

ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY
CITY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



March, 2005

<http://www.uchs.net>

Mike Hardy, Editor



SPRING HOUSE TOUR

This spring's UCHS house tour on Saturday, May 14, includes homes and sites drawn from the neighborhoods of **Spruce Hill, Cedar Park and Garden Court**, a geographical range made possible through the use of the free vintage streetcars operating that day on the special **University City Trolley Loop** during the tour hours from 1 to 5 pm. Tour goers can experience "**the rich diversity of University City**" in visits to over a dozen architectural environments in this historic "streetcar suburb," from restored Victorian townhouses, Edwardian mansions, Queen Anne twins, Jazz age condominiums and retrofitted 20's row houses along with a variety of spectacular reclaimed and new local public landmarks.

Commentaries by home and property owners will point out the unique features "**in the details**" of their personal environments, from distinctive architectural or design elements, chapters in their own personal histories of restoration, renovation or reuse and physical reflections of the occupants' diverse backgrounds and personalities.

The UCHS tour is one of the 27 tour offerings, between April 29 to June 11, 2005, of the 27th season of **Philadelphia Open House**, an umbrella of house tours sponsored by the **Friends of Independence National Historical Park**. The general public can order tickets in advance for all of them, using the form in the POH brochure included in this mailing with payments made directly to the Friends of Independence Park, 143 S. 3rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

The **Alumni Office** of the **University of Pennsylvania** is also publicizing the house tour and the

trolley excursion on May 14 as part of Penn's Alumni Weekend, so we hope to have many other visitors from outside the neighborhood join us..

However, as a special membership benefit, current and new members of the **University City Historical Society** may order discounted advance sale tickets for the **University City** tour directly from UCHS using the flyer and return envelope included. Rather than the \$30 advanced sale price for the general public, UCHS members may purchase tickets for \$20 each with checks made to "UCHS" at P.O.Box 31927, Phila, PA 19104.

All advance sale registrations and payments for the tour must be received prior to Friday, May 13 to permit the return of written confirmations which must be presented at the tour's start, the **Calvary Center for Culture and Community**, 48th and Baltimore Avenue. Those purchasing tickets without a pre-paid reservation will be charged a \$5 handling fee on the day of the tour in addition to the POH ticket price.

Also on view at Calvary on the tour day will be an exhibit of the work of West Philadelphia artist, **Suzanne Francis**, whose portraits of homes, pets and people can be commissioned at (215) 473-0165. Her line drawing of one of the tour sites is shown above.

So, this spring, use your UCHS membership to order your tour tickets, get aboard the trolley and get the inside look at some of the most interesting spaces University City has to offer with the best tour guides available who really love their subjects.

VALENTINE TEA, 2005

Gregory Oliveri & Elisabeth Dubin

The University City Historical Society celebrated its annual **Valentine's Awards Tea** on February 13th at the whimsically eclectic "castle" of **Nick & Ellie Cernansky** at 48th & Springfield Avenue. This annual event not only offers an opportunity for those passionate about history and preservation in University City to socialize, but creates a public venue to present awards to individuals and organizations in our community who have contributed to the preservation of our built environment. Among many in attendance were

Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell and Representative James Roebuck, shown among the awardees.

In addition to acknowledging the individuals and businesses who have enhanced our streetscapes with their exterior preservation and greening efforts (see the January 2005 edition of the UCHS newsletter for a complete list of *2004 Gifts to the Streets*) the historical society presented specific awards for outstanding and notable examples of preservation efforts during the year.

The *Preservation Initiative Award* was presented to **Frances Aulston** and members of the board of the **West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance** for the plan to preserve and restore the **Paul**



Robeson House at 4951 Walnut Street. Claiming its well-deserved place as an important historic site, the house will serve as an active, ongoing celebration of the legendary scholar, actor, athlete, singer, and human rights activist.

The *Outstanding Preservation Award* was presented to commemorate the preservation and re-opening of the **Walnut West Library** of the



Free Library of Philadelphia. Highlighting the often collaborative nature of preservation efforts, **Beth Ann Johnson** and board members of the **Friends of Walnut West**, **Councilwoman**

Jannie Blackwell, and **Elliot Shelkrot**, **Director**, **Free Library of Philadelphia**, were collectively recognized for this triumph over the wrecking ball. The important Walnut West library, a **Carnegie** library which opened in 1906 on land dedicated to its purpose in perpetuity, in recent years risked wholesale demolition but has been renewed as an invaluable asset to the community.

The *2004 Preservation Honors Awards* celebrated the sensitive restoration of exterior elements. **Nicole McEwan** was recognized for the rebuilding and restoration of the front porch and other façade elements of her house, 1012 South 47th Street with **The Life Center Association** recognized for the total rebuilding and restoration of the front porch and other façade elements at 1014 South 47th Street.



(Both halves of this twin suffered serious fine damage as shown. The contractor for both restorations, **Alphonso Robbins** of **Robbins Enterprises**, 1630 S. 56th Street, shares this award as well, ed).



David Moody & Katy Clark with their contractor, **Chris Neff**, 4612 Kingsessing Avenue, were recognized for work at their home at 4313 Larchwood Avenue that included the restoration of the bay window, recreation of the original porch columns and railing, and the reconstruction of the side window surrounds. These honor awards underscore the important contribution of even individual architectural elements to the rich historic fabric of University City architecture.

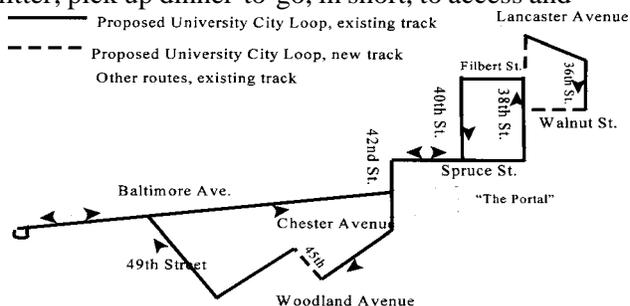
THEY ROLL AGAIN



On Saturday, May 14 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. one can again board newly renovated and air-conditioned vintage 1930's era **PCC SEPTA** streetcars and, along the extensive existing streetcar rails of University City, visit some of the area's prime commercial corridors (**Baltimore Avenue, 38th & 40th Streets**)

and historic neighborhoods along **Spruce, 42nd & 49th Streets, Baltimore & Chester Avenues.**

Again, as in the fall of 2004, free tickets, sent to UCHS members in the next newsletter and available at numerous sites in University City, including the **University City District**, will permit riders to board and disembark at more than 15 locations throughout the neighborhood approximately every twenty minutes on the continuous “loop.” And on that day, you can use the streetcar to get home or to work; pick up the groceries; mail a letter; visit the doctor or dentist; take the pet to the vet; rent a room; get to church; buy some bread; get to the bank; pick up the kids; get to school or day care; have brunch; get to a **Philly Car Share**; buy a house; hear a talk; buy a book; take out a pizza; get the best haircut in the city; eat burritos, gyros, injera, pad thai, fettucine alfredo, chicken tandouri, kimchi and whatever our great local chefs create; visit a friend; get to a meeting; take in a museum; buy plants and flowers; stock up on cat litter; pick up dinner-to-go, in short, to access and



enjoy the myriad of amenities along the extensive still existing streetcar track system of University City.

While we will work to see that this University City trolley excursion becomes a regular seasonal event, it can, with limited additional track construction, inaugurate a permanent trolley loop that could link commercial and institutional resources on **Lancaster Avenue, Penn’s University Square, 40th Street & Baltimore Avenue** with their surrounding neighborhoods. Operating night and day, seven days a week, it could provide, for both residents and visitors alike, an alternate to total dependency on the automobile and fossil fuels and provide a 21st century solution to meeting the urban transportation needs of University City’s diverse, but often separated, communities. It could also serve as the lifeblood for economic redevelopment of University City’s commercial corridors.

Details can be found in the special “gift packet” of materials describing the resources and amenities of University City which will be provided that day to excursion riders by its sponsors, **UCHS, University City District & SEPTA.**

BRICKS AND BRANCHES



In preparation for a major **Arbor Day** planting of street trees along **North 34th Street** from **Market Street** to **Powelton Avenue** on Saturday, April 17 by a partnership led by **UC Green**, UCHS and others will provide a hands-on workshop for the restoration of a brick sidewalk on Saturday, April 2. This project will replace, with used period pavers set in sand, those missing in the stretch of a largely intact historic brick sidewalk along the west side of N. 34th Street between Lancaster Avenue and Race Street. At the same time, a “hyphenated” four foot wide “tree lawn” and tree pits will be created to receive the line of “underwire” species of flowering Hawthorns going in there during the Arbor Day planting.

The **Powelton Village Civic Association**, in the persons of **Joe Revlock** and **Michael Jones** (also on the UCHS Board), is co-sponsoring this project, which recognizes and celebrates the place these brick sidewalks have in the historic streetscapes of Powelton and other parts of University City. A number of **Drexel** volunteers have already signed up to help and others from the University City community and elsewhere are welcome to lend a hand, gawk, kibitz or learn the procedure for repairing your own or your neighbors’ sand-laid brick sidewalks. We start work at 10 a.m. and hope to have the job done by 4 p.m. Rain day is Sunday, April 3. Call (215) 573-4684 for more information.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

A membership survey is included in this issue of **“On the West Side.”** The Officers and Board of UCHS would greatly appreciate hearing from you about what you use, like, or miss from UCHS and what you believe should be our priorities and membership categories.

You may use the enclosed envelope to return this to us, either by itself or along with your tour ticket order, but please get it back by May 13 so that we may begin compiling the results, informing the membership and acting on your recommendations.

Page
**SAVE THESE DATES
 FOR THESE EVENTS**



Sunday, April 17, 3 pm - **The Bel Canto Lyric Opera Company** in “Bye Bye Verdi” to benefit the **St. Francis De Sales Organ Restoration Fund**, St. Francis De Sales Church, 47th & Springfield Avenue - An effervescent blend of **Verdi** and **Gershwin**, of live orchestra and of talented vocalists singing in the Bel Canto style and then belting it out Broadway style! A \$25 donation to the Organ Fund is requested; tickets are available at the door. A special opera themed reception and dinner at **Abbraccio Restaurant**, 47th & Warrington Avenue, is available after the show.

Sunday, May 1, 10 am - 2 pm, **Lombardy Poplar Tree Planting**, 3900 block of Woodland Avenue - **The White Dog Cafe**, a unique restaurant that offers their patrons activist opportunities,



teams up with **UC Green** for a day of hands-on community greening in West Philadelphia. In partnership with the **University of Pennsylvania**, they will be planting 17 historically significant Lombardy Poplar trees, no longer favored, but the original street tree planted in the United States and known for their beautiful waving leaves, upright shape, and yellow fall color. This historic street tree planting will be alongside the “**Hamilton Beds**” where volunteer planting groups, led by UCHS member, **Michelle Murphy**, have been installing and nurturing imported flora or “exotics” to emulate the efforts of **William Hamilton** (1745-1813), developer of **The Woodlands** estate across the

street and prolific plant importer of his time, who first introduced and cultivated the Lombardy Poplar in America in the late 18th century. These poplars will mirror the line of native red maples along 3900 Baltimore Avenue and the “**Bartram Beds**” of native American plants located there. Space is limited. Please call (215) 573-4684 to reserve your place. Rain or Shine. Complimentary lunch will be provided for volunteers.



Thursday, May 5, 5:30 – 8 pm – **6th Annual Party for the Park**, a fundraising event for **Clark Park - USP’s Kingsessing Mall** on 43rd Street between Woodland Avenue & Regent Square. Celebrate **Cinco de Mayo** with cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, and a silent auction. For the past five years, contributions to the Party for the Park have vastly improved the appearance, health, and vitality of Clark Park. 100% of your contribution goes directly towards supplemental park maintenance: mowing grass, edging walkways, weeding planting beds, emptying trashcans, mulching trees, fertilizing, and completing spring, summer & fall clean-ups, throughout the year. (Your personal invitation is in the mail)

Saturday, May 7, 10 am to 3 pm – **Bartram’s Garden Native Plant Sale** – Bartram’s Garden, 54th & Lindbergh Blvd. Come browse for botanical treasures in the Bartram barnyard (with the oldest barn in Philadelphia, built by **John Bartram, Jr.** in 1775). Arrive early for the best selection. Free admission to the John Bartram House,



Saturday, May 7, 11 am to 4 pm – **Spruce Hill May Fair** – Clark Park, 43rd and Baltimore Avenue. Annual community gathering, food, games, music, plants, (tree plantings by **PHS's Tree Tenders**), gifts, displays, community groups (including **UCHS**).

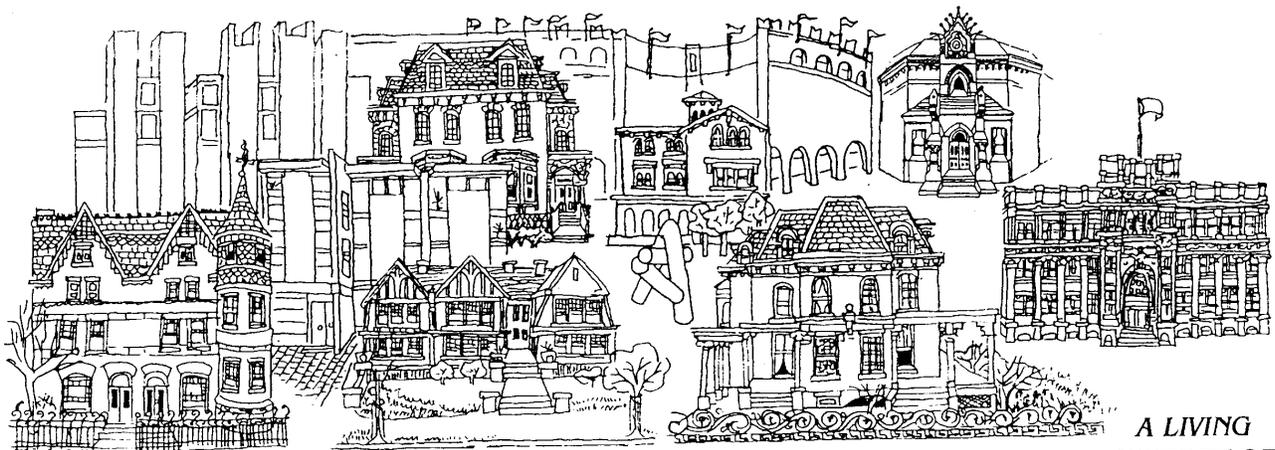
Sunday, May 8, 2 and 4 pm – **Mother's Day Schuylkill River Cruises** (optional dinner at **Abbraccio Restaurant**) – Bartram's Garden, 54th & Lindbergh Blvd. A popular one-hour boat trip from the **Bartram Meadow** to the **Fairmount Waterworks** and back, limited seating. After cruise, dine at Abbraccio Restaurant, 47th & Warrington Avenue, for \$20 three-course dinner (call to reserve dinner at (215) 727-8247, mention Bartram River Cruise Special Dinner). Cruise, \$15, Bartram members, \$20 non-members, arrive ½ hour before departure, call to register, (215) 729-5281, x100.

Thursday, May 12, 5:30 pm – **Research Your Historic Home** – HSP, 1300 Locust Street. A workshop for beginners in researching the history of your home, research strategies, documents you should consult and more. Presented by the **Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies** and the **Historical Society of Pennsylvania**. Free, call (215) 732-6200.

AND SPECIAL THANKS TO

those who have recently renewed their annual UCHS dues, especially those who made additional contributions as **Sustainers of UCHS: Carol Dubie; Genie & David Hochman; Tim Rupe & Mark Stuart** and as **Friends of UCHS: Sylvia Barkan; Greg & Mary Berzinsky; Tony West & Diane Cloutier; James & Nancy Cox; Richard Dretsch; Mary L. Goldman; Conrad & Lois Johnson Hamerman; Edwin Bittner & Michael Lazenka; Peter A. Shelton; Paul Steege & Associates; Tammy & Michael Tursi; Steve Zdancewic & Stephanie Weirich; Youth Services, Inc.**

"On the West Side" is printed by the **University City Copy Service, Inc.**, 3819 - 33 Chestnut Street & Houston Hall, 3417 Spruce Street, Lower Level, visit them at www.uscopy.com



THE UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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1789 - 2000**

ON THE WEST SIDE

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY***

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