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NEWSLETTER

JUNE 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.



President's Message—Happy Summer!

Dear SHHS Members:

Welcome to the June 2024 SHHS Newsletter.

Unbelievably, we are halfway through 2024, and it has been a very busy year for the SHHS, with really great programs.

Besides our program on June 11 about Eat'n Park, other events are happening in Squirrel Hill this month. The Squirrel Hill Farmers Markets continue on Sundays from 9-1 p.m., and the Squirrel Hill Night Markets are bigger and better than ever this year on June 29, August 31, and September 28, from 6-10 p.m.

Other special days in June include the First Day of LGBTQ+ Pride Month, Jewish festival of Shavuot from June 11-13, Flag Day on June 14, Father's Day on June 16, Juneteenth on June 19, and the first day of summer on June 20.

Friends of Neill Log House, whose president is SHHS board member Tony Indovina, has completed restoration of the Log House and plans to open it for tours this summer. Other projects are being undertaken to make the Log House and the area around it relate to early American life, such as planting a period garden and planting native trees.

SHHS does not have a regular program scheduled for August, but the SHHS board is planning a meet-and-greet so we can spend time with our members in an informal gathering. More information will be in the July SHHS Newsletter.

A quick note: with better weather, watch for more bicyclists and pedestrians on the roads. We all need to share the streets safely. Bike riders and pedestrians, as well as vehicles, should follow traffic rules and signals. BE SAFE!

When our May speaker cancelled, Helen Wilson was tapped to fill the slot. She presented a program about the history of some of Squirrel Hill's buildings. She says one of reasons she loves to give such presentations is that the audience adds information she didn't know. Such was the case at this presentation. Members of the audience enlarged on the information she presented, offering more details or adding to the ongoing history of the buildings and the people who built them.

Helen's presentation is now posted on the SHHS website. If you have additional comments or more information about the buildings of Squirrel Hill, please contact the SHHS and let us know.

Thank you, loyal members,

Jim Hammond President, SHHS

Editor's Note: Building on Buildings

Helen Wilson

SHHS Officers and Board

The SHHS is an all-volunteer organization. Board Members are 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.

When the May SHHS speaker canceled his presentation, SHHS's program coordinator, Todd Miller, called upon me to fill the slot with a talk about a topic I have been researching—the various histories of the buildings in Squirrel Hill. From the oldest—the Neill Log House in Schenley Park (1795)—to one of the newest—Flats on Forward at the corner of Forward and Murray (2024)—Squirrel Hill's buildings hold the history of our neighborhood in what they look like, when they were built, and what happened to them over the years. Most buildings in Squirrel Hill are original to their site. For those that have been replaced, some are built on the same foundations. Others are completely new, but the stories of when, where, and why they were constructed—and what they replaced—are fascinating.

As I was putting the presentation together, I realized two things: first, the buildings I talked about in my presentation had much longer and more detailed stories than I could tell in one presentation, and second, there were a whole lot of other buildings I couldn't cover in a 50-minute talk. I feel I just scratched the surface. So I'll continue researching and maybe do a Part 2 presentation in the future and also find other ways to disseminate those stories. I plan to feature Squirrel Hill's buildings in my next display at the Squirrel Hill Branch of Carnegie Library and continue reporting on various buildings in this newsletter.

If you'd like to watch my presentation, it has been posted on YouTube and can be accessed on our website on the "SHHS Past Program Videos and Events" link.

Graffiti

Graffiti is becoming more and more visible in Squirrel Hill, and it doesn't make the neighborhood look good. A thank you goes out to the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition (SHUC) for its efforts to have graffiti removed on private property in the business district by contacting building owners. Also, SHUC has had a park bench in Frick Park replaced that had hate speech on it and the beautiful metal bird and flower sculpture on the walls of the restroom building at Schenley Oval cleaned after it was smeared. Thank you, SHUC! Historically, only one mention of graffiti appears in the *Squirrel Hill News* newspapers from 1935 to 1970 in a completely different context (*left*), and it wasn't even in Squirrel Hill.

Help the SHHS Keep Squirrel Hill's History Alive!

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.

Do you have any issues of *The Squirrel Hill Gazette* or *Squirrel Hill News*? The SHHS is looking for *Squirrel Hill News* issues from 1929 to 1934 or after 1970. We'll also take any 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 sqhllhist@shhsoc.org. We will scan the newspapers and return the originals to you.



Photo by Helen Wilson

Live Musical At 'Back Room'

A live musical comedy using motion picture film to help tell a story entitled, "Ah Sweet Mystery of Life, at Last, . ." will be presented at Kramer's Restaurant Back Room, 214 N. Craig St., for four weekends, starting July 21 and 22.

The unique presentation which combines live performances with specially prepared film footage features Shirley Haviland, local singer, and Bob Donahue, Pittsburgh guitarist. Both performers have been active for several years in local community and summer theater.

"Ah Sweet Mystery of Life, at Last, . ." was filmed, produced, directed and written by Bob Pretiss and Bob Wolcott.

Described as a "psychedelict-opera" by its creators, the show includes sketches, songs, story line, graffiti and one dance routine.

Squirrel Hill News, July 27, 1967

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SHHS Programs (Live and on Zoom)

June 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.**

June SHHS Program (Live and on Zoom)

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.

Upcoming SHHS Programs

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) 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.

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British Descendants of Mary Schenley Visit the Neill Log House on May 24

Tony Indovina

You may have seen the May 16 TribLIVE.com article by Joyce Manz entitled "British descendants of Mary Schenley visit her Pittsburgh legacies." The photos on this page highlight a tour of our log house given by myself and several members of Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH) on May 3. Our visitors from England were two brothers, Jeremy and Robert Harbord, great-great-great-grandsons of Mary Schenley and great-grandsons five times removed of James O'Hara, and Robert's daughter, Georgie Harbord. The family's visit to the city was hosted by Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC). While in town they were special guests of the Conservancy at its annual PNC Spring Hat Luncheon on May 4. For their tour of Schenley Park, the Harbord family specifically requested to see the Neill Log House. They were given an overview of the house's history, with an emphasis by me on the Schenley family's special relationship to the house and land. This began when James O'Hara became the last owner of the Neill Log House when he purchased the tract of land called Highland in 1813. I pointed out to the family that, to our knowledge, none of those who owned the log house ever lived in it, preferring to rent it to tenant farmers.

The first tenants of James O'Hara were the Burchfields, a notable early Pittsburgh family. Before the Harbords' visit, I had sent them research on "James O'Hara's Landholdings in Allegheny County,"¹ describing the remarkable amount of real estate in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County acquired by O'Hara that Mary Schenley ultimately inherited. As an aside, I also pointed out that among O'Hara's many enterprises was the first business to manufacture window glass in Pittsburgh, which he owned in a partnership shortly after the log house was built. The Neill Log House was likely one of the first buildings in Western Pennsylvania to benefit from locally made glass windows. And, of course, the other family connection was with Mary Schenley's gift of land that included Highland to the City in 1889 for what ultimately became our Schenley Park.

The Harbords seemed to genuinely appreciate learning about Pittsburgh history and their connection to it. This was very gratifying to observe from individuals who live in a culture that is hundreds, and even thousands, of years older than ours (Jeremy lives not far from Stonehenge).

Our afternoon visit was preceded by a little serendipity involving our log house descendent Charlie Stewart, grandson four times removed of Robert Neill. Before coming to join the rest of us at the log house to greet our visitors for their tour, Charlie had taken his trail bike on a ride through the Panther Hollow ravine. As he was riding down the upper ravine trail, he saw the trio walking toward him, and something in their dress caught his attention—two men in sport coats wearing ties and summer dress hats. On a hunch, Charlie stopped and greeted them, telling them that he was shortly planning to meet two gentlemen from England. And the rest is history.



Photos by Helen Wilson: Top right: The Harbords with Charlie Stewart (seated). Bottom left: SHHS member Stanley Klein (left) and Charlie Stewart (fourth from left) with the Harbords.

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June Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH): Site Work and Landscaping Around the Neill Log House

June 2024

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.



The June update for the Neill Log House is demonstrated in the three accompanying photos taken over Memorial Day weekend, showing much long-anticipated work in progress.

The photo taken from East Circuit Road in front of Catahecassa Fountain shows the beginning of foundation work for new stone steps up what is technically the park trail to the log house (*top right*). The old stone steps have now been removed. What is most evident here is the absence of the cyclone fence that had enclosed the Neill Log House for over 30 years. That fence was installed, it was said, to discourage vandalism. The next phase of site work will be the installation of a new black aluminum wrought-iron style fence around an expanded boundary coming down to the road and offering an unimpeded view of the log house.

The next two photos detail work done and in progress and landscaping that took place over the Memorial Day weekend. Both photos show the result of recent site grading to remove the trenching around the log house that was necessitated by foundation work and to generally contour the ground in all directions. The one from the western, or left, wall of the house (*right*) shows how some of the old stone steps that have been removed from the front have been repurposed as a landscape feature to take advantage of a high bank behind the house. At the base of the wall is evidence of electrical work being finished, which is wiring to service an outside electrical connection while fixtures, including Early American-style wall sconces, are being installed inside the house. Across the back of the house at the edge of the grass can be seen a large pipe in the ground. This

has finally been confirmed by a hydraulic engineering company retained by us to be an old water fountain that was once connected to city water service from the golf course. We are currently investigating how this can be once again be reconnected to service to nurture the new plantings shown in both photos.

Before the cyclone fence was removed and prior to site grading, the City Forestry Division removed numerous trees from the property around the house and down to the road, leaving only a few select specimens. This work and

the site grading set the stage for the most recent enhancement to the property—extensive planting donated by Tree Pittsburgh. FONLH Vice-President Mardi Isler has worked with this group to finally realize this major gift and was on site before Memorial Day when everything she describes in these photos was planted: "Two back trees are paw paw. On the bank, from west to east, are three blackberries, one black raspberry and two elderberries. To the east of the front are three apple, and in the front are two plum."

All this is a very gratifying start to the upcoming summer season and the long anticipated reopening of the Neill Log House.



Photos by Tony Indovina



[Click here to return to 2024 Newsletters](#) **The Steps of West Homestead**

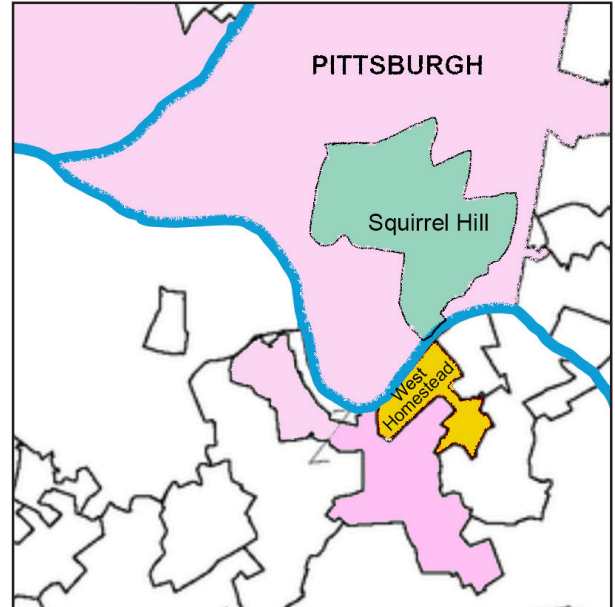
June 2024

Drew Porvaznik (Drew is a SHHS member who lives in West Homestead.)

What better way to follow up on Laura Zurowski's excellent July 2023 SHHS lecture on the history of public steps in Pittsburgh than to discuss steps in the suburbs. One of the closest suburbs to Squirrel Hill is West Homestead, across the Monongahela River. *The map to the right shows its location in orange.*

Public steps, more so in the past than now, enabled people to get to work and school, patronize businesses, visit relatives and friends, and also get back home, especially if you did not own a car, according to Zurowski. These reasons also apply to the public steps in West Homestead. The borough steps provided opportunities for people to gather and socialize and even led to a marriage!

Because West Homestead may not be as familiar to readers as their own community, here is a description: The one square mile borough, with a population of under 2,000, is comprised of an upper and lower area. The lower section, now also called the Historic District, contains all of the five sites of active public steps. That area mainly consists of 7th and 8th Avenues, which are flat, plus 9th and 10 Avenues and associated streets, which are hilly.



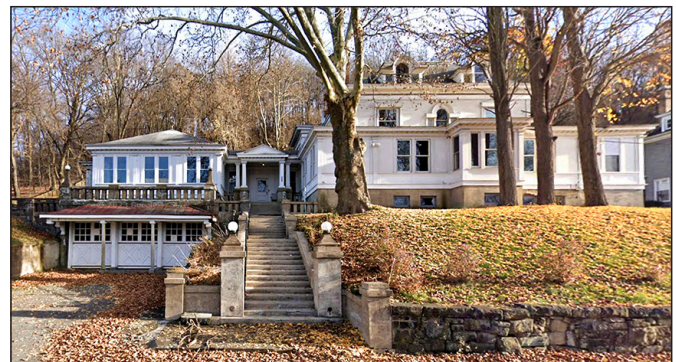
Location of West Homestead, Squirrel Hill, and Pittsburgh



West Homestead's upper area, known as the Village, is made up of Calhoun Village, Calhoun Manor, and Gates Park. The area is all residential, with homes built mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. The land is a hilly plateau on an elevation higher than the Historic District. *See the next page for a map of West Homestead showing where the sets of steps discussed in this article are located.*

Separating the Village from the Historic District is a valley where the main road, Forest Avenue, runs from 8th Avenue to West Run Road in Munhall Borough. The corner of 8th and Forest Avenues is where the borough and police building is located. Near that intersection is the borough's longest set of public steps, which I'll call set #1 (*photo to the left and red dot on the map*). It has approximately 50-60 steps that go uphill from Forest Avenue to the intersection of Doyle and Basic Avenues. Doyle Avenue is about one mile long and runs parallel to 7th and 8th Avenues and overlooks the river.

The second house on Doyle is the former mansion of Perle Mesta (*right*). Perle was the wife of George Mesta, founder of Mesta Machine Company, which was located next to the former U.S. Steel Plant. Perle was nationally known as "The Hostess with the Mostess." Further down Doyle is the former Mesta Park, which was used as a picnic ground for Mesta employees. The park is fenced off and has fallen into disuse since the closure of the plant in 1983. According to Dave Harhai, a



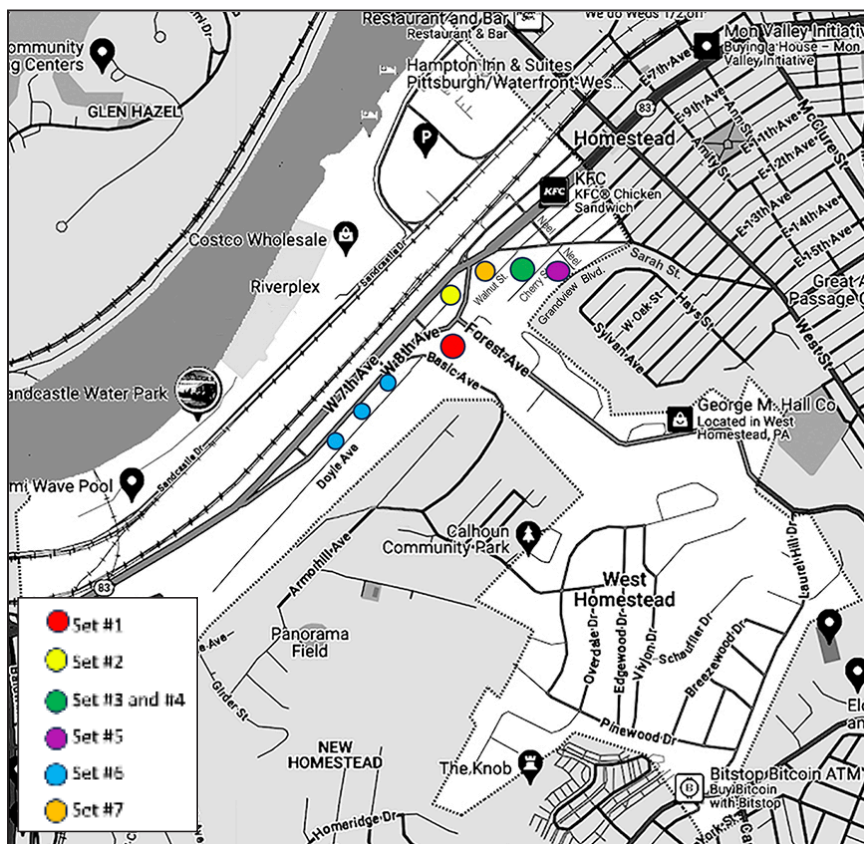
Mesta Mansion



borough councilman, legend has it that Perle had trees

planted in the park that were not native to the area. He said it would be nice if a botanist could determine if any of the trees, or their offspring, are still there.

Below Doyle and the park are set #6, three sets of concrete steps each of which are about a quarter of a mile apart that are no longer used and are badly deteriorated and fenced off (*photo to the left and blue dots on the map*). These steps were used for people to go to work (mainly to U.S. Steel, Mesta Machine, and American Shear Knife), to the business district, or to school. Lisa Guckes, the town's tax collector, remembers using the steps around the



1990s and early 2000s when she lived on Doyle. Both she and Harhai believe the steps were built and originally maintained by the Mesta Machine Company.

The other street at the top of the Forest Avenue steps, Basic Avenue, is partly owned by West Homestead (lower end) and New Homestead (upper end). New Homestead is part of Pittsburgh, has fewer than 1,000 people, is three quarters of a square mile, and is rural, compared to the rest of the city.

Besides leading to New Homestead, Basic also leads to the Village area (one of three entrances). Ironically, one needs to leave the borough, enter the city, and re-enter the borough to get to the Village, through Basic. This writer used the Forest Avenue steps many times as a teenager from the Village to get to the 8th Avenue business district and to catch buses to Oakland, Downtown, Squirrel Hill, and East Liberty. Jim Burk, who grew up on 10th Avenue and now lives in South Carolina, remembers using the Forest Avenue steps to go to the Village to hang out with friends as a kid.

Even more unusual are two streets, Angle and Kran, which are not contiguous to West Homestead. Both streets are like an island separated from the borough. The only way to get to Angle and Kran is to leave West Homestead and enter New Homestead. This arrangement is probably unique among the suburbs.

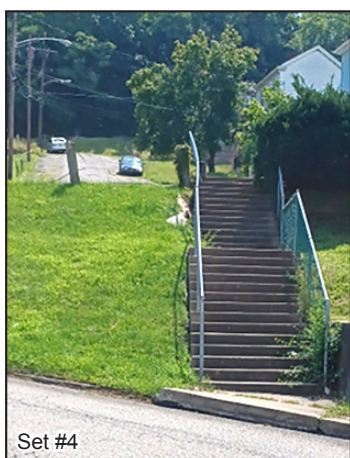
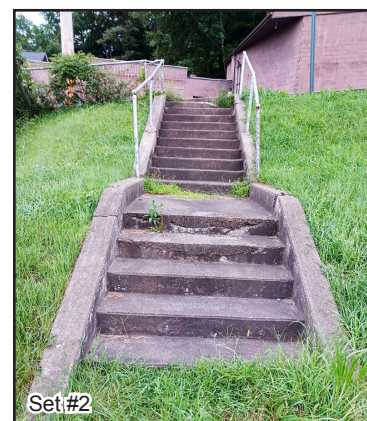
Not far from the Forest Avenue steps are about 10 steps, set #2 (picture to the right and yellow dot on the map), on New 8th Avenue, which is a short street parallel to 7th and 8th Avenues. The street has about three houses and a few warehouse-type buildings. The steps are a shortcut to either 7th or 8th Avenues.

The next two sets of steps connect to Sarah Street (not to be confused with the one on Pittsburgh's South Side) which lead into 8th Avenue. Set #3 (not pictured) has about 10 steps that connect Walnut Street with Sarah. One block uphill is set #4, which connects Cherry Street with Sarah and has about 20 steps (picture to the left and green dot on the map).

Set #5 (picture to the right and purple dot on the map), sits atop steep Neel Street, which runs into Cherry. This set has approximately 20 steps and connects to Grandview Blvd. (not to be confused with Grandview Avenue on Mt. Washington) and is probably not used very often, except by the mail carrier, because Grandview has only three to four houses on it. At one time, Grandview had many more houses, which have been torn down.

Roslyn Stulga, a longtime resident, told a story about how the steps led to her parents' marriage. She said guys used to hang out and socialize on the Cherry Street steps. One of the guys noticed this girl walking up Neel and using the steps to get to Grandview every day. He told the guys that someday he would marry that girl, and eventually, he did!

Going down Sarah to 8th Avenue and heading to the Forest Avenue steps, one will



notice on 8th Avenue, set #7, four sets of very steep steps, about 20 or so, in very poor, unusable condition (*picture at right and orange dot on map*). Each of these four sets of steps connect to the backyards of four homes on Walnut Street, providing a shortcut. The steps are not used now because those houses were demolished in the 1970s and 1980s.



The same reasons public steps were used in the city, as Zurowski explained in her lecture, are the same reasons public steps were used in West Homestead—shortcuts to work, school, and business, visiting friends and relatives, socializing, and shopping, especially if one did not own a car. Even if these steps were used as shortcuts long ago, the people of West Homestead probably still achieved the health goal of 10, 000 steps every day!

Personal interviews and Wikipedia were used as a source for this article.

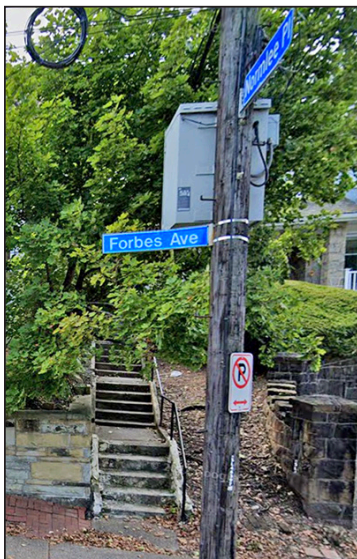
Note : Laura Zurowski's soon-to-be-published book is entitled City Steps of Pittsburgh: A History & Guide. Co-authors are SHHS board member Charles Succop & Matthew Jacob. Pre-orders are open on Amazon.

Are There Any Public Steps in Squirrel Hill?

Helen Wilson

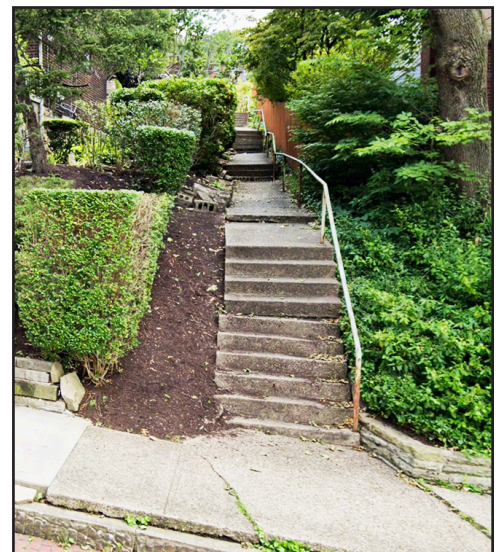
When I read Drew's article about the steps of West Homestead, I started to wonder if Squirrel Hill had any public steps. The answer is—very few. I surmise that's for two reasons. First, public steps were built mainly for factory workers to walk to work. Many of their homes were built on steep hillsides, and the factories and mills were in the valleys. Squirrel Hill's residents were for the most part not factory workers, and the valleys that held the factories and mills were not located within walking distance, with one exception—the set of steps shortly after the end of the Homestead Grays Bridge on the left as you go up Browns Hill Road (*photo to the right*). A small area on the left side of the hill is part of Squirrel Hill, and a set of stone steps goes from Browns Hill Road up to Desdemona St. Workers could use those steps to get to the steel mills in Homestead.

The only other public steps of any significance in Squirrel Hill are the steps on Forbes Ave. a few doors up from Margaret Morrison St. that connect Forbes Ave. to Gladstone Rd. (*photo below left*) and the steps connecting Caton to Lilac Streets (*photo below right*) and then from Lilac to Rosemoor Streets (now impassible) above Minadeo School in Squirrel Hill South.



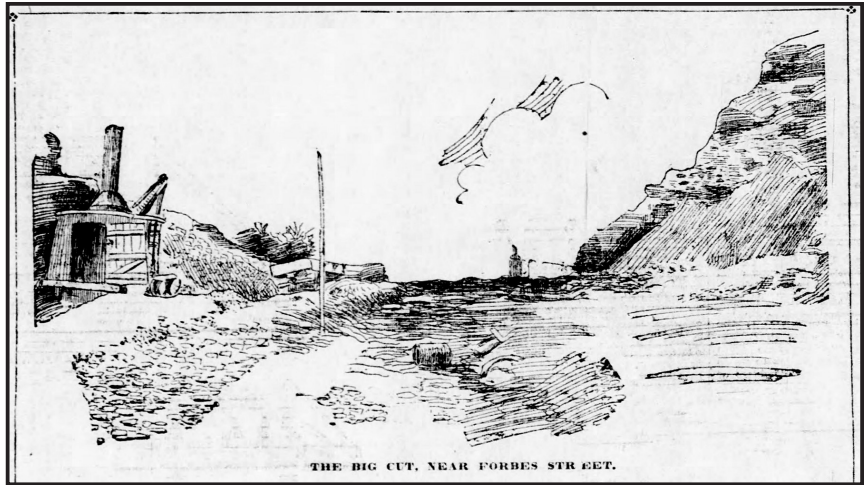
A second reason why Squirrel Hill doesn't have many public steps is because, beginning in the late 1800s and quickening in pace through the 1900s, developers smoothed out the terrain in many places. Hilly areas were leveled, such as at Hobart St. between Murray Ave. and Wightman St., and pretty much the whole length of Beechwood Boulevard. (*See the sketch on the next page.*) Many ravines were also filled in. (We're researching the ravines and valleys in Squirrel Hill that have been filled in and will report on it in a future article.)

Squirrel Hill's terrain was left relatively untouched only in the wilder areas of Schenley and Frick Parks, so that's where



most of Squirrel Hill's public steps are located. But that's a story in itself, so it will be described in a future article.

If you'd like to find out more about Pittsburgh's steps, the City has an online interactive Pittsburgh Steps Map showing where all the public steps in Pittsburgh are located and notes their condition. Go to pittsburghpa.gov/domi/city-steps/ or google "Pittsburgh City Steps Map."



"The Big Cut, Near Forbes Str. Eet." *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, July 18, 1897. The sketch shows the leveling of Beechwood Blvd. between Forbes Ave. (St. until 1957) and Northumberland St.

Anne Frank's Tree Comes to Squirrel Hill

Helen Wilson

A poignant piece of history concerning a tree came to Squirrel Hill on April 23—a 12-ft. sapling grown from a seedling from the original 170-year-old European Horse Chestnut tree Anne Frank could glimpse from her hiding place in the attic of a house in Amsterdam and wrote about in her diary. She viewed it as a beacon of hope.

The sapling was planted near the *Gary and Nancy Tuckfelt Keeping Tabs: A Holocaust Sculpture* on the grounds of Community Day School, 6424 Forward Ave. It was dedicated on May 6—Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. It was grown at an Indiana nursery and brought to Pittsburgh by Lauren Bairnsfather, who headed the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh and is now CEO of the Anne Frank Center USA. The original tree was diagnosed with a serious disease in 2005. Its seeds were collected and donated to various organizations. The tree collapsed in 2010, but its legacy lives on in its genetically identical descendants.

Lauren Bairnsfather gave a talk about the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh to the SHHS on April 25, 2017. Her presentation can be viewed by going to the SHHS website, squirrelhillhistory.org and clicking on the link "SHHS Past Program Videos and Events."



Anne Frank's Tree European Horse Chestnut *Aesculus Hippocastanum*

In loving memory of Holocaust survivors
Moshe and Malka Baran

This tree was awarded by the Anne Frank Center USA in 2024 in recognition of Community Day School's commitment to education and sharing Anne Frank's message of hope.

Anne Frank wrote three times in her diary about the majestic chestnut tree that grew outside of the window of the secret annex and wrote often about her love of nature. Anne's tree thrived in Amsterdam until 2009, ultimately succumbing to disease and a windstorm in 2010. Through the efforts of Anne Frank House, saplings grown from the original tree now flourish across the globe, forming a living memorial to the memory of Anne Frank.

"How wonderful it is that no one has to wait but can start right now to gradually change the world! How wonderful it is that everyone, great and small, can immediately help bring about justice by giving of themselves!"

Anne Frank, *Tales from the Secret Annex*
Written on March 26, 1944

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Two More Trees to Talk About

June 2024

Helen Wilson

As Tony Indovina and I were walking through the grove of trees near the Schenley Oval track, we were stopped in our own tracks by the sight of a magnificent white oak tree. We measured the circumference and found it to be around 12 feet. That's a diameter of almost 4 feet! Tony did a quick calculation on the age of the tree using the growth guide we used when we were doing our tree project. According to the guide, the white oak tree might have grown from an acorn from a tree felled to build the original Neill Log House 227 years ago.



Tony and I are always aware of the trees around us when we walk in our parks. Recently we were strolling on Riverview Trail in Frick Park along the new trees planted in the field beyond the Blue Slide Playground. The new trees are various species, and I was thrilled to see that the tulip poplar was blooming. It has beautiful flowers, definitely worth making the trip to see!



In the News!

Irish Centre Update: On May 20, Phipps Conservatory announced that it reached an agreement to acquire the site at 6886 Forward Avenue, paying \$760,000 to acquire the property. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that "Phipps ultimately intends to use the Irish Centre as headquarters for its Homegrown fresh produce program, a nursery for upcoming flower shows, an incubator for new community greening projects citywide, and as a laboratory for research projects."

Squirrel Hill Farmers Markets are held every Sunday until November 24 at the Beacon Bartlett Parking Lot from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Squirrel Hill Night Markets will take place on Saturday June 29, August 31, and September 28 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Speaking of trees, the **American-Chinese hybrid chestnut trees** will soon be blooming on Riverview Trail in Frick Park on Country Club Hill near the Off-Leash Dog Area. Take a stroll past them to enjoy their heady scent in the next few weeks.



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, June 5, 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 signing will follow.



Lawrenceville Historical Society Lecture Series

Wednesday, June 18: "Songs of Western Pennsylvania"

Presented by the **Slim Forsythe Trio**

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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The Pittsburgh Park Ranger Program

Photos submitted by Emily Ehrenberger, Park Ranger



These pictures shows some of the sixteen Park Rangers who patrol Pittsburgh's parks. They provide emergency response assistance, local ordinance enforcement, educational programming, service events, tabling activities, and more.



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The Pittsburgh Park Ranger Program at Frick Park

Emily Ehrenberger, Park Ranger

The Pittsburgh Park Ranger program was created in 2015 to provide emergency response assistance, local ordinance enforcement, and daily patrols within the city parks. Since then, the program has grown to include educational programming, service events, tabling activities, and more.

There are sixteen rangers staffed throughout the five regional parks, including Emerald View, Schenley, Frick, Highland, and Riverview. Rangers also lead programming in other smaller city parks, such as Westinghouse, Wightman, Allegheny Commons, Mellon Park, and more. Frick Park holds four park rangers, stationed next to Blue Slide Playground.

The rangers at Frick Park are constantly looking for ways to expand their program and enrich the experience of park goers. The historical timeline of Frick Park (*pictured below*) was created by me (Ranger Emily) to share with anyone interested in learning more about the fascinating history of the park. A larger version of the timeline can be found on the next page.

You can find the rangers on hot summer days at pop-up events on Blue Slide Playground, where they will be sharing park history and handing out lemonade!

Have a question or concern regarding your local park? Or want to set up a program? Send us an email. Include which park you are interested in, and a ranger will get back to you! Parkrangers@pittsburghpa.gov

Added bonus: Go to the Pittsburgh Park Rangers page on the City of Pittsburgh website, pittsburghpa.gov/publicsafety/park-rangers and click on the Pittsburgh Park Rangers "Nature at Home!" workbook. This packet is full of free activities for kids and families, including coloring, puzzles, and nature pages, and even a Build-Your-Own Park activity!



You can help Park Rangers keep our parks safe by following Park Rules and Regulations. Park Rangers are authorized to enforce and issue citations for any violation to park ordinances which can be found under the municipal code section 473 and 633.

These rules include but are not limited to:

- Park hours are 6AM-11PM unless otherwise noted.
- All pets must remain on a leash throughout the park unless in an approved off-leash exercise area (OLEA) site.
- Any disfigurement or removal of park amenities is prohibited. This includes natural resources such as lumber, plants, and/or seeds.
- All forms of tobacco are prohibited within City Parks. This includes but is not limited to cigarettes, cigars, vapes, e-cigarettes, and chewing tobacco.
- Interfering with any wildlife is prohibited; this includes hunting, trapping, feeding, and/or harvesting.
- Proper permits are required for any pavilion rental or special event happening within parks.
- Drones and Model Airplanes are prohibited in City Parks
- Grilling is only permitted in designated grilling areas. Campfires are prohibited without a permit.



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History of Frick Park

Created by Emily Ehrenberger, Park Ranger

Park Ranger Emily Ehrenberger worked with members of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society to create this timeline of the History of Frick Park.

History of Frick Park

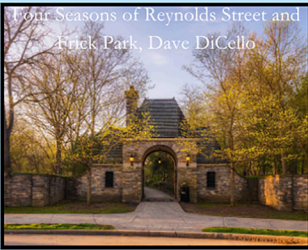


The first Europeans settled in Squirrel Hill during the 1760s, consisting primarily of Indian traders, explorers, soldiers, and squatters. Settlers began using the land for agriculture, which flourished during the early 19th century. Frick Park and the land around it was home to crops such as Indian corn, oats, potatoes, butter, molasses, apples, and grapes. The most successful plot that occupied Frick Park's land was the James Fleming Farm. By the 1880s, this era of agriculture dwindled drastically due to industrialization.



In 1904, the Pittsburgh Country Club was built on the hilltop next to Riverview Trail. This was the meeting place of many Pittsburgh elites, such as Andrew Carnegie, Richard B. Mellon, and Henry Clay Frick. Disaster struck in 1913, when a fire engulfed the club during a celebratory festival, but luckily no casualties occurred. The club was rebuilt and operated until 1936. Its land was later purchased by trustees to expand Frick Park.

During the next 8 years, the Department of Public Works expanded Frick Park to 306 acres with the help of the \$2 million trust. The park officially opened to the public in 1927. During this time, the gatehouses that grace some of the main park entrances were built.



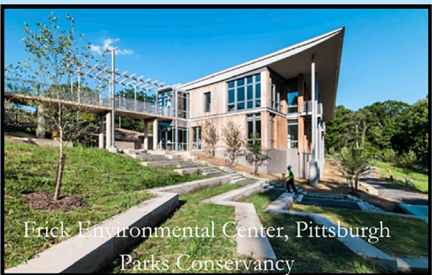
These were designed by John Russell Pope, the same architect that designed the Jefferson Memorial.

The Blue Slide Playground was built in the early 1960s. Its defining feature, the blue concrete slide, was originally painted red. This playground gained international fame in 2011 from the Mac Miller album,

"Blue Slide Park," and is the site of annual vigils for the late rapper. Today, it is one of two concrete slides that remain in Pittsburgh.



The Frick Environmental Center was originally constructed in 1979. In 2002, a fire destroyed the facility. The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, in partnership with the Bohlin Cywinski Jackson architecture firm, worked to construct a new and innovative building, which was completed in 2016. The FEC has achieved the highest level of LEED certification due its state of the art sustainable design. It is one of the only Living Buildings in the world that is free and open to the public.



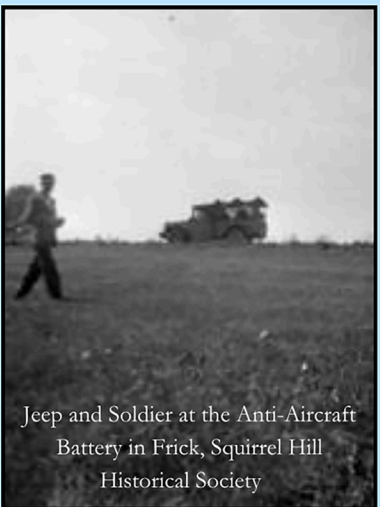
1800 1882 1904 1927 1952 1960 2006 2024



In 1882, Henry Clay Frick, a powerful American industrialist, purchased his first home located in what is now Frick Park. He remodeled this home into a 23-room, four-story mansion, which is now part of The Frick Pittsburgh's museum.

1919

Frick Park was established in 1919 when Henry Clay Frick gifted the City of Pittsburgh 151 acres of land, along with a \$2 million trust to be used for land maintenance and preservation. The land was originally known as Gunns Hill Tract, named after an old pioneer family that once lived on the land.



From 1952 to 1955, Frick Park held an anti-aircraft battery in the midst of the Cold War. This artillery site overlooked the Monongahela Valley steel mills, as this was a potential target for Soviet bombers. The site featured a four 90-mm gun battery, ammunition, communicative facilities, and tents. It encompassed the hill atop Riverview Trail, all the way to the Off-Leash Exercise Area.

In 2006, the Nine Mile Run Trail received a \$7.7 million restoration in partnership with the United States Army Corps of Engineers. This project included removing slag heaps and sewer lines from the former industrial dumping site, as well as reforestation.



2016

Today, Frick Park is Pittsburgh's largest city park at 644 acres. More land was acquired through the years by Frick Park trustee purchases, as well as a 106 acre addition during the Summerset housing development. The land features 17 miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking, baseball fields, clay tennis courts, a volleyball court, playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment, a bowling green, and even more amenities.