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NEWSLETTER

MAY 2024

About SHHS

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society (SHHS) is a membership organization established in 2000, committed to gathering, preserving, and celebrating the historical memories of our neighborhood. The SHHS sponsors a monthly lecture series on topics of interest primarily focused on Squirrel Hill and Pittsburgh history. The programs take place on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Church of the Redeemer, 5700 Forbes Ave. A Zoom option is also available.

How to contact the SHHS:

P.O. Box 8157
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Website:
squirrelhillhistory.org

Email:
sqhillhist@shhsoc.org

Most of our programs are recorded. If you would like to view past programs, go to squirrelhillhistory.org and click on the link "Squirrel Hill Past Program Videos and Events."

SHHS Newsletters are sent only to SHHS members. Past issues are posted on the password-protected Members page on the SHHS website. If you are a member and need the password, email the SHHS to request it be sent to you.

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society, Inc. has been determined to be exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). All contributions to the SHHS, including dues, are deductible from federal taxes under Section 170 of the IRS Code.

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society (SHHS) is a membership organization established in 2000. It is committed to gathering, preserving, and celebrating the historical memories of our neighborhood.

To submit an item of historical interest for publication, suggest a topic for a speech, ask a question, or give feedback, send an email to sqhillhist@shhsoc.org, or write to SHHS, PO Box 8157, Pittsburgh, PA 15217.

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of SHHS President Jim Hammond's wife Nancy on April 23 in Florida. Our sympathy goes out to him and his family.

President's Message—May the 4th Be With You!



Dear SHHS Members,

Welcome to the May SHHS Newsletter. Although our membership drive has ended, we are still getting renewals, so a final reminder that the new password for the Members Page has been sent to members. If you did not receive it, contact us at sqhillhist@shhsoc.org to request it.

May is a month of many holidays. **Mother's Day** is May 14, and **Cinco de Mayo** is May 5. This month we also commemorate our military heroes, with **Armed Forces Day** on May 20 and **Memorial Day** on May 29.

May is **Jewish American Heritage Month**. May was chosen because of the successful 350th Anniversary Celebration of Jews in America, marking the Jewish arrival in New Amsterdam.

May is also **Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month**. May was chosen to commemorate the migration of the first immigrants from Japan to the United States. May is also significant because it observes the anniversary of the transcontinental railroad, which thousands of Asian immigrants labored to complete.

David Rullo, author of the book, *Gen X Pittsburgh: The Beehive and the '90s Scene*, filled in at the last minute after **Ann Belser** had to cancel her April presentation about the newspaper she puts out, *Print: Pittsburgh's East End Newspaper*. Her talk has been rescheduled for November. The newspaper can be purchased in the Giant Eagle and some newsstands. Please support Ann's efforts to keep print journalism alive by picking up a copy. *Print* is our local newspaper, and it contains articles about neighborhood concerns and events.

David Rullo's talk about the lively coffeehouse scene in the '90s in the South Side was a breezy look at a time when coffeehouses were brimming with all sorts of creative ideas. You can view the program on YouTube through our website. Click on the "SHHS Past Program Videos and Events" link and scroll down to the April 2024 presentation.

Unfortunately, our May 14 speaker, **Dr. Matthew Johnson-Roberson**, had to cancel his presentation, **"Our Futuristic Murray Avenue Neighbor: An Overview of CMU's Robotics Institute."** SHHS Vice-President has stepped in to fill the slot. She

SHHS Officers and Board

The SHHS is an all-volunteer organization. Board Members are Wayne Bossinger, Toby Chapman, Audrey Glickman, James Hammond, Tony Indovina, Stanley Klein, Todd Miller, Charles Succop, Helen Wilson, Todd Wilson, Eveline Young.

President: Jim Hammond
Vice-President and Newsletter Editor: Helen Wilson
Program Coordinators: Todd Miller and Toby Chapman
Membership Coordinator: Stanley Klein
Email Coordinator: Tony Indovina
Treasurer: Eveline Young
Media Specialist: Audrey Glickman
Website Manager: Janine Michael
Principal Researchers: Wayne Bossinger, Helen Wilson, and Tony Indovina

All SHHS members are welcome to contribute articles, suggest programs, and participate in our activities.

will to give a talk about the history of various buildings in Squirrel Hill.

Thank you for your support!

Jim Hammond, President SHHS

Editor's Note: Isn't It Interesting?

Helen Wilson

I looked out my kitchen window while I was having lunch and saw—no, not the usual deer. I did a double take when I saw it was a coyote, strolling along 15 feet from my house. I posted the sighting on NextDoor, and an interesting thing happened. The responses exploded—around 30 so far and still counting. What interested me even more was that the responses were all over the map, from people thanking me for the warning to those who shot back with accusations that we humans are taking over the wild spaces where such creatures roam, so we should expect it to happen. One person wrote, “I went out today and saw humans everywhere, it was frightening also.”



Photo by Helen Wilson

(Note: We're also seeing skunks in the area, and Tony's dog was sprayed in his backyard in Greenfield. Baking soda, hydrogen peroxide, and detergent helped remove the smell.)

This is where historical perspective comes into play. The people bemoaning the disappearance of wild areas are likely sitting in houses or apartments that were once wild areas. When I drive in the country and suddenly see a housing development where a farm used to be, I think that that was what was happening in Squirrel Hill beginning in the 1800s. Wild areas were turned into farmland, and then the farms were bought by developers who divided them into lots and built on them. The sequence of maps of the *Pittsburgh Historic Maps* website shows the area's development clearly. (The web address is long, so just google *Pittsburgh Historic Maps*.)

The maps also show something else: Once buildings were built in Squirrel Hill, they usually stayed put and were repurposed, often more than once. For example, in this newsletter, a Carnegie Mellon researcher presents a fascinating history of Hamburg Hall, formerly the Bureau of Mines Building, located on Forbes Avenue.

We Need Your Help!

How does a community remember its past? One of the best ways is through its local newspapers. If stories aren't written down, they can be forgotten.

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society needs your help. Do you have any issues of *The Squirrel Hill Gazette* and/or the *Squirrel Hill News*? We also don't have any *Squirrel Hill News* issues from 1929 to 1934. They were lost when the newspaper's offices were destroyed in a fire in 1956. The newspaper published issues after 1970, but the SHHS has no copies of them, either.

Likewise, we have only three copies of *The Squirrel Hill Gazette*. We want more, any date!

Please check your attics and basements for issues of the newspapers and lend them to us to be digitized. We'll also take copies of *Pittsburgh East* and Allderdice's *The Foreword*.

Help us keep Squirrel Hill's history alive! If you have newspapers, contact us through our website, squirrelhillhistory.org, or email us at sqhillhist@shhsoc.org. We will scan the newspapers and return the originals to you.



Photo by Helen Wilson

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SHHS Programs (Live and on Zoom)

May 2024

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, all programs are presented live and on Zoom on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Live programs are held at Church of the Redeemer, 5700 Forbes Avenue. Free parking is available in the St. Edmund's Academy parking lot. Members will be sent a link to the Zoom program a few days before the program.

**Note: Zoom broadcasts will be contingent on volunteers being available to assist with the Zoom part of the program. Members and those signing up will either receive the link the weekend before the program or a notice of Zoom cancellation. Anyone able to assist us at the program is encouraged to contact us through our website, squirrelhillhistory.org, or email us at sqhillhist@shhsoc.org.*

May SHHS Program (Live and on Zoom)

NOTE: Dr. Matthew Johnson-Roberson has informed us he had to cancel his commitment to speak on May 14 due to an international travel obligation, so his presentation will be rescheduled. SHHS Vice-President Helen Wilson has stepped in to fill the slot with a talk about how Squirrel Hill's development is illustrated by its buildings.

Tuesday, May 14: "The History of Squirrel Hill as Seen Through its Buildings"

Helen Wilson, SHHS vice-president, has been researching the history of various buildings in Squirrel Hill and discovering how they relate to and illustrate the neighborhood's history. In her presentation, she will show how various buildings in Squirrel Hill demonstrate the sequence of the development of the neighborhood.

Upcoming SHHS Programs

Tuesday, June 11: "The Story Behind the Smile: A History of Eat'n Park"

Lynn McMahon is author of *The Story Behind the Smile: Eat'n Park*. The book relays how Eat'n Park Hospitality Group leaders have blended business savvy with a genuine concern for people to become one of the nation's admired and successful businesses over the past 75 years. Storytelling is a significant thread in the fabric of Lynn's professional life as an award-winning writer and public relations practitioner with Pipitone, an integrated marketing agency on the North Side. Like most Pittsburghers, Lynn's relationship with Eat'n Park has spanned the various stages of her life from Big Boy balloons in her childhood, to strawberry milkshakes and onion rings after football games in her teenage years, to business breakfasts that continue today.

Tuesday, July 9: "Pittsburgh's Historic Ballparks"

Mark Fatla, author of *Pittsburgh's Historic Ballparks* (Arcadia Press, 2023), states that Pittsburgh has an incredible baseball history with great players, teams, and historic moments, but few people realize that Pittsburgh has often been in the lead in ballpark design and development. Fatla chronicles the nine ballparks that hosted major league baseball in Pittsburgh between 1876 and the present, including the Negro Leagues. Historic photographs illustrate design and construction phases, the major changes as parks expanded and aged, and eventually their demolition. This talk and the accompanying book provide a unique perspective on the rich history of Pittsburgh's ballparks.

Tuesday, August 13: (Tentative) SHHS Board Meeting and Members' Social

Tuesday, September 10: "Jewish Family & Community Services, Present & Past"

Ivonne Smith-Tapia, Director of Refugee and Immigrant Services at Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS) will explain how the organization helps immigrants and refugees build new lives in Pittsburgh and will also provide an overview of the organization's 80-year history. Ivonne joined JFCS as Director of Refugee and Immigrant Services in July 2021. She holds master's degrees in Cultural Anthropology and Social Work with a certificate in Human Services Management. Ivonne worked for more than a decade with the Colombian government, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks promoting community development, education, human rights, and leadership in diverse rural and urban communities in Colombia. She moved to Pittsburgh in 2013 and has worked with the University of Pittsburgh to provide training and technical assistance to Family Support Centers and at the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh leading programming on global issues.

Tuesday, October 8: "The Story of Dragon's Den"

Guilia Lozza Petrucci, executive director of Dragon's Den, a non-profit organization housed in the former St. Mary Magdalene Church on Amity Street in Homestead, will discuss the history of the building and how Dragon's Den's innovative programs teach youth from diverse backgrounds and abilities to overcome challenges in themselves, their communities, and the world.

Tuesday, November 12: "Writing the First Draft of History" (*Rescheduled from April*)

Ann Belser, publisher and writer of *Print, the East End Newspaper*, will tell the story of how *Print* came to be, some of the stories behind the stories that have been published, and what it is like running a local newspaper where the people you cover are also your neighbors. She will also talk about some of the Squirrel Hill businesses that Jan Kurth has written for the newspaper.

Tuesday, Dec. 10: "Friends of Neill Log House Update"

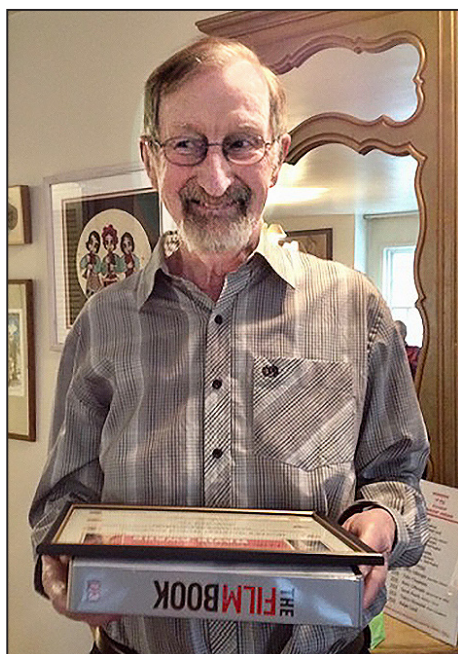
Tony Indovina, president of the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH), and some members of his board will report on the results of the project to restore the house, landscape the area around it, and welcome visitors to it once again.

If possible, we will schedule a daytime tour of Lucyna de Barberay's sustainable home on Fernwald Rd. Rob Ruck and Ted Muller, co-authors of Pittsburgh Rising: From Frontier Town to Steel City, 1750-1920, will speak at one of our programs next year.

Ralph Lund, a Gentleman and a Scholar

Michael and Esta Ehrmann

Ralph Lund was a founding member of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society. His many ideas and contributions to the SHHS helped it grow into the vibrant organization it is today. SHHS President Emeritus Michael Ehrmann and his wife Esta contributed this memorial to Ralph.



We are sad to report that Ralph Lund has passed away. Ralph said that he wanted to live to be 100 years old. He came mighty close. Ralph died on April 15th at the age of 94, two months shy of his 95th birthday.

Ralph grew up on a farm in North Dakota until he moved with his family to Sacramento. He graduated from San Juan High School and received a degree in Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. He worked for Alcoa for 43 years, first in California and later both in US cities and in countries around the world, ending his career at the Pittsburgh HQ.

Why did he settle in Squirrel Hill? He often mentioned that this was the neighborhood he and Patti chose to live in because he felt comfortable here and enjoyed voicing controversial opinions to discuss with friends. Those of us whom he befriended feel that it was indeed a privilege to know him.

He later developed the website for the Alcoa Retirees Club. He was an avid world traveler and a diehard sports fan for the Steelers, Pirates, Penguins, and Riverhounds. And he was a prominent part of the Squirrel Hill Walker/Talkers.

A family man, he was devoted to Patti, fiercely loved his son John and daughter Karen, his sister Margaret and brother Graham, as well as extended family members too numerous to note here.

This erudite gentleman was fascinated with history, often saying how history is the basis for all that exists today. Ralph was so instrumental in forming the path of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society that it is impossible to list his multitude of contributions, both solo and with his wife Patti. He helped write the books, he suggested the format for meetings and helped set them up, he offered ideas about speakers and about how the meetings might be presented so as to be interesting to the audience. He and Patti generously brought snacks and treats, made signs directing traffic, and were helpful to all. He participated in meetings and was a major contributor of ideas when on the Board of Directors. It was Ralph's idea that speaker presentations be recorded and put on the internet so that all could benefit from their stories, and the concept of the SHHS library display is thanks to Ralph.

He is irreplaceable, and he will be missed. Our deepfelt condolences to Patti. May his memory be a blessing.

May is Jewish American Heritage Month—and CMU's Pittsburgh Jewish Newspapers Project Is a Great Website for Research into Pittsburgh's Jewish History.

Search for Jewish history in Pittsburgh's Jewish newspapers! Google "Pittsburgh Jewish Newspapers - Digital Collections." The project is a collaboration of CMU Libraries, the Rodef Shalom Congregation Archives, the Rauh Jewish Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center, the *Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle*, and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. It holds Pittsburgh's Jewish publications, including the *Jewish Criterion*, *American Jewish Outlook*, *Jewish Chronicle*, and various newsletters. Generous financial support has been provided by the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, Philip Chosky Charitable Educational Foundation, and donations to CMU in memory of Henry Posner, Jr.

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Forbes Field Switchboard Operator—A Personal Story

Jenny Herre

Editor's Note: When I was having lunch in Alexandria, VA, with my sister and one of her old friends from Washington, DC, and his wife, Jenny, the subject turned to telephone switchboards. Jenny mentioned she had been the Pirates' switchboard operator in the 1960s. I asked her to write about those experiences, and here is what she sent me.

When I was in college in the mid-sixties, I worked for the Pittsburgh Pirates as the switchboard operator at Forbes Field. I had the key to the door and a parking space across the street in the Carnegie Museum parking lot. The offices and entrance for the players to the locker room was through this door, so I saw the players, coaches, and owners from my seat at the switchboard answering phone calls. The busiest times were when there was a chance the game could be called on account of rain. Connecting an incoming call with the front desk was almost non-stop buzzing.

Of the players who came through this entrance, I remember especially Willie Stargell, Roberto Clemente, Bill Mazeroski, and Danny Murtaugh. They were always friendly—especially because I hooked them up in the locker room. Occasionally an owner would come by—Joe Brown and John Galbreath, I remember. It was fun to be a part of the organization—and my love of baseball grew from that experience.

When the field was closed and torn down—I believe Pitt built a library there—homeplate was left in place [in Wesley W. Posvar Hall] to commemorate its history.

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Mansard Roofs in Squirrel Hill

Helen Wilson



These six nearly identical Second Empire-style houses near the bottom of historic Murray Hill Avenue feature Mansard roofs.

Squirrel Hill sports many styles of domestic architecture, old and new, and a good place to see them is Murray Hill Avenue, Squirrel Hill's only Pittsburgh Historic District. Near the bottom of the Belgian block road is a set of six nearly identical houses classified as "Second Empire" style. These houses sport Mansard roofs, a style that goes back to 17th-century France, used by renowned architect François Mansart. The style became popular again during France's Second Empire (1852–1870). Because it was French, it was chic, so American architects took note and used the style in both public and private buildings of that era.

Angelique Bamberg wrote about Pittsburgh's Mansard roofs in an article in the Summer 2023 *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine*. She writes that the second City Hall, the main downtown Post Office, and even Western State

Penitentiary had Mansard roofs. The first two buildings have been demolished, and the Mansard roof was removed from the penitentiary, but the style can still be seen in many houses built back then, such as the ones on Murray Hill.

Mansard roofs have a double sloped roofline in which the lower slope is almost as steep as the vertical walls beneath it, topped off with a sometimes nearly flat hipped roof above it. Such roofs are often punctured by dormer windows. The style developed at a time when floors below the attic line were taxed but attics weren't. The Mansard design allowed more head room in the garret without being taxed.

May Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH):

Selecting Contents to Be Restored

Tony Indovina, FONLH President and SHHS Board Member

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

Adopted February 2022



Friends of
NEILL LOG HOUSE

"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."

Individual support for the FONLH restoration effort will always be needed. To make online donations by credit card or PayPal, go to the SHUC website, shuc.org, and click on the "Projects" link in the black menu bar at the top of the page. A pull-down menu will appear. Select "Friends of the Neill Log House." Alternatively, checks can be sent to SHUC (put FONLH in the memo line) at the following address: SHUC, 5604 Solway Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15217.



In recent updates, we reported on the site work currently going on this spring, and this work continues with tree removal last month and grading to take place in the area around the log house, in preparation for landscaping and planting of specimen trees in May. The last physical work to the site will be new steps installed by the City up to the house from East Circuit Drive and new fencing around an expanded site, to be approved through an amended lease agreement with the City.

All of this, of course, is in preparation for again opening a newly restored Neill Log House to the public later this summer. We have mentioned programming work being finalized but have not reported much about plans for the contents of the log house once displayed in the house by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) after its reconstruction. Friends of Neill Log House contracted with certified Object Conservators for a professional assessment of all of the contents we acquired from PHLF. This work was reported in earlier editions of our newsletter (October and December 2022 and February 2023). The records of everything that was once donated to PHLF from the Junior League of Pittsburgh and private individuals is contained in half a dozen archival documents we possess, listing a total of 116 objects, both large and small.

At this time, all the wrought iron pieces we possess are currently in the log house in preparation for being re-installed and displayed around the fireplaces. This will occur when electrical work currently being done is completed. Subtracting these cooking, fireplace and other metal pieces from the total, and also subtracting objects like silverware and dishware from original records that have gone missing over the nearly 30 years the house sat unused, there are now approximately 42 objects remaining. These include table and chairs, chests and cupboards, beds, wooden tools from spinning wheel to jigsaw, and other miscellaneous artifacts, intact or broken, that have been in storage since before our recently completed restoration.

A subcommittee has been formed to make recommendations to the board about the contents we possess, and about what should ultimately be returned to the log house for display. The vision may be to maintain a collection of objects, some of which stay in the log house and others which can be moved in and out as appropriate to programming needs. Emphasis might be on a sparse display that suggests the pioneer setting, with focus on pieces that are spoken to in docents' narratives. The first set of objects that was considered for restoration is the centerpiece of any pioneer family's home—a table and chairs that would have sat before the fireplace. One of the earliest photos of usage after the PHLF opening shows Arthur Ziegler, its founder and then President, standing by this table in front of the fireplace. This table that once gleamed is now assessed to be in "very poor" condition, with broken pieces and large areas of its legs gnawed by rodents.



Arthur P. Ziegler Jr. with slate puncher in restored Neill cabin.

"Log Cabin Life-Style Recreated For City." *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 1, 1972. Copyright ©, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2024, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission."

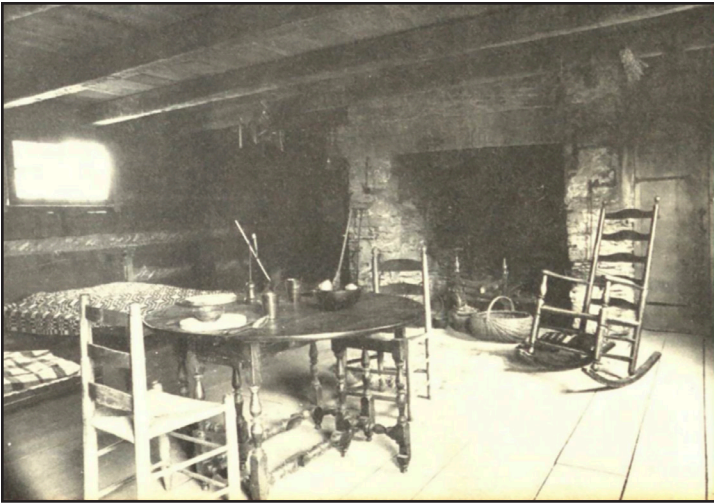


Photo by Helen Wilson

It has been deemed too deteriorated to be restored. The ladder-back chairs we possess are easier to justify restoring as they were all assessed to be in fair to good condition, so they will undergo restoration.

Our decisions will be guided by several factors. Though none of our contents are original to the Neill Log House, everything we possess is documented to be original to the late 1700s, so many had, and perhaps still have, antique value. More important is the responsibility we must remind ourselves we have to be “good stewards” of what we have acquired and for which we now have responsibility. An immediate goal, then, would be to identify the funding necessary to have items we desire to display assessed for restoration and returned to the log house by the time we open. Foundation support to pay for cleaning and restoration of selected contents from the Neill Log House is currently being solicited. We will also welcome support from any individuals in a position to make their own personal contributions to help save and display objects from our collection.

Oh, Deer!

Helen Wilson

The ***Deer Management Pilot Program Debrief*** booklet was published by the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety on March 28, 2024. It states that the Deer Management Pilot Program Legislation was approved by Pittsburgh City Council in September 2023 in cooperation with the APHIS Wildlife Services Team and was enacted for Frick and Riverview Parks from September 20–December 9 and from December 26–January 27, excluding Sundays. Selection of archers was undertaken with strict guidelines to ensure public safety. The final tally was 108 deer harvested, with 59 donated to the food bank, providing them with 2,360 pounds of venison (9,440 meals). To read more, google “Deer Management Pilot Program Debrief.”

That being said, deer are a major problem in Pittsburgh. Collisions with them are increasing, up from around 300 per year in 2018 and 2019 to over 500 per year in 2020 and 2021. Plus, the deer population is doubling every two to three years due to lack of predators. The City is considering other deer control measures.



Photo by Helen Wilson

According to the latest State Farm report for 2023-24, the top five states for deer-vehicle collisions are:

- 1: *West Virginia (1 in 38)*
- 2: *Montana (1 in 53 chance)*
- 3: *Pennsylvania (1 in 59 chance)*
- 4: *Michigan (1 in 60 chance)*
- 5: *Wisconsin (1 in 60 chance)*

Collisions with deer sometimes can't be avoided, but experts advise trying to avoid hitting the deer but not swerving, because the chances of having a bad accident are much higher if you swerve. They say “it's better to hit a deer with the front of your car going straight where the car is built to withstand an impact than it is to swerve and go off the road and possibly hit a tree or another vehicle.” Something to think about when you're driving down a road and a deer runs out in front of your car.

Click here to return to 2024 Newsletters When CMU's Hunan Express Used to Be a Train Station

May 2024

William Curvan

This article is an adaptation of a piece which originally appeared in the September 23, 2023 issue of The Tartan, Carnegie Mellon University's student newspaper. The author (me!) is a junior in the college of engineering who occasionally writes about the idiosyncratic history of CMU and its surrounding neighborhood. Check out what my peers and I are writing these days at the-tartan.org.



On the storied campus of Carnegie Mellon University, there is no structure more overlooked by the undergraduate population than Hamburg Hall. Lying in the forgotten west corner of campus along Forbes Avenue, this Beaux-Arts structure, built between 1915–1917 and dedicated in 1919, is a place few undergrads ever have a reason to visit. It is home to the Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy, a graduate-student-only college whose minimal classroom space hosts little to no undergrad courses. (Most of this author's time in that region of campus is spent taking the shortcut to the Chipotle on South Craig Street.)

Hamburg Hall is the forgotten seventh structure of Henry Hornbostel. The core of Carnegie Mellon, known as the Mall,

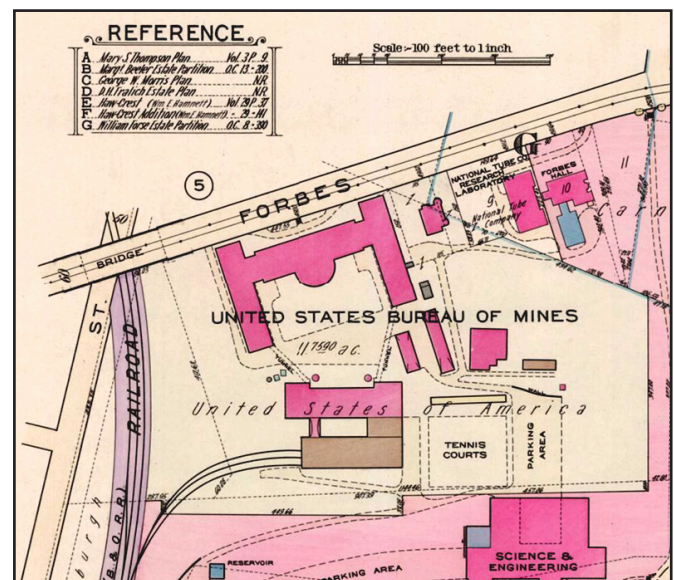
features a historic quad with six buildings all designed by Hornbostel, a New York-based architect with a number of projects to his name in both Pittsburgh and the Big Apple. When Andrew Carnegie proffered the city of Pittsburgh the money for a brand new set of technical schools, Hornbostel wooed the stakeholders with his plans and won the right to design Andrew's namesake school against a number of other architectural firms.

A decade or so after the Carnegie Technical Schools opened their doors, the United States Bureau of Mines began snooping around the east end of Oakland for a nice plot to build their brand new research center. Borrowing Hornbostel's talent, they set up shop in the backyard of the Carnegie schools on a piece of prime Forbes Avenue real estate that was formerly home to one of Christopher Magee's manors. (Christopher here being related to the namesake of UPMC Magee-Womens' Hospital, and also an infamous political boss of the Pittsburgh Republican Party.)

The building is beautiful and striking, in a gilded-age, early-industrial, steampunk kind of way. Architectural historian Walter Kidney tells us in his book, *Henry Hornbostel: An Architect's Master Touch*, that upon entering Hamburg Hall, one will notice that "in the brickwork Flemish bond prevails, but the second-floor level is marked with soldier courses, corbeling in checker patterns, and header stack bond. These spandrels lighten the interior." Such commentary is surely meaningful to readers more fluent in architectural styles than this writer, who sadly cannot parse such phraseology but does indeed agree with their spirit. It's a very nice-looking place.

So what happened within the walls, and how did it come to be part of Carnegie Mellon? This building was a research facility run by the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM), part of the Department of the Interior. The bureau was formed in 1910 to promote safety in the catastrophically unsafe mines of the 20th century. It conducted cutting-edge research on mining techniques, developed better personal protective equipment for miners, and conducted mine inspections. USMB won 35 R&D awards from R&D World magazine, an accolade that its Wikipedia page (which reads suspiciously like it was written by a former USBM employee) describes as "especially impressive considering the small size of the Bureau's research budget." Congress voted to close the bureau in 1995 after deciding that, I assume, mines had been fixed forever.

But back in its heyday, the USBM owned not just Hamburg Hall but a whole complex of structures in the neighborhood that included what is now Newell-Simon Hall, currently home to CMU's Robotics Institute. Hamburg was known simply as



1939 Hopkins Plat Map of Bureau of Mines. University of Pittsburgh/Archives Service Center.

“Building A” until 1987, when the university acquired, renovated, and renamed the building after Lester Hamburg, a life trustee and major donor to the restoration. The building became home to the newly formed, and rapidly growing, School for Urban and Public Affairs, a graduate college which would one day become the Heinz College.

USBM Building A was formally dedicated in a three-day event from Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, 1919, to what appears to be much fanfare. According to a letter from Vanoy Manning, the Director of the USBM, to university president Arthur Hamerschlag, the bureau staged “an actual coal dust explosion” along with a “Mine Rescue Contest.” Readers can only surmise what excitement this must have been.

Most interesting however, is the lineage of buildings on the current site of Newell-Simon Hall. Allow me to put yourself in the shoes of a Carnegie Mellon student: after a long and exhausting study session at Sorrel’s library in the dreary and brutalist Wean hall, you take the pedestrian bridge over to Newell-Simon Hall for some food. Because you see, in the middle of Newell-Simon is a centrally-located two-story atrium with a popular Chinese food takeout spot known as Hunan Express, an important and stalwart dining institution beloved by CMU students of all ages and majors. But this atrium has an interesting feature. Above you is a vaulted glass roof, and you are boxed in by exterior-looking walls. It looks for all the world like you are between two separate buildings. Is this indoor space a former exterior courtyard?



Hunan Express is located in the glass atrium between the two green-roofed wings of Newell-Simon Hall. *Photo by Helen Wilson.*

The short answer is no, but the long answer is much more interesting.

Back in USBM days, there actually were two distinct buildings at that site. Uncreatively named Buildings C and D, these structures housed the boiler rooms that provided power and steam to the USBM labs in Hamburg and Smith Halls.

Even more fascinatingly, the southernmost structure, Building D, had a garage on the basement level that was directly connected to the train tracks of Junction Hollow by a 300-foot long rail “spur.” (*The spur can be seen on the map on the previous page.*) Trains would pull off of Junction Hollow into Building D to unload coal, cargo, and whatever else a 20th-century mine researcher might order by train.

Sadly, this train line was too small and limited in its usage to ever get a name—and seeing as all the good names for train lines (A train, SEPTA, and Polar Express) are taken, I propose that we posthumously name it the Hunan Express. Buildings C and D remained mostly untouched until 1998, when Carnegie Mellon, having acquired all the former USBM property, began construction of a new home for the Robotics Institute. The architects decided to reuse the foundations of Buildings C and D, hence the twin-building design of Newell-Simon Hall. And in between the two halves, they constructed an interior atrium boxed in by faux-exterior walls to mirror the history of these buildings.

Parts of this original complex still exist. According to Bob Reppe, University Architect, an old coal shed was uncovered during the construction of Scott Hall (in the 1923 Hopkins maps, this can be seen as a small structure on the south side of the tracks). Underneath the patios in front of Newell-Simon, there are some large, rather unexplained brick columns. These are actually the remnants of the old smokestacks of building C.

And if you want to see some of this history yourself, you can walk to the bottom basement level of Newell-Simon hall, amidst the workspace for Carnegie Mellon Racing, and you’ll find tracks still embedded in the concrete floor, untouched for a hundred years.



The B-level basement of Newell-Simon hall contains much of the original foundation of its predecessor building, including the remnants of a rail spur that used to connect with the train tracks of Junction Hollow. *Photo by William Curvan.*

"The Dream Weaver"—Poetry When Radio Was Young

Helen Wilson, with Peter McCormick



Marjorie Thoma McCormick Michaux was Tony Indovina's good friend Peter McCormick's mother. Pete told Tony that in 1938, his mother was hired by KDKA Radio as a writer and producer when the profession was male-dominated. At the time, KDKA was looking for programming to lift people's spirits to offset the endless stream of unsettling war news. Marjorie proposed a poetry program. Station managers initially weren't sure it would work, but the show became a sensation and aired for 15 minutes five days a week in the 1940s. Since copyrights and permissions proved hard and time-consuming to get, Marjorie

decided to make use of her immense creativity to write her own poems. Radio hosts read the poems, the last of whom was Paul Shannon. His sonorous voice was described in one article as "mellifluous." The readings were accompanied by organ music, usually played by Bernie Armstrong. The show was called "The Dream Weaver." It became a hit and ran for seven years. A side historical note is that the program was sponsored by the Braun Baking Company (Town Talk Bread).

In honor of Memorial Day this month, here is a poem written by Marjorie Thoma McCormick Michaux, commemorating not only the nurses to whom the poem was dedicated but also the soldiers who were in their care.

Marjorie Thoma was born in 1910 and grew up in Homewood, going to night school at Carnegie Institute of Technology while helping to support her widowed mother and two sisters. She married Frank McCormick and had three children, Pete, Kate, and Dennis, who provided the information about their mother for this article. They also donated poems by her to the Heinz History Center, which were digitized to allow for virtual reading. A current exhibition at the Heinz History Center, "A Woman's Place: How Women Shaped Pittsburgh," which runs until October 6, includes a display about Marjorie, extolling her many accomplishments as writer and producer at KDKA when women were a rarity on radio programs.

Besides being a poet and writer, Marjorie later taught at Carnegie Institute of Technology and the University of Pittsburgh, and also went full tilt into public relations and community service work. Pete wrote, "She volunteers to help a church or community group and soon thereafter she becomes the president."

Frank McCormick died of cancer in 1962, and in 1965, Marjorie married Joe Michaux, a widower who had 12 children of his own. They moved to Regent Square, and Marjorie got involved with her church and all the schools the children attended. They had a child in every grade except second, from first grade to junior in college!

THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

(Dedicated to Army and Navy Nurses)

Marjorie Thoma Michaux

Pity's softness, compassion's frailness, I reject,
And scorn the silent tear, the whispered prayer,
For I have seen men clench their teeth in pain, and death,
And In wildest desperation I have wondered where.
I might seize the fire to fight this fire,
Another arm – another hand – to bring then life again.

Oh, now that I have seen what I have seen, I cannot weep,
For in my soul has entered iron,
And in my heart a flame has leapt,
To see men brought so low in mud and grime,
Away from all that warmth and love desire.
No more must I be silent, but with features set
In a smile to meet their own,
I must seek to hold their life's blood flow,
While white hot anger sears my brain,
That men should live to suffer so –
Men who loved and laughed in jest, yet may not laugh again.

Weakness I have put behind, but Oh, my strength I've kept,
To feel a pulse, to feed them plasma,
To give sleep's mercy, before the surgeon's cutting knife,
To write that letter home, to reassure the vapid eyes,
And never stop until he smiles a wan, sweet smile, and says:
"Thanks, Nurse, I guess you've saved my life."

Then I know triumph too, though the enemy and I not once
In combat face to face have met;
For I have sworn that as he fights to destroy and kill,
That I with greater power will beat him at his game.
For those men who go forth to die for me and mine,
I count it – not my duty – but my honored privilege – to heal,
That someone's boy may live to see – the glorious sun again.

The list of Marjorie's accomplishments is long and varied. Along with "The Dream Weaver" at KDKA (which resulted in the publication of two books of poetry), she produced hour-long dramas for the radio station. She became an accredited Public Relations Practitioner after her stint at KDKA. Her 1975 resume lists "Full range of public relations and community relations practice. News writing, media contact, annual report preparation, external and internal publications, trade shows, exhibits, slide/sound productions, speech writing, presentations, photographic supervisions." She worked for many organizations in these capacities, including public relations companies whose clients were Carnegie Institute, Mercy Hospital, Chatham College, various natural gas companies, and the Pittsburgh Opera. She worked in that capacity at GASP (Group Against Smog and Pollution) and then became a board member, working with City Councilperson Michelle Madoff. She also taught Radio and TV classes at Carnegie Institute of Technology. She received numerous awards, including seven Golden Quill Awards for Excellence in Journalism and three Public Relations awards from the American Lung Association.



Marjorie and Joe Michaux

All of this while raising a large family and then continuing family get-togethers as her children grew up and began lives of their own! Everything written about her extols her warmth, creativity, energy, and talent. Marjorie never stopped writing poetry. It was a mainstay in her life. She lived life to the fullest until she died in 1999 at the age of 88.

Each Dream Weaver program opened with Marjorie's signature verse:

*He who knows your dreams knows you better than your closest friend.
He who reads your unhampered mind, your questing heart, your quickening pulse,
For He is your companion on this mystic journey through the unknown borderlands of life;
He who knows your dreams in all their hidden meaning, holds you close;
He reads the longings in your heart, and He is with you now, as always.*

Marjorie's son Pete McCormick and Tony Indovina spent time together discussing Pete's mother's many creative accomplishments. They also went to the Heinz History Center to view Marjorie's display.

Tony asked Pete what his favorite poem was out of all the poems his mother had written. This is it. (Pete asks if you can guess who the baby is.)

The First Step

*He couldn't understand their apparent surprise — That jubilant look in Daddy's eyes,
Or the radiant smile that Mother wore!
Grown-ups were always so queer before,
But today they were worse; they kept crying: My darling! My pet!"
All because he had set forth one small wobbly foot, And gingerly taken his first tentative step!*



The East Liberty Valley Historical Society Spring 2024 Marilyn Evert Lecture Series

Lectures begin at 7:00 PM

Calvary Episcopal Church Parish Hall
315 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

A question-and-answer session and book sale will follow each lecture.

Parking in the adjacent church lot and on-street is free.

Wednesday, May 21, 2024: "The Old East Liberty: A Reading by Joseph Bathanti and Linda Schifino"

The authors read from their new books drawn from childhoods of love and loss in the East Liberty/Larimer of the 1950s and '60s—Bathanti from "The Act of Contrition & Other Stories" and Schifino from "neighborhood Girl." Book signings will follow.



Lawrenceville Historical Society Lecture Series

May 21: "Matthew Dunn: Blind Congressman"

Presented by **Jennie Benford**

Lectures are held on the third Tuesday at Zion Lutheran Church, 237-37th Street at 7:30 p.m. Parking is available on the street or after 7:00 p.m. in St. Augustine Church's parking lot on 37th Street.

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Reader's Question: "Who Was Peebles Township Named For?"

May 2024

Helen Wilson

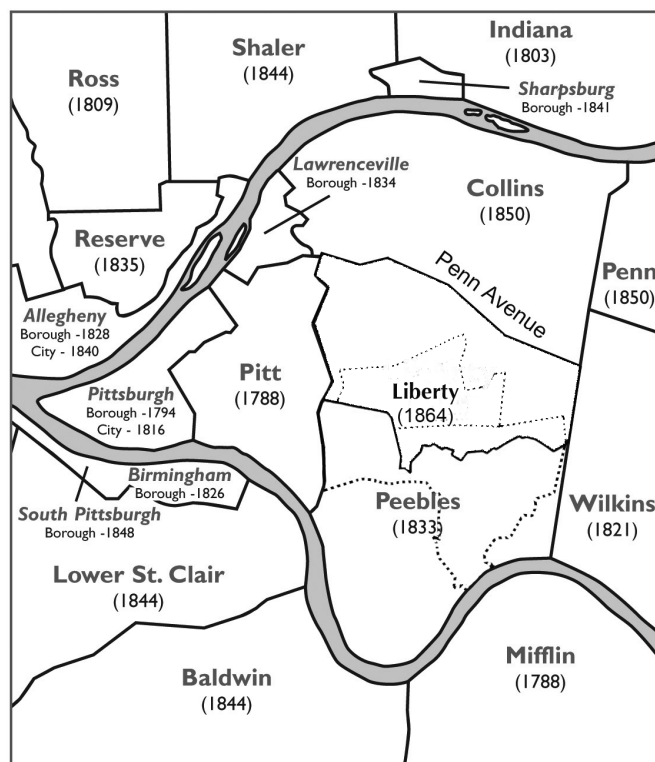
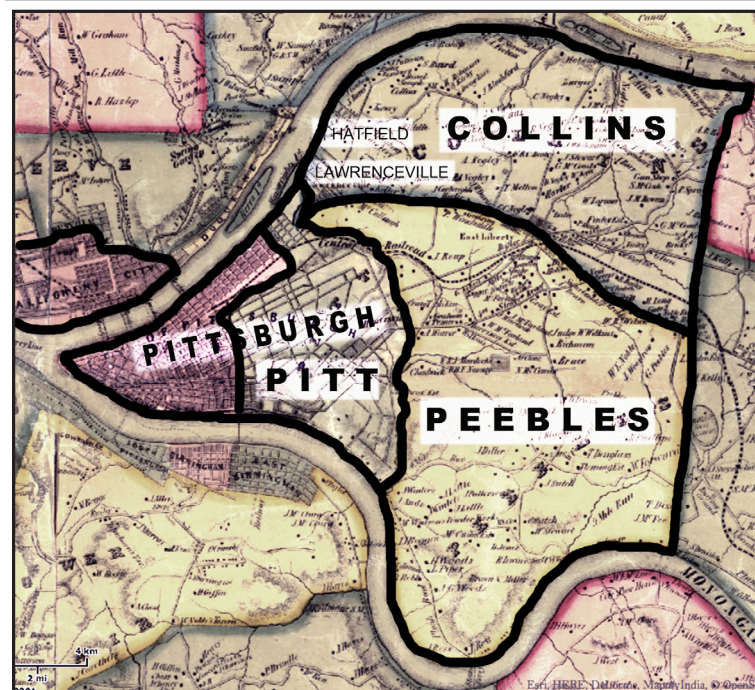
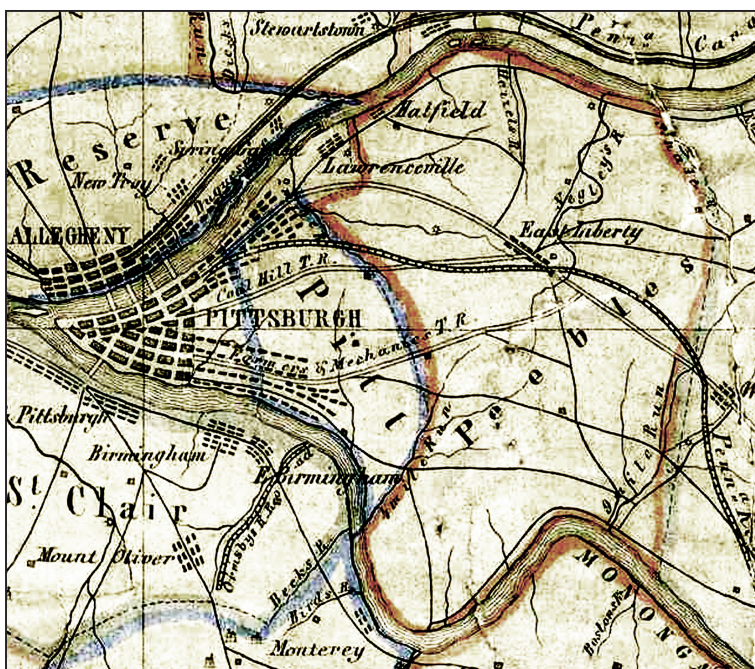
Sometimes a reader sends us a question that makes us delve into our historical resources to find the answer. Such is the case with the question, "Who was Peebles Township named for?" Not present-day Peebles Township, but the one that Squirrel Hill was part of from 1833 to 1868. Peebles was first part of much larger Pitt Township, which had been created in 1788. Pitt Township was divided into several smaller townships, including Peebles, in 1833. In 1850, the northern part of Peebles became Collins Township. In 1864, Liberty Township was created, but it was short-lived because Peebles, Collins, and Liberty were all annexed by Pittsburgh in 1868 and divided into wards.

So who was Peebles? We found the answer in a March 11, 1891, article in *The Pittsburgh Press*, entitled, "Over a Million Involved, An Interesting Case That Was Before Judge Stowe." It read, "Away back in the early part of the century William Peebles owned a tract of over 200 acres of land at East Liberty. He was the patriarch of his family and a man of note in his day, for whom the old Peebles township was named. That township has been extinguished by the extension of the city over the territory covered by the township. The tract was originally patented as the "Bullock Pens" tract, and, strange to say, part of the same tract is now covered by the extensive stockyards of the Pennsylvania

Railroad company. William Peebles left a family of five or six children ... A half a century ago, when the East Liberty valley was covered by farms and gardens, the daughters of William Peebles vied with the Negleys, the Winebiddles, the Rouns, the Kellys and others of that beautiful valley, for pre-eminence socially and intellectually. They were the leading belles of the day."

Meanwhile, Collins was named for Thomas Collins, described as a prominent lawyer and "legal giant in those early days, not prominent as a politician. Socially, he stood high."

The two maps to the left are adapted from the *Pittsburgh Historic Maps* website.



(Above) Map adapted from the article, "Liberty, the Mysterious Township," by Tom Powers and Jim Wudarczyk, *SHHS Newsletter*, Jan. 2019.