 1971 they were discovered and a selection of their work, which has never been published or exhibited, will be displayed from April 13 until May 12 here and copies of some of the prints will be available for sale.

MEMBERS
PREVIEW

POST OFFICE ATTENDANCE

Since we opened January 9th through March 14, we have had 3,287 visitors in the Old Post Office Museum. We are told by other museum directors that this is a very good attendance for this time of year, but we must recognize that the attendance should increase vastly in order for us to be useful to the community, to warrant our investment in exhibitions, and to produce enough revenue to keep the building functioning. Please remind your friends that we are open and that the exhibits are changed frequently and tell them about the many events going on at the Old Post Office. And remember that if you can volunteer your time on a regular basis for the gift shop, call Karen Casey at 322-1204 and let her know.

PIANO NEEDED: We are in need of a small piano for use at the museum for the performing arts. If any member knows the whereabouts of an unused but usable piano we will be glad to pick it up and bring it to the museum, mark it as a gift, and provide a tax deduction for its value.

THE OLD POST OFFICE MUSEUM GIFT STORE

Have you been to the Old Post Office Shop yet? If not, you're missing out on what is the most unique shop in Pittsburgh. The Gift Store features antiques, handcrafted items, quality gift items, and racks of books dealing with architectural history, antiques, and do-it-yourself projects.

Recent additions to the Gift Store include hand-printed stationery depicting the Old Post Office Museum, the Cathedral of Learning, the Duquesne Incline, and the Fort Pitt Blockhouse. We also have a selection of imaginative rings which are handcrafted from silver spoons. For those interested in the practical side of restoration, we have a supply of H. Dickson McKenna's A House In The City, a fully illustrated hardbound edition full of the most practical restoration advice to be found anywhere.

If you are looking for something unique, drop by the Old Post Office Gift Store! If you're a fan of history and architecture, and if you appreciate the quality of handcrafted items, then we have exactly what you're looking for!

SPRING DISCOVERY PLANNED AT OLD POST OFFICE

The week of May 14 will be a big one in Old Allegheny when all the business and cultural institutions join together for the gala promotion "Discover the New North Side". A 26-page newspaper supplement will appear in the Pittsburgh Press on May 14th, the same day that the entire program will "kick off" here at the Old Post Office. Mrs. Donald Kenagy is heading up the Spring Promotion Committee and all the advisory committees of the Old Post Office have been called to action so that we can help focus the attention of the general public on "The Lively Landmark". We need workers, we need ideas and we need help; please call Mrs. Kenagy if you can participate with us in what will be the first major event at the Old Post Office since we opened in January. People will be coming out of winter hibernation by that time; help us bring them to the Old Post Office for a week of fun and frolic. Mrs. Kenagy's phone number is 231-2539.

Our organization will be running programs and special events all during the spring festival week of May 13 to May 21. The events will be announced later but they are expected to include a special flea market, an auction, a lecture on oriental rugs, a "fill the dome with balloons" happening for children, a landmarks bicycle ride to discover the new North Side, films for children, a recital by Lois Dietrich, and a story hour for children.

For the auction we need the help of our members. We ask that each member donate a nice object of any kind be it art, or bric-a-brac, or useful household items so that we may auction them off with all proceeds going to the operation of the museum. *Please bring any objects that you can donate to us for the auction direct to the Old Post Office either at or before the annual meeting on April 24th.* All gifts will be tax deductible at the value for which they sell at the auction. Please help the museum by helping the auction.

We have now printed souvenir color postcards of the Old Post Office showing also the little houses up on the Fineview Hill. By mail they sell for three for 25¢. Send for some now as the supply is limited.

EVENTS

SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2:00 & 3:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Committee Presents a preview of a new Don Brockett review "Politics '72", a musical

Two more exhibits open:

The paintings of Lee Dittley, the 77 year old painter of South Side

Pencil drawings of East Street by David Smith

TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 7:00 p.m.

A musical evening with the Allegheny Quintet
Members free; non-members 75¢

THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 3:00 p.m. Opening

The photographs of the Lilley brothers. Recently the old negatives for photographs of Pittsburgh in the early part of the century were discovered by David Polechko & John Bensink. This will be a first showing and copies of the photographs will be available for sale.

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2:00 & 3:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Committee Presents a program by J. Brooks Dendy, III "Art of Creative Drama with Poetry & Dance"

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 8:00 p.m.

Annual Meeting
Please plan to attend on this important occasion

PERFORMING ARTS ANNOUNCED

We are pleased to announce the formation of the Performing Arts Advisory Committee for the Old Post Office. The Committee is charged with developing a series of performing arts including concerts, recitals, theatre, readings, and dance. The Committee has established an initial 12 week experimental period with performances to be given at 2:00 p.m. and repeated at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoons. On March 12 a young pianist, a young violinist, and The Mount Lebanon Ballet Company performed and on March 26 Dr. Robert Croan gave a recital. Particularly aimed at involving young artists in our efforts at making the Old Post Office "The Lively Landmark", the Committee consists of the following members:

Allegheny Community College
Christopher R. Pignoli

Allegheny County Cultural Advisor
Robert Gaitens

Art Center
Dr. Selma Burke

Carnegie Institute Drama Section
J. Brooks Dendy, III

Carnegie-Mellon Drama Department
Jewel Walker

Central Catholic High School
Gregory Lehane

Duquesne University & Pgh. Forum
Dr. Robert Croan

East Liberty Chamber of Commerce
Miss Barbara Petersen

John B. Haber
Director/Designer

Lovelace Marionette Theater
Miss Margo Lovelace

Mary Ann Christy-McGroarty

Mount Lebanon High School
Jonquil Thoms

Mount Lebanon Ballet Company
Marjorie Soriano

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre
Mrs. Leon Falk, Jr.

Pittsburgh Poor Players
Richard Felnagle

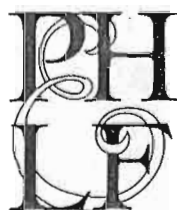
Mrs. Barbara Russell

WDVE Radio
Miss Carolyn Smith

WJAS Radio--Early Morning Program
John Cigna

WJAS Radio--Ira Apple Show
Ira Apple

Wickersham Music Studio
Mrs. Lois Dietrich



PITTSBURGH HISTORY & LANDMARKS FOUNDATION

THE OLD POST OFFICE
ALLEGHENY SQUARE WEST
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15212
412/322-1204

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