

# on the HOUSE

The Newsletter of  
Hopkinson House • Summer 2020



## What's Inside

Lynn Miller, [www.lynn-miller.net](http://www.lynn-miller.net)

Our now-familiar figure of speech, social distancing, may be the oxymoron (you can't be *social* and at a *distance* simultaneously) that will come to define the current era. Contradictions abound today. America has reacted to the kind of global pandemic none of us has experienced before by turning the effort to keep us healthy into another instance of our political polarization. The economy has been largely shut down for months, throwing millions out of work at the same time the stock market has seen its best quarter in a generation. But while we fail to control the coronavirus, we're at least examining our society's treatment of racial minorities in ways we haven't done in half a century. Whether we'll make actual progress to stamp out either kind of virus is still to be determined.

Our current issue shows both awareness of these issues and their contradictions. While **Joseph Quinn** comments on how the coronavirus has upended our lives, he calls attention to the ways in which several residents are helping some of the most distressed members of our larger community.

**Martha Cornog** reviews the remarkable life work of a congressman who marched with Martin Luther King, whose biography has now appeared to much acclaim in a surprising format.

My own essay considers the life of a 19th-century hero of Philadelphia from its African American community and how he is inspiring those who seek greater social justice today.

Our current challenges help explain why **Larry Meehan** regards this November's presidential election as the most consequential since the Civil War.

So much of what remains the best about America got its start in our neighborhood. **Jim McClelland** gives us a glimpse of the history of nearby Carpenters' Hall, which served as the pre-birthplace of our nation.

Speaking of comfort, Washington Square shows off its floral masterworks throughout the summer season. **Dennis McGlade** provides an illustrated guide to the many spectacular varieties of hydrangea that bloom in our front yard.

We begin, as usual, with a report from our Council president, **Theresa Kowalski**. She lists Council members

and new officers following our recent election. She also reminds us of essential etiquette while the coronavirus still lurks, updating us on the HVAC project and on new resident committees.

Our manager, **Erica Alles**, provides updates on various important projects underway or completed to maintain our common home. She also notes the recent change in the management team for our garage.

An article by guest contributor **Joe Baker**,

president of the Friends of Independence Branch of the Free Library on 7th Street, tells us something of the Friends' work. It is yet another reminder of the rewards of volunteering for worthy causes.

In her Chef's Corner, **Jane Hickman** has favored us with two recipes for fresh salads where tomatoes star, during this, their peak season. Enjoy!

We thank Robin Siddall of Parallel Design, Inc., for her design of this issue. ■

### Occasional Photo by Dennis McGlade



Read about Washington Square hydrangeas on pages 12-13.

# on the HOUSE

## Newsletter Committee

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## Website

Find past issues of  
*on the House* at  
[www.thehopkinsonhouse.com](http://www.thehopkinsonhouse.com)

## Message from Council

Theresa Kowalski



In my last newsletter article I talked about the beginning preparations for dealing with coronavirus. Here we are, four months later, and masks have become a way of life, along with takeout food, sanitizing everything before and after we touch it, online shopping, bingeing on Netflix and catching up on all the reading we've ever wanted to do. Many of us are working from home: a blessing and a curse. Some of us dream about jumping into a pool, going to a movie, hugging our newborn grandchild. And yet the virus continues to spread, even increases, and so must we in our efforts to contain it. Please remember to wear your masks in all public areas of the building, stay further than six feet away

from other people, wash your hands as often as possible and be understanding to each other.

### New Election Methods and New Council

The coronavirus and our condominium governing documents forced us to think of creative work-arounds for the Spring election of HHOA Council candidates. The election committee pulled off the incredible feat of providing ask-the-candidates night in two different forms: either by joining a large Zoom meeting and watching it on your computer, or by watching it on TV on our in-house channel.

The actual voting took place online via a commercially available, secure, software package specifically available for voting in elections such as in condominiums. The security of the voting process and the record-keeping and vote tallying is much easier than our usual paper and person method. Many of those who voted early reported how easy and clear it was to follow directions, and that each person received verification for how they voted. So, thank you to the election committee headed by Patricia Kapur, who was ably assisted by Joe Quinn, Charlene Compheer, and Rich, our combination AV/Computer/Maintenance technician.

The election resulted in one re-elected and two new council members for 2020. The council members are now as follows:

Theresa Kowalski, President  
Joe Salerno, Vice-President  
Kevin Cornely, Treasurer  
Grazina Crisman, Secretary  
Bruce Chamberlin, Council Member  
Millie Korn, Council Member  
Gail Winkler, Council Member

### HVAC Project

The Steering Committee for the HVAC Project has begun meeting with the new Project Manager, Ronald Street, from Northstar. Ron has already developed a more detailed project timeline, incorporating each of the phases of the project. Additionally, he has produced two versions of a more combined and detailed budget, giving the Council and Finance Committee a little better information with which we can begin investigating financing and talking to financial institutions.

### Committees

Shortly, you'll be receiving information about HHOA committees for the next year. Operational guidelines for them were developed last year but unfortunately did not get distributed to everyone. This year council is contemplating reorganizing some of the work of the committees by combining some and possibly phasing out others. If you have thoughts about the committee structure at Hopkinson House, please send them to Erica Alles to be shared with Council.

In conclusion, stay safe, wear your masks, space six feet apart and wash your hands. ■

### Nelly Childress

As your new editor, and on behalf of our Council, management, and the entire newsletter committee, I extend our thanks and appreciation to Nelly Childress for her many years of excellent and dedicated work as the editor of *on the House*. Her new title, Editor Emerita, is one she has richly earned, although it does not begin to express the manifold contributions she has made to the life of Hopkinson House over many decades. We join in wishing her much happiness and a well-deserved rest.

—Lynn Miller



# Message from Management

Erica Alles



The last few months have been busy and productive at Hopkinson House! Some major projects are complete or underway, including some HVAC-related projects, namely, the new rooftop air handler is complete and running. The air handler serves the common area corridors. Now that it is running, we were able to remove the temporary fans we had been using to maintain airflow in the hallways. Also, steam tube bundles are under contract to be replaced. The tube bundles are part of the overall HVAC project. They convert steam to hot water; the hot water goes to your convector units and in turn heats your home.

The new rubber roof is complete and will have a

20-year manufacturer's warranty. We await the manufacturer's final sign-off, though our Hopkinson House engineer has already given it the stamp of satisfaction. Your new roof looks beautiful!

Our transition to Park America—our new garage management company—has been smooth and well-received by residents. Most of the existing employees were retained, and Paul Miles is the site manager. If you have questions about your account you can see Paul or log on to [www.parkamerica.net](http://www.parkamerica.net), go to the “customers” link, then to “Philadelphia Monthly Payments,” then “Hopkinson House.” Regarding the garage, we will be coating sections of the floor by the end of the summer. The coating serves to protect the concrete from elements and will look nice and fresh as well. We have repaired inoperable lights and converted the garage overhead lights to LED which will produce a savings in electric and maintenance costs, plus potential PECO rebates.

In conjunction with the garage floor coating, we will be re-coating the pool portion of the courtyard fountain. As the courtyard is on top of the garage (it's the roof of the garage), this will serve to waterproof the fountain so it does not leak into the garage below.

The rooftop pool deck has been coated, coping has been re-pointed, and we added a secondary drain underneath the deck. We also completed repairs to the pool, which we do each year, and painted the pool as well.

Sadly, at this time, it would be strange for an association manager to send out a communication and not mention COVID 19 and its ongoing impact on the community. As I write this article, we still have a resident home recovering from the virus and my thoughts and prayers are with that resident. And that person is our second known case in the building; thankfully the first resident recovered fully. Hopkinson House Council, staff and

management continue to work around the clock to make every effort—on behalf of all residents and staff—to maintain the building in a manner that allows residents to function, yet incorporates measures to protect and comfort residents who prefer to be more cautious. While the city, state and nation take steps toward “re-opening,” HHOA is generally in sync, though Council is not obligated to move at the same pace. Please know that Council is making decisions based on current industry standards, CDC guidelines and the advice of experts.

I must continue to thank our residents who have adapted with us on this journey and who have been understanding or patient when rules and procedures are inconvenient or less than ideal.

I hope you enjoy this summer! Whether that means spending time outside, exploring, or indulging in a hobby, safely carry on, until next time. ■

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# Coping with COVID-19: All in This Together

Joseph Quinn

**Surreal:** marked by the intense irrationality of a dream or fantasy; unbelievable; fantastic; incongruous; hallucinatory. Sound familiar? Surreal is a word now used a lot to describe the world we've been living in since March—the world of COVID-19.

Remember visiting the Philadelphia Flower Show during the first week of March? We enjoyed creative, colorful floral displays while mingling with thousands of visitors, many of whom arrived on packed SEPTA trains. By then, the COVID-19 virus had already wreaked havoc in parts of China and was making deadly inroads around the world.

Grim reality set in on **March 13**, when the U.S. declared a national emergency, and really hit home on **March 23**, when the City of Philadelphia issued a Stay-at-Home Order detailing restrictions on social and economic activity.

One week we were enjoying unlimited social activity, gathering in favorite restaurants, greeting friends and neighbors with handshakes, hugs and unmasked smiles. Then we were ordered to stay indoors and told we could leave our homes only for “essential” activities. We were wearing masks and gloves (if we could find them), keeping six feet apart, finding supermarket shelves stripped bare of cleaning products and toilet paper, avoiding public transportation, canceling summer

vacation plans, setting up home offices, home-schooling kids, and Zooming into the world of virtual gatherings for birthdays, graduations, doctor appointments, and, sadly, funerals and memorial services.

In just three months, our society has endured a staggering amount of suffering and sadness. U.S. deaths are now predicted to approach 200,000 by the time the flu season arrives in the fall. The daily routines for medical providers, educators, students, parents, businesses, transit and grocery store workers have been upended and changed, maybe forever. The very existence of many retail establishments is threatened. Thousands of employees are uncertain whether they will get their jobs back. Concerts and sporting events have been erased from our calendars. The pain goes far and deep, especially for families who have lost incomes and are struggling to pay rent and put food on the table.

Nevertheless, some things give us comfort. Thanks to prudent guidance from state and city health officials, and the compliance of most citizens, Philadelphia has avoided becoming a major hot spot and seen the curve of infections plateau. Our own 19106 zip code has consistently had the lowest number of reported positive test results in the city. But behind all the timelines, graphs, maps and numbers



Socially distanced in Washington Square

are people who contracted the virus, two of whom live here at Hopkinson House (the good news is that they are expected to recover).

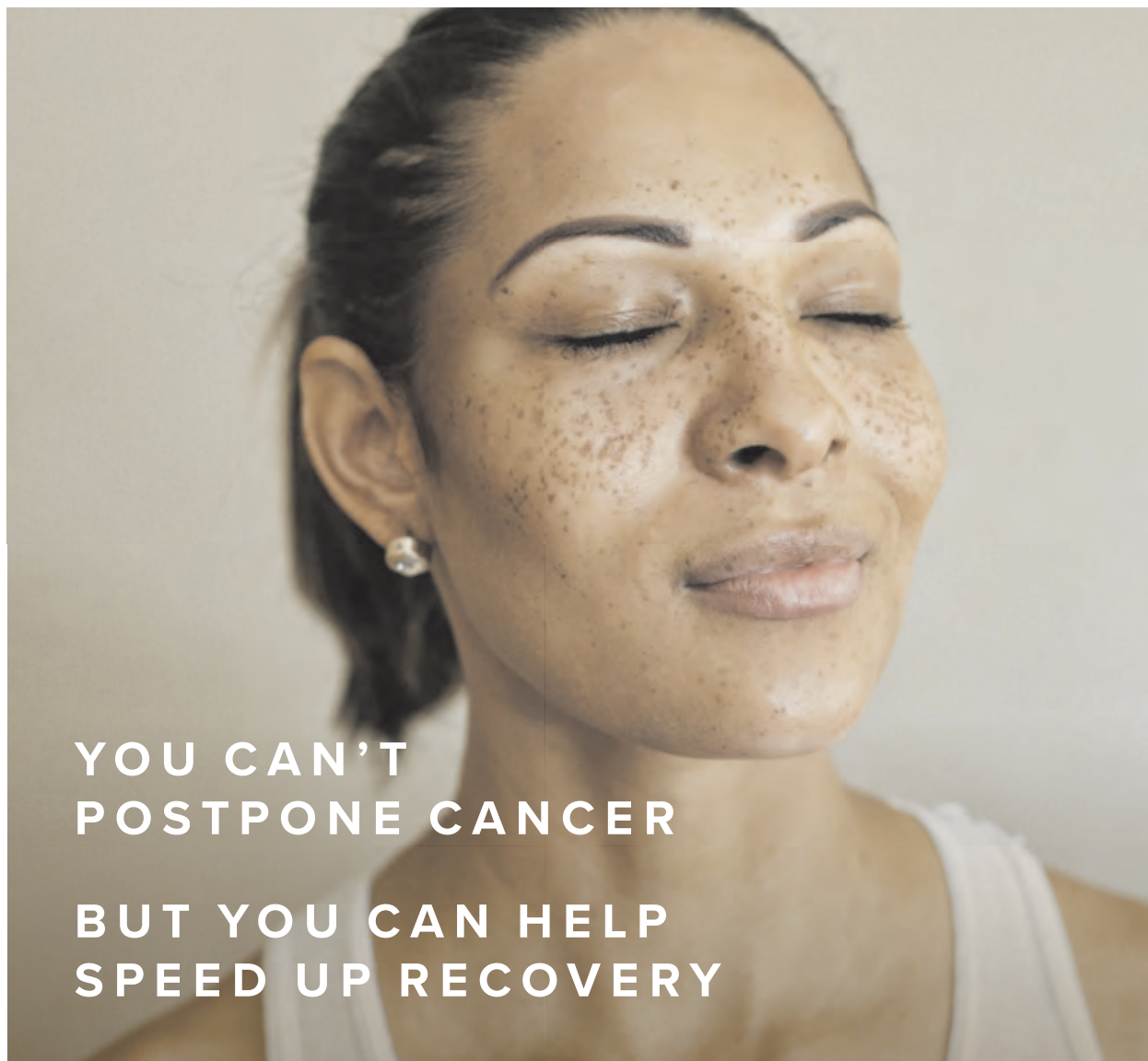
Which brings us to the ways we at 604 South Washington Square have been affected by this pandemic and how we as a community have responded.

Yes, there are things we have had to do without: non-essential repairs and renovations, personal housekeepers, relaxing by the pool, pot-lucks in the solarium, in-person discussion groups and lectures, in-building yoga and exercise classes, access to the library, casual visits from friends and family. (Note: Management restored access to the solarium, sun deck, and library as of June 26, and is considering opening the pool for a short season. All activities will be subject to the now-standard personal protection and social distancing recommendations.)

But consider a few things that continued to make our lives bearable:

- ♦ We have had the benefit of world-class medical resources within walking distance, courageously staffed by dedicated professionals, many of whom are friends and neighbors.
- ♦ Hopkinson House management and staff have kept things running seamlessly, performing the usual maintenance activities while taking on added cleaning and disinfecting duties.
- ♦ Mail and package delivery have continued uninterrupted, despite the enormous increase in online shopping.
- ♦ Thanks to the Kim family, our convenient in-house grocery and deli has kept its doors open every day during the pandemic.
- ♦ We've had the luxury of Washington Square as our front yard, offering us the opportunity for fresh air and outdoor exercise.

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## Coping with COVID-19: All in This Together

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- ✦ We survived a primary election complicated by fewer poll locations, a shortage of workers, and a flood of mail-in ballots. (Get ready now to make sure your vote counts in the November election by applying for a mail-in ballot at the link below).
- ✦ We even managed to stage our annual council election on a totally virtual basis, for the first time using an electronic balloting system that drew a record number of votes.

But beyond maintaining a semblance of everyday “normality,” there is a need to strengthen the support systems for people, especially seniors, under increased stress caused by the pandemic. Self-quarantining can compound the harmful effects of social isolation among elderly singles and those with medical conditions.

Several individuals at Hopkinson House volunteer with organizations dedicated to helping vulnerable communities. And like many front-line medical personnel, they are working hard to meet the special demands for assistance brought on by the pandemic.

Janet Burnham is a familiar representative at Hopkinson House for Penn’s Village, an organization of dues-paying members dedicated to “connecting neighbors” and “minimizing isolation through social engagement.” For fourteen years, Janet has devoted countless hours to addressing the needs of Penn’s Village members and volunteers. She notes that Hopkinson House residents “are and have been vital to fulfilling the Penn’s Village mission,” which has become even more essential now. The pandemic has caused the suspension of many of the personalized services Penn’s Village usually provides, and now they are pivoting toward virtual and remote support. Still, Hopkinson House resident volunteers, are doing their best to keep neighbors connected on a personal level. One resident volunteer faithfully telephones a Penn’s Village member every day to catch up. Another meets with her companion regularly in the park to keep their friendship evergreen while staying six feet apart.

One of the most disturbing things about the pandemic has been the increased number of people visiting

food distribution centers, sometimes waiting for hours to receive a package of basic food items they can’t afford to buy. Hopkinson House resident Mindy Bartscherer sees it firsthand as a volunteer at the Jenkintown Food Cupboard in Montgomery County. Food pantries are considered “essential,” and so have remained open during the pandemic. As Executive Director, Mindy puts in 50-60 hours over the course of a six-day week. She can do some of her job remotely, but the bulk of the work—sourcing, sorting, packing and delivering food—can only be done by hands-on volunteers. They serve 150-200 families a week, providing pre-packed bags of food based on household size.

Yet, many volunteers who are usually available to help are members of high-risk groups themselves and are concerned about contracting the virus and passing it on to others. But the pantry remains committed to providing this vital service. As Mindy notes, “the pandemic has brought an increasing number of families with both spouses out of work, no income, and little savings to fall back on. The food provided

can help them reallocate scarce dollars for other necessities, like rent, medication, gas, and clothing.”

Established charitable organizations are the lifeblood supporting the most vulnerable in a time of crisis. Speaking of lifeblood, Hopkinson House resident Liz Riley reports that she donated blood safely and conveniently at the nearby Jefferson Blood Center. She encourages others to do the same. With the suspension of large-scale blood drives, personal donations are badly needed right now.

By the time you read this, Philadelphia may have transitioned to its “green phase,” and there will be a gradual return to... well, exactly *what* we will be returning to remains to be seen. The “new normal” has become a stock phrase to describe what we might expect. Our daily lives will have changed, maybe not always for the better. But I think we can be confident that the “new” normal will still have remnants of the best values that were part of the “old” normal, strengthened by fires of adversity—like the ability to reach beyond our own needs and generously respond to the needs of others. ■

### Online Resources

**Voting by mail:** <https://www.pa.gov/guides/voting-and-elections/#VotingbyMail-InBallot>

**Philadelphia Updates:** <https://www.phila.gov/programs/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/>

**Pennsylvania Updates:** <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Cases.aspx>

**Centers for Disease Control:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

**World Health Organization:** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

**International and National Updates:** <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

**To volunteer in Philadelphia:** [serve.volunteermatch.org](https://serve.volunteermatch.org)

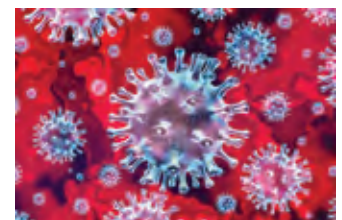


Image of the corona virus. Beautiful but deadly. From Webmd.com.

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# Marching for Good Trouble

Martha Cornog

When he was tending chickens as a boy, John Lewis had no idea he would win prizes much later for his life story—told in comics format.

An Alabama congressman currently serving his 17th term of office, the 80-year-old Lewis has been battling pancreatic cancer. His long life began as the son of a farmer in rural Alabama. Soon enough, the boy became aware of segregation as mandated by the Jim Crow laws, and because his parents urged him to stay out of trouble and not “get in white people’s way.”

But at age 15, Lewis heard Martin Luther King on the radio, and in college he became involved in the civil rights movement. Picturing himself a preacher since childhood, and drawn by King’s “social gospel,” Lewis was soon active in a Nashville student group holding sit-ins to protest whites-only lunch counters that wouldn’t serve black patrons. While Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and the Constitution’s 13th Amendment had freed the slaves a century before, Dixie’s discriminatory state and local laws had been upheld by the Supreme Court, and strict separation was enforced between the races.

The young Lewis and the other black kids nearby rode an old hand-me-down school bus on dirt roads because roads into “colored” communities weren’t paved. Black performers could entertain white audiences

in theatres, but could not sit in those audiences themselves. There were separate restrooms, schools, eating places, and separate seats on buses. Moreover, the black facilities were inferior and underfunded compared to those for whites. Voting was suppressed, so black people couldn’t vote or serve on juries or run for office. Worse, harassment, assault, and, all too often, murder, awaited any black person seen as acting disrespectfully or out of place—or even just for existing.

This was a time when comics had become enormously popular. Superhero comics began in the late 1930s, and the format held such strong appeal that care packages shipped overseas to GIs during World War II included comic books. As the civil rights movement grew, a pacifist group called the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) began to teach nonviolent resistance to groups of activists. The organization put out a comic book, titled *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*. Lewis and many others read copies circulated privately in the South. The comic book contained instructions on how to become a superhero—or that’s what it felt like to Lewis and his fellow students, who took FOR workshops. The narrative included a detailed how-to for practicing nonviolent resistance, following the approach of Mahatma Gandhi who had led his countrymen in India to freedom from British rule.



*March* trilogy, by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, & Nate Powell, Top Shelf, 2013-2016

Learning nonviolent resistance wasn’t easy. Lewis and his fellow students role-played returning insults with calmness, and resisting orders by going limp rather than fighting back. Lewis and his group, plus many others, used nonviolent resistance for the sit-ins. Over the following five years, countless sit-ins, boycotts, ride-alongs, voter drives, and marches caused plenty of what Lewis later called “good trouble, necessary trouble,” but finally led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Yet, along the way, Lewis and his allies suffered numerous beatings, arrests and jail terms (45 arrests for Lewis alone), attacks from dogs, tear-gas and firehoses, shootings, and even murder. To retaliate against the activists, black churches were bombed; buses carrying protestors were set on fire.

Those years of the movement are known especially for their marches, including the game-changing March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963) and

the tempestuous Selma to Montgomery marches for voting rights (1965). The marchers were nonviolent, but the official response often was not.

Though he’d been seriously injured during his 1960s activism, Lewis, like many others after King’s 1968 assassination, kept going. He directed a voter education project in the South that added nearly four million minority voters to the rolls. He worked for the Carter administration and served on the Atlanta City Council. In 1986, he won the seat for Georgia’s 5th congressional district. He has been reelected 16 times, usually running unopposed. An Atlanta newspaper described him as the “only former major civil rights leader who extended his fight for human rights and racial reconciliation to the halls of Congress,” including getting arrested for anti-war protests and leading a sit-in for House action on gun control.

Shortly before Barack Obama became President, Lewis hired as a staffer

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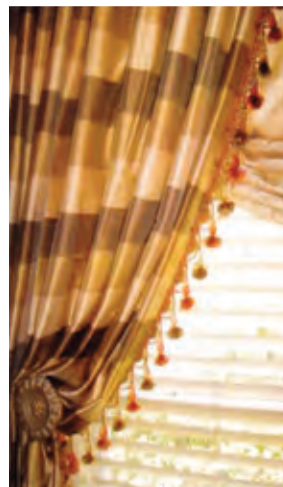
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## Marching for Good Trouble

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a young white man named Andrew Aydin. He became close to Lewis, who told him stories about the “bad old days” and how difficult it was to be African American in the United States. Lewis spoke about that 1950s comic book and its influence, and Aydin was fascinated. Being a fan himself of comic books and their longer form, “graphic novels,” he urged Lewis to turn his life story into that picture-and-words

format to inspire a new generation the way the FOR comic book had inspired his boss. Lewis, more at home by then with the *Federal Register* than comic books, felt hesitant. But remembering how powerful that comic’s message had been for 1960s activists, he agreed—if Aydin would help him. When they finished the script, Georgia comics publisher Top Shelf agreed to take it on, and

hired artist Nate Powell for the drawings. Titled simply *March*, the volume grew into a trilogy that made the *New York Times* bestseller list and won the National Book Award, plus many other honors.

The *March* trilogy packs a visceral punch that can help us all grasp some of the horror and superheroic persistence in those early struggles against segrega-

tion’s overwhelming insult to personhood. Lewis and his team’s creation, together with the searing visuals in the films *Selma* (2014) and *Good Trouble* (2020), can teach us about our painful past and its heroes.

The recent nation-wide marches expressing outrage about police violence against black people have developed out of momentum from previous civil rights marches, which originally were assisted by a 10¢, 16-page comic book about nonviolent dissent. As for the need to help law enforcement treat minorities more humanely, we hope that the marches for societal reform this time around will have as profound a positive effect as did the nonviolent black-led marches of the civil rights era that ultimately led to an African American President. ■

### Further Reading

*March*, by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, & Nate Powell, Top Shelf. Vol. 1: 2013; vol. 2: 2015; vol. 3: 2016. Available singly and in a 3-volume slipcase from bookstores, comics shops, and online vendors. Our local comics shop is Atomic City Books at 638 South Street, now open. Check here for hours: <https://www.facebook.com/atomiccitycomics/>

*Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*,

Comic book, full text: [https://www.crmvet.org/docs/ms\\_for\\_comic.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/ms_for_comic.pdf)

Print copy for sale by the Fellowship of Reconciliation:

<https://forusa.org/product/martin-luther-king-and-the-montgomery-story/>

*Good Trouble*, trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_oEk0dIXdo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_oEk0dIXdo)

*Selma*, trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6t7vVTxaic>

**Want to march yourself?** Philly Protest lists activism events around the city: <https://phillyprotest.com/>

## Graffiti at the Tomb of the Unknown

Protests have swept the nation since last May over the need for police reform and greater justice for all. Unfortunately, some of the first demonstrations in Philadelphia were accompanied by looting and vandalism before the protesters themselves succeeded in preventing those bent on violence from destructive acts. In the park at our doorstep, graffiti was spray-painted on the wall of the monument to the Tomb of

the Unknown Soldiers of the American Revolution on the same May night that, across South 6th Street, a plate glass window was smashed at Washington Square Pharmacy. Nearly two months later, what is remarkable about ongoing protests is how positive and peaceful they have been.

Employees of Independence National Historical Park, which oversees Washington Square, quickly succeeded



in stripping bright red off the wall, but they found the lettering in black had seeped into the soft sandstone, making it harder to remove. Park officials have now hung notices in front of the monument

to explain the situation and thank concerned neighbors for their expressions of concern and willingness to assist with its restoration. Happily, soon after this photo was taken, the wall looked pristine again. ■



# Washington Square Hydrangea Highlights: Apologies, Gratitude or Braggadocio

Dennis McGlade

For me, one of the joys of living in Hopkinson House is its location on Washington Square. Some of my favorite plants there are the hydrangeas. From late May through the summer, the square is filled with flowering hydrangea shrubs of one sort or another. You recognize these plants by their large flower clusters in white, pink, or blue. On some bushes, both pink and blue flowers may appear at the same time.

However, all is not as it seems. These showy parts of the flower clusters are not flower petals at all, but sepals. Sepals are at the base of a flower and protect the petals. Usually sepals are green. But in the case of hydrangeas they can turn white, pink or blue and pass for flower petals.

There are five types of hydrangeas in Washington

Square. They are described below in the order in which they come into bloom in the park, from late spring through mid summer. The first two fall into a group called big-leaf hydrangeas. Two types of big-leaf hydrangeas, the mopheads and the lacecaps, are in Washington Square.

The mopheads (pictured on page 1) have some of the showiest flower clusters. Flowers are massed together in large hemispherical or even spherical clusters called “mopheads.” They come in white, pink or blue, and are usually sterile. They begin to bloom from May into June.

The second type of big-leaf hydrangea has its flower heads arranged in a gently curved, flattish plane. These flower heads usually have the showy sepal flowers around the outer

edge of the circular inflorescence. These sterile flowers surround a central constellation of little, granular, fertile flower buds. Plants with such flowers are called “lacecap” hydrangeas. These bloom at the same time as the mopheads. Their flowers also come in white, pink or blue.

The next type is the oakleaf, which is native to the southeastern United States. It can be recognized by its leaves that look like red oak foliage. These plants have white flowers in long, pointed clusters. Unlike the mopheads and lacecaps, the oakleaf can better take our summer heat and thrive in much drier conditions. Oakleaves come into bloom slightly later than the first two types.

“Smooth” hydrangeas are the next to come into

bloom. These are usually cultivars of another of our wild hydrangeas native from the Midwest to the Atlantic. They can take colder and hotter climates than the mopheads and lacecaps. The cultivars of smooth hydrangeas in the park look a bit like the mopheads. They also have rounded ball-like clusters of white flowers.

“Panicle” hydrangeas are the fifth type in the park. These have some of the largest flower heads in the shape of broad, pointed cones. The flowers are white. I grew up in Chicago, where the smooth and panicle hydrangeas were the only types that would survive our cold, harsh winters, blooming dependably every summer. Panicle hydrangeas are usually the last group to come into bloom, starting



Type 2: Lacecap hydrangea



Type 3: Oakleaf hydrangea



in June and going through July into August, depending on the cultivar.

The name ‘hydrangea’ is derived from the Greek and means water jar. Hydor is water and aggeion is a vessel or jar, referring to the plant’s cup-shaped fruit. The water reference is also appropriate, at least for mopheads and lacecaps, because they need lots of water. They readily wilt when planted in full sun because they transpire more water through their leaves than their roots can take in. They usually revive when the sun goes down if they are planted in moist soil. Oakleaf, smooth, and panicle hydrangeas seem much more tolerant of full sun and dry soil.

Within the big-leaf hydrangea group, certain cultivars of the mophead and lacecap hydrangeas

with flower sepals can be colored to your taste—blue or pink. The color of the sepals on these types is a response to the soil chemistry. If the soil is “acid,” the flower head runs to the blues. If soil chemistry is more neutral, then the flower color will go to pink. Sometimes if the soil chemistry seems a bit indeterminate, you can get pink and blue flower clusters on the same plant. They are a little like the mood rings of the plant world.

Because of the variety of hydrangeas in Washington Square, one type or another is in bloom for most of the summer. All the hydrangeas in the park hold their flower heads into and through the winter, providing botanical interest during that very quiet time of year. Regardless of their flower color in the summer, by the time

autumn arrives the sepals have usually turned brown. Mophead, lacecap and panicle hydrangeas came mostly from Japan by way of the Dutch East India Company in the 18th century. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, French nurseries took center stage in hydrangea hybridization, especially of the mophead type. In 2017 about fifteen new species of hydrangea were discovered in the Andes Mountains of South America.

The roots of the two native hydrangeas—the smooth and oakleaf hydrangea—were used by Native Americans as painkillers and for treating ailments of the kidney and bladder. These were to be found in the gardens of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson among other founding fathers.

The Philadelphia connection is made complete because Jefferson and Washington purchased their native hydrangeas from William Bartram, son of John Bartram, who started America’s first nursery, Bartram’s Garden, on the banks of the Schuylkill River here.

In Japan, hydrangeas have a long cultural history and are associated with heartfelt emotion, apologies, and gratitude. The Victorians, however, did not care much for them, equating their big flower clusters with braggadocio. The next time you are in Washington Square, keep an eye out for the hydrangeas. See if you can find all the different types and decide if either the Japanese or the Victorians had the better, more appropriate response to them. ■



Type 4: Smooth hydrangea



Type 5: Panicle hydrangea

# For Octavius V. Catto, Black Lives Mattered

Lynn Miller

Philadelphia and the nation are living through a moment when demands for greater social justice for black and brown people are resonating in ways we haven't seen since the 1960s. Similar protests have also arisen far from our own shores, not just out of sympathy for those pressing for such change in the U.S., but to challenge the inequalities that exist in many other societies.

Protest marches in our city this spring have repeatedly swirled about the monument on City Hall's south apron to a man, Octavius V. Catto, who would have been at the forefront of these demonstrations were he alive today. Protestors have sought to dramatize how Catto and his "Quest for Parity" (the monument's title) connect across a century-and-a-half to the ongoing fight for the full and equal treatment of all citizens in American life today.

Octavius Catto was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1839 and was brought to Philadelphia as a child when his family moved here. His late mother came from a prominent mixed-race Charleston family, and his father, born tenuously free, had recently been ordained as a Presbyterian minister. In Philadelphia, the 15-year-old Octavius became a student at the Quaker-run Institute for Colored Youth (which would eventually become

Cheney University) located at Sixth and Lombard. Four years later, he graduated as class valedictorian, earning praise from the Institute's director for "outstanding scholarly work." He then spent a year studying Latin and Greek in Washington, D.C., before returning to Philadelphia in 1859 and a position—at the ripe old age of 20—at his old alma mater as a teacher of English literature, higher mathematics, and classical languages.

Then came the Civil War. Catto was immediately inspired to make the Union cause advance the rights of blacks. Following Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, he helped found the Pennsylvania Equal Rights League in 1864 as an affiliate of the national League, formed at the same time. Catto then worked with Frederick Douglass to recruit black troops for the Union Army. Eventually, 8,612 troops were raised from Pennsylvania, the most from any northern region. Catto himself served in the National Guard as a major in the Union Army, although neither he nor the troops he'd helped raise saw action, thanks to unwillingness on the part of white officers to accept their help.

Still, that wartime effort allowed Catto and his associates to develop alliances with sympathetic whites, particularly in the Union League of Philadelphia, which had been created at the start of the



The monument to O.V. Catto outside City Hall includes, bottom left, the text of the 15th Amendment granting voting rights to free black men. Columns behind the statue represent upturned trolley cars, desegregated by Catto.

Civil War to support Lincoln, the Northern cause, and the Republican Party. Once the North's victory was secure, Congress enacted the transformative Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution. In 1865, the 13th Amendment abolished slavery; three years later, the 14th granted citizenship to everyone born or naturalized in the U.S.; the 15th guaranteed voting rights to all free men (women of all races would wait until 1920 to secure that right). Catto took the lead in pushing the adoption of the last of these, which finally was accomplished in 1870.

By then, Catto was perhaps the most prominent leader of Philadelphia's African Americans, the largest such community in the nation. He had already led the long struggle to desegregate Philadelphia's streetcars. An accomplished athlete

himself, he also founded the nation's first black baseball team, the Philadelphia Pythians. A dignified and charismatic leader, he insisted on principled behavior by black people as a way of demonstrating why they deserved equal rights. Catto lived in a boarding house at 812 South Street, in the heart of the African American neighborhood which ran from about 8th Street to the Delaware.

October 10, 1871, was the first Election Day in Philadelphia in which African Americans had the right to vote. Catto had been tireless in the weeks leading up to it to help thousands of his newly enfranchised neighbors register so that they might exercise that right. These efforts unleashed a backlash among, especially, working-class Irish immigrants who continued on page 15



## For Octavius V. Catto, Black Lives Mattered

continued from page 14

viewed their own livelihoods as threatened by the newly attained freedoms of the black population. On Election Day, white ruffians roamed the streets, intent on intimidating black men from going to the polls. The police, tacitly supported by local Democratic leaders, made little effort to control such groups even as some grew more menacing.

That evening, Catto left a polling place in the 700 block of South Street, heading home. When he passed several armed white men, words were exchanged and one of the men shot him in the chest. He died

as he staggered toward his own front door. He was 32 years old.

Catto's funeral, paid for by the city, became a national event. Mourners lined Broad Street as his cortege passed with full military honors. More than 5,000 mourners attended the service in the City Armory. His assassin, a Democratic operative named Frank Kelly, was quickly spirited out of Philadelphia and soon fled to Chicago. Six years later, Kelly was at last extradited to Philadelphia to face justice. But at the end of a ten-day trial, an all-white jury acquitted him.

Fast forward 140 years to September 26, 2017. On that date, Philadelphia's monument to Octavius Catto was unveiled outside City Hall. It was made possible as the result of a fundraising campaign by Democratic Mayor Jim Kenney.

Although today's Republican and Democratic parties retain the names they acquired in the 19th century, what each stood for then is markedly different from their identities today. Yet America's quest for social justice and racial equality advances still in fits and starts, so that many see

little change from Catto's day to ours. That is why it is—what?—touching, sad, ironic, a little chilling, even, that the issues confronted by the great Philadelphia martyr, Octavius V. Catto, nearly a century before Martin Luther King, Jr., was martyred in the same cause, should still resound loudly with so many of us today. ■

*Further Reading:*  
Daniel R. Biddle and Murray Dubin, *Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).



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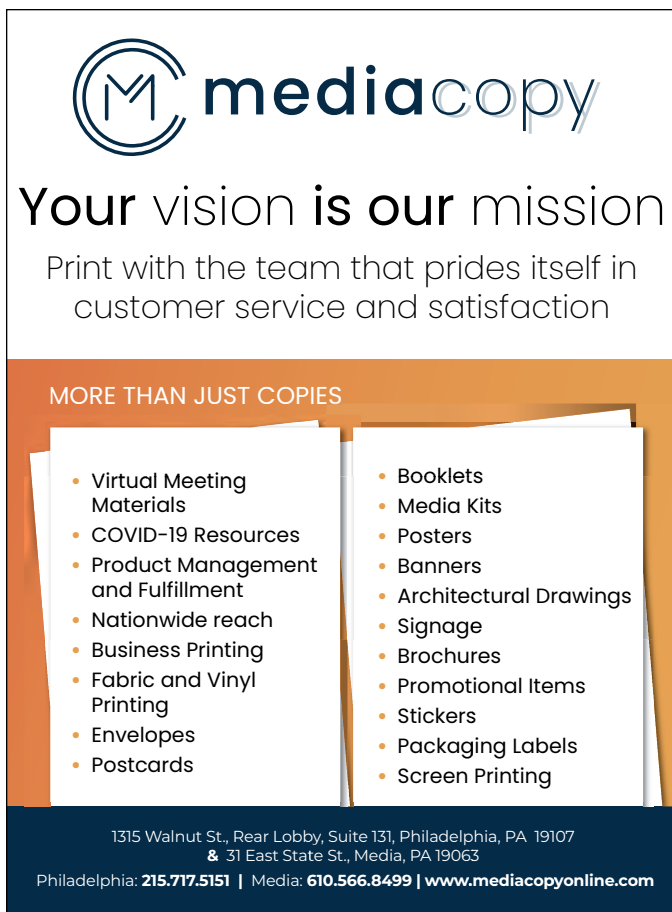

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# An Election in Peril

Larry Meehan

**N**ovember 3, 2020, is the date of the most important presidential election since the Civil War. One simply cannot underestimate the need to conduct an election that is fair and legitimate while offering voters accessibility, safety, and security.

Our recent experience conducting elections during a time of pandemic, civil unrest, and new voting procedures has not been encouraging. The catastrophe in Wisconsin was repeated two months later in Georgia and Nevada, and other jurisdictions faced significant problems. In light of the critical role that Pennsylvania will play in November, we should review how our experience in the June primary highlights those problems and suggest certain remedies.

## Preparation for the Pennsylvania Primary

Shortly before the primary, the Pennsylvania legislature enacted sweeping election reforms. For the first time, any registered voter could vote by mail. Before that could be finalized, however, we faced the COVID-19 global pandemic. In response, the legislature promptly passed legislation that called for moving the primary from April 28 to June 2 and adopting other temporary measures to ensure the health and safety of voters while protecting election integrity.

Just before the primary, two suburban Philadelphia counties, Bucks and Delaware, won court

decisions extending the counting of mail-in ballots. Then Governor Wolf issued a similar order for six counties, including Philadelphia.

Fear of COVID-19 led many election workers to decline to serve, so the scramble was on to find volunteers to work the polls. In Philadelphia, more than 77 percent of the polls were closed on Election Day, and in our own Fifth Ward, the usual more-than-30 polling places was reduced to three.

All of this took place in the midst of ongoing civil rights protests and looting in many neighborhoods.

## Primary Election Day Results

Mail-in voting was quite popular. About 2.8 million votes were cast in Pennsylvania, roughly half by mail. Election officials in Allegheny County had anticipated a 22 percent voter turnout based on figures from previous elections, but turnout exceeded 40 percent, clearly a result of the county's decision to mail every registered Democrat and Republican a vote-by-mail application.

Allegheny County used a superior scanning operation to count all votes within 18 hours after the polls closed, but other counties took much longer. In Philadelphia, scanning of mail-in ballots was delayed because they had to be checked against poll books to ensure there was no double voting. Then

came the counting of the many provisional ballots. Accordingly, it took more than two weeks to tally the ballots here.

In Philadelphia, 348,740 votes were cast. In-person voters constituted 48 percent, mail-in votes 40 percent, absentee votes 10 percent, and provisionals 2 percent. In our Fifth Ward, 80 percent voted by mail or absentee.

## What Went Right—and Wrong?

I spent more than 12 hours working at the polls on Election Day. Considering the difficulties confronting the City Commissioners and their staffs, the election came off surprisingly well. We had too few workers, some supplies were missing, and there was considerable confusion just before the polls opened. A fair number of voters had submitted mail-in ballot applications and received no response. Others didn't know their polling place location or couldn't find a mail-in ballot drop box.

Yet, voters were almost uniformly pleasant and understanding. Furthermore, not a single voter arrived who was not wearing a mask. We had plenty of gloves and sanitizer available, and distancing procedures were rigorously enforced.

## Remedies Needed Before the November Election

Numerous organizations are working on bipartisan solutions. Among them is VoteSafe, co-chaired by

former governor Tom Ridge, who was also the first Secretary of Homeland Security. Another is Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition of 43 civil rights, civil liberties, and good government groups. Suggested reforms include the following:

- 1 Because it is unlikely that all existing polling locations will open as usual in November, counties need the flexibility to create safe, accessible, and well-staffed voting centers.
- 2 Because of challenges facing the U.S. Postal Service, ballots post-marked on Election Day should be counted up until seven days after the election.
- 3 The legislature should authorize the Department of State and/or county board of elections to send mail-in ballots to all registered voters.
- 4 Permit counties to process mail-in ballots well before Election Day, instead of starting to count ballots on Election Day as provided under existing law.
- 5 Increase funding to cover the following costs: In-person voting site safety and sanitation; printing and postage costs; extra processing staff and enhanced ballot tracking services; and additional mail-in ballot drop boxes.

continued on page 19



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## An Election in Peril

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### Legal Issues

*The Philadelphia Inquirer* recently reported that the Pennsylvania NAACP sued the state, alleging that lack of accessibility disenfranchised black and Hispanic voters. The NAACP pointed to mass closures of polling places in some counties, last-minute changes to polling places that caused confusion, touchscreen voting machines that could have spread the coronavirus, and mail-ballot deadlines thousands of voters were unable to meet.

The *Inquirer* also reported that the Trump reelection campaign has sued Pennsylvania state and county officials, saying that mail ballot drop boxes were

unconstitutional in the way they were used in the primary and asking a federal court to bar them in November. Counties run by both Republicans and Democrats had utilized such boxes.

### Hope for Legislative Action

On June 29 the *Capital-Star* reported, "A key Pennsylvania lawmaker said he wants to take another look at state election law to prevent a drawn-out vote count in November." While national politicians have created a highly contentious tone for the national debate, "...Rep. Garth Everett, R-Lycoming and the House State Government Committee Chair, said it didn't necessarily have

to impact Harrisburg's own debate." Recently, the committee, which handles all voting matters, passed an omnibus bill that included numerous tweaks to state election law. "We have never had expanded mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania. We knew there's going to be issues with them. And we knew we were gonna have to do a piece of legislation to address them," Everett told the *Capital-Star*.

Among other changes under consideration are moving the application deadline for mail-in ballots from a week to 15 days before the election, and allowing more time for counties to pre-canvass mail-in ballots. If these

are successful, it would be the third change to state election law in the twelve months before the 2020 presidential election.

Action by the legislature would be a much better outcome than change instituted by the courts, the governor, or local election boards, because the reforms would bear the stamp of legitimacy and be easier to defend against legal challenges. The process also would avoid the last-minute changes that may confuse voters and are more difficult for local election workers to implement. In this overly politicized environment, the last thing the electorate needs is another reason to distrust our civic institutions. ■

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# Another Gem in Our Neighborhood

Jim McClelland

A little gem for us to discover—or rediscover—now that things are opening again is Carpenters' Hall, which rose at 320 Chestnut Street starting in 1770. So, the building is celebrating its 250th birthday this year, although the organization that brought it into being began its work in 1724. The Hall, which sits back from Chestnut Street in its own quiet courtyard, was created as the headquarters of the Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia, which it remains to this day. The name is misleading, since its members were never carpenters in our modern sense of the term, but master builders—architects, building engineers, and contractors—nor did they form a company in the business sense, but an association of professionals. Its approximately 150 members today are all principals in companies of their own. They preserve the Company's history and traditions, and interpret the building to the public. Carpenters' Hall remains the headquarters of the oldest extant craft guild in America, and is now a part of Independence National Historical Park.

The first generation of the Carpenters' Company built the Pennsylvania Statehouse (Independence Hall) and Christ Church, in addition to their own headquarters. Carpenters' Hall's architect was Robert Smith, who created a two-story brick meeting hall in Georgian

style. His plan began as a 50-foot square, from which he removed ten-foot squares from each of its four corners, giving the building a cruciform shape. Smith had also designed the Christ Church steeple, in 1754, which became the city's highest landmark for most of the next century.

In September, 1774, the First Continental Congress met in Carpenters' Hall to consider the colonies' complaints against the British Crown. On September 5, delegates published their list of grievances and recommended that a second such congress should meet in May, 1775, if no redress from London had come in the meantime. When the Second Continental Congress convened in the State House the following spring, blood had already been shed at Lexington and Concord. More than a year later, the delegates voted to break all ties with Britain when they adopted the Declaration of Independence.

Meanwhile, Carpenters' Hall became the meeting-place for initiating the diplomatic process that would bring the government of France's King Louis XVI into the war on the side of the insurrectionists. On three nights during December, 1775, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay met there secretly with the French envoy, the Chevalier de Bonvouloir, to lay the groundwork for that alliance.

While the war for independence took its toll,



Photo courtesy of Carpenters' Hall

parts of the first and second floors of Carpenters' Hall were used as an infirmary for disabled American soldiers. Then, when the British occupied Philadelphia during much of 1777-1778, British officers made themselves at home there and had free use of the books held by the Library Company, which was housed at the time on the second floor. Reportedly, the Brits were respectful of the collection, returning what they had borrowed.

Once the war was won, Carpenters' Hall became home to new institutions. During the 1780s, the American Philosophical Society rented the first floor's west room to house its scientific apparatus and astronomical instruments. By 1794, the first floor was leased to the First Bank of the United States until its own building on 3rd Street was finished. After that bank's demise, the Second Bank of the U.S. leased space in the Hall from 1816 to 1821. Later in that decade, the Franklin Institute came into being and was first headquartered here.

Given its important connections to much early American history, it is no surprise that Carpenters' Hall is visited annually by more than 150,000 tourists from around the globe (2020 will no doubt be an anomaly because of the COVID-19 epidemic). A great many dignitaries have paid their respects.

Philadelphia has so many sites of unmatched importance to our nation's history that we who live in the heart of that assembly may scarcely notice a building that would be a central attraction in any other American city. But Carpenters' Hall is more than worth our attention. A capital campaign is currently underway to raise two million dollars by 2021 to support renovation and restoration efforts of this important piece of our heritage. ■

*If a group, or groups, of Hopkinson House residents would like to tour this historic building, they should email Alex Palma, Assistant Director: alexpalma@Carpentershall.org.*

# The Friends of the Independence Branch Library

Joe Baker, president of The Friends of the Independence Branch Library

We love our library. That's why community members organized back in 2001 to form the Friends of the Independence Branch Library. We knew the city only provided so much funding for materials for the library. We thought our little Friends group could add the 'icing on the cake' to augment the library's offerings and help tailor it to our community's needs. Little did we know that, ultimately, we'd be supporting essential services and purchases.

Nothing has brought home the importance of the Independence Branch, at 18 South 7th Street, more than the closing of all the libraries due to the corona-

virus pandemic. This spark of light and information, so much taken for granted, disappeared from our lives. People who needed to use a computer but didn't have one lost the free, easy access to the library's computers. People missed their English as a Secondary Language classes and citizenship classes. The little ones lost their morning story time get-togethers. Summer family programs featuring musicians, magicians and culturally exciting programs were canceled. Book clubs, science classes, poetry readings—all gone. As the world returns to normal, the Friends will continue to work with the librarians to access the library's needs and see where we can help.

We'll continue to buy books and supplies and fund programs.

In addition to this physical support, we join with other library Friends' groups across the city to advocate for more resources for the Free Library. This means talking to our city councilperson and contacting the mayor at budget time. Our advocacy has been successful in slowly moving to restore the Free Library's budget to pre-2008 levels. This latest financial crisis to hit the city has us all dealing with harsh realities, but we must keep emphasizing the Free Library's importance, especially for the less fortunate among our neighbors. Library services

are so much more than checking out a book, and people need those services.

The Friends of the Independence Branch Library is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. We have over 180 members in the community who support our branch. The Friends support the library through members' donations, an ongoing used book sale, and with grants we receive. The Friends have raised and spent about \$1,000 a month for the Independence Branch. We always welcome new members. Join with us. Please see our website [indyfriends.net](http://indyfriends.net) for membership information and to receive our digital newsletter. ■



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# Summer Tomato Salads

Jane Hickman

Delicious local tomatoes are especially abundant from July through September. They can be used in soups, main dishes, drinks, and salads. Although we think of tomatoes as vegetables, botanically they are considered fruit, further classified as berries on the plant *Solanum lycopersicum*.

The origin of the tomato is traced back to 8th century Mesoamerica, where they were cultivated by indigenous peoples of Mexico. During the 16th century, Spanish Conquistadors introduced the tomato to Europe. From there, tomatoes spread around the world. Tomatoes always taste better

if you buy them fresh and firm, and then let them sit on a windowsill or ripen on your kitchen counter for a few days. Never put tomatoes in the refrigerator, unless they are very ripe and you won't be eating them right away. Below are two recipes for fresh, simple salads, with the tomato as the star! ■

## Chefs' Corner



Avocado Caprese Salad

### Tomatoes with Blue Cheese and Balsamic Vinegar

#### Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1½ Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 large tomatoes, cored, then sliced or cut into chunks (or cherry tomatoes)
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped green onion
- 1 ounce crumbled blue cheese
- 2-3 shredded fresh basil leaves
- Salt and pepper

#### Directions

- 1 Mix oil and vinegar in a small bowl. Whisk until blended.
- 2 Arrange tomatoes on a serving platter. Spoon dressing over the tomatoes. Sprinkle green onion, blue cheese, and basil evenly. Salt and pepper to taste.

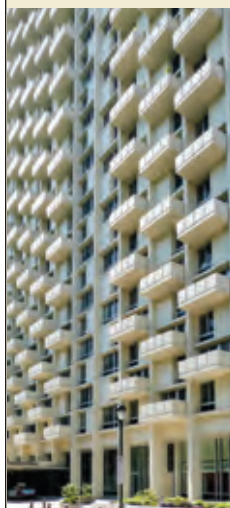
### Caprese Salad with optional Avocado

#### Ingredients

- 3 large tomatoes, cored, then cut into ¼" slices
- 1 pound fresh mozzarella, cut into ¼" slices
- 1 ripe avocado, sliced (optional)
- 15-20 leaves of fresh basil
- Balsamic glaze
- Salt and pepper

#### Directions

- 1 Layer alternating slices of tomato, mozzarella, avocado (if you're using it), and basil.
- 2 Drizzle with balsamic glaze. Season with salt and pepper.
- 3 To make your own glaze, cook balsamic vinegar down until it reduces to a syrup-like consistency. Add a little brown sugar if you like it sweeter.



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