

## **Tuesday, July 12: “The Family Clubs of Squirrel Hill”**

**Eric Lidji**, director of the **Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center**, has been researching the family clubs that were a defining and unique feature of the Ashkenazi Jewish experience in the United States in the 20th century. These clubs had members, officers, dues, meetings, minutes, newsletters, reunions, and programs. What made them different from any other club was their membership: everyone was related.

**No program will be presented in August.**

## **Tuesday, September 13: “Overview of Hazelwood’s Past, Present, and Future”**

**JaQuay Carter**, Founder and President, **Greater Hazelwood Historical Society of Pittsburgh**, will present a program focusing on the history of the former J&L mill site and its connection to Homestead and the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. JaQuay also plans to discuss Scotch Bottom, which predated the mill, and the legacy of African-American metalworkers (i.e., Rivers of Steel’s current Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access initiatives, of which he is a committee member) and the role that women played during WWII.

## **Tuesday, October 11: “The Allegheny Arsenal Handbook”**

Lawrenceville historians and SHHS members **Tom Powers** and **Jim Wudjarczyk** will discuss their book about the **Allegheny Arsenal**. It has 340 pages of detailed information on the facility, with plenty of maps and photographs.

**November and December programs TBA.**

*Several more interesting and informative programs are in the works. Stay tuned for more information about them in future newsletters and under the “Upcoming Events” link in the main menu of the SHHS website.*

## **Past SHHS Program Videos**

You can find videos of almost all past SHHS programs from 2006 to the present on the SHHS website. Click on the link “SHHS Videos by Topic” and choose a program that interests you. If the program raises questions or if you’d like to comment on it, click on the “Contact us” link on our website or send an email to [sqhillhist@shhsoc.org](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org).

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## **March 2022 Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH)**

*Tony Indovina, SHHS Board Member and FONLH President*

### **Mission Statement for the Friends of the Neill Log House (FONLH Inc.)**

*Adopted February 2022*

***We secure funds to restore and maintain the Neill Log House, foster knowledge of its historic significance, and work with interested parties to ensure the continued educational use of the structure and its site for future generations.***



Friends of the Neill Log House (FONLH) is moving along as the fully functional organization it has become. Most of the work now takes place outside our monthly meetings, when most members of our board of 12 assume specific responsibilities on committees that meet one or more times a month, before the next meeting of the whole. The two main standing committees, Building/Design (B/D) and Fundraising, work in ways dependent on each other. Cost estimating and preparing to go to contractors for estimates is very much needed for grant proposals. And, of course, grant money is necessary to go to bid.

Much other work goes on to support our overall efforts, such as continuing discussion with the city to agree to a long-term agreement for managing the city-owned property. Another meeting with the city is currently planned to ascertain all the departments and offices that need to grant approvals for any work planned in the future. Other meetings are also being scheduled with key figures in local government and area universities to discuss regional assets and collaborative arrangements to support future usage. And, of course, there will be continued discussion of matters such as safely removing and storing the many historic artifacts in the log house during a prolonged period

of work. This was previewed in a recent newsletter with some encouraging developments. We have a major local storage firm that is willing to donate space for six months, but we would need more time than that to plan moving everything for an undetermined longer period of time.

Finally, watch for announcements and updates from our Funding Committee in the very near future as we transition from our “quiet campaign” of giving from individual donors to support our day-to-day efforts, to going public. Individual support will always be needed, with details on how to donate available on the SHHS website from the main menu link to the Neill Log House. The link for online giving to FONLH is found in the Projects site, accessed from the top of SHUC’s homepage, or <https://shuc.org/projects/friends-of-the-neill-log-house/>

## **John T. Comès: The Man Who Shaped the Architectural Landscape of Pittsburgh**

*Jim Wudarczyk*

In mid March of 2020, Carlow University found itself pitted against the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission when it removed a marker honoring architect John T. Comès. The commission argued that the university did not have the legal right to remove the marker at 3219 Fifth Avenue in Oakland since it was state property. Carlow officials countered that the marker was in a safe place and that it had been removed because people did not understand that the plaque honored the architect, and it did not mean that the building it stood near is a landmark. Soon local preservationists entered the fray, hoping to save the former Saint Agnes Church from demolition, or at least see part of the structure incorporated into the new building.

The historical marker reads: “**John T. Comès** (1873-1922) A nationally influential church architect and a prolific writer and lecturer. Comès was recognized for his philosophy regarding design and decorations of Catholic churches. A Pittsburgh resident, his commissions, including Saint Agnes here, are located in Pennsylvania and other states.”



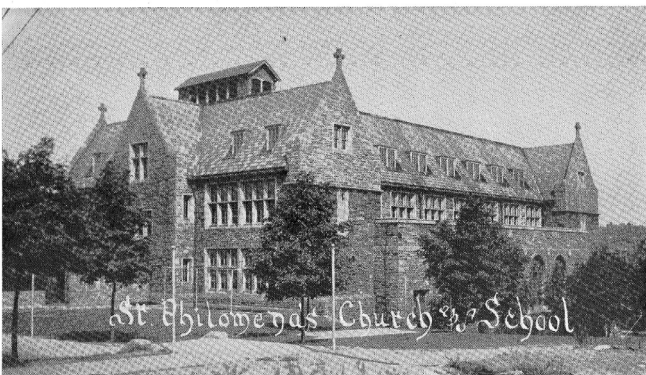
The former St. Agnes Church, now Carlow University's St. Agnes Center

Dedication of the state historical marker took place on Sunday, January 27, 2013, at 3 p.m. Persons attending the dedicatory ceremony included City of Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, Senator John Heinz History Center President and CEO Andrew Masich, Father James Garvey, and descendants of John Comès, with architectural viewpoints by Albert Tanner and Kevin Scott.

While the marker was an appropriate tribute, the few words on the metal tablet hardly do justice to the architect's incredible legacy. Comès, who designed approximately one hundred churches, schools, rectories, and the original Saint Joseph Hospital (South Side), is the first Western Pennsylvania architect

to receive such an honor. Best known for his work in the Italianate, Romanesque Revival, English Gothic Revival, and Spanish Renaissance Revival styles of architecture, Comès' works may be found throughout the United States.

John Comès was also responsible for the St. Philomena campus, one of the landmark pieces of architecture in Squirrel Hill. Of the St. Philomena project, John Bates wrote, “Comès designed this complex in Early English Gothic around a quadrangle. The school with its integrated chapel that served as the parish church and rectory for the Redemptorist Fathers was dedicated four months after the death of Comès, while the convent was still under construction. Closed in 1993, the complex is now the Jewish Community Day School.”



Picture of St. Philomena's on the cover of the booklet commemorating the 50th anniversary of the church.

Writing in the June 2017 issue of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society newsletter, Helen Wilson shed light on why Squirrel Hill was chosen as the site of Saint Philomena's new campus when it moved from its original home in the Strip District. Wilson quoted from the booklet *50 Years in Squirrel Hill—St. Philomena's Parish, 1921-1971*: “... the priests looked at various sites, including Fox Chapel, which they rejected because they ‘thought it might be unhealthy because of its proximity to the