



What's Inside

Lynn Miller

Sarah Kelly, President of Council, reminds us of recent good times and projects we have completed thanks to our neighborly community in Hopkinson House. She also brings us up to date on projects to be undertaken during the coming year.

Gary van Niekerk, our new General Manager, expresses his appreciation to residents who have stopped by to introduce themselves. He outlines a number of major projects to be rolled out in the near future, and informs us that all members of the staff and Council will soon have new email addresses. He will provide those new addresses to all residents once they are available.

Starting with this issue of *on the House*, we'll include a regular Committee Corner feature. Chairpersons of Hopkinson House standing committees are invited to provide us with information about their current and forthcoming activities, allowing all residents to be informed about matters ongoing and forthcoming in our community.

Our regular contributor, **Concha Alborg**, introduces us to a resident of Hopkinson House, Bill Stigliani, who moved to Hopkinson House from Iowa so that he could be closer to his children

following his retirement. Bill had a distinguished academic career as an environmental scientist in Iowa.

A new resident, **Jill Horn**, is the former owner of a prepared food stall in Reading Terminal Market. She lets us know what it's like to have lost both her sense of smell and of taste. You'll be glad to learn that she has now made the necessary adjustments.

Martha Cornog assigned herself to learning more about the lives of a number of Black explorers, whose accomplishments she summarizes for us in this issue. Her subjects range from shipmates of Columbus to a woman active today as a diver who helps salvage slave ships lost long ago at sea.

Long-time resident **Ramona Johnson** reminds us of the important activities of our neighborhood organization, the Society Hill Civic Association. She lays out all the reasons Hopkinson House residents should become members and support its mission. Good times are among the benefits.

Michael Neff shares another of his childhood fantasies. He imagines a game of chess in a fairy-tale setting as a metaphor for how children enter the game of life.

on the HOUSE

The Newsletter of
Hopkinson House • Winter 2024



I take note of two recent publications by our own Concha Alborg. Both are essentially memoirs written by each of her parents during a period in the 1930s when they were not yet married, but engaged, and separated by the hardships of the Spanish civil war.

Bari Shor gives us photos of a number of residents enjoying our holiday party early in December in the lobby. Council tells us that another neighborly gathering will be scheduled sometime in January in our by-then newly renovated solarium.

For **Joseph Quinn**, his trip to France last autumn succeeded in immersing him in the world of a number of modern

French artists, which included visits to several of their studios. It also allowed him to catch up with some ex-pat friends now living in southwestern France.

2024 marks two important anniversaries for Carpenters' Hall, the elegant, small neighbor across the street from Independence Hall. I recently discussed plans for how those anniversaries will be celebrated with the building's executive director, who pulled back the veil.

Finally, turn to our Chef's Corner to see recipes **Johanne Lamarche** proposes especially for the cold days of January that follow what may have been overindulgence during the holidays. ■

Occasional Photo by Bari Shor



Snow, Washington Square, not yet this winter.

on the HOUSE

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Find past issues of
on the House at
www.thehopkinsonhouse.com

Message from Council

Sarah A. Kelly

I hope you all have enjoyed a peaceful holiday season and are looking forward to the new year. On the Council, we are relieved (happy doesn't seem like the right word here) to have gotten through our budget process for the upcoming year, although we will continue to examine ways in which we might be able to reduce our expenses as the year progresses. With great assistance from our general manager, Gary van Niekerk, and our assistant manager, Jason Love, who helped many of you set up your online accounts, our transition to FirstService Residential as our new management company occurred as of December 1. We look forward to a successful partnership with FirstService. A key aspect of completing our new management team is to find the right candidates to fill two important openings—our Chief Engineer position and our office Executive Assistant. We actively continue to search.

As I write this message over the holiday week,

I'm reflecting on the spirit of neighborliness we enjoy in Hopkinson House. Our annual holiday toy drive was a tremendous success, residents generously contributed to the employee holiday fund (despite the difficult budget news we all received), and we hosted two budget-conscious but very enjoyable and well-attended holiday parties: the annual tree and menorah lighting party in the lobby on December 9 and the employee holiday party in the solarium on December 15. The solarium is looking wonderful with the renovation it has received as part of our HVAC project; the solarium required extensive work during the project as all of the risers end (or do they begin?) in the solarium.

Looking ahead to 2024, Council is committed to establishing the priorities for our upcoming capital projects. The building

façade is a critical area, as a number of Hopkinson House units experienced water incursion from façade leaks, especially during the December 17-18 rainstorm, and unfortunately we can expect more of those wind-driven rainstorms in the future. Our domestic hot water tanks are also in need of replacement. The elevator replacement project is also on the list, but because of a good inspection report just received, that project may be able to wait until 2025. We continue to review and plan for the roof deck project, and we are seeking a structural assessment of our garage. Happily, our capital reserve is well-funded to accomplish all of these projects. We'll keep you posted.

Meanwhile, I hope your new year is off to a good start. Happy 2024 to everyone at Hopkinson House. ■



Sarah A. Kelly is a retired lawyer, who is serving her second stint as HHOA Council president, almost 20 years after the first time she served in that capacity.

Residents' Corner

Residents wishing to make comments or observations on the current issue may send them to: "The Editor," lynnm3@comcast.net. Those who do not have a computer can place their comment in an envelope addressed to "Editor, *on the House*" and give the envelope to the employee at the Resident Services Desk.

Your comments will be published in the next issue of the newsletter.

Anonymous comments will not be accepted.

The editor reserves the right to reject opinions/comments, etc., if they are deemed inappropriate or can involve the association in legal troubles.

Committee Corner

Here is the first committee report from the Chair of the Pool Committee, Jo Anna Farber:

The wonderful 2023 pool season is just a pleasant memory, but the Pool Committee continues to meet during the off season, eagerly anticipating 2024's opening day! We'll work on

possible no/low-cost initiatives, e.g., safety training/equipment upgrades, removing damaged chaises, extending the wall's blue paint, co-sponsoring resident parties in conjunction with the Social Committee, and surveying the Hopkinson House community about pool-related information.

Message from Management

Gary van Niekerk

Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy, and mutual valuing
—Rollo May

Thank you to all those residents who have stopped by the Management Office and introduced themselves, or whom I have met at the various meetings held since I started in September. You have all made me feel welcome. In time, I hope to meet many more residents. The management team (Jason and I) are readily available most days, so please feel free to stop by at any time with questions or suggestions about your community.

There are many projects and tasks to be undertaken and performed at Hopkinson House. These range from basic housekeeping improvements to large-scale projects such as elevator replacement. In conjunction with the Council, I will be working hard to prioritize and tackle these projects in an effective manner. One such administrative project will include updating the email addresses that the Hopkinson House team uses. Each department, Front Desk, Maintenance, Management, and Housekeeping as well as Council will all have new email addresses, so please be on the lookout for that

announcement coming soon and update your records accordingly.

The Association recently engaged FirstService Residential as the managing agent for the property. Transitions such as these can be an interruption to daily life, and I understand that there may be some frustration surrounding the process. Please know that we continue to work hard to make sure the data transfers correctly and that the process of signing up

for the Resident Portal and/or ACH payments (ClickPay) is as painless as possible. If you do note an inaccuracy or require assistance with signing up to the Portal, please do not hesitate to contact either Jason or myself.

I look forward to serving the community and focusing my energies on improving the appearance of, and services to, the community by creating an environment that is meaningful and a great place to call home. ■



Gary van Niekerk has been managing condominiums, including both the Ayer and Lippincott condos on Washington Square, for more than fifteen years.

In Memoriam: Murray Savar Remembered

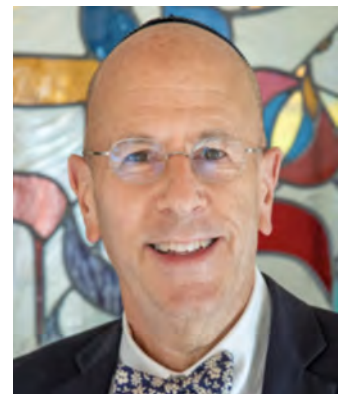
Long-time resident Murray Savar died last October 30 at age 68.

He will be affectionately remembered throughout Hopkinson House as the music director of the Agnes Irwin School, who for many years brought his student choir, the Bel Cantos, to provide us with a cappella

Christmas songs at our annual holiday party in the lobby. Murray was chair of the Visual and Performing Arts Department at Agnes Irwin, where he taught music and drama for 47 years, creating and directing hundreds of concerts and plays throughout his time there. He was himself an accomplished singer and

composer who created a musical history of the Agnes Irwin School for its 125th anniversary in 1995.

His many friends at Hopkinson House remember him as caring and compassionate, with a remarkable ability to engage with others and bring out the best in them. ■



You are invited to join

Washington Square Citizens League

Washington Square Citizens League is a nonprofit organization with more than 140 members, most of whom live in Hopkinson House.

If you are not a member and would like to join, contact Martha Cornog at martha.cornog@gmail.com, or find a link to the membership form at <https://thehopkinsonhouse.com/activities/>

Membership Fee: \$10 per year.



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Getting to Know Our Neighbors

Bill Stigliani: Where Faith and Science Meet

Concha Alborg

Bill Stigliani moved to Hopkins House from Iowa over six years ago to be closer to his children who live in the New York City area. He is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Northern Iowa, where he was Director of the Center for Energy & Environmental Education and taught environmental science and sustainability for 22 years. Bill received a PhD in chemistry from Princeton University in 1971, but found chemistry to be too limiting for his broader range of interests. Auditing a brand-new course at Princeton entitled “Environmental Chemistry,” taught by Professor Tom Spiro, opened up a new horizon for Bill. It launched his career as an environmental scientist, and he and Tom went on to co-author five university textbooks on environmental chemistry. During his academic and research career, Bill published 68 journal articles and presented at 86 conferences, 20 as the keynote speaker, including 14 at international conferences.

He is most proud of his eight years (1986-1994) as Senior Research Scholar at the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA) in Luxemburg, Austria. There he had the opportunity to collaborate with Soviet scientists on global environmental problems of mutual interest. Shortly after his arrival at IIASA the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl exploded 700 miles to the east. In his own words, it was “one of the most

transformative experiences of my life. The prevailing winds blow from east to west, so the toxic plume from the explosion blew into western Europe. I remember well the day it passed over Vienna. My immediate concern was for the safety of my children, ages one, two, and four. A massive public panic ensued, made all the worse by the lack of authoritative information about the impacts of the explosion.” Bill decided at that precise moment to dedicate his life toward preserving the planet for the sake of his children and future generations. And he has kept his word, working on climate change, toxic chemical pollution, and depletion of land and water resources. Closer to home, Bill was a Staff Officer and Project Director at the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, which gave him practical knowledge on national policy perspectives.

The list of Bill Stigliani’s honors is as long as his research projects. Among them are the National Academy of Sciences Certificate of Appreciation for Outstanding Service on the Landmark 1983 Publication on Risk Assessment; a World Wildlife Fund Diploma for Supporting Preservation of Tropical Rain Forests; the Governor’s Iowa Environmental Excellence Award for Preserving and Protecting Iowa’s Natural Resources; and appointment to Governor Culver’s Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council.



Bill Stigliani

Bill has always been guided by his strong Catholic faith. In Spain in 2015, he walked the Camino de Compostela from Pamplona to Santiago—a thirty-six-day journey—and, not surprisingly, it was a life-changing experience for him. “One of my fondest memories,” he says, “is walking through the eucalyptus forests of Galicia at daybreak, just when nature woke up to greet the rising sun. At that moment I was no longer a scientist observing nature. Rather, I was just a part of it all, in communion with all the plants and animals sharing this beautiful moment as morning was breaking. I often return to this memory to refresh myself.”

Since his retirement in 2016, Bill has continued his faith-based work at Old Saint Joseph’s Church. For the last three years, he has served as Chair of the Care for Creation Committee. As such he has written with his committee a document titled *Caring for Creation*:

100 Reasons for Hope about organizations and people working worldwide to heal the planet. Another project dear to his heart is Faith, Food and Friends, a program sponsored by Old St. Joseph’s that provides lunches and counselling to homeless people, treating them as guests.

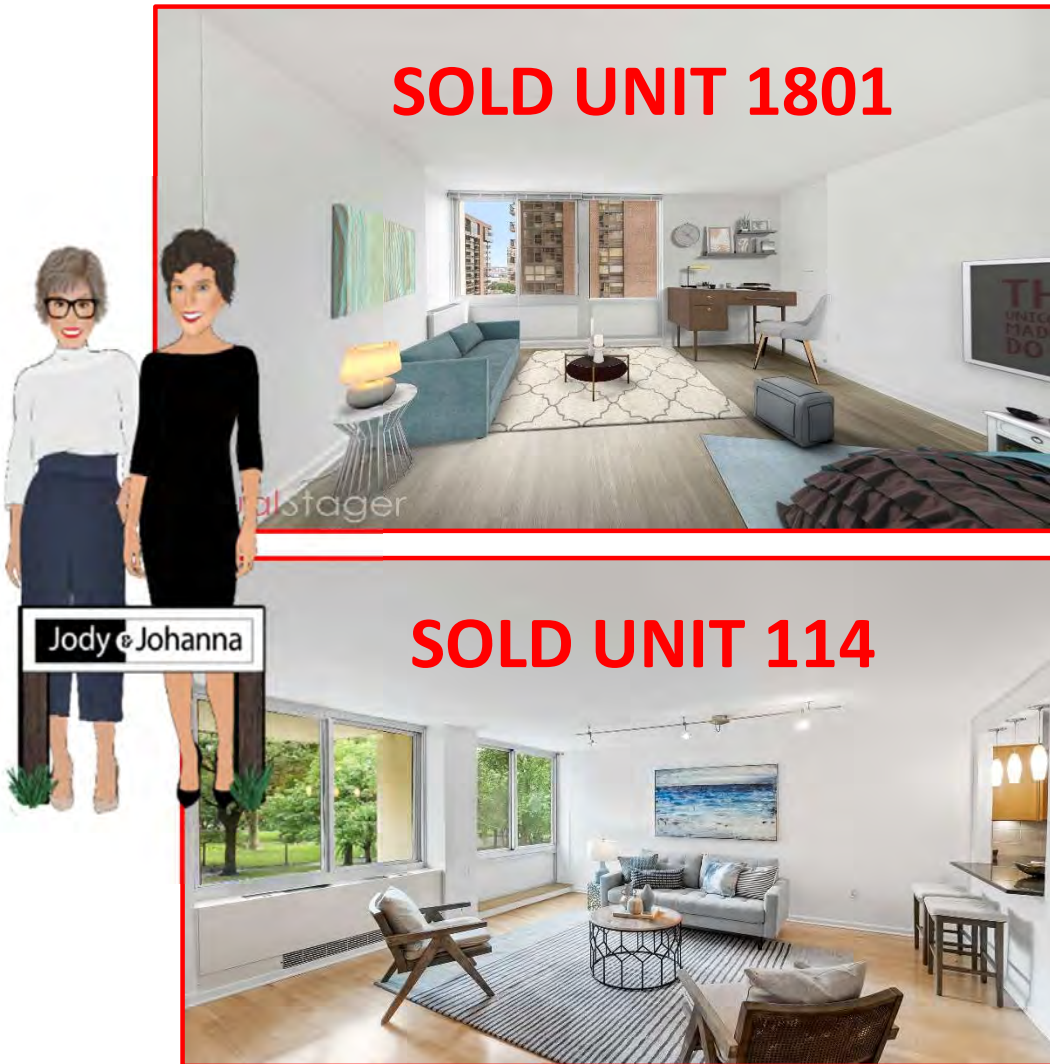
Just as Chernobyl made Bill reflect on the lives of his children, the current state of our planet now threatens the well-being of his grandchildren’s generation. They will bear the consequences of our sins unless we have the courage to do the right thing for their sake.

Bill Stigliani’s commitment to science and faith is profound. He tells us, “I am an environmental scientist and I am a Catholic and I embrace both of these ‘I am’s’ as a seamless integration. My faith informs and encourages my environmentalism, and my knowledge of the environment and earth systems inform my faith.” ■



Concha Alborg, PhD, is a retired academic and author originally from Spain. She writes fiction, creative non-fiction and a blog, “Epilogues/Epílogos.” www.conchaalborg.com

We have been busy at The Hopkinson House



“Jody and Johanna are the best! They have sold, and helped us purchase our homes/condos over the years. In each instance they have given us sound advice, gone the extra mile, and been delightful to work with. I cannot say enough good things about them, and my husband and I feel so grateful have had them by our side.”

Kathy Gosliner seller of 114

Jody & Johanna

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Losing Some of My Senses

Jill Horn

Possessions such as gold chains, sets of fine china, or silver are not meaningful to me. But being able to taste and smell was a priority. Even before I cooked for a living, I could boast about my “bec fin,” or fine senses, which were an invaluable asset in turning out perfectly seasoned food. Once they were gone, I realized that I had a huge loss to deal with.

A few lectures were available on the subject, so I approached the Monell Institute of Smell and Taste, to no avail. But now I have a new plan: “creamy and crunchy” has become my mantra. I now add creamy food such as yogurt to smoothies with frozen bananas and other food

high in proteins to make them as healthy as possible. I have added more raw cabbage to my salads and am pleased with how crunchy they are.

I have modified crunchy to save my aging teeth by soaking my granola overnight, and adding yogurt. I look forward to my breakfast every morning.

My crunchy has become a panoply of various lettuces, and all colors of peppers, even green, which I rejected when I could taste. All the vegetables that I previously included on my crudité platters, such as cauliflower, carrots, and celery, are on hand also. I do prefer my broccoli and Brussels sprouts blanched. Amazingly

enough, when I bite into a cherry tomato, I get a delightful spray of the ocean, a slightly salty memory.

No, I have not become a vegan and feel more of an omnivore, especially when I eat out. I have spare ribs, a variety of seafood and shellfish, and actually crave shrimp. At home, I usually have salmon and chicken on hand as an entrée, or mixed in with my salads for variety. Nor have I been withering away. I was quite pleased at my last visit with my primary doctor’s evaluation of my blood work.

She thinks that my diet, along with the supplemental vitamins I take, are keeping this 81-year-old woman in fine fettle.

My loss of smell is, alas, a sadder tale. I have only my memory in that area, and I have to admit that mine is not as reliable as it once was. Perhaps my photographing of flowers and foods that were once so fragrant to me can pique my imagination!

Yes, I am proud that I have found my peace and my place in dealing with the loss of these dear possessions. ■



Jill Horn moved to Hopkinson House not long ago after retiring from a career in the food industry. For years, she operated a food stall at Reading Terminal Market.

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LETS CONNECT



Black History Month: Exploring Black Explorers

Martha Cornog

From sea to sea, from pole to pole, from ocean bottom to outer space: Black explorers have gone everywhere! This selection comprises just a small percentage of those explorers over the past 500 years. ■



Statue of Pedro Alonso Niño by Anselmo Iglesias Poli, at the Convent of San Francisco de Moguer, Spain.

Pedro Alonso Niño (ca. 1455–1505) and His Brothers

Christopher Columbus is credited with “discovering” the New World in 1492, but discovering it right along with him were Pedro Alonso Niño and his brothers Francisco and Juan. Pedro piloted the *Santa María*, Juan was owner and shipmaster of the *Niña*, and Francisco a sailor on the *Niña*. Born in Moguer, Spain, Pedro Alonso was also known

as *el Negro*. Their father was a Spanish sailor who had been captured in Ghana, and later coupled with a local woman.

Pedro Alonso accompanied Columbus on a subsequent voyage to the Caribbean and then struck out on his own as a trader. Visiting islands offshore from Venezuela together with rich Spanish merchants,

they parlayed with the native people to trade cheap objects for a quantity of pearls — worth a good deal back in Europe. But when they tried to sell their booty in Spain, they were accused of cheating King Ferdinand out of his share of the profits. Pedro Alonso’s property was confiscated, and he died in prison before his trial ended.



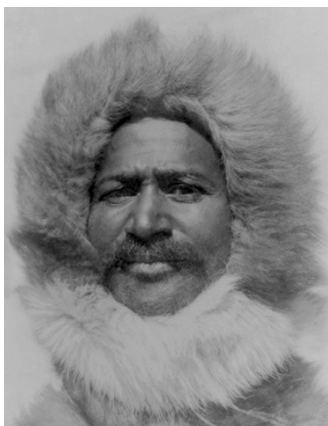
Statue of York by Ed Hamilton, at the Riverfront Plaza, Louisville, Kentucky.

York (1770s–1815+)

The first Black American to cross the continent and see the Pacific, the enslaved York (full name unknown) was introduced as a youngster to a youthful William Clark as a companion/servant. But later when Meriwether Lewis invited Clark to co-lead his 1804–06 cross-continent expedition, York came along not just as Clark’s body man but as a full participant. York could swim —

most crew members could not — and use a rifle skillfully. Dark-skinned, broadly built, and very strong, he drew astonishment and admiration from indigenous tribes en route for his appearance and woodsman skills, which eased relationships with the tribes and gained advantages for the entire expedition. York expected to be freed after returning east to join his wife, but Clark expected

him to resume his former limited, submissive role with only occasional conjugal privileges. When York complained mightily, Lewis whipped and sold him. Documentation is lacking, but the memoir of a later fur trader tells of meeting a “negro man” in what is now Wyoming who described traveling with Lewis and Clark. He was living with a Crow tribe, treated as a chief, and had four wives.



Matthew Henson. Photo: Getty

Matthew Henson (1866–1955)

What twelve-year-old wouldn’t fantasize about running off as a cabin boy on a merchant ship headed to eastern ports! Matthew Henson actually did that. Born to free Black Maryland sharecroppers and inspired by hearing Frederick Douglass speak, he began his exploring life young. Later, he gained fame for accompanying

Commander Robert Peary on seven Arctic expeditions, and reached the North Pole — or near it — in 1909. Henson’s arctic skills grew from “going native:” learning Inuit plus how to handle dog teams and build igloos. Indeed, the final polar expedition included some fifty indigenous men, women, and children as well as Peary’s party. Both

Peary and Henson took Inuit concubines. And although Henson married twice in the U.S., his surviving descendants come only via his son by Akatingwah. After the expedition, he was made a life member of the Explorers Club, received numerous honors, and wrote of his adventures in *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*.

Exploring Black Explorers

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George Washington Gibbs, Jr. (1916–2000)

Serving as a U.S. Navy gunner in World War II was actually a second act for George Gibbs. His opening act found him reporting to Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd for the man's third Antarctic expedition, the first Black American on that frozen continent despite racism from crewmates. In fact, his third and fourth acts were

also out of the usual sequence; postwar, he graduated with a degree in education then worked in IBM's personnel department. Later, he founded and ran his own employment agency.

His duties near the South Pole kept him busy as a cook and mess attendant (the only Navy position

then open to Black Americans), but he also helped catch Adélie penguins for the Smithsonian Institution — working from a rowboat in icy water and dense fog. When out of the Navy, he became a powerhouse for civil rights, integrating several Elks Club lodges and organizing a new chapter of the NAACP.



George Washington Gibbs, Jr.
Photo: History Center of
Olmsted County

Guion Bluford (1942–)

Born in Philadelphia to a teacher and an engineer, Guion Bluford left our city behind to go up — far up. An Air Force ROTC graduate from Penn State, Bluford flew 144 combat missions during the Vietnam War and then worked as instructor pilot while earning his PhD in aerospace engineering with a minor in laser physics. By 1977, he was ready to apply to

NASA to be an astronaut, and was ultimately selected for four Space Shuttle flights from 1983 to 1992. He became the first Black American in space with over 28 days off planet. On the shuttle, he tested the orbiter's 50-foot robotic arm and performed numerous technical operations and experiments. After retiring, he took management jobs in the private sector serv-

ing the aerospace industry. He was appointed recently by President Joe Biden to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's Advisory Board. Bluford has received dozens of accolades. Perhaps most unique is *Hold Fast to Dreams*, a short musical work honoring him by composer Nolan Williams, Jr. and premiered in 2017 by the Philadelphia Orchestra.



Guion Bluford. Photo: NASA

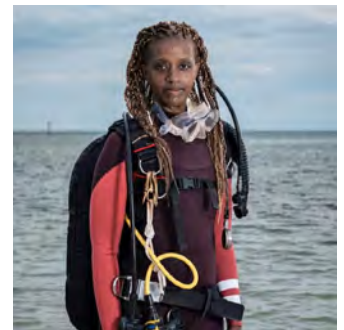
Tara Roberts (c. 1969–)

Imagine finding touchable evidence from hundreds of years ago that gives form to tragic history. Tara Roberts explores the work of *Diving With a Purpose*, a group of fellow volunteer divers who seek out the wrecks of slave ships on the ocean's floor. Roberts had been a writer/editor for *Essence*, *Ebony*, and other publications. Her documentary work on slave ship discoveries led *National Geographic*

to name her Rolex National Geographic Explorer of the Year in 2022.

Of the estimated 500-1,000 shipwrecks of transatlantic slaver vessels, less than 20 have been found and documented. Roberts' podcast for *National Geographic* reveals how she and other divers have inspected four: the *São José Paquete Africa* sailing from Portugal (1794), the Danish ships *Fredericus*

Quartus and *Christianus Quintus* (1710), and the American *Clotilda* (1859). Gathering tangible proof of these terrible voyages gives substance and clarity to horrors of the past, honors the dead, and helps people recognize their own histories.



Tara Roberts.
Photo: *National Geographic*



Martha Cornog reviews graphic novels for Library Journal.

The Society Hill Civic Association is Here for Us

Ramona Johnson

Society Hill surrounds us, and our neighborhood offers something for everyone. Hopkinson House residents enjoy many benefits from being part of Society Hill, and that is why membership in Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) is so important. If you are not already a member, please join. If you are a member, it is time to renew.

Membership is valuable for many reasons. Seven of my favorite reasons follow:

Reason #1: When City Council's Bill 220299, a.k.a. the "Sprinkler bill," was proposed, Hopkinson House and other high-rise buildings were faced with the threat of large expenditures for retrofitting each unit with a sprinkler system. The need for sprinkler-fitting all the units was disputed by many, and SHCA stood up for its constituents in Hopkinson House, Independence Place

and Society Hill Towers. SHCA voted to send a resolution to Councilman Squilla and other Council members, voicing its unanimous opposition to the bill and asking that the bill be withdrawn. You have no doubt heard that the bill is dormant for now, and because it was not considered during the last councilmanic session, it will have to be reintroduced in a future session to be considered. We are grateful that SHCA lent its considerable clout to our residents on this issue.

Reason #2: Conservation and enhancement of Washington Square are paid for in part by SHCA and the gala fundraisers that it holds in the Square. In the last issue of *on the House*, Editor Lynn Miller gave us a very interesting history of the park. Washington Square serves as our front yard as we walk out the door. Many Hopkinson House residents volunteer to do

gardening and cleanup projects throughout all seasons, an effort that is organized by SHCA. Many of us have attended SHCA's Washington Square Affair fundraisers for the park.



SHCA is currently funding restoration of the Washington Square Guardhouse.

Through its Preservation Foundation, the SHCA will fund the ongoing restoration of the Guardhouse, and it is actively working on that effort now. Washington Square is part of the National Park Service, but when individual citizens

and local organizations are inspired to play a role in its preservation and upkeep, changes can happen more quickly. SHCA helps make that happen.

Reason #3: The SHCA e-mails the Spotlight, a weekly e-newsletter, to everyone who signs up for it. Spotlight tells its readers all about local events and topics of interest. I look forward to seeing the announcements, photos and notices that land in my inbox every week.

Reason #4: SHCA pays the Center City District for regular cleaning of sidewalks and sponsors a twice-yearly clean-up day that includes shredding of unwanted paper and electronics. SHCA hires a graffiti-removal expert to remove graffiti from public areas within its boundaries. The SHCA's Clean and Beautiful Committee and

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The Society Hill Civic Association is Here for Us

continued from page 10



SHCA pays for graffiti removal.

the Safe and Sound Committee work to keep the neighborhood well-maintained and safe.

Reason #5: New owners in Society Hill get Welcome Gift Bags! If you are a new owner in this building and haven't received a Welcome Gift Bag yet, please contact me so that we can follow

up. In the bag you will find wine, coffee, chocolates, and special treats. Also included are neighborhood information and gift cards for local restaurants, theaters and shops. Receiving a Welcome Gift Bag is a lovely way to get acquainted with the neighborhood. The bag's contents are donated by local merchants and organizations.

Reason #6: SHCA publishes *The Society Hill Reporter* on a bi-monthly basis and makes it available to all residents via paper copies in our mailroom and a copy on SHCA's website. *The Reporter* keeps us in touch with local events, issues, and businesses as well as fascinating insiders' investigations into the history of Society Hill.

Reason #7: SHCA collaborates with nearby civic associations and police on issues of noise, traffic and crime. Collaboration is one way that we connect to the big city that is our

larger home. It helps to have people working together on these issues that affect all of us.

There are many more reasons for being part of the organization. Check them out via the website at societyhillcivic.org. You'll find much more information about how Society Hill Civic Association enhances our daily lives. While you are there, use the opportunity to become a member or to renew your membership. A basic household membership is \$50 annually. Seniors and students pay \$40 annually. Tax-deductible contributions can also be made through the website. If you'd prefer to pay by check, there is a form you can print out and instructions for mailing it in with your check.

Join SHCA or renew your membership, and you'll gain a renewed sense of pride in being part of what makes Society Hill such a special place to live. ■



Tova Walton is a recent recipient of SHCA's Welcome Gift Bag.



Ramona Johnson is a long-time resident who now serves as the liaison between Hopkinson House and the Society Hill Civic Association.

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When We Were Young, We Set Out on Our Quest

Michael Neff

*When we were young
We set out on our quest.
We found an old chest filled with costumes
And chess pieces.
We dressed up
And stepped onto the game of life.*



Michael Neff has been painting and teaching for more than fifty years.



Surveying the Field



About to Set Out



Entering the Game



The Tower

Concha Alborg Remembers Her Parents in Two Publications

Lynn Miller

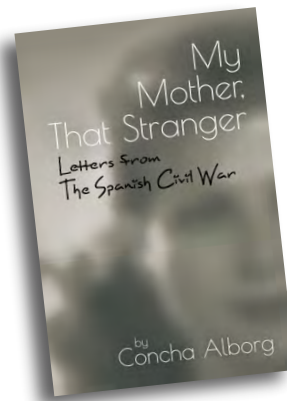
Long-time resident Concha Alborg needs no introduction to the readers of *on the House*. As a regular contributor to our quarterly paper, her writing appears in virtually every issue. As her name suggests, her heritage is Spanish. She was born in Valencia, grew up in Madrid, and has lived in the U.S. since the 1960s. After obtaining her PhD from Temple, for years she taught contemporary Spanish literature at St. Joseph's University where now, in retirement, she is a professor emerita.

Concha has recently published two books about her parents that are also the products of her parents' own writing. Her father, Juan Luis Alborg, was a well-known literary historian and critic in Spain. While Concha was preparing for a symposium at the University of Malaga in 2014 marking the centenary of her father's birth, she discovered more than 800 letters written in the 1930s between her newly engaged parents. At the time, her father was on the Republican war front fighting the forces of

Francisco Franco, and her mother had an insider's view of the political and military situation while working in a government co-op in Valencia, which became the official capital of the Republican government in November, 1936.

With her discovery in hand, Concha turned first to a work about her mother. The letters showed her mother's passion to express her complex feelings in very difficult circumstances, something her daughter had not previously understood. The young woman who was not yet her mother described the contrasting burdens of family life in Valencia and the life of her fiancé soldier on the front lines. Concha's publication is *My Mother, That Stranger. Letters from the Spanish Civil War* (Sussex Academic Press), 2019.

Then Concha turned to her father, whom she featured in her latest book, published in Spanish under the title *Retrato del joven escritor Juan Luis Alborg: Epistolario durante la Guerra Civil* (University of Malaga



Press), 2023. Spanish-speakers will know that translates to *A Portrait of the Young Writer, Juan Luis Alborg: Letters during the Civil War*. The book is not yet available in English, but a translation of the press release tells us "this correspondence describes the years of the Spanish Civil War and the existential situation of a young soldier who is anticipating a happy life with his fiancée. It is unique because he is also foreseeing his career as a writer before becoming

the literary historian and critic as he is known today."

Concha Alborg has made a successful life for herself as an American and a Philadelphian, but one who has kept her Spanish heritage alive and honored her parents by documenting such an important phase of their private lives. In the process, she has added a poignant and sensitive personal narrative to our understanding of one of the seminal political events that occurred nearly a century ago. ■



Lynn Miller is a professor emeritus of Political Science at Temple University, now a sometime writer and painter. www.lynn-miller.net

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Visiting France: the Art of Life

Joseph Quinn

In the fall of 2023, I spent five weeks in France studying Post-Impressionist and Modern art. Along the way, I learned that a meaningful aesthetic experience could happen not only in a museum, but in sacred spaces, humble ateliers, and even an asylum for the mentally disturbed.

My group tour began in Nice, convenient for exploring the Provençal haunts of Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Matisse. It continued with a cruise up the Rhône and concluded in Paris. I extended my stay in Paris for more museum-going, and then wound my way down to the Dordogne region, where I had the privilege of spending time with American expat friends who have retired there.

A few kilometers from Nice, I made a discovery

not on the tour agenda. In Villefranche-sur-Mer, on the sparkling Mediterranean coast, sits the tiny Chapelle Saint-Pierre, designed and executed by French writer, artist, and filmmaker, Jean Cocteau. Inside, he covered the curving, arched walls with designs mingling Biblical and modern imagery, the sublime and earthly, in his exuberant, semi-surrealistic style. The visit itself is surreal: inside, hushed reverence; outside, crowded beach cafes and the conspicuous materialistic trappings of the Riviera social set.

I found a very different religious space in Henri Matisse's Chapelle du Rosaire in Vence. Toward the end of his life, after Matisse had what he considered a miraculous recovery from cancer, he designed this starkly modern building for an

order of Dominican nuns. Luminous stained glass windows in cool blues and greens bathe the chapel in an otherworldly light. By contrast, the stations of the cross and other religious imagery are depicted on the walls in shiny black-and-white ceramic tiles. Matisse considered the chapel his ultimate masterpiece, a place where he wanted visitors to experience "a lightening of the spirit...even if they are not believers."

Visiting a museum is a great way to see art, but it doesn't come close to the thrill of stepping into an artist's studio where masterpieces have been born. Paul Cézanne's work can be seen in museums around the world, including our own Barnes Foundation and Philadelphia Museum of Art. But standing in his Aix-en-Provence atelier, with northern light

streaming in through a wall of windows, illuminating his preserved painting materials and some of his favorite subjects — bowls of fruit, ginger jars, skulls — was an experience beyond the purely aesthetic. I had the sense I was in one of his paintings, not just looking at one. After being in that mystical creative space, every Cézanne still life or landscape I see will vibrate with an almost tactile immediacy.

My encounter with Vincent van Gogh on this trip was also more than just an exercise in art appreciation. In the village of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, I visited St. Paul de Mausole, a mental hospital where van Gogh spent some of the most productive months of his life. In about fifty-three weeks, while undergoing treatment for the mental imbalance that plagued his later years, he produced 143 oil paintings and more than 100 drawings. From his room, and on these grounds, he saw and indelibly captured sunflowers, irises, and starry nights. It's still an active residential psychiatric institution specializing in art and music therapy. The poignancy of our visit was heightened by the sound of joyful, enthusiastic voices singing in a courtyard behind a high wall.

The museums and iconic sights of Paris are perpetually teeming with people and activity. At the not-to-be-missed Louvre, Orsay and Pompidou, come continued on page 17



Looking at Monet's swooping, wall-spanning waterlilies in the Musée de l'Orangerie is a watery immersive experience.

Visiting France: the Art of Life

continued from page 16

prepared with sharp elbows and lots of patience if you want a sliver of private time in front of the masterpieces everybody wants to see. So what if you can't get within fifty feet of the Louvre's star attraction, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, besieged by hundreds of fans hoisting their cell phone cameras in the air. A few steps away are galleries bursting with French, Italian, Spanish and Flemish golden age paintings. Find consolation in the sublime spirituality of da Vinci's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*.

Smaller venues were less hectic. As you enter the curved rooms inside the Musée de l'Orangerie specially built to house Monet's diaphanous waterlilies, discreet signs ask you to speak softly to preserve a peaceful, meditative air. You're not so much looking at them as you are immersed in their watery world. Inside Sainte-Chapelle the atmosphere is always hushed, as visitors gape in awe at its stunningly beautiful medieval stained glass windows, almost more aesthetic stimulation than the eye can bear. I found an air of Eastern serenity at the Guimet Museum of Asian Art (in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower), and studied quiet in the Musée du Luxembourg. After taking in an exhibit, you can step outside and stroll through the manicured fifty-five acre *jardin*.

My hotel room in Saint-Germain-des-Prés offered



In his Chapelle Saint-Pierre, Jean Cocteau covered every surface with Biblical and modern imagery in his unique semi-surrealistic style. Image: Pinterest



Visiting Cézanne's atelier, with his painting materials and still life subjects, is like walking into one of his canvases.

a classic view of the Seine with its constant traffic of sightseeing boats. But I couldn't wait to get out and explore the neighborhood: the refuge of the charming Place Dauphine, Notre

Dame, its façade largely intact, but now surrounded by cranes and scaffolding, and Shakespeare and Company Bookstore. Where else do you have to stand in line to enter

a bookstore? Also, nearby I found Le Procope, said to be the oldest café in Paris (ca. 1686), and the studio where Picasso painted his signature work, *Guernica*. continued on page 19

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Visiting France: the Art of Life

continued from page 17



In the Chapelle du Rosaire, Matisse contrasted jewel-like tones of stained glass and ceramic tile to create a serene, modern look. Image: The Art Pilgrim



Van Gogh's room in St. Paul de Mausole mental hospital, where he completed 143 paintings—sunflowers, irises, starry nights.

I consider myself fortunate to have life-long friends who pursued careers overseas and ultimately settled in southwest France, not far from Toulouse—and who are always eager to offer bed and board to a traveler from the U.S.!

Bill & Gil occupy a rustic, renovated schoolhouse in miniscule Montirat (population 200). Standing on the second floor balcony you look out on nothing but a forested hillside.

The garden with its flowers and herbs is an ideal place to sit and read and cherish the small-town silence.

Not far away, in Caminel (population 250), Taffy

and Jean Pierre have their own retreat on a small plot of land where they grow vegetables and fruit trees. Performing seasonal chores like plowing, cutting firewood, and putting up preserves are part of the daily round. But Jean Pierre still devotes time to his home-based publishing business, and Taffy perfects her weaving skills on one of the three looms in their living room.

After several feverish weeks consuming some of the best art *in* life, what could be more satisfying than spending time with friends enjoying the art of life? ■



Joseph Quinn is a retired technical writer who likes to write about architectural treasures in our neighborhood and his travel adventures.

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Lifting the Veil on Carpenters' Hall

Lynn Miller

Recently, I sat down with Michael Norris, Executive Director of the Carpenters' Company, to acquaint myself with the Company's hall and its history. Almost the first thing he said to me was that his central mission is to "lift the veil" on the building by arranging events, often in collaboration with other organizations in and around Independence Park, to attract local residents in addition to tourists from around the world.

We'll sample some of those events in a moment, but first, a reminder: 2024 is the 300th anniversary of the founding, in 1724, of the Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia. Exactly 50 years later, in 1774, the First Continental Congress met within its walls. In a large room on the ground floor, 56 delegates from 12 colonies — Georgia didn't participate — prepared the way for a Second Congress, which rolled out in Pennsylvania's State House in 1775. Before that Congress adjourned in 1776, its delegates broke the American colonies' ties to Great Britain and signed the Declaration of Independence.

If you suppose that the Carpenters' Company was founded as a kind of union to serve those laborers who wielded hammers and saws, you are only partially right. It is in fact the oldest design guild in the U.S.,

which, from its beginning, included architects, engineers, contractors, building craftspeople and other professionals — everyone, in other words, who had a role in the building trades. Its creation was inspired by London's Worshipful Company of Carpenters, which dates from the middle ages. These days, the Company's mission is largely to preserve and interpret the hall as an active historic monument. The most recent renovation of Carpenters' Hall began in April, 2020, and was nearly completed when an arsonist set a fire in the basement on Christmas Eve, 2022. Fortunately, the flames were contained there, although some smoke damage occurred on upper floors, along with water damage to archival materials when the sprinkler system was activated. The fully restored hall reopened on July 3 of last year.

The 300th anniversary is kicking off on January 18 to celebrate the birthday of the master builder of Carpenters' Hall, Robert Smith, a Scottish immigrant and American patriot. On January 31, the Company will partner with the Museum of the American Revolution to present Pulitzer-Prize-winning biographer Stacy Schiff, who will discuss her latest book, *The Revolutionary: Samuel Adams* as it pertains to Adams's participation in the First Continental

Congress. Each weekend in May the public is invited to Carpenters' Court for free demonstrations in such skills as brickwork, stone carving, blacksmithing, and carpentry.

From July 15 to 20, the First Young People's Continental Congress will bring high school students and teachers from the 13 original colonies to the Hall to explore the nation's history and take action on current civic issues. Then in 2025, the Second such Congress will gather students and teachers from all across America. For the public as a whole, in September and October, look for free public re-enactments of key moments and stories from the First Continental Congress.

Other events commemorating these anniversaries include the Carpenters' Cup Golf Outing to benefit the Company's scholarship fund. It takes place on July 30 at the historic Liberty Hill course in Montgomery County, which, long before it became a golf course, was one of the sites where Washington fought back the British occupation of Philadelphia.

On October 25-26, a delegation from the aforementioned London Company of Carpenters



Seal of The Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia

will be in Philadelphia to participate in the 300th anniversary celebration. That culminates in what is described as a "spectacular night of food, fun and fellowship at the historic Bellevue Hotel." Why the Bellevue? Because it was where the Carpenters' Company held their 200th Anniversary Gala in 1924. Rumor has it that they are ready to reserve the same facility for their 400th anniversary in 2124.

Weeks ago, the Global Philadelphia Association presented a Globy Award for Historical Preservation and Leadership to Carpenters' Hall's Michael Norris. Now that he has lifted the veil for us, you'll no doubt want to visit Carpenters' Hall, either on your own or as a participant in some of the events being hosted there. You will experience one of the gems in Philadelphia's crown of iconic historical sites. ■



Lynn Miller is a professor emeritus of Political Science at Temple University, now a sometime writer and painter. www.lynn-miller.net

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Healthy Winter Cooking

Johanne Lamarche

The colder weather has us hunkering down and craving some comfort foods while also wanting to move away from the holiday indulgences. A bright citrus salad with lots of crunch

and flavor from fennel and almonds is sure to brighten the winter months and awaken your tastebuds with its tangy orange-caper-Dijon vinaigrette. Make a big pot of fragrant vegetarian

chickpea and cauliflower stew to enjoy all week. This soup gets a big dose of flavor from its warming spice mix. Both recipes will keep you eating healthy in those long winter months. Dig in! ■

Chefs' Corner

Note: If you have a favorite recipe, we would love to test it and put it in this column. Send your recipes or requests to Johanne Lamarche, frenchgardener@comcast.net.

Orange-Cranberry-Fennel Winter Salad with Caper-Dijon Dressing

Ingredients

For the dressing:

- 1 T red wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 1 T Dijon mustard
- 3 T orange juice
- 2 T olive oil
- 2 T diced shallot
- 1 T orange zest
- 2 T capers, rinsed and roughly chopped
- freshly ground pepper, to taste

For the salad:

- 2 heads of Bibb lettuce, torn
- 1 c thinly sliced fennel bulb
- 1 T fennel fronds, chopped
- 2 Cara Cara oranges with peel and pith removed, thinly sliced
- 1 avocado with pit and skin removed, thinly sliced
- ¼ c dried cranberries
- ½ c blue cheese crumbles
- ¼ c sliced almonds, toasted

Directions

- 1 Place all dressing ingredients in a small jar with tight lid. Shake to mix well. Reserve until ready to toss the salad.
- 2 In a large shallow bowl, spread the Bibb lettuce. Top with orange slices, then sliced fennel and avocado. Sprinkle the blue cheese across the top, dot with the cranberries and finish with the almonds and chopped fennel fronds.
- 3 When ready to eat, toss with caper-Dijon vinaigrette.



Winter Warming: Immunity-Boosting Vegetarian Stew

Ingredients

- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 T olive oil
- 4 carrots, sliced
- 1 sweet potato, diced
- 2 c cooked butternut squash
- 28 oz can of diced tomatoes
- 3 c cauliflower florets
- 3 c vegetable stock
- 14 oz can of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1¼ c raisins
- ¼ c shredded coconut

- 1 T fresh ginger, grated
- 1 T Jeerem-Meerem spice mix (see below)
- lime wedges, to serve
- For the Jeerem-Meerem spice (store excess in airtight jar):
- 2 t ground cumin
- 1½ t ground turmeric
- 1 t cinnamon
- ¼ t ground cloves
- ½ t chili powder
- ¼ t black pepper

Directions

- 1 In a large pot, heat oil and cook onion until translucent. Add carrots and sweet potatoes and cook a few minutes.
- 2 Add broth, tomatoes, cauliflower, spice mix, ginger, and mashed squash. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer 45 minutes.
- 3 Add the chickpeas and raisins and cook a few minutes until raisins are plumped up.
- 4 Serve with a wedge of lime and shredded coconut.



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