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Squirrel Hill Historical Society

Newsletter

June 2025

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. 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.



Squirrel Hill Historical Society

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society (SHHS) 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

Dear SHHS Members:

Welcome to the June 2025 SHHS Newsletter!

We are six months into 2025, and so far the weather has been cool and stormy. The SHHS is warming up the year with great programs for the rest of the year. The June 10 program will be about the little-known history of Pittsburgh's orphans and orphanages. The July 8 program will be a **Members' Social** celebrating SHHS's 25th anniversary. You won't want to miss this special program to meet fellow SHHS members and share your Squirrel Hill and SHHS stories. Refreshments will be served.

We are planning a members' tour of the Neill Log House on June 22. See more about the tour in Tony Indovina's FONLH report in this newsletter.

June holidays include the Jewish festival Shavuot, beginning the evening of June 1st, D-Day on the 6th, Flag Day on the 14th, Father's Day on the 15th, and Juneteenth on the 19th, which celebrates and symbolizes the end of slavery in the United States.

Work on the solar farm in Swisshelm Park across Nine Mile Run valley from Summerset has begun, with land being cleared. It will be interesting to see the finished product and how well it will function. Also, work on the components of the new Parkway East Commercial St. Bridge in Nine Mile Run valley is progressing at a fast rate. Take a drive down Commercial St. or hike the trail to see what's going on.

This is a great time to walk the trails in Frick Park and see flowers and trees in bloom. Be careful, however, because a lot of trees were uprooted in the last storm. Remember to keep dogs on a leash, and no smoking or vaping are allowed in the park. Or go to Phipps Conservatory to view the Spring Flower Show or to the Pittsburgh Botanical Garden, about 10 miles southwest of Squirrel Hill. UPMC for Life members and one guest receive free admission on the third Tuesday of each month through November.

Pittsburgh has been in the national news with the U. S. Steel and Nippon Steel contract details. Hope it works out and U.S. Steel keeps its headquarters and steel jobs in Pittsburgh. Another newsworthy future event is that the city is hosting the NFL Draft next year from April 23-26, when it can show everyone how great a host Pittsburgh is, and maybe bring more events and business to our city. The new expansion of the Heinz History Center should be completed by the time the NFL Draft takes place and will be a great destination for visitors to learn and explore Pittsburgh history. I feel it's wonderful to tell people visiting Pittsburgh about all the different neighborhoods in the city, with Squirrel Hill being the best!

Thank you, loyal members of Squirrel Hill Historical Society,
Jim Hammond, President of SHHS

Editor's Note: Looking Through Keyholes

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, Alex Musicante, Rod Permigiani, Charles Succop, Helen Wilson, Todd Wilson, and 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: Rod Permigiani
Media Specialists: Audrey Glickman, Alex Musicante

Website Manager: Janine Michael

Principal Researchers: Helen Wilson and Tony Indovina

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

I've been living in the same house in Squirrel Hill since 1978. As I looked around my living room recently, I thought about the house being built in 1926. So much of its history isn't mine. Ghostly images of the sweaty bootleggers making whiskey in the basement arose in my mind. When the house went up for sheriff's sale after government agents raided it in 1938, a complete list of the contents appeared in the newspaper. It was like looking through a keyhole to see a small piece of life in the 1930s.

The point I'm making is that without research, I never would have known about what happened in the house before I moved in, and further research led to more information about illegal liquor making and distribution in the East End.

It's the same with the wider scope of Squirrel Hill's history. Many things happened in the past here, but they can only be discovered through research, and each discovery helps create a deeper understanding of our community. That's why we're working on a project to identify the origins of the names of Squirrel Hill's roads, bridges, and major buildings, with the help of the CMU intern this summer.

This newsletter contains other links to Squirrel Hill's past. Tony Indovina and I attended the Frick Park Outdoor Discovery Space and Sensory Nature Trail Ribbon-Cutting on May 15, and after the ceremony, we walked the trail and experienced the various stations along it, which brought to mind some of the things that happened in that area in the past. Read more about it in Tony Indovina's article in this newsletter.

Tony and I would like to congratulate Catherine Qureshi, President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, and her dedicated staff, who made the Sensory Nature Trail happen. We also acknowledge the help of Naturalist Educator Lydia Konecky, who collaborated on Tony's article, as well as providing information about Barbara's legacy to Frick Park in Tony's original article from 2020.

Upcoming SHHS Programs (Live and on Zoom) and Other Events of Interest

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, all programs are presented both live and on Zoom on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. unless inclement weather causes a program to be aired on Zoom only. In that case, a notice will be sent to members and those on our extended mailing list the day of the program. Live programs are held at Church of the Redeemer, 5700 Forbes Avenue. Free parking is available in the Church of the Redeemer and St. Edmund's Academy parking lots. Members will be sent a link to the Zoom program a few days before the program. Programs are recorded and put on YouTube and can be accessed a few days after the program through the "SHHS Past Programs and Events" link on our website.

Tuesday, June 4: Historic Review Commission Hearing on the Nomination of Schenley Park as a City Designated Historic Site

The hearing is open to the public, both in person and on Zoom, and interested people can view the nomination form and send comments before the hearing. We hope SHHS members voice their support. See page 3 for information about the hearing.

Tuesday, June 10: "Pittsburgh's Orphans and Orphanages"

Jim Wudarczyk and **Joann Cantrell**, co-authors, will discuss their book, *Pittsburgh's Orphans and Orphanages*. Their research showed that in the early 1900s, orphanages in the United States housed more than 100,000 children, thousands of whom lived in Pittsburgh. Buildings that became group homes were constructed through churches and fraternal organizations. For the orphans living in such homes, everything was communal and privacy was nonexistent. Some children still had a living parent, but due to dire circumstances of the times, their fate was in the hands of those who operated the orphanage.

Sunday, June 22, Noon-3 p.m.: Members Tour of the Neill Log House

Members and guests are invited to come to the Neill Log House on Sunday, June 22, anytime from noon to 3 p.m. to meet the Park Rangers and tour the house with SHHS board members. See page 6 of this newsletter for more information.

Tuesday, July 8: Members' Social Celebrating the SHHS's 25th Anniversary

It's time to get together to celebrate the SHHS's 25th Anniversary. Members and guests are invited to a social gathering to celebrate the SHHS's own history! This event is still in the planning stages but will definitely include refreshments and a presentation consisting of our members sharing their Squirrel Hill and SHHS stories with everyone.

Tuesday, August 12: No Meeting The SHHS generally doesn't schedule programs in August, so see you in September!

Tuesday, September 9: "Red-lining in Pittsburgh"

Randy Weinberg, Professor of Information Systems at CMU, will discuss the origins and substance of racial covenants and other discriminatory housing practices in the city of Pittsburgh throughout much of the previous century.

Tuesday, October 14: "Tales from the Graves of Smithfield Cemetery"

In keeping with this spirit of Halloween, **Jan Kurth**, editor of *Print*, Pittsburgh's East End Newspaper, will share captivating stories about some of the people buried in Smithfield Cemetery.

November 11: "Pittsburgh's Historic Stadiums and Arenas"

Mark Fatla, author of the book, *Pittsburgh's Historic Stadiums and Arenas*, will present information about many of the city's iconic sports venues, including Forbes Field, one of the first "modern" concrete and steel ballparks; PNC Park, the best of the new millennium's retro design movement; Schenley Casino and Duquesne Garden, the first artificial indoor ice rinks; and the engineering marvel of the Civic Arena's movable dome.

Tuesday, December 9: "The ABCs of Pittsburgh Aviation"

Western Pennsylvania History magazine editor **Brian Butko** and public historian **Sue Morris** will discuss the thrilling early days of flying in their new book, *Bettis: Where Pittsburgh Aviation Took Off*. Beginning in the 1920s, the daredevil women and men of West Mifflin's Bettis Field helped shape the industry from barnstorming to passenger service in less than a decade. A book sale and signing will follow.

Historic Review Commission Hearing for Schenley Park on June 4

Helen Wilson

The SHHS recently received an email from the Historic Review Commission containing the agenda for its June 4 meeting. One of the presentations on the agenda is the "determination of nomination viability" for Schenley Park's City Historic Designation. DCP-HN-2025-00110. Also on the list is the Anathan House on Murray Avenue, DCP-HN-2025-00088. The Schenley Park nomination was initiated by the SHHS with the help of Preservation Pittsburgh and the support of the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, and Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation.

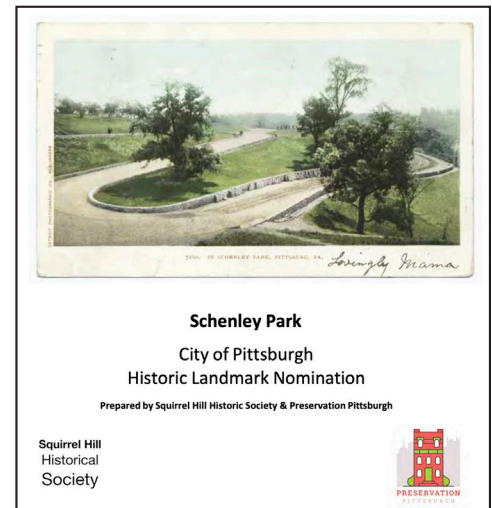
Information about these items can be found on the City Planning Public Meetings Calendar. The link is very long, so google "Pittsburgh City Planning Public Meetings Calendar" and click on the June 4 date to find the time of the hearing, its location, the link for viewing it virtually, and most importantly, the extensive, detailed nomination forms.

The meetings are in-person, hosted on Zoom, and streamed live on YouTube. To attend in person, go to the Lower-level Hearing Room, 412 Boulevard of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. To join via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88232493998>. To join by phone, dial +1 312 626 6799 with Webinar ID 882 3249 3998. To stream the meeting live, visit the City Planning YouTube page.

Anyone can provide public testimony expressing their opinions about agenda items in several ways before the meeting. One way is to email historicreview@pittsburghpa.gov. Testimony will be accepted until the business day before the meeting at 12 p.m. Another way is to send a letter to 100 Ross Street, Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. Mailed testimony must be received by two business days before the meeting.

Public testimony can also be given at the meeting or via Zoom. If providing testimony in person, follow the Commission instructions to queue. If providing testimony via Zoom, join the virtual meeting and use the raise hand function to request to speak, or call into the meeting on your phone and use the raise hand function by pressing *9.

To see other current projects under consideration by the Historic Review Commission, go to EngagePGH, engage.pittsburghpa.gov, which also has information about the Frick Park Sensory Nature Trail and the improvements being made to the Schenley Oval Sportsplex. You can also help plan Pittsburgh's future by googling "Pittsburgh's 90-1 Campaign, view the information, and fill out surveys seeking residents' opinions on the city's economy, culture, neighborhoods, infrastructure, civic participation, and other topics.



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More About the Schenley Park Nomination Form

June 2025

Helen Wilson

The SHHS got involved in the nomination of Schenley Park because the park is located almost entirely within Squirrel Hill's boundaries and doesn't yet have City Designated Historic Site status, as do Frick and Mellon Parks, but Schenley is eminently deserving of that honor as well. The park was intended from its very beginning in 1889 to be Pittsburgh's main venue for both huge public events and solitary strolls through the woods. Below is part of a draft of the introduction of the Nomination form, which describes why Schenley Park is such a superb place, worthy of City Historic Site designation. To read the final nomination form, google "Pittsburgh City Planning Public Meetings Calendar" and click on the June 4 hearing date, where you'll find the form. More sections of the 92-page nomination form will appear in future SHHS Newsletters.

Schenley Park, at 456 acres, is the City of Pittsburgh's second largest park after Frick Park. It opened in 1889. It is situated mostly in Squirrel Hill South except for part of the Bob O'Connor Golf Course in Squirrel Hill North, and Schenley Plaza, the Frick Fine Arts Building, and Mazeroski Field in Oakland. The park's borders basically follow Junction Hollow to the west, Frew Street and Northumberland Street to the north, Darlington Road to the east, and just north of Saline Street and the Parkway East through Four Mile Run valley to the south. The park has expansive fields, scenic vistas, main and secluded trails, elegant monuments, historic buildings and bridges, sports areas, picnic pavilions, and a variety of plants, trees, and wildlife within an urban neighborhood setting.

The park was carefully designed as part of the "City Beautiful Movement" that developed in the late 1800s that sought to make the architecture and landscape of industrialized, polluted cities monumental and harmonious in order to promote a better quality of life. The park's topography—flat areas at top and bottom and steep slopes and ravines running through the middle—was an important factor in determining the layout of the park. The topography and geology of the park will be described in more detail in the "Topography" section of this narrative.

The Pittsburgh Department of Parks and Recreation calls Schenley Park "Pittsburgh's grand dame" and describes the park as "a favorite of the University community and plays host to major civic events. ... The park is home to landmark attractions, iconic monuments, and the best in urban recreational facilities." (Pittsburgh Department of Parks and Recreation online Story Map)

Schenley Park was placed on the list of National Historic Places in 1985. In addition, some of the park's landmarks have already received City Historic Designation. (Historic Review Commission of Pittsburgh, Division of Zoning and Development Review). They are:

Catahecassa (Snyder) Spring, E. Circuit Road, Schenley Park, March 6, 2017

Neill Log House, E. Circuit Road near Serpentine Drive, February 22, 1977

Panther Hollow Bridge spanning Panther Hollow, July 26, 2002

Phipps Conservatory, Schenley Drive, December 25, 1972

Schenley Bridge, Schenley Drive, July 26, 2002

Tufa Bridges, Panther Hollow Ravine, February 15, 2016

Westinghouse Memorial, W. Circuit Drive, March 7, 2019

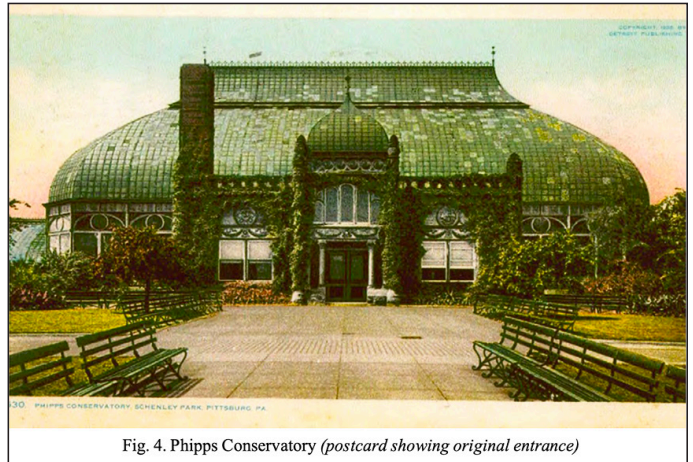


Fig. 4. Phipps Conservatory (postcard showing original entrance)



In addition, the Neill Log House, Charles Anderson Memorial Bridge, Serpentine Road, and the Mary Schenley Memorial Fountain were mentioned as contributing factors in Schenley Park's National Historic Designation nomination form.

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June Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH): Reporting on the First Month's Opening of the Neill Log House

June 2025

Tony Indovina, FONLH President and SHHS Board Member



**Friends of
NEILL LOG HOUSE**

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

Adopted February 2022

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

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.



As of this writing, FONLH has concluded its first month of collaboration with Pittsburgh City Parks for opening the Neill Log House to the public during our inaugural 2025 season, marking the start of our active programming phase. Our Pittsburgh Park Rangers have admirably taken charge of publishing and managing the schedule and accommodating all who want to visit. Remember, you can always find the current schedule by googling "PittsburghPa.Gov Neill Log House" and clicking on "Neill Log House Events." Or you can go to our SHHS Homepage and click on Neill Log House from the Main Menu. The first thing you'll see is "Click on this City Parks Neill Log House Link," and you're there.

Our collaboration with the Pittsburgh Park Rangers has been nothing short of a joy. We are continually in communication with the rangers, from the first meeting earlier this month between our teams to the day-to-day and month-to-month plans that have evolved. This involves everything from scheduling on the website, setting up and closing down for openings, and adding new ideas to adjust to the public's demands. The challenge, from a former teacher friend's playbook, has been to "monitor and adjust." This is evident from the schedules you'll see posted on the City's Neill Log House site. At the time of this writing, both the May and June schedules appear on the site, and if you view them, you'll note differences that have been made. An earlier vision we had was to set up early to later times two to three days a week. We learned that while Sunday afternoons are very popular for walk-in visits, early Mondays are not.

It's been fun to drop in when the house is open and see the public's very positive response to everything presented, from the history of the land and its people, to how FONLH was formed and evolved, to plans that lie ahead. Besides amassing names in our guestbook, we are engaging in random conversations that include questions about whether the log house will be open for special events and offers from some local women to volunteer for the "Period Garden" that is planned.

The answer to the question about "events" was that, of course, we are ready to iron out the procedure for doing so and allow approved groups to use the house as a base for a catered event, with tables, chairs and possibly a picnic tent on our beautiful stone patio below the house. Besides the scheduled public visitation times, we continue to be willing to schedule private

visits by large or small groups. Recently, we hosted our first out-of-state travelers to Pittsburgh for a private visitation. The visit was by two more "cousins" of Robert Neill and his Neal brothers—two sisters who traveled from Columbus and Cedar Rapids as a followup to their family genealogy search. As a side benefit, they have been now connected to our "Descendent of Robert Neill" FONLH board member, Charlie Stewart, to be added to his list of cousins.

In addition to offering open hours and private visitations, the City Parks Department and FONLH will continue to add special events to the list of regular uses of the log house during the season. The first of these events was "Art in Schenley Park, Neill Log House," advertised by the Park Rangers to be held on May 31 by registration only. And a Neill Log House special event for SHHS Members is being planned for Sunday, June 22. See the announcement on the next page.



SHHS board member Todd Miller and his family and SHHS member Drew Porvaznik were among the visitors to the Neill Log House on Opening Day. *Photo by Helen Wilson.*



You're invited to a Members Tour of the Neill Log House

Sunday, June 22, from Noon to 3 PM

Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH), in collaboration with the Squirrel Hill Historical Society, is hosting a SHHS Members Tour of the Neill Log House. This invitation is also extended to the board members of SHUC. The event will be on Sunday, June 22, from 12-3 p.m., when the log house is scheduled to be open to the public.

Members are invited to drop in anytime during these visiting hours to meet the Park Rangers in charge of programming for the house, talk about the house and its furnishings, and get a glimpse of what living in Squirrel Hill was like in the early days. Come whether or not you've visited the Neill Log House before. There's always something new to experience.

Each person who signs in as a SHHS member or SHUC board member will be invited to choose a memento or two from the assortment of postcards being made of our favorite images of the log house. Since we will also be open to the general public that day, nonmembers may make donations for the souvenirs.

Note on volunteering for the Neill Log House: There will be many opportunities for help going forward, including substitute docent work and other duties in the log house such as examining and preparing artifacts. And there will be much to do on the grounds, including taking care of the garden. If you are interested in volunteering, send us an email through CONTACT US on our SHHS Homepage to express any interest and inquire about specific help most needed.

Pittsburgh's Parks in the News

Helen Wilson

Just through serendipity, this issue of the SHHS Newsletter has focused on Squirrel Hill's two large parks—Schenley and Frick, with articles about the opening of the Sensory Nature Trail at Frick and the Schenley Park City Designated Historic Site nomination hearing. But other city parks have been in the news lately, too. On May 23, Pittsburgh Magazine's online edition reported that the city's public parks were ranked 15th in the nation by Trust Public Land, a 53-year-old nonprofit based in Los Angeles that strives to create public parks and protect public lands because research has shown that people who have access to parks are healthier and happier. Pittsburgh received the ranking because “most of the city's population lives just a 10-minute walk from a park in the city.” The article says Pittsburgh has 239 parks in all.

Squirrel Hill is truly lucky to have Schenley and Frick Parks mostly within its borders and Mellon Park just outside them.



(The border is Shady Ave.). It also has two beautiful smaller but still

substantial parks— Wightman Park on Solway St. (*left*) and Shelburne Park in Summerset (*above*). In addition, small parks and playgrounds are sprinkled around our neighborhood. Enjoy our precious green spaces!



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The New Frick Park Sensory Nature Trail ... and Reflections on Barbara Balbot's Stone

June 2025

Tony Indovina

On May 15, Helen Wilson and I went to Frick Park to attend the official public opening of the Outdoor Discovery Space and Sensory Nature Trail near the Frick Environmental Center. The ribbon-cutting celebration was hosted by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC), the organization responsible for creating this first-of-its-kind space in our city parks. The event was attended by PPC staff, state and local public officials, donors, and others who supported this effort. The page on the PPC website, pittsburghparks.org/odsnt/, has all you need to know about the remarkable three-acre space adjacent to the Environmental Center in Frick Park, with its new 1/3-acre trail.

As explained on the PPC website, the space was conceived to “consider the needs of children (and others) with physical and intellectual disabilities and ... different sensory needs.” The finished project is the culmination of much planning, and a “community engagement process to solicit feedback from individuals with disabilities, caregivers, teachers, and dozens of Pittsburgh-based organizations serving children with disabilities, on the design of a welcoming and accessible trail and outdoor discovery space.”



Dignitaries present at the ribbon-cutting ceremony included City Councilwomen Erika Strassburger and Barb Warwick, State Rep. Dan Frankel, PPC President Catherine Qureshi, Mayor Ed Gainey, and State Sen. Jay Costa.. Photo by Helen Wilson.

A wooded space that was heretofore inaccessible to many individuals will now “wind through the woodlands and discovery stations along the way that encourage visitors to pause and participate in activities that promote nature-based learning and engage the senses. Gathering spots will allow visitors to the site to rest, reflect, and reap the benefits of time outdoors ... The site will allow the Parks Conservancy, through its team of Naturalist Educators working out of their model Environmental Center, to forge partnerships with new organizations and schools and develop new environmental education programs that consider the needs of learners with exceptionalities and disabilities.”

These drawings were done by Barbara Balbot as a cover illustration for a park manual she produced.



Reflections on Barbara Balbot's Stone

Helen and I viewed our attendance at the Sensory Nature Trail opening event through the lens of some park history we knew. You will soon understand the serendipity we experienced on May 15. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the public was encouraged to enter the new space by walking a few feet down the Clayton Loop Trail past the Environmental Center and into the trail. As we began, we immediately recognized a single small memorial stone set in the ground just beside the trail. It was the park memorial stone for Barbara Balbot, former Director of the Frick Environmental Center. Although we had already known about the stone's location here, we were both struck by the fact that it now sits close to the entrance of the new Sensory Nature Trail. Before proceeding down the trail, we turned back a few feet to where the President of PPC, Catherine Qureshi, was talking with our

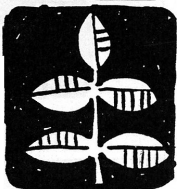
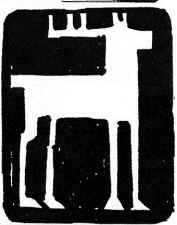
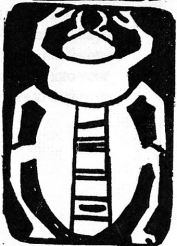




Barbara Balbot (1930–2000)

district councilperson, Barb Warwick. Helen and I both felt the need to share with them how truly appropriate we thought it was for this major figure in park history to now be memorialized so close to the new trail because of how well Barbara's contributions to Frick Park aligned with the history and goals of this space. We also congratulated Catherine again on PPC's very significant addition to our City parks.

The bio piece I wrote for the May 2020 SHHS Newsletter—five years ago to the month from the opening of the new Sensory Nature Trail—was entitled “Barbara Haynes Balbot, A Force of Nature in Frick Park.” It was one of the most rewarding of all my writing contributions for our newsletter, both because of my strong personal connection to Frick Park and also for the greater admiration and respect I acquired for this woman after learning more about her life and work. I had earlier written about my personal connection to Frick Park (SHHS Newsletter, July 2019, “Nostalgic Remembrances of Wandering in Frick Park”), exploring it from my childhood home near one side of it and then raising my family close to the other side of it. (The newsletters are archived on the Members Page on the SHHS website.) And my now-adult children had a close personal connection of their own to “Ms. Barbara” through their childhood attendance at her summer day camps in Frick Park over the years.



I learned many things about Barbara in researching that May 2020 article—how she found a new home for herself and her daughters in Pittsburgh and Squirrel Hill, and how she remade herself from an artist to working for the parks department, eventually becoming a park naturalist and later Director. Nothing about her legacy resonates more strongly for me than how her memory evokes the passion she had for exposing the natural wonders of this area of Frick Park to the public. The Environmental Center is the entranceway to what was originally known as Frick's Woods, the oldest area of the park, the 151-acre Gunn's Hill Tract that Henry Clay Frick acquired from the Wilkins Family and bequeathed to the city in 1919. Within this parcel is the approximately 115-acre Frick Woods Nature Reserve, the area adjacent to the South Clayton Trail, dedicated on Earth Day 1992. This is the area that Barbara personally championed and envisioned as a place that could best display the park's natural splendor, with wildflowers and the “aesthetic look of a forest in the city.” The new three-acre Sensory Nature Trail, at the beginning of the Loop Trail, is on the same small footprint of trails carved out of the larger Reserve sometime before Barbara's tenure in the park. She labored to enhance this space by turning it into a native wildflower reserve. I relate in the 2020 article that Barbara was forced by illness to leave the job she loved after 19 years and died before she could fulfill all her goals. She was known to be very outspoken about many things, including her regret that there wasn't more diversity in park planning and usage. I believe she would be very gratified to learn that the area of the park she worked so hard to share is now to become more inclusive and is able to serve a more diverse population of park visitors.

My original article on Barbara begins with how her memorial stone had been moved twice before being placed in a grove of three millstones on Riverview Trail, past Blue Slide Playground. Helen and I participated in a little bit of park history with these memorial stones by giving testimony to the Arts Commission several years ago about an art installation that was approved to be located very near this grove (SHHS Newsletter, March, 2023, “Art in the Park?” by Helen Wilson). We were able to make a case for the fact that an installation piece that was said to “convey whimsy” should not be located close to memorial stones. The two stones there, Barbara's and one for former park maintenance superintendent Kenneth Kingsford, were subsequently relocated, his fittingly to a spot opposite the park maintenance center, and Barbara's to an area we had recommended, in between the Environmental Center and the small area of trails leading to the Nature Reserve she so loved.



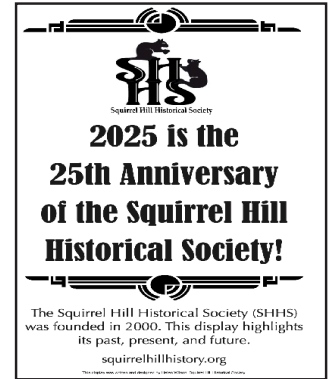
The ultimate bit of serendipity on the May 15 opening day for the Sensory Nature Trail occurred when we entered the new trail and there met Naturalist Educator Lydia Konecky, who was giving the first of a number of opening-day demonstrations. Lydia was a close friend of Barbara's and worked with her from when Lydia first started her career in Frick Park (Lydia collaborated with me on Barbara's article from 2020 and on this one). After we related how we felt about Barbara's stone finding its final resting spot right outside the new trail, Lydia commented that the stone wasn't located where it is now because of the trail—the Sensory Nature Trail had not yet been conceived of when the stone was placed there. Then again, Lydia reflected, it may not have been an accident. Referring to Barbara as “a force of nature” may have meant more than I could have imagined when I wrote my article about her five years ago.

June's "List of 25 ..."

Squirrel Hill Historical Society Accomplishments

Helen Wilson

The SHHS has been in existence for 25 years. Here is a list of 25 accomplishments it has achieved in those years. For more details about them, go to the SHHS's website, squirrelhillhistory.org, click on the link "SHHS Carnegie Library Displays," scroll down the list of displays, and click on "2025—SHHS's 25th Anniversary."



1. **The SHHS was founded by architect Terry Necciai and his wife Sharon**, who was then pursuing a master's degree in landscape studies, to highlight the history of Squirrel Hill.
2. When the Necciais left and **Michael Ehrmann became president**, he gathered a stellar group of dedicated friends and neighbors to run the SHHS, including Ralph Lund, Patricia Hughes, Patty Gillespie, Betty Connelly, Esther Tucker, Anita Newell, Eveline Young, and Audrey Glickman. Eveline and Audrey are still active on the SHHS board.
3. The SHHS has been presenting **monthly programs** from the start. Most of the programs—more than 200 so far—have been recorded and posted on the SHHS website.
4. The SHHS has taken members and guests on **walking tours** of places in Squirrel Hill and other neighborhoods almost since its inception.
5. The SHHS website was created in 2002 by Patricia Hughes. It was redesigned and updated in 2018 by current webmaster Janine Michael.
6. The SHHS published its **first book, *Images of America: Squirrel Hill*** (Arcadia Publishing) in 2005.
7. **SHHS Newsletters** have been published every month since 2014. They are now archived on the password-protected "Members Page" link on the SHHS website, with access to all members.
8. Also since 2014, a **"museum board"** with changing displays about Squirrel Hill's history has been placed near the entrance to the Squirrel Hill Branch of Carnegie Library. Past displays can be viewed on the "SHHS Library Displays" link on the SHHS website..
9. In 2015, the SHHS applied for and received **501(c)(3) nonprofit status** from the Internal Revenue Service, so dues and donations are not taxable.
10. The SHHS published its **second book, *Squirrel Hill: A Neighborhood History*** (History Press) in 2017.
11. The SHHS participates in **local events and activities**, such as Night Markets; Pitt and CMU Osher; Squirrel Hill, Greenfield, and Hazelwood Holiday Mingles; Turner Cemetery History Walks; Carnegie Library History Fairs; National Night Out at Frick Park; collaborations with local elementary schools; and historical presentations for other organizations.
12. In 2017, Ralph Lund arranged to have its archive of issues of the ***Squirrel Hill News* newspapers** from 1935 to 1970 digitized and put online on the Historic Pittsburgh website, historicpittsburgh.org.
13. A log-running project of the SHHS involving **researching the origins of the names** of Squirrel Hill's more than 212 streets, roads, avenues, boulevards, ways, Interstate highway and tunnel, and park trails and determining how the names reflect the history of the neighborhood is now on fast forward since a CMU intern has been brought on board to help with researching and writing the book this summer.
14. A few years ago, the SHHS undertook a related project to research the names and histories of **significant buildings in Squirrel Hill**. Most but not all are in the business district. The results so far were reported in a Carnegie Library display, "Significant Buildings of Squirrel Hill, Then and Now," which can be viewed on the "SHHS Carnegie Library Displays" link on the SHHS website.
15. In 2020, the SHHS began the project to restore the Neill Log House in Schenley Park and was soon joined by the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition (SHUC) to form **Friends of Neill Log House, Inc. (FONLH)**. Other historical organizations joined the effort, and the Neill Log House is now open to visitors, under the leadership of the Pittsburgh Park Rangers. More information about visiting hours can be found in the Neill Log House update in this newsletter.
16. The Neill Log House project was sparked by a National Parks Service contractor assigned to work with the **Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail** section of its website. The National Parks Service found evidence that Merriwether Lewis stopped to water his horses and might even have spent time at the Neill Log House on his journey to Pittsburgh in 1803 to take charge of the boat that would take him down the Ohio River to meet William Clark and begin their epic journey west. For more information, go to [nps.org https://www.nps.gov/lecl/planyourvisit/pennsylvania.htm](https://www.nps.gov/lecl/planyourvisit/pennsylvania.htm).

17. The SHHS has an extensive collection of **original photographs** of Squirrel Hill in its archives, and so far 90 photos, mostly taken by Patricia Hughes, have been uploaded to the Historic Pittsburgh website. There are at least twice that many more photos that still need to be catalogued, formatted, described, and uploaded to the website. A volunteer who is familiar with Photoshop is welcome to join in this effort. Contact sqhillhistory@shhsoc.org to volunteer.
18. In 2020, Helen Wilson and Lauren Winkler prepared an interactive "**Driving Tour of Squirrel Hill**" that can be accessed through the SHHS website. The route takes you from top to bottom of Squirrel Hill, from parkland to business districts, and from original buildings to brand new developments.
19. The SHHS began to look into the history of homes in Squirrel Hill a few years ago, in which homeowners gave us interesting stories about their houses. The stories have been uploaded to our website under the link, "**House History Project**." Do you have a history of your house you would like to see included in this project? Contact us at sqhillhistory@shhsoc.org.
20. The SHHS began a "**Squirrel Hill Champion Tree Project**" a few years ago, searching for the largest, oldest, and rarest trees in Squirrel Hill. We're still adding to the list. The list of trees was announced in the August and September 2020 issues of the SHHS Newsletter, which are archived in the "Members Page" link on the SHHS website and also in the 25th Anniversary Display at the Squirrel Hill Carnegie Library, which has been uploaded to the SHHS website..
21. **Past SHHS President Michael Ehrmann was named a Squirrel Hill Treasure** by the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition in 2019, and May 14 of that year was proclaimed "Michael Ehrmann Day" by Pittsburgh City Council.
22. **Vice President Helen Wilson was named a SHUC Squirrel Hill Treasure** in 2023, partly because she has written over 54 articles that have appeared in every Squirrel Hill Magazine since in 2010. These articles, covering many aspects of Squirrel Hill's history, are in the process of being uploaded to the SHHS website.
23. Long-time SHHS board member and past treasurer of both SHHS and SHUC, **Eveline Young, was named one of Squirrel Hill's Hidden Gems** by SHUC in 2025.
24. **The SHHS has nominated Schenley Park to be a City Designated Historic Site**, The detailed nomination application was written by Helen Wilson. Preservation Pittsburgh president Matthew Falcone augmented the form and took on the rest of the nomination process. The hearing before the Historic Review Commission has been set for June 4. See the article on page 3 of this newsletter about the nomination and hearing.
25. The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition (SHUC) has just announced that SHHS member **Caroline Boyce will be one of its Squirrel Hill Treasures this year**. When Caroline purchased artist Henry Koerner's house on Negley Ave. in 2021, she began researching the artist and started a campaign to keep Koerner's legacy alive. In 2022, she collaborated with SHUC and SHHS to hold a "Henry Koerner Event Weekend" featuring tours of her house, the screening of a documentary about Koerner at the Manor Theatre, and a lecture by his art historian son, followed by a reception. This year, Caroline applied for and was successful in having the house put on the National Register of Historic Places, adding this honor to the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation plaque already awarded.

The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition Announces its 2025 Treasures

SHUC's naming of Caroline Boyce as a Squirrel Hill Treasure was mentioned as #25 on our list above. Also on the list are Ann Belser, publisher of *Print: Pittsburgh's East End Newspaper*; who believes that "there is a need and a demand for the news of where you live, told by skilled journalists (*quote from SHUC's announcement*), and Dr. Eugene Myers, a renowned specialist in head and neck oncologic surgery, who at the age of 91 still gives lectures around the world. SHUC also names a place or organization as a Treasure, and this year it's Action Housing. "The organization was founded on the guiding principle that any great city must have not only a vibrant city center but also strong neighborhoods and good housing for its residents (*SHUC announcement*). Kraus Commons and Flats on Forward are two of its largest projects in Squirrel Hill. The Treasure Dinner will be held on November 6.

CMU Intern Update— The Squirrel Hill Street Names Project Continues!

Helen Wilson

The daunting task of determining the origins of all of Squirrel Hill's many kinds of roads, bridges, and buildings is well underway. Our CMU intern, Emily Manack, is doing a deep dive into Squirrel Hill's convoluted pathways and beginning to assemble the information about them in a template designed by Helen Wilson. The ultimate aim is a book with not only the names and origins of the roads but also why they're where they are and how they relate to the neighborhood's development. Some volunteers have stepped forward to help with this project, each undertaking parts of it, so it's moving along nicely.

If you have any information to offer about your street's name, contact us at sqhillhist@shhsoc.org.