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# NEWSLETTER

JULY 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](http://squirrelhillhistory.org)**

Email:  
**[sqhillhist@shhsoc.org](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org)**

Most of our programs are recorded. If you would like to view past programs, go to [squirrelhillhistory.org](http://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](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org), or write to SHHS, PO Box 8157, Pittsburgh, PA 15217.



## President's Message

### Happy Independence Day and Pittsburgh H Day!

Dear SHHS Members:

Welcome to the July 2024 SHHS Newsletter.

I hope everybody will enjoy the **July 4th "Flashes of Freedom Fireworks Show"** that launches from Point State Park at 9:30 p.m. on the Fourth. You can watch the fireworks in the comfort of your home on Channel 11.

The **2024 Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix's ten-day Motorsport Festival** kick-off is July 21st with the Schenley Park car show and racing on Saturday August 3rd and Sunday August 4th. All information can be found on the [pvgp.org](http://pvgp.org) website. The Pittsburgh Grand Prix is the Nation's largest vintage street race event.

June's SHHS program, "**The Story Behind the Smile: History of Eat'n Park**" [75th Anniversary] by Lynn McMahon, was very interesting, with lots of facts about Eat'n Park history. She also brought lots of Smiley cookies for all to enjoy. And she answered the question, "Why Eat'n Park and not Park'n Eat?"

The July 9th program, "**Pittsburgh's Historic Ballparks,**" presented by Mark Fatla, will be another great program about Pittsburgh's history. Be sure to attend in person or on Zoom so you can ask questions at the end of the program.

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society board has sent a letter to the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure to maintain **Serpentine Drive** in Schenley Park for cars as well as bikes and pedestrians. There is an action that wants to eliminate cars from using the road. We will keep all informed on this action.

Last year SHHS did research on the **Irish Centre** property and the eight-story, 160-condo, Irish Centre development project. That project was nixed by the city, and Phipps Conservatory purchased the Irish Centre and plans to repurpose the site for the Conservatory's Home-Grown Edible Garden, a nursery for plants, and a laboratory for research.

Work begins next month on PennDOT's \$95 million, two-year project to replace the **Commercial St. Bridge** on the Parkway East leading to the Squirrel Hill Tunnel. Work on the Wilkinsburg exit ramp, environmental controls, an access road for a road down to Commercial Street, tree and brush clearing, and other projects have to be done before the new bridge is constructed starting July 2026. The new bridge will be built beside the existing structure and slid into place when the old bridge is demolished. Expect lots of detours and traffic delays as this project moves forward.

Thank you for being loyal members of SHHS,

Jim Hammond, President, SHHS

## 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.

## Editor's Note: Living History

Helen Wilson

As I walked around the Squirrel Hill business district recently, I studied the odd arrangements of the buildings along Forbes and Murray. Some—like the PNC Bank building, Born Building, and West Building—are substantial and even grandiose. Others look like one-story afterthoughts that haphazardly filled in the empty spaces between the older buildings as the business district grew.

As I walked, I noticed something else—the variety of people who inhabit the space. I realized they portray a living history of the neighborhood. I saw elderly people with canes and walkers, Orthodox Jews in their distinctive garb, young techs talking about things beyond my comprehension, Asians on their way to work or class, middle-aged people striding along, others in all shapes, sizes, and ages. Skin color and clothing styles varied tremendously. I caught snippets of conversations as I passed by people. Different worlds in a few sentences in many languages.

At times there was an edge to what was happening. Panhandlers were a common sight. A big pickup truck parked in front of the Post Office sported a large American flag draped across its front. At the corner of Murray and Darlington, a group had gathered at the parklet, with Israeli flags waving. Another time, I saw a helmeted guy on a woods bike doing wheelies down Forbes. The police arrived quickly.

Squirrel Hill's history and legacy occupy a unique and sometimes tense position in Pittsburgh. But mostly, it's a neighborhood where people coexist peacefully and have a strong sense of community. Taken together, they illustrate the passage of history in the neighborhood and the trends shaping today and tomorrow.

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## July 19—"H" Day in Pittsburgh

Helen Wilson

In 1758, British Brigadier-General John Forbes defeated the French at Fort Duquesne during the French and Indian War. He established a new settlement there and named it "Pittsburgh" after British Prime Minister William Pitt the Elder, 1st Lord of Chatham. The "burgh" part of the name came from Forbes paying respect to his Scottish heritage. In Scotland, towns are pronounced "borough" but spelled "burgh." Because spellings weren't standardized in the early years of Pittsburgh, the name of the town appeared in print as both "Pittsburgh" and "Pittsburg." In 1816, the town was officially incorporated, and in its founding document, the "h" was left off. Pittsburghers continued to use both spellings until 1890, when the federal government mandated that the "h" be dropped from "burgh" in all cities and towns where it was used. The change was compulsory for federal government agencies, including the Post Office, and "Pittsburg" was also used by several local newspapers and even the Pittsburg Pirates, but the mandate was unpopular. A number of nongovernmental entities such as the University of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Stock Exchange continued to use the "h." In 1911, the mayor, city council and postmaster demanded a hearing to have "Pittsburgh" be made the formal spelling. On July 19, 1911, the federal government agreed, and the "h" was returned to Pittsburgh.

## The SHHS Is Still Looking for Old Newspapers!

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](http://squirrelhillhistory.org), or email us at [sqhillhist@shhsoc.org](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org). We will scan the newspapers and return the originals to you.



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## **SHHS Programs (Live and on Zoom)**

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*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:** The SHHS board is in the process of deciding whether to continue broadcasting our programs on Zoom beginning in September. During the pandemic we averaged around 30 viewers, but now the number has dropped to 10 or less per program. We hired a tech specialist to run the Zoom part of the program, but since the number of viewers is declining, we might decide to discontinue the Zoom effort. We would like to hear from members about this matter. Contact us at [sqhillhist@shhsoc.org](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org) to weigh in. Programs are still being recorded and can be accessed in a few days after a live program through the "SHHS Past Programs and Events" link on our website.

Our July program will still be on Zoom. Members and those signing up will receive the link the weekend before the program.

### **July SHHS Program (Live and on Zoom)**

#### **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.

### **Upcoming SHHS Programs**

#### **August (date TBD): Neill Log House Opening Celebration**

Progress on the Neill Log House and the landscaping around it is progressing nicely, and plans are being put in place for a grand opening in August. Further details will be in the August newsletter.

#### **Tuesday, August 6, 4:30-7:30: Celebrate National Night Out with the Frick Park Rangers**

Location: Riverview Trail (starts at Blue Slide Playground). The SHHS will have a table at the Frick Park Rangers' National Night Out celebration to talk with people about the long and varied history of the park. The Rangers plan to have crafts, games, scavenger hunts, vehicle tours, and more. Come enjoy a fun night out with neighbors!

#### **Tuesday, August 13: Members' Social**

The SHHS Officers and Board Members invite all our members to join us for an informal meet-and-greet to get to know each other and talk about what interests them about Squirrel Hill's history. We'll have displays about our projects and maybe some fun activities. Refreshments will be served.

#### **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.

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

**Guilia Lozza Petrucci**, executive director of Dragon's Den, a nonprofit 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



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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 about 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.

*We hope to schedule a daytime tour of Lucyna de Barberay’s sustainable home on Fernwald Rd. this summer. Rob Ruck and Ted Muller, co-authors of Pittsburgh Rising: From Frontier Town to Steel City, 1750-1920, will speak next year.*

*To find current events happening in Squirrel Hill such as the ones on page 14, subscribe to the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition’s “In a Nutshell” online newsletter. Go to the SHUC website, <https://shuc.org/> and scroll down to “Subscribe.” enter the email address and click the Subscribe arrow.*

## **Doors Open Pittsburgh Boat Tours**



**Bridges, Buildings and  
Architecture of the Three  
Rivers**

Jul 13, 2024



**Secrets of The Ohio River**

Aug 17, 2024



**Bridges, Buildings and  
Architecture of the Three  
Rivers**

Sep 28, 2024



**The Mighty Monongahela**

Oct 19, 2024

**Doors Open Boat Tours**, featuring SHHS board member and bridge historian **Todd Wilson**, along with architect **Paul Tellers** (July and September tours) and architectural historian and preservationist **Justin Greenawalt** (August and October tours), take place four times in the coming months. The tours sail for 90 minutes from Station Square. Go to [doorsopenpgh.org](https://doorsopenpgh.org) for more information and tickets.

## **Saturday, July 13, 1-3 p.m.: “Bridges, Buildings and Architecture of the Three Rivers”**

**Todd Wilson** and **Paul Tellers** will be your guides for this journey through time. Pittsburgh’s amazing bridges and impressive architecture will be explained as the scene unfolds from the vantage point of the boat’s viewing decks. Be immersed in Pittsburgh’s history as seen from the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers.

## **Saturday, August 17, 1-3 p.m.: “Secrets of The Ohio River”**

**Todd Wilson** and **Justin Greenawalt** lead you beyond the typical sightseeing tour to uncover the mysteries of the Ohio River. Beyond the Point lies a part of Pittsburgh shrouded in relative mystery. From the largely uninhabited Brunot Island to the roughhewn walls of Western Penitentiary, the triumphant arch of the West End Bridge to the monumental McKees Rocks Bridge, many of the river’s secrets are hidden in plain sight.

## **Saturday, September 28, 1-3 p.m.: “Bridges, Buildings and Architecture of the Three Rivers”**

**Todd Wilson** and **Paul Tellers** will again be your guides for this riverboat journey through time. Pittsburgh’s amazing bridges and impressive architecture on all three rivers.

## **Saturday, October 19, 1-3 p.m.: “The Mighty Monongahela”**

**Todd Wilson** and **Justin Greenawalt** take you beyond the typical sightseeing tour as we sail past the Hot Metal Bridge and discover how the Monongahela River shaped the Steel City. Fragments of its industrial past dot the riverbanks, but the Monongahela River began shaping the fortunes of Pittsburgh long before iron and steel.

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## **Tree of Life Reroots**

July 2024

*Audrey Glickman*

It's a new branch on a well-established tree.

They say when a tree lives through stress it grows stronger. This certainly seems to be true for Tree of Life Congregation in Squirrel Hill.

More than five and a half years after the shooting that threw a large wrench into our community, the congregation is working with a new nonprofit, Tree of Life Inc., to use that wrench to build something new: a building of light and enlightenment that will provide a place for education about hate, a museum of antisemitism, a place for community events and conversation, and of course, a home for the congregation.

After years of deconstructing, being certain that all parts recyclable are being repurposed, reused, or plowed back into the ground, the groundbreaking on the new building designed by Daniel Libeskind took place on Sunday, June 23, 2024.



Second Gentleman of the United States Doug Emhoff speaks at the ground-breaking ceremony. *Photo by Audrey Glickman.*

The event was filled with heart, hope, and cohesive community.

Members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra string section provided sweeping, heartfelt music just before the program began, and then also as the opening of the program. Your humble correspondent blew the shofar (a horn used since ancient times to call people to action), and was joined by Michael Supowitz on his baritone shofar and Tree of Life Rabbi Jeffrey Myers on his even deeper shofar, and then by children from the community on their own shofarot.

Diane Rosenthal, sister of brothers Cecil and David Rosenthal whom we lost in the 2018 shooting, spoke of how she can feel their presence on the site, even today. "We don't want our loved ones to be solely remembered for how they were killed, we want them to be remembered for how they lived their beautiful lives." The building will be a place to fully remember each of those eleven persons whom we lost, and simultaneously be a testament to the resiliency of our community, where people of all ages can learn how to counter antisemitism and all forms of identity-based hate, lessons which are desperately needed in our world now.

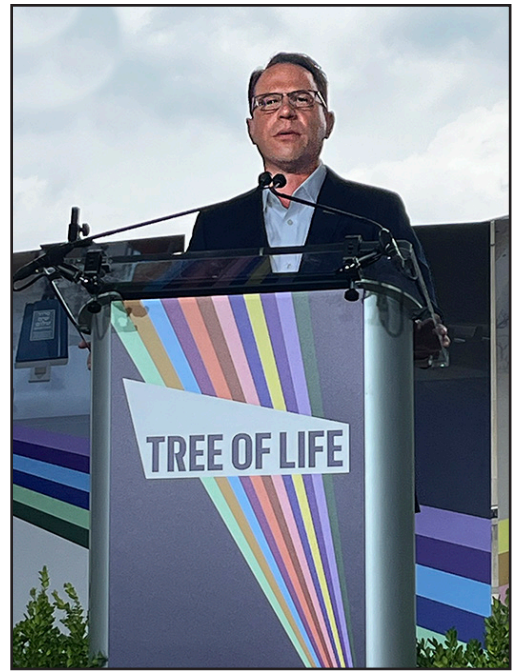
Interspersed among the several speakers were brief, poignant films created specifically for this occasion by filmmaker Abigail Tannenbaum Sharon, along with local filmmaker Josh Franzos. The first reflected upon our resilience as survivors and family, the second gave commentary by public officials, and the third circumscribed this project, "our path forward," and those who are working to bring it to fruition.

Rabbi Myers spoke, and then led an interfaith group of honorable clergy (and community friends) in a benediction, and then journalist and author Wolf Blitzer offered remarks. Carole Zawatsky, CEO of Tree of Life Inc., and Jeffrey Solomon, member of the board (filling in, in part, for board chair Michael Bernstein, who unfortunately was not able to attend), spoke of the scope and breadth of the project, and how very supportive the local community consistently has been. Mr. Solomon said that we were standing in the place where folks danced at his bar mitzvah celebration, and "we will dance again." He noted Michael Bernstein's vision and leadership as key to the project's journey, and presented Mr. Bernstein's remarks on his behalf. He also suggested that we each do at least one extra good deed in honor of each of the eleven we lost, every day.

We were treated to a performance by members of the choir of Northgate High School, with whom survivors and families have already engaged, and who are each so positive about the future. Further remarks came from Tree of Life Congregation President Alan Hausman, who thanked the broader community for standing by the congregation, and understanding that we are stronger together. Mr. Hausman's remarks were followed by gracious words from event co-chairs Meryl Ainsman and Jeffrey Letwin. We also heard from activist/author Eric Ward, member of the Tree of Life Academic Advisory Committee.



Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro spoke (*right*), conveying regards from his wife Lori, who is an honorary member of the Tree of Life Inc. board. He also thanked Lt. Gov. Austin Davis for being there, as well as our Senior Senator Bob Casey, and so many other elected officials who are so supportive. He spoke of being humbled to walk beside us through the long years since, and how he is looking forward to our shared future. He was here the afternoon of that horrid day in 2018, and remembered not only the shattered lives of those he met at the JCC, but also the gathering of the entire interfaith multicultural community at Forbes and Murray, comforting one another, and finding strength together. The work is not reserved for those on television, for those who hold elected office, he said. It is upon each of us to speak and act with moral clarity, against hate. Each and every one of us must build that community that is more tolerant. He spoke of the physicality of the building toward that purpose. In this Commonwealth, he said, we have a responsibility that “stretches back to the year 1681, when our charter was given to William Penn, who sought to build a community that was welcoming to people of all faiths.” Mr. Shapiro’s speech is well worth seeking out online.



Governor Josh Shapiro speaks at the ground-breaking ceremony. Photo by Audrey Glickman.

Then the Second Gentleman of the United States, Doug Emhoff—the first Jewish spouse of a President or Vice President—spoke. His remarks, too, are well worth seeking out online. He has made a mission of working against antisemitism and other hatred, and he continues to work with the community, and to be behind and alongside the work to come at the Tree of Life.

Then there was a symbolic breaking of glass—as is done at the end of Jewish weddings, to remind us that there is sorrow in joy, and from the shards of the past we can create a positive future. Breaking the glass were family members of those lost, survivors, first responders, representatives of the US Attorney’s office, community member “helpers”—Alan Hausman, Brian Schreiber, Maggie Feinstein, Ronald Roth, and Meryl Ainsman - and Messrs. Shapiro, Emhoff, and Casey.

The shards will be encased in mezuzah cases, holding pieces of scripture on each doorpost of the new building. Carole Zawatsky said that they will remind us all to try to pick up the shards of our broken world, and create a better place.

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## **SHHS Takes a Stand on Serpentine Drive in Schenley Park**

*The SHHS has learned that the Department of Mobility Infrastructure (DOMI) is considering closing Serpentine Drive in Schenley Park to all vehicular traffic, leaving it open only to pedestrians and bicyclists. Right now, due to the damage to the road from the partial collapse a few years ago, cars (not trucks) can only drive down it, not up. The SHHS opposes the closure for historical and safety considerations and sent a letter the SHHS Board sent to City Officials in June. This is the letter:*

We, the undersigned board members of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society (SHHS), are appealing to all those concerned about how a current proposal by the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure to “restore Serpentine Drive by planning improvements for bikes and pedestrians that would prohibit automobiles,” is inconsistent with this road’s historic legacy and might possibly jeopardize the National Historic Place designation for Schenley Park.

This proposal was advertised for comment during a 60-day period ending on February 29, 2024. The SHHS received no notice of this action, and we would like to know where any



such notices were posted. Our Registered Community Organization, The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition (SHUC), had not been contacted either or asked to conduct any Development Activity Meeting to elicit community-wide comment. Most importantly, neither the SHHS nor SHUC have heard that the proposal has gone through any historic review process, which would be fully justified by Serpentine Drive's legacy and importance to Schenley Park.

Serpentine Drive was specifically cited as a major contributing factor in the application and nomination form that ultimately resulted in Schenley Park being designated a National Historic District. In that application, the Drive was specifically cited as "the park's most dramatic roadworks ... linking the main drive with the upper branch road" (emphasis on *linking*). The drive was built in 1894 under the direct supervision of Superintendent Edward Bigelow, sometimes called the "Father of Schenley Park." It was designed as a pleasure drive for carriages and automobiles. An old map suggests it was one of the first roads to be completed in the park.

Notwithstanding the present condition of the road after landslides and closure, the undersigned SHHS board members believe it is absolutely necessary to involve the larger community in discussing the legacy and future of this priceless historic treasure. At this time, bicyclists and pedestrians are sharing a temporary arrangement with one-way car traffic. We feel there needs to be dialogue based on the legacy and importance of restoring this road to what it once was and can be again. It is worth noting that few pedestrians used the road before the present closure because abundant walking trails exist in the park for that purpose, even more than roads for vehicles. And the park's vehicular roads were carefully designed to be a unified concept for park visitors. It seems ironic that local bicyclists urge their members through social media sites to request that Serpentine be used only for bicycles and pedestrians on what they themselves acknowledge is a historic road, designed for cars. Their postings admit to not wanting to share this road with automobiles, although bicycles and cars did share Serpentine Drive for years, and could do so again if properly planned.

An additional concern for us is that Serpentine Drive was specifically planned to conduct automobiles within the park. Closing the drive to cars forces drivers coming from Greenfield Rd. or Panther Hollow Rd. to go out of the park into a residential neighborhood on residential streets, causing a more dangerous situation for bicyclists and pedestrians. To get to the Neill Log House or the golf course from Serpentine's closure on Bartlett St., drivers must make dangerous left turns from Bartlett, a street with speed humps, to Murdoch St. and Darlington Rd., which has no sidewalks. The alternate route, turning left onto Panther Hollow Rd. from Greenfield Rd. and then following Schenley Dr. to Darlington Rd., is much longer and is a much more heavily used pedestrian and bicyclist route.

Whatever historical and safety considerations need to be discussed, it is absolutely necessary to stop whatever process was begun and consider everything through a broader perspective, and most importantly through historic review, because not doing so might impact the park's historic designation. We urge our Councilperson, Barbara Warwick, and our elected officials to intervene in this matter, to assure that input from the entire Squirrel Hill community and from historic and preservation organizations may be heard.

Those of us from the SHHS encourage our partner organizations to respond to us to share their views and historic perspectives regarding what the future of Serpentine Road should be.

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## **Squirrel Hill Gets Parking Meters**

*Eric Lidji, Director of the Rauh Jewish Archives at the Heinz History Center, researched and wrote three very interesting articles about Squirrel Hill parking. The articles appeared in the June 2, 9, and 16 Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives, an Enewsletter of the Heinz History Center. (To sign up for the enewsletter, google "Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives" and click on the link that pops up. Then scroll down to the bottom of the page and type in your contact information.) The articles were also published in The Jewish Chronicle. Lidji has graciously given the SHHS permission to reprint the articles in our newsletter. In the first of the three-part series, Squirrel Hill business owners ask for meters to bring order to the commercial district. Fights ensue.*

Pittsburgh is one of the nicest cities in the world, except when it comes to parking.

If I mentally tick through the meanest encounters I've had with strangers, most involve parking: ugly notes left on the windshield, cutting remarks yelled from porches. One time someone buried my entire car in snow as punishment for a perceived parking offense.

It was "perceived" because no laws were violated — no written laws anyway. There are two sets of parking regulations in Pittsburgh. One is set by the city. The other is set by the People. Violating the first gets you a ticket. Violating the second gets you an enemy.



In an old, cramped city like Pittsburgh, where space is a premium, parking marks the exact point where the rights of individuals bump against the needs of a community.

Parking is a three-way competition. Residents want parking in front of their homes, ideally without any charge. Employees want parking close to work for long stretches during the day. Shoppers want parking close to businesses for short periods of time.

Pity the poor city officials who must appease all three!

Complaints about the new purple “smart loading zones” in Squirrel Hill got me thinking about the ways small changes in parking policy can ripple through a neighborhood.

To sharpen the point: Perhaps parking could help explain why Squirrel Hill maintained its Jewish community while similar neighborhoods in many other cities were upended by emerging suburbs. Not that parking is the answer, just that it provides some useful data.

Squirrel Hill today has five city-owned parking lots and several hundred parking meters throughout the Murray-Forbes-Forward business district and creeping onto a few side streets. Thanks to new digital resources from the City of Pittsburgh Archives and the Squirrel Hill Historical Society, it was possible to discover how this situation came to be.

The 14th Ward had the highest rate of car ownership in Pittsburgh in the late 1930s. The neighborhood accounted 6.5% of the city’s people and about 17% of its cars.

With the growth of the Squirrel Hill commercial district throughout the 1930s, the demands of residents, shoppers and employees came increasingly into conflict.

Squirrel Hill parking was a bit lawless back then. People parked anywhere they wanted, for as long as they wanted. There was all-day parking, all-night parking, and double-parking. Cars and big trucks often blocked hydrants, driveways and loading zones.

Toward the end of the decade, the business community made a push for metering Murray and Forbes. The *Squirrel Hill News* strongly favored it. So did business owners, four to one, according to a persuasive but unscientific survey by the newspaper in January 1940.

At issue were shoppers. Supporters said meters would improve business. Paid parking would push employees out of the business district, making it easier for shoppers to park near shops. Detractors thought meters would push shoppers to other parts of the city.

In September 1940, the city installed about 150 meters along both sides of Forbes between Murray and Shady and along both sides of Murray between Forbes and Phillips.

“Parking Meters Seem to Solve Problems,” read a *Squirrel Hill News* headline in October 1940. Shoppers could suddenly find parking spaces. The only frustration came from shoppers who every so often had to rush outside mid-sandwich to feed the meter.

Simple enough.

By the following spring, the *Squirrel Hill News* was campaigning for meters on Forward Avenue, conducting a survey of that business community with similar results as before.

And yet, revolt was brewing.

The city was considering removing the meters on Murray. Opposition among residents was growing. And this was not mere complaining but open and aggressive conflict.

“Three officers who have been on patrol duty along the metered zone on Murray avenue have been removed to other locations as a result of ‘brush-offs’ with residents who were tagged,” the *Squirrel Hill News* reported in July 1941. “These selfsame residents used ‘political pull’ to have the officers ousted from the Squirrel Hill district.” Locals were jamming meters with slugs. Business owners were trying to bribe officers into allowing parking in loading zones.



This photograph accompanied Eric Lidji’s article. “Shoppers on Murray Avenue facing north toward Bartlett Street, near the current Giant Eagle—July 10, 1947.” The city metered the street in 1940. *Pittsburgh City Photographer Collection, University of Pittsburgh Archives & Special Collections.*



One woman tried to rip an officer's badge from his chest.

City officials said Murray Avenue was causing more trouble than any other section of Pittsburgh. And to be clear, this was just on Murray. Everything seemed calm on Forbes.

What was the difference? If I had to guess, I would say Forbes attracted more business from outside the neighborhood, while Murray attracted more business from inside the neighborhood. Perhaps locals resented having to pay to park in their own neighborhood.

Even before these meters were active, homeowners on Bartlett and Darlington were protesting. Metering the business district, they said, would push drivers onto side streets.

The Bartlett Street Property Owners Association was formed in summer 1941 to demand better enforcement of parking on side streets. They complained about all-day parking, blocked driveways, and "constant hornblowing." There had once been one-hour parking signs on the street. When those disappeared, they filed a petition, leading the city to prohibit all parking, even for residents, along 650 feet of Bartlett Street for a 60-day test.

Berthold Floersheim and his sister Bertha Rauh led this petition drive. The Rauhs had been living on Bartlett Street for almost 40 years. "The new restrictions make it livable again here," she said. "At one time we wanted to put our home on the market and sell it because the noise and clutter of the traffic on Bartlett street made it unbearable here."

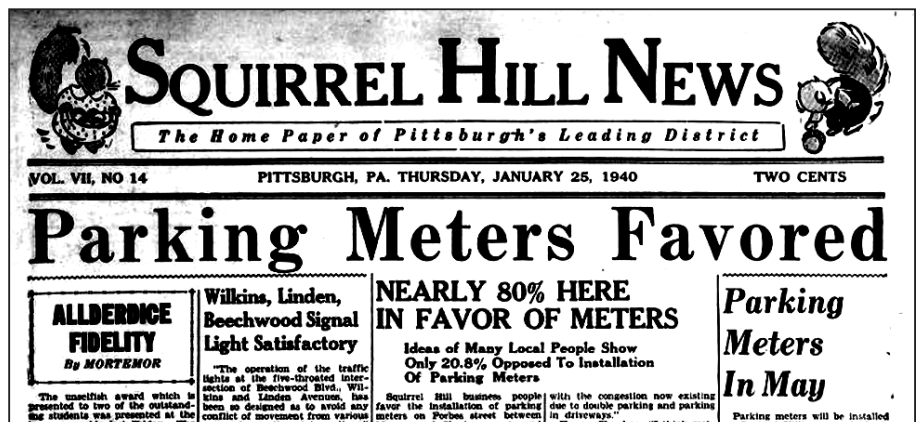
The *Squirrel Hill News* was incensed. What if homeowners on every block of Bartlett and Darlington protested? "Where do merchants, clerks, doctors, dentists, and shoppers unable to secure parking on Murray and Forbes, place their cars?" the paper asked.

The business community appealed the 60-day test through official channels. One local company took a different approach. The Perl-Reichbaum grocery chain said it would demolish the house at 5807 Bartlett St. and construct a small parking lot for customers.

The move was technically illegal, but the city was actively considering an ordinance that would have fast tracked such parking lots in residential areas to ease parking problems.

Amid this rancor, the gentlest of scandals emerged. A *Squirrel Hill News* investigation in August 1941 revealed that six property owners on Bartlett Street had never actually signed the petition for the 60-day test. They had merely expressed a desire to see some improvement to the situation and had been added to the petition without their knowledge.

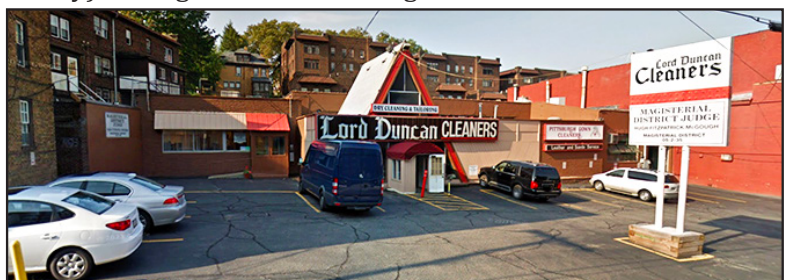
So the 60-day test ended, the lot wasn't built, and tensions between shoppers, employees, and residents persisted until the city pursued an obvious solution: off-street parking lots. *(Part 2 will appear in next month's newsletter.)*



Squirrel Hill News, Jan. 25, 1940

## Lord Duncan Cleaners and Magistrate's Office Zoning Proposal

The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition's online June newsletter, "In a Nutshell," reported that a proposal to change the use of the magistrate's office at 5850 Forward Avenue to retail sales and services by Fukui Architects did not require a public DAM (Developments Activities Meeting) because "the majority of the project site (the former Lord Duncan Cleaners) is located in the LNC (Local Neighborhood Commercial) zoning district and the proposed dollar store is permitted in this district with no need for ZBA (Zoning Board of Adjustments) approval. A small section of the site is within a RM-M (Multi-Unit Residential, Moderate Density) zoning district—the Magistrate's Office. Since the use is going from an existing non-conforming use to a new non-conforming use, this process is considered a special exception and not a use variance, which would trigger a DAM. The proposal is considered to be simply an interior/exterior renovation with no increase in square footage." *Historical note: the parking lot is an indication that the original use of the building was a car dealership—Samson Buick.*





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

July 2024

### Pathways to the Neill Log House

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

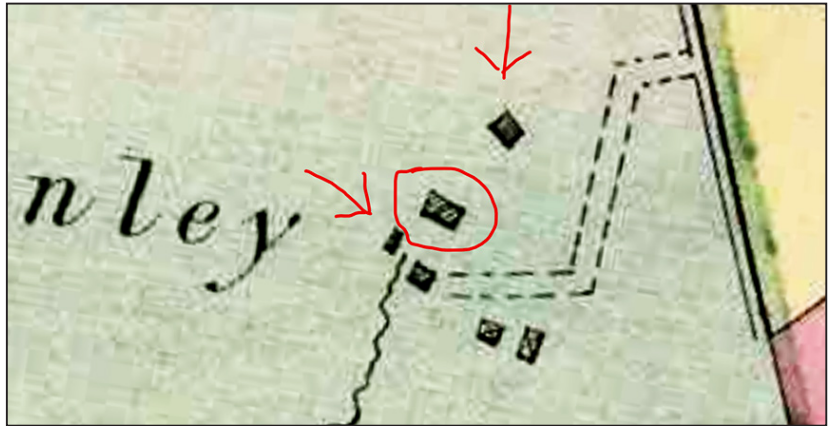
***"We secure funds to restore and maintain the Neill Log House, foster knowledge of its historic significance, and work with interested parties to ensure the continued educational use of the structure and its site for future generations."***

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](http://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.

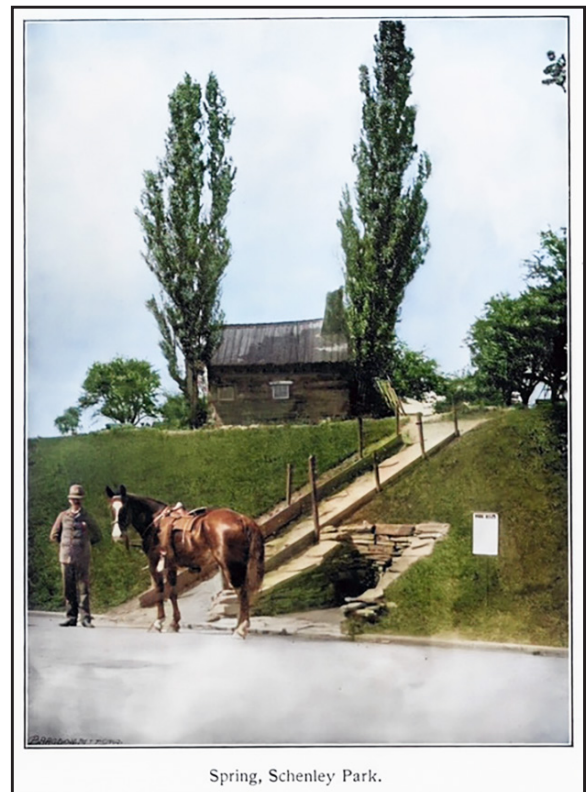
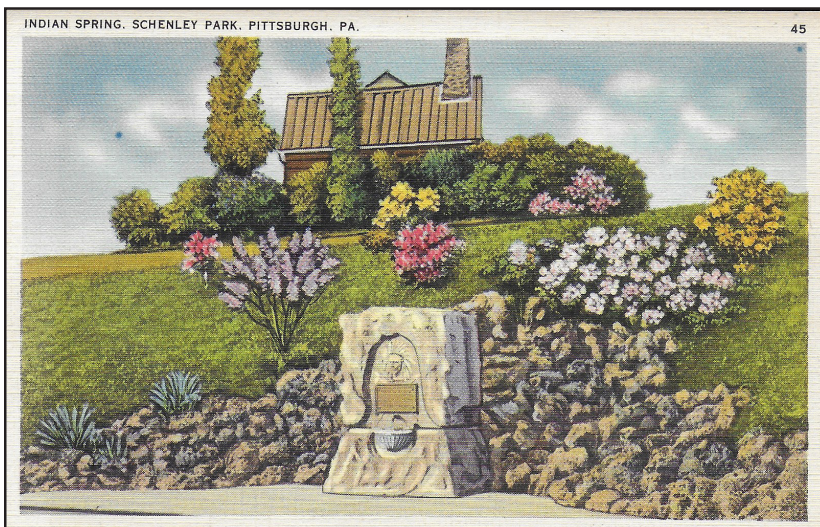


Paths to the Neill Log House have changed much over the years, as we can surmise from old images and maps (*right*). We believe that the steps from E. Circuit Rd. to the house are a relatively modern feature, as they do not appear on photos from some of our archival postcards (*below*). The two postcards from the late 19th and early 20th century reveal the different treatments of the log house and the hillside facing it from the south.

The beautiful sandstone steps that most of us know were recently removed by the City DPW and are being replaced by stone-clad concrete steps being worked on as of this writing. It was commonly believed that the old sandstone steps (which many thought had much charm) were installed during the Depression Era by the Works Progress Administration at the same time as the stone bridges in the ravine below that leads to Panther Hollow Lake. The steps did have charm, but they were admittedly hazardous because of the unevenness in their rise. As we researched the steps, we discovered that they were a more recent addition than we first thought. They were originally installed probably around the same time as the PHLF reconstruction

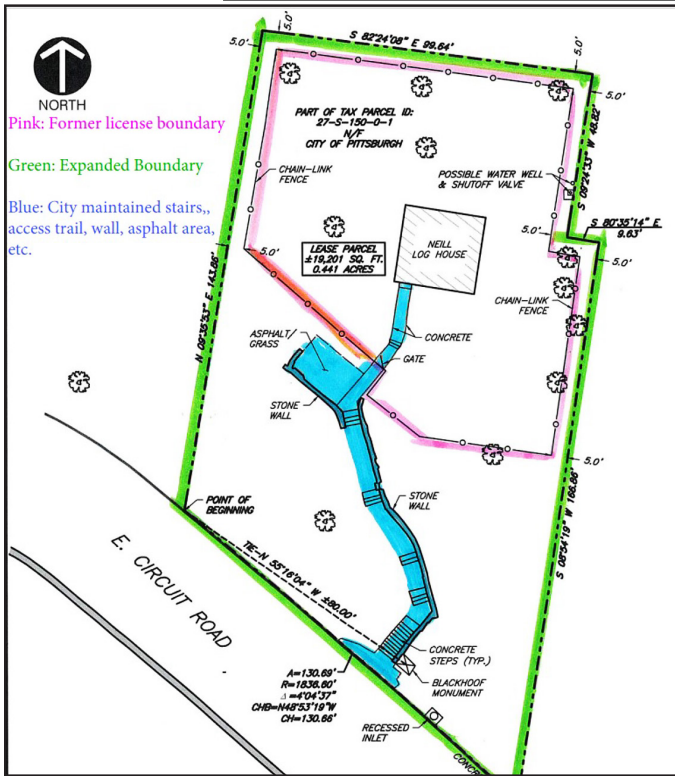


This excerpt from an 1872 map on the Pittsburgh Historic Maps website shows the Neill Log House and surrounding farm buildings in place at that time. A spring runs south down the hill from the house. The farm road to the house entered from what is now Darlington Road.



Spring, Schenley Park.





This diagram shows the additional land encompassing the new fencing. **Pink** is the former license boundary. **Green** is the expanded boundary. **Blue** is the City-maintained stairs, access trail, asphalt area, etc.

appears above and shows the old and new boundaries of the Neill Log House site with the steps, or park trail, running through the site in blue. As part of the negotiation for this revision, it was agreed that a small portion of land on either side of the steps would never be needed for golfing.

The photo at bottom right shows the progress of the construction of the new steps, up to the pouring of cement that occurred in mid June. Because we believe the original site had no steps to the south or to the spring below the house, this project is not considered a historic reconstruction but rather a park amenity to accommodate visitors to the log house from E. Circuit Rd. The reconstruction of the steps has been undertaken and funded by the Department of Public Works, from the striking design created by the city's chief landscape architect, with intermittent landings and accompanying patio, to the finished work of stone-cladding the steps by highly skilled master stonemasons employed by the City.

It is interesting to note that paths to the house before the park era likely led from Murdoch Farms and the road that is now Forbes Ave., four miles from the Point. This is shown on the 1872 map on the previous page.

We know that in earlier times, for which we have photographic images, the entrance door to the log house was from the northern side (*see postcard on the left on the previous page*) and that there was a large shed attached to what is now the backside of the structure. If that served past times well, we believe the new steps being put in place this summer promises to enhance the future of the Neill Log House.

Watch for announcements of completion of all of this work and a formal opening ceremony later this summer.

in 1969, on what we have always been told is formally classified as a park trail. In the years before the park was created, the log house appears to have had no steps or, as shown on the "Spring, Schenley Park" postcard, only a path to bring water up the hill.

In the course of our planning with the City on site improvements to accompany our recent reconstruction, there was general agreement that the steps and railing needed to be replaced, and this is occurring now.

When FONLH first negotiated a lease to manage the log house and site, it was acknowledged that the City would retain responsibility for the steps, or park trail, from E. Circuit Rd. to the log house. An agreement was recently completed to reflect additional land necessary to encompass the new fencing that will dramatically showcase the house within the entire site (*left*).

In the February 2024 SHHS Newsletter, we published an architectural rendering of how the entire site will be surrounded by this new eight-foot wrought-iron style aluminum fence. Large parts of the fence are already in place, with the rest to be completed very soon after step construction is finished.

An attachment to the recently revised management agreement that was executed between FONLH and the City





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## Theme and Variations in Train Whistles

July 2024

Helen Wilson

The train whistles that knock me out of bed on summer nights are loud and long, but it still took me a while to realize they were part of a code of signals. The pattern of two long, one short, one long blasts never varies at the busy railroad crossing at The Waterfront in Homestead, and most of southern Squirrel Hill can hear them. The General Code of Operating Rules for railroads says — — 0 — means “Approaching public grade crossing.”

When I started listening to the whistles more intently, I heard variations in the way each engineer blew the same code. Some make quick work of going through the sequence. Others blow two agonizingly long whistles, then one only a bit shorter, and then another long, drawn-out whistle. Some engineers put a lot of time between each blast, maybe to build anticipation. A guy I know who worked on the railroad said each engineer had their own way of blowing the signals so listeners could tell who was at the controls. The tones of the whistles aren’t identical, either. Some are loud and strident, some are what can be considered usual, and a few are as beautiful as organ chords. And every once in a while, I’ll hear a different pattern, such as two or three short blasts, which likely come from the railroad yard in Glen Hazel, where train engines and cars are being moved into place.

The — — 0 — signal is blown only at at-grade road crossings, where streets cross railroad tracks. The whistles most likely to be heard by people in Squirrel Hill are the ones from trains at The Waterfront crossing. The signals aren’t blown in Pittsburgh because the city has very few at-grade crossings. Beginning in the 1870s, the city and the Pennsylvania Railroad, which ran through East Liberty, made deals to get rid of all at-grade crossings for safety reasons—railroads crossings were dangerous, and the railroads even forbade electric trolleys to cross the tracks, so riders had to get off one trolley, walk across the tracks, and get on another trolley. Deals with other railroads followed, and overhead bridges and underpasses were constructed. This didn’t happen in the suburbs, where at-grade crossings such as the one at The Waterfront, can still be found. The only one I’ve seen in the city is at the bottom of Hazelwood Ave. at Second Ave., where the road goes into the new Hazelwood Green development. Since that crossing went only into the steel mills, it didn’t impact street traffic.

The elimination of at-grade crossings in the city brought about the erection of the Homestead Grays Bridge. It was originally called the Pittsburgh-Homestead High-Level Bridge for a very good reason. Before it was built, trolleys and vehicles went on a steep, curving drive down Old Brown’s Hill Road and crossed the 1895 Brown’s Bridge across the Monongahela River, which let out at Amity Street in Homestead. The busy railroad tracks in Homestead backed up traffic constantly and were hazardous to drivers and pedestrians crossing them. The Homestead High Level Bridge was built to cross not only the Monongahela but the railroad tracks on both sides of the river.

Around 8 a.m. and midnight, I’ll hear trains passing by that don’t blow signals. Some trains, such as Amtrak’s Capitol Limited to Washington, D.C., still use the old B&O tracks on the Squirrel Hill side of the river, where there are no at-grade crossings. Those tracks are the only ones that actually run through Squirrel Hill. Railroads avoided climbing hills, so Pittsburgh’s rail routes went around the hill.

*The red line on the map to the right shows Amtrak’s Capitol Limited route through Pittsburgh.*

**The General Code Of Operating Rules, used by many railroads, contains the following list of whistle signals and their meanings:**

Note: “o” denotes a short sound; while a “—” is for a longer sound.

— When stopped, air brakes applied, pressure equalized.

— — Release brakes, proceed.

0 0 Acknowledgement of any signal not otherwise provided for.

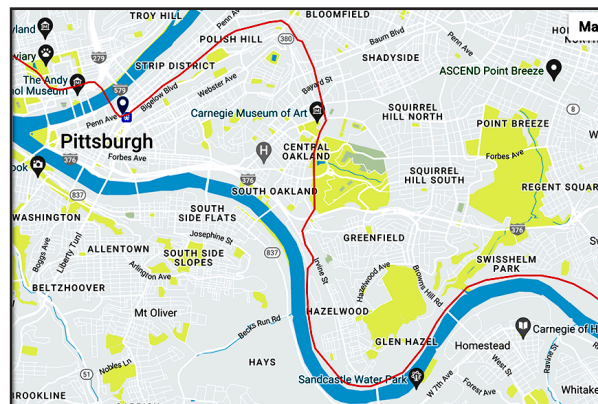
0 0 0 When stopped, back up; acknowledgement of hand signal to back up.

0 0 0 0 Request for signal to be given or repeated if not understood.

— — 0 — Approaching public grade crossing.

— o Approaching men or equipment on or near the track, regardless of any whistle prohibitions.

A series of short blasts is sounded in an emergency.



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## Gas Stations in the Summer of '60

July 2024

Steve Paulovitch

*Eric Lidji's article in this newsletter about Squirrel Hill's parking problems and the one about the proposed change in zoning coming to Forward Avenue are related in that they both deal with automobiles in Squirrel Hill. As Lidji points out in his article, the 14th Ward had the highest rate of car ownership in Pittsburgh in the late 1930s. The neighborhood accounted for 6.5% of the city's people and about 17% of its cars. The situation only got worse as the neighborhood continued to develop rapidly. Car dealerships and gas stations abounded in Squirrel Hill, so it's time to reprint an article by SHHS member Steve Paulovitch that appeared in the June 2021 newsletter. In looking at the Squirrel Hill business district, it's safe to say that wherever there is a wide parking area in front of a building (Lord Duncan's Cleaners on Forward, New Dumpling House on Murray, Nova Care on Forbes), there was once a car dealership. And wherever there's a new building instead of an old one refurbished, it was probably once a gas station. Steve's article not only mentions the many gas stations but also the businesses that anyone who lived in Squirrel Hill in the '60s remembers.*

My time cruzin' Murray and delivering beer, '58 to '65 ... to narrow it down, "Gas'em Up" would be the summer of '60. That "era" would be my time loafing at the Isaly's on Forbes or Weinstein's or Polonsky's ... oh yeah, the "Hot Puppee Shoppee" on Forward .... Back when, parking was a joy ... no coins for the meters after p.m. ... By 1961 began touring Walnut Street ... Carnegie Teck and Shadyside Hospital School of Nursing ... time of chinos, madras shirts, and loafers.

### The Gas Stations of Murray Ave.

Here's another tour of Squirrel Hill. If capable, try to walk it ... my days are gone. This will be all via "Mr. Peabody's Wayback Machine" and Memory.

You're in front of the 6th Presbyterian Church on Forbes at Murray. Now, if you look up Forbes toward Shady, there was an AMOCO across from Rosen's Drugs. Catty-corner was Merge's MOBIL. Turn your head toward going down Murray, aiming to wind up at Hazelwood Ave. Across from the church was the Biggie Auto Center, aka BLACK'S GULF ... A Marine bud of mine was a window washer and pumper there, in the early '60s. He has his own memories of the place.

Keep (virtually) walking, approaching Darlington Rd. Across the street is the Mellon (Citizens) Bank, prior to, was a small ESSO ... keep walking on this (Black's) side, now at Bartlett was a SUNOCO, now an Eat'n Park.

As you walk, you are passing Weinstein's at the corner of Beacon.

Look across the street—it's the Beacon Pharm ... Catty-corner from Weinstein's was the newest endeavor, a modern BORON ... (Boron was a sub of SOHIO.) Rest of the walk is "dahn'hill" till you get to Forward and Pocusset .... Squirrel Hill's very own "Five Points." You should be at the corner of Pocusset and Murray, and next to the Bell Telly'fone bldg. Now do a 280° scanning.

To your left, across the street is Loblaw's (aka Sparkle, aka Star, aka DelFarm) with the CITIES SERVICE next to it. Look across at the Morrowfield Pharm, Poli's, and Morrowfield Oldsmobile dealership. Inside the dealership up in the work area were AMOCO pumps.

Cross Pocusset and be on Forward and Murray. To your right will be a full service TEXACO while directly across the street was a small, Poli-owned gasser, aka SUNOCO.

I worked on Forward at the Kahn-Morris Bev Co. ... another time to mention.

Stay on Murray, passing the departed Burton L. Hirsch Funeral Home ... I'll go on ahead and meet'up at Lilac. Across the street was Homer's ATLANTIC (I was partial to Atlantic Imperial) ... Across was the Murray Ave. Pharm, the Coop, Lieberman's Bakery, Perer's Variety and a small (Mr. Curtain's) TEXACO. Across from

Of all the gas stations Steve mentions in his article, only one remains, but it isn't a gas station anymore. Homer's Automotive is still on the corner of Murray Avenue and Lilac Street in Greenfield. The gas pumps are gone, but the Homer family still runs the Automotive Service.





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July 2024

him was the Loretta Street trolley stop and Roosevelt School. Today the school is a Giant Eagle.

A wee longer. Stay on Murray till get to Hazelwood Ave, turn left. On the right side was Mr. Curtain's biggie TEXACO Centre ... behind his place was the all night Hilltop Diner.

Across from him (Hazelwood at Beechwood) was AMOCO, now an Oil Change place.

Today, where have all the Gas Stations gone ... pay phones not withstanding ... Time to go on my break.

*Editor's Note: Whoever thought of taking pictures of gas stations??? Does anyone have any to share with the SHHS?*



Squirrel Hill News, December 19, 1968.

## Squirrel Hill Farmer's Market 2024 Season!



### Squirrel Hill Farmers Market

Opens for the 2024 Season on Sunday, May 12, 2024

SUNDAYS: May 12 through November 24, 2024.

Beacon Bartlett Parking Lot

9 AM to 1 PM

An extended Winter Market Session is scheduled for December 1, 8 & 15, 2024.

Meet SHUC at the Farmer's Market on August 25, September 22, October 6, and November 17!



### Lawrenceville Historical Society Lecture Series

Wednesday, July 16: "History of the  
Lawrenceville Boys and Girls Club"

Ray Czachowski

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.

**The June 20 Night Market  
has been postponed until  
JULY 13**



Join Us for Frick Park's

## National Night Out

**Tuesday, August 6th**

**4:30-7:30PM**  
**Riverview Trail**

- Crafts
- Games
- Scavenger Hunts
- Vehicle Tours
- ...And MORE!

**Thank you to our Partners**










# squirrel hill

## NIGHT MARKETS

**Murray Ave  
Between Forbes + Beacon**










**SATURDAY**

**JUNE 22**

**AUG 31**

**SEPT 28**

**6P - 10P**