

What's Inside

Martha Cornog

The high summer is upon us! And the views out our windows yield masses of green in every direction. Whether you may travel on vacation or not, our writers let you travel in your mind to follow along with present building matters as well as enjoy other accounts of interest.

Council President **LJ Steinig** focuses upon the concepts of "opportunity" and "gratitude" in laying out for us some of the challenges facing Hopkinson House residents and Management over the forthcoming year. We will also need to rely on informed and creative strategic planning, as she describes in her Message from Council.

From Manager **Gary van Niekerk** comes praise for our building's sense of community. With so many complex projects in process, we must—and do, indeed—hang together, calling to mind Benjamin Franklin's famous witticism about the Revolutionary War.

And within our community, Hopkinson House Committee members are hard at work for you. **Jean Papaj**, in her regular Committee Corner feature, keeps you up to date on their current and future activities.

Focusing on another interesting building resident, **Concha Alborg** introduces us to poet

Ernest Yates, who sets our city of Philadelphia as the center in his many books of poetic work. Another poet living here with us is Robert Coles. Both poets have given readings for fellow residents.

Many of you attended that informative Plumbing Forum in May. To help us remember how to cope with drips and leaks, Hopkinson House's Engineering Committee chair **Michael Garz** catches us up on what's being done in the building, and how to prevent and respond to problems or emergencies.

To honor the Semiquincentennial anniversary of our nation, **Michael Neff** shares his re-vision of a classic painting that infuses today's ideals of freedom into a historic event.

Our architecturally curious **Joseph Quinn** reveals the history of an odd center city building: the "incongruent and ridiculous" multipart castle-in-the-air at Chestnut and South Juniper Streets known as the Hale Building.

Continuing with the history theme, **Rebecca Yamin** shares more of the professional life of Hopkinson House architect Oskar Stonorov. He apprenticed to the French master, Aristide Maillol, and collaborated

on the HOUSE

The Newsletter of
Hopkinson House • Summer 2026



with the Italian sculptor, Jorio Vivarelli, including on works for Hopkinson House.

Crossing Washington Square, who can miss the colorful blooms and rich foliage of the garden plots scattered around the perimeter? These fifteen lovely flower beds are all tended by local volunteers, three from Hopkinson House, as I describe with much appreciation.

Our summer recipe from **Johanne Lamarche** presents quiche as a new star for the

season. This savory ricotta pie, tucked into a crisp polenta-parmesan crust, is lighter, naturally gluten-free, and packed with flavor. It's the sort of rustic-elegant dish that slips easily from brunch to dinner, always feeling just right. Paired with a side salad, it is summer on a plate.

On the cover and inside, photographer **Bari Shor** brings bits of the past months to life with her evocative photos of residents engaged in some of the many recent gatherings. ■



Several Hopkinson House residents and their friends stay in shape gracefully through Tai Chi.

on the House

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on the House at
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Message from Council

LJ Steinig

As a writer, my favorite part of being Hopkinson House Owners Association President is getting to write this article. I write, and people care about what I've written, and then they actually read it? Amazing. A writer's dream. But right now, the night before it's due, with all the projects weighing on my mind, even my favorite thing is hard to do.

I want to be excited for summer, with the FIFA World Cup games and our country's Semiquincentennial, but it was 90 degrees this weekend and the pool was closed as it awaits the repair of a leak. And last weekend was windy and cold, nowhere near as fun as a crane-watching experience we had in March 2025.

I want to be excited for summer, but truth be told, I'm having a hard time because I have a lot on my mind. It's in my personality to ruminate, and with everything happening around here, I have a lot to overthink about. Currently, the major projects and the assessment are taking up a lot of space in my brain. And now the transformer and the pool leak have piled on. But mostly, I think about you. Yes, you, reading

this copy of *on the House*. As President, I hear from a lot of you, and I know some folks have concerns. I hope you know that I, and all of Council, are feeling it too.

Let's flip the script, together, shall we? Like I said at the June 1 Town Hall, we, Council and Management, have been working hard to keep you informed. We updated you with a "Frequently Asked Questions" document about the projects and the assessment, we held our first casual Council meet-and-greet in the lobby, and General Manager Gary van Niekerk has begun adding a Management Update feature to the Friday HHOA Notices & Reminders emails. And then we had that June 1 Town Hall, the third one since I've been President. This is a good thing.

Another good thing is that we finally got to share Studio Sustena's vision with you. Many of you seem as excited as I am about how they based the design of our courtyard on the geometry of Washington Square; some of you, less so, and your feedback has been quite helpful. I'm trying to look at the whole situation as

an **opportunity**. It's easy to look at the impending construction and assessment as a negative, but we can just as easily see it as a positive. From the driveway to the courtyard and the pool, we currently have the **opportunity** to make our building more accessible for more people, more sustainable for the planet, and more functional for our community. As challenging as the next few years are going to be, the rewards are truly spectacular. A brand-new roof (two brand new roofs, in fact, since the plaza is the roof of the garage), brand new elevator machinery, improved amenities. We need to look at this not as a disadvantage, but as a long-term investment in our future, as a way to attract new owners and residents to our community.

Another thing that helps me sleep at night is **gratitude**. We are so lucky to have such an incredible staff of professionals here at Hopkinson House. Everyone—the Front Desk, Housekeeping, and Maintenance—does so much to keep our home safe and clean and running. Remember, at the heart of these major

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Residents' Corner

Residents wishing to make comments or observations on the current issue may e-mail them to: "The Editor," c/o martha.cornog@gmail.com.

Those who do not have a computer can place their comments 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 *on the House*.

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.

Message from Management

Gary van Niekerk

A sense of Community. In his seminal 1974 book, psychologist Seymour B. Sarason states that the psychological sense of community is “the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure.”¹

I use this introduction because the Hopkinson House Owners Association as a whole is embarking on a journey not previously seen at Hopkinson House. There is a special assessment in place, numerous large-scale capital projects over the next 5 years, unplanned repairs such as the transformer, and the strategic planning process through which the Association will be trying to improve the building's marketability in Philadelphia, as well as define what it means to be a part of this community and everyday life at Hopkinson House. Keeping a sense of

community will be key in helping us to successfully navigate the next few years.

Residents choose to live at Hopkinson House in part because there is a sense of community, and they believe that it should operate as such—a community that can and should be able to assist its members with all aspects of life involving Hopkinson House and the immediate neighborhood. This could mean telling Management about those neighbors who need assistance, about recommendations for improvements, or even about where services or efforts may be lacking or needed. Your input as a resident is invaluable in making Hopkinson House a great place to live, and in building this sense of community.

Another very important aspect of living in a community is a sense of security. With the increased number of projects on the horizon, there will be many unfamiliar faces in and around the property. Because of this, along with the ever-increasing package

deliveries, we will see an increase in the number of people coming and going for any number of reasons. Added to the contractors and delivery vendors are the routine medical assistants and service providers, housecleaners, guests, and numerous others. Keeping our front desk team informed is extremely important in helping them be both more vigilant and also more helpful as regards expected vendors and guests.

Lastly, a brief word on the unseen sense of community that lies in your own apartment unit: your home. Keeping your home clean, organized, and well-maintained helps our community be safe. This limits fire hazards, reduces the potential for water leaks, and provides access for routine maintenance or unplanned emergencies should they occur. It also helps us keep control of pests.

So while the meaning of

“community” may mean different things to different people when living in a multi-family environment, keeping a few simple things in mind for the betterment of everyone goes a very long way in creating a healthy sense of community. These could include, for example, considering the effect of your actions on others who use the same trash room, hallway, or elevator, and providing input (good or bad) for the betterment of the entire building.

As always, please feel free to reach out to the management team with your comments. We keep all suggestions and/or reports anonymous unless otherwise advised. ■

Notes

(1) Seymour B. Sarason, *The Psychological Sense of Community: Prospects for a Community Psychology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 1974, p. 157.



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

Message from Council

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projects is *life safety*, and General Manager Gary van Niekerk together with Chief Engineer Michael Perez are so thorough, and they take their jobs so seriously. If you see them, make sure that you thank them for all they do.

I am also filled with **gratitude** for the hard work of all Council members

and Committee members. I'm so proud to know and work with so many people dedicated to our building and our community. Keep an eye on your email for the Call for Committees: this is your opportunity to join a committee, and we would love to have your expertise!

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the one committee

that will not be recruiting new members, the ad hoc **Strategic Planning** Committee. As if ruminating about the projects and the assessment wasn't enough, I can't overstress the importance of working



LJ Steinig is a teacher, a writer, a vegan powerlifter, a film photographer, and a train enthusiast. She is currently serving her second term on HHOA Council, and her second year as President.

on a strategic plan *now*. We are doing the important work for the long-term health of our building and our community. I know that everything is a lot right now, but we can do hard things. We got this. ■



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Committee Corner

Jean Papaj

History Committee

Rebecca Yamin, Chair

Under the leadership of Jim Campbell, the History Committee completed and submitted a nomination of Hopkinson House for a historic marker to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). With contributions from all members of the committee, the nomination documents were submitted to the PHMC on May 27 by Gary van Niekerk, acting in his capacity as General Manager of the building. The committee elected new leadership at the last May meeting: Rebecca Yamin as chair and Joe Quinn as the note taker. Appreciation was expressed to Victoria Kirkham for her dynamic, very productive two years as chair of the committee. Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, a member of Council, attended the meeting and will serve as Council liaison to the History Committee.

Social Committee

Millie Korn, Chair

On Wednesday, May 13th, the Social Committee held its first BYOB Movie Night featuring *Mamma Mia!* The Solarium was arranged to resemble a movie theater. Attendees were given written lyrics to the song "Dancing Queen," and small bags of popcorn were available. At the end of the movie, the attendees got to sing and dance to the theme song and expressed that they had a good time. The committee would like to thank all the residents who come out to support our events. The next scheduled event will be BYOB Bingo, to be held July 15th outside on the lower Solarium deck.

The Social Committee is actively seeking additional volunteers to join in the fun of creating and executing events for Hopkinson House residents. If interested, please contact Millie Korn at 214mck@gmail.com.

Pool Committee

Diane GaNun, Chair

Thank you to all who joined us for the start-of-season pool party. Unfortunately, however, the Pool Committee and Management regret that due to a continuing leak, the pool will remain closed for the entire season. Both Council and Management carefully evaluated all options, including completing some repairs, and potentially facilitating additional temporary repairs.

But to properly repair the leak would require extensive and expansive work, similar in nature to what we already planned as part of the pool renovation project slated for 2028. An update will be provided.

Finance Committee

Ann Roantree, Chair

The Finance Committee meets monthly with the Treasurer, General Manager, and several Council members to review the prior month's Financial Reports prepared by First Services Residential (FSR) as well as to discuss current or upcoming events that impact HHOA finances. Reports consist of a Balance Sheet, Operating Income Statement, Reserve Income Statement, Bank Statements, Accounts Receivable, and Accounts Payable.

The Committee monitors Year-to-Date Income and Expense Actual Performance against Budget, Cash Balances, and Delinquencies. Through April, Actual Performance is in line with our 2026 Budget.

The Committee reviews Year-to-Date Use of Reserve Funds as well as Near and Longer Term Forecasted Use of Reserve Funds. This includes the funding of the major projects as well as how to address major unforeseen building emergencies.

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Committee Corner

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The Committee scrutinizes the reports for accuracy, and regularly submits comments and questions to FSR.

The Committee encourages Owners to pay attention to the finances. The Monthly Balance Sheet and Income Statement are available to all Owners. Towards the end of each month, FSR posts the prior month's Financial Report in the Forms & Document Section on your FSR Account Portal. Annual Audits dating from 2008 to 2025 are located in the Documents & Forms section on your BuildingLink account.

Green Committee

Bill Stigliani, Chair

The Green Committee has been very active in 2026. We started with a January Veggie/Vegan Potluck Kickoff event, featuring a smorgasbord of scrumptious dishes to encourage meatless alternatives among residents. A Veggie/Vegan Potluck Earth Day Social was held on April 22. A second Earth Week event was the PAR-Recycle

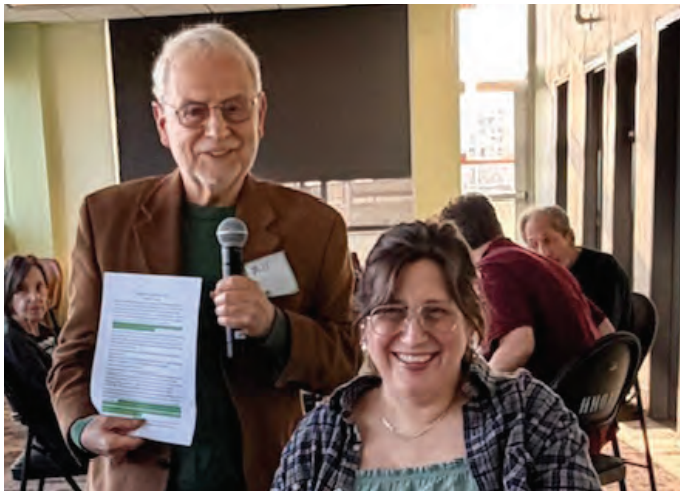
Works Electronic-Waste Pickup on April 25. We collected a half-ton of e-waste! Precious metals processed from that waste are sold to pay for the wages of PAR-Recycle workers, who are formerly incarcerated individuals.

Bill Stigliani led a discussion on "Climate Change: How Might It Affect You & What Can We Do About It?" at the May 4 WSCL discussion forum, which included a synopsis of our building's carbon footprint, four measures to offset that footprint, and the importance of storytelling about measures to combat climate change.

In May, we participated in the Plumbing Forum, where Bill discussed the Green Committee's contribution to the building's water conservation and plumbing maintenance, with particular emphasis on the importance of composting kitchen food wastes. We estimate that our Hopkinson House composting program has saved about 3 tons of food scraps annually from being discarded through sink disposal, which is a major source of pipe clogging.

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The Green Committee's April Veggie/Vegan Potluck Earth Day Social



Committee Corner

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Strategic Planning Committee**Sandy Garz, Chair**

Work continues on the Strategic Plan, with much to consider from responses to the Hopkinson House Strategic Planning Survey. A sincere “thank you” for the high 35% response that reflects resident cooperation in making Hopkinson House a more robust, modern, and inviting place to live. More information and detailed findings will be forthcoming.

First, what stands out are the positive comments regarding staff, Management, governance, and the feeling of “community.” The Front Desk staff are described as warm, kind, efficient, and genuinely caring. Maintenance

staff are reported as responsive, efficient, and helpful, and participation in programs, committees, and social gatherings adds to resident connection. But here is also much to evaluate, as residents call for more shade in the courtyard/pool/sundeck, a desire for washer/dryers in units, a gym, and improved accessibility. Dissatisfaction extends to hallways and somewhat to the trash rooms and cart room/delivery space. Improved cleanliness and better organization of spaces are notable. Safety is rated very high, though with concerns about the lower level and the Bike Room in particular. Council will build upon the positives and consider the negatives as decisions are made to modernize/upgrade conditions and add amenities. Stay tuned for more detailed findings.



PAR-Recycle Works Electronic-Waste Pickup Event in April

Engineering Committee**Michael Garz, Chair**

Our principle focus over the last few months was in completing the analysis of plumbing issues, and presentation preparation for the Plumbing Forum that was held on May 19th. The committee remains focused on support of Council with regard to the major capital projects program, ongoing study for accessibility improvements, research on alternative cooking stove alternatives, and support of the engineering/Maintenance Department needs. Additionally, the committee is reviewing building security and emergency preparedness in concert with Management.



Jean Papaj, MBA, is a marketing, communications, and business development executive with additional experience as an adult educator.

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Getting to Know Our Neighbors

Ernest Yates: A Poet of Philadelphia

Concha Alborg

Ernest Yates was born in Panama (Canal Zone), now fully part of the Republic of Panama. His father was born and raised in Panama, studied dentistry at Loyola University in New Orleans (where he met and married Yates's mother), and practiced dentistry at a U.S. Army base in Panama. Ernest, under the tutelage of his strict grandmother, did not grow up speaking Spanish. He was expected to be well versed—no pun intended—in English in order to study in New Orleans, where he attended public schools from first grade to graduation from high school. Ernest remembers wanting to be a poet since he was four years old. Thus, it makes sense that he attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, a traditionally liberal arts college.

Fortuitously, Jacqueline Röell, a student from the Netherlands who would become Ernest's wife years later, was also studying there. In the intervening years between college and a professional commitment, Ernest served in the U.S. Army, surfed in California, spent time traveling through Europe, and enrolled at the University of Utrecht. Although he declares that he is not a romantic poet, his pursuit of Jacqueline makes for a fascinating narrative. A momentous example was the twenty-four hours hitch-hike from Paris to Utrecht that

Yates undertook to meet Jacqueline after a separation of four years. Jacqueline and Ernest married in The Hague in 1972.

Recommended by an American teacher in Utrecht, Ernest applied at the University of Pennsylvania for graduate studies. He earned his doctorate with a dissertation on Wallace Stevens, although he doesn't consider his poetry to be influenced by Stevens. But given the difficulty of finding a professorship in English, Ernest made his career working as a Magistrate in the Disability Program of the Social Security Administration, which turned out to be a challenging and fulfilling job. During those years, the Yates's lived and raised their three children in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania.

Given his attraction to the streets of Philadelphia as a theme in his poetry, it's not surprising that Ernest and Jacqueline moved to the city two years ago. Hopkinson House has been the perfect place for them, with a balcony over Washington Square and the fact that their oldest son and grandchildren live nearby. Aside from reading and writing poetry every day, which Ernest often does in The Athenaeum, he loves listening to jazz, and he takes care of Garlic, their cat.

Since 2004, Ernest Yates has written three chapbooks and sixteen books of poetry, which



Ernest and Jacqueline in their Hopkinson House home



Ernest Yates giving a reading at Hopkinson House

he has self-published. As writers know, being self-published nowadays doesn't carry the stigma that it once did, particularly in poetry. It only shows the situation of the publishing world and not the quality of the work. Yates is a past winner of the Grand Prize of the Pennsylvania Poetry Society, among other awards.

Although he studied the traditional European literary masters from the classic Greeks to Kant, Yates doesn't think that they reflect American aesthetics.

As a poet, Ernest prefers Japanese and Chinese poets in haiku-like forms. Walking the streets of Philadelphia with an audio recorder and a camera in hand, he finds inspiration. According to his website: "His characteristic poems are short Buddhist-inspired meditations on people, objects, and incidents that Yates has encountered in his many wanderings through the city. As Yates interacts with city sights and sounds, a dual portrait emerges, of an imagination that engages

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Ernest Yates: A Poet of Philadelphia

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with its surroundings—the city—and of the city itself. In the mysterious relationship between imagination and external surroundings, normative values such as love, liberty, and beauty emerge as imaginative possibilities.”

All of Yates’ works have *Poems of Philadelphia* as subtitle, with evocative and descriptive titles such as: *Ragged Footsteps*, *Brushed Drums* (2015), *Relatively 4th Street* (2016), or *Pub Crawl* (2019)—which consists of 400 pages of narratives and poems. For him, a poetry reading is a performance, something we were able to enjoy at Hopkinson House via his presentation here in April. It’s very difficult to choose one poem from Ernest Yates’ vast creation,

but a favorite of mine is this one from one of his early books of the same title, *Geography Lesson*.

Here at Hopkinson House, we are fortunate to have another resident-poet who gave a wonderful poetry reading in March as presented by the Washington Square Citizens League. Robert Coles, Emeritus Professor from Hampshire College, read from his latest book, *Akyiba: The Return* (2025), which captures the essence of the African Diaspora with poems echoing across the Atlantic Ocean. Coles has also written a memoir that incorporates his fascination with African-heritage Russian author Alexander Pushkin. ■

“Geography Lesson”

*I searched ancient Chinese poets
for a wise word about love,
but they were silent on the matter.
Then i studied the world
conjured by troubadours in song, . . .
but that romance was too lofty and not mine.
Then i looked to that beacon of refinement
Hollywood
and stumbled upon bits and clips
and scraps of dialogue
too much like patter
to be any use.
So. Unsatisfied,
disappointed by all the sages of China,
Provence and Hollywood,
i finally probed my heart at home
in Philadelphia, and found
the voodoo there.*



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

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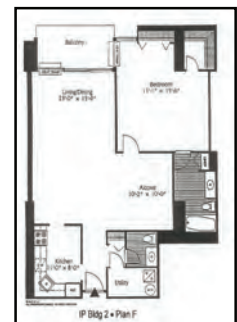
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The Recent Hopkinson House Plumbing Forum

Michael Garz

As Chair of the Hopkinson House Engineering Committee, I want to summarize the Plumbing Forum event held on May 19. The goal of the forum was to present an analysis of the building's collective experience with plumbing problems during calendar year 2025, their root causes, Hopkinson House management's corrective actions, resident community actions, and the best practices that residents should follow to prevent these problems from happening. Controlling plumbing issues will not just save money for all of us but will also lead to a more sustainable future through water conservation. (Note that "plumbing" here refers to sinks, toilets, dishwashers, and in-unit laundry facilities.)

The Forum was hosted by Michael Perez, Chief Building Engineer; Bill Stigliani, Chair of the Green Committee; myself as Chair of the Engineering Committee; and the Hopkinson House Owners' Association Council.

Our principal takeaways from the analysis:

60% of the year's plumbing incidents were preventable.

Residents may request that Hopkinson House Maintenance staff inspect their unit's plumbing to identify any potential deficiency.

Replacement of toilets installed at the time of our building's 1964 construction is recommended.

According to the EPA, a typical 1964 toilet consumes 5 to 7 gallons per flush. Today's standard toilets are mandated to use a maximum of 1.6 gallons, while modern EPA WaterSense high-efficiency models use 1.28 gallons or less. This means today's models use up to 80% less water.

Do not use plumbing fixtures for other than their intended purpose, e.g., flushing away corrosive chemicals, paint, plaster, or paper products other than toilet paper.

Discovery and immediate reporting of plumbing problems mitigates damage.

Our Maintenance staff is available 24/7 to clear clogged toilets and sink drains.

The installation of water sensors that detect leaks will provide early warning of a problem.

What we learned from the analysis of the 2025 incident history:

61 unit-based incidents were reported from 53 units, which impacted 66 other units. Thus on the average, a plumbing issue in one unit affects a second unit. Toilets accounted for 43% of the incidents.

The building's infrastructure failures, for example, shower or sink drain line failures, accounted for 28% of incidents.

There was no discernable location pattern to the incidents, whether by vertical stack or by floor.



Hopkinson House's plumbing forum, May 19.

What has Hopkinson House done or is planning to do?

The Maintenance Department responds to all incidents to stop the source of water, provide cleanup, provide drying equipment, and make minor repairs.

Incidents due to building infrastructure failure are also repaired.

Inspection of a unit's plumbing is performed at unit turnover from one owner/tenant to another.

Units being renovated are inspected twice: first, an inspection during demolition to identify infrastructure deficiencies; second, an inspection at completion of the "plumbing rough-in" to assure work meets building code and Hopkinson House standards.

Overall, the Maintenance Department oversees

ongoing inspection, maintenance, and/or replacement of plumbing infrastructure.

The department has also upgraded the performance criteria for plumbing fixtures and household appliances, i.e., set higher standards for new installations.

The Maintenance Department, Engineering Committee, and Green Committee will continue to monitor plumbing performance using calendar year 2025 as a baseline for determining performance improvements.

The Forum was intended to raise awareness as to the extent and causes of plumbing incidents, and outline actions and practices to foster a safer, smarter, and more sustainable future for the Hopkinson House community. ■

The Recent Hopkinson House Plumbing Forum

continued from page 12

What Hopkinson House Residents Can Do

Immediately report any plumbing problem to the Front Desk: 215-923-1776

Non-emergency requests may be made as usual via work orders through BuildingLink.

Request an Engineering Inspection.

Replace any original 1964 fixtures (toilets, appliances, fittings).

DO NOT use plumbing as a general disposal system.

Install water sensors—small devices that detect leaks—as recommended by the Maintenance Department.

Follow water conservation guidelines listed below.

Water Usage

Hopkinson House water consumption in 2025 totaled 8.6 million gallons at a cost of \$247,000, or 3.6% of our annual operating budget.

Rates for water service have increased 36% since 2021 and are likely to increase in the future.

Water Conservation

If every unit conserves 1 gallon of water per day, the yearly cumulative savings would be 196,000 gallons, enough water to fill the rooftop swimming pool 4 times over.



Bathrooms account for more than half of all indoor water use.

- Replace your old toilets.
- Take shorter showers.
- Shut off the water when brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Replace your showerhead.
- Replace your old faucets.

Kitchens

- Give pots and pans a soak instead of scrubbing them under running water.

- Install a water-saving aerator on the kitchen faucet to reduce flow to less than 1 gallon per minute. They are typically available in local hardware and plumbing supply stores and online for approximately \$5 or less. WaterSense is one type of such device that is certified by EPA.
- Plug up the sink or use a wash basin if washing dishes by hand.

- Use a dishwasher—make sure it's fully loaded, and use the shortest effective wash time.
- Scrape your plate instead of rinsing it before loading it into the dishwasher.
- Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the faucet run until cool.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator overnight rather than using a running tap of hot water.
- Add food wastes to your Compost pile instead of using the garbage disposal. Composting diverted an estimated 3.1 tons of food waste from the plumbing system over the last 12 months of the Hopkinson House program!

Laundry

- Pick the appropriate water level setting.
- Wash only full loads.
- Pick the right soil setting.
- Use cold water rather than hot or warm water.
- Replace your old washer. (New washers must be approved by the Building Engineer.)
- Measure laundry detergent.



Michael Garz, FAIA Emeritus, is a retired architect who was executive architect/design manager of the World Trade Center Transportation Hub and was Senior Vice President of STV. He is Chair of the Hopkinson House Engineering Committee.

Independence Hall, The Declaration of Independence, And a Painting Fantasy

Michael Neff

When I was a kid, some seventy and more years ago, my grandparents lived at Tenth and Locust Streets. They were tailors; their shop and the house behind it were headquarters for a large array of aunts, uncles, cousins, and neighbors. Daily, an eclectic group of old codgers gathered around my grandfather's sewing machine to philosophize and comment on the passing scene as observed through the large window facing Locust Street. The sewing machine was like the pot-bellied stove in a Norman Rockwell painting. Grandmother ran between the store and the kitchen at the back. Customers who appreciated the aroma of

her cooking—and who brought in some business on Friday: bread-baking day—got a miniature loaf to take home.

Center City was a lot different in the days before urban renewal. There was a lot more retail and manufacturing, big department stores and cheap good eats, pool halls and cigar shops, movie theaters and used bookstores. It was culturally, economically, religiously, and racially diverse. My younger brother and I roamed the city, unaccompanied and unsupervised by adults, from the time I was eight and he was five. We never felt a danger and never had a threatening incident.

One place we ran through regularly was Independence Hall. Those were sleepy days for the grand old building. Philadelphia hadn't yet been branded as a tourist destination. Years before, native son and comedian W.C. Fields had remarked that he entered a contest in which first prize was a week in Philadelphia and second prize was two weeks in Philadelphia. Justifiably or not, that reputation still stuck. The enormous new civic spaces of Independence Mall and Constitution Mall hadn't been carved out of the old houses and businesses which then stood in those blocks. Substantial tourism began with the Bicentennial of 1976. Those were also

the days long before the high security culture that came after 9/11.

So, a couple of non-threatening little kids could short-cut through Independence Hall. In the front door and across the worn wooden floors, we could peek into the hallowed meeting rooms, pat the patinated bronze of the Liberty Bell which sat in the foyer, and go out the back into the Square where Franklin, Jefferson, and the whole gang of Declaration and Constitution signers lolled between arguments.

In a sense, though my grandparents were immigrants, the early history of the country seemed very

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John Trumbull, *The Declaration of Independence*, 1818, 12 ft x 18 ft

Independence Hall, The Declaration of Independence, and a Painting Fantasy

continued from page 14

local and neighborly. There was the big bank building that looked like a Greek temple, Betsy Ross's house, Carpenters' Hall where Ben warned that we'd better hang together or surely we'd just hang. In Washington Square, we ran over the graves of soldiers who'd fought over Philadelphia. Early American history seemed intimate. Ben founded the first hospital, on Pine Street. Its original buildings sat behind the beautiful gardens. Dolley Madison lived on Spruce Street. William Penn landed at Dock Street.

We owned the favorite souvenir: a faux parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence. (One of the writers for this paper says she still has hers, and the quill pen with

which it was "written.")

There was an old painting that fascinated me, *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*, by John Trumbull. (Check the back of a \$2 bill.) John Hancock sits in the presiding chair. Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams are about to sign. And every delegate—those who opposed as well as those who favored, those who attended and those who were absent—is witnessing, all in their white wigs and high socks. In those days I didn't wonder if "my people" were represented in that group. It wasn't a question that was asked. I assumed that, their eccentric clothing aside, they represented me. Gradually, I learned about the tragedies of enslaved people, the exclusion of

women, the mistreatment of Native Americans, and all the other things that kept us from being as perfect as I'd assumed. And I really don't know what to say about all that, but something occurred to me as a painter: and that was what you might call a dream or a fantasy. Or a wish? Through the medium of an imaginary image came an idea for a painting, perhaps a gift of the muses? I saw Frederick Douglass signing the Declaration of Independence, accompanied by a supportive African woman, Jefferson and Franklin standing by, smiling approvingly. In the

chair is a native chief, and the audience is as diverse a group of onlookers as I had the ability to draw.

One can't re-write history. But perhaps a fantasy image based on history might help move it on?

That's my story about the painting, *Frederick Douglass Signs the Declaration of Independence, A Historical Fantasy*. ■

Editor's note: In honor of our country's semiquincentennial year, we are reprinting this moving art and essay that originally appeared in the summer 2023 issue of on the House.



Michael Neff paints in Washington Square in summer, fall, and spring. You can see some of those, and other, pictures on his Instagram account, @paintinginthe park.



Michael Neff, *Frederick Douglass Signs the Declaration of Independence, A Historical Fantasy*, 2023 (Collection of Toni O'Neil)



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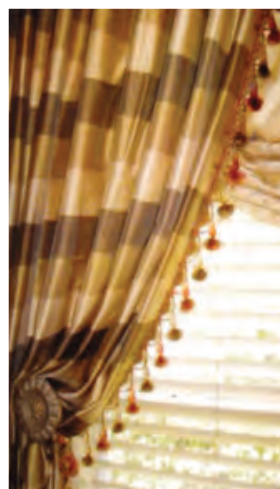
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The Hale Building: Architectural Aberration or Castle in the Air?

Joseph Quinn

Has any surviving nineteenth-century structure in Center City been more ridiculed and vilified than the Hale Building? Willis Gaylord Hale (1848-1907) borrowed elements from Loire chateaux, Gothic cathedrals, and Romanesque abbeys, and Frankensteined them into something utterly original, if not freakish. Soon after its debut in 1887, it aroused the curiosity and scorn of observers and critics. Some found it merely tasteless and “lacking in restraint.” But to a critic for the *Architectural Record*, it was an “Aberration: absurd...irrational, incongruent and ridiculous...a restless jumble.”¹

Hale was born in Seneca Falls, New York, and studied architecture in Buffalo and Rochester. After an unsuccessful attempt at private practice in Wilkes Barre, he set up shop in Philadelphia in 1876. His short career was a curious mix of quick, heady success and slow decline into bankruptcy, obscurity, and death at age 59.

His early success likely had something to do with his marriage to the niece of William Weightman, giving him entrée into the world of Philadelphia’s wealthiest and most socially prominent families. Weightman (1813-1904) made a fortune from a synthetic form of quinine—used to treat malaria—that made him the “richest man in Pennsylvania” and “the largest individual owner of Philadelphia real estate.”²

He kept Hale busy designing tracts of middle-class housing to fill that land. Another influential client was trolley tycoon Peter A. B. Widener (1834-1915), for whom, in 1887, Hale designed a palatial mansion at the corner of Broad Street and Girard Avenue.

1887 was a banner year for Hale. Not only did he complete the Widener mansion and design the majestic Ravenhill estate for Weightman in Germantown, he also opened an office building at 1326-28 Chestnut Street. He was undaunted by the problematic corner site, a sliver of land that offered minimal frontage on Chestnut, but a block-long sprawl along Juniper all the way to Sansom. Since he couldn’t build wide, he built tall, piling on a series of disjointed architectural fragments seven stories high and beyond, qualifying it for status as a “skyscraper” in that era.

The Chestnut Street façade, constructed of rugged buff-colored limestone and delicate terra-cotta ornamentation, exhibits a clear case of split personality. At the base on the left, Hale planted an ostentatious peaked entrance portico. Rising above is a series of richly framed window treatments diminishing in size but increasing in number—two-across, then three, then four. At the top sits a small temple with a triangular pediment and spire. Four cornices provide horizontal ballast. continued on page 18



The Hale Building on the corner of Chestnut and Juniper Streets



Detail of the Chestnut Street façade of the Hale Building as it looks today

The Hale Building: Architectural Abberation or Castle in the Air?

continued from page 17



A vintage sketch of the Hale Building and the adjoining Garrick Theatre as they appeared in 1887. Many outlandish features of the building have disappeared over successive modernizations.



The 1834 National Bank of the Republic by Frank Furness, who, like Hale, endured criticism for his eclectic designs, features a conical tower and turret like the one on the Hale Building.

Low wrought iron balconies curve around the corners on levels three and five.

Moving from left to right, we find what appears to be the tower of a medieval fortress. Window triplets snake upward, winding around the bulky stonework, pausing to let two small balconies emerge. Topping off the structure are crenellations, a turret, and a spire. One can almost imagine archers from *Ivanhoe* standing guard in the turret, on the lookout for foreign invaders. On the

Juniper Street side rises a massive wall of red brick, punctuated on the ground floor with fifteen arched window bays encrusted with heavy stonework.

The audaciousness of Hale's original design can best be appreciated by looking at vintage photos and sketches that show elements removed over successive modernizations. These include the top balcony and turret, a row of chimney-like sentinels that marched down Juniper Street, and the grandiose

entrance to the ground floor, now replaced with a wall of black plate glass.

Another significant loss is the Hale-designed Garrick Theatre. Its four-story colonnaded entrance stood to the right of the Hale Building and included a 230-foot lobby running from Chestnut to Sansom. From 1901 to 1936, the 1,500-seat auditorium was a premiere showcase for top-ranked performers like the Barrymores, George M. Cohan, and Douglas Fairbanks.

During his short but prolific career, Hale was responsible for over 100 Philadelphia projects, of which only a handful remain. Another notable survivor is the Lorraine Apartment House, an imposing adaptation of French Renaissance style completed in 1894 at Broad and Fairmount in North Philadelphia. Ten stories tall, it was one of the first "high-rise" apartment buildings in the city. Acquired in 1948 by one

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The Hale Building: Architectural Abberation or Castle in the Air?

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Father Divine, it earned its place in Civil Rights history by becoming the first racially integrated hotel in Philadelphia and later serving as headquarters of the Divine International Peace Mission. After a long period of abandonment and decay, it's being revitalized as a "mid-rise" residence.

It's instructive to compare the reputations of Hale and Frank Furness (1839–1912), as their careers overlapped by 30 years, and both are known as proponents of challenging, provocative architecture. Like Hale, Furness came in for his own share of abuse for purveying the "worst of Victorian excess."³ There's a remarkable similarity between the Hale Building and Furness's furiously eclectic 1834 National Bank of the Republic (later called the Philadelphia Clearing House), which is bisected by a circular tower capped with a steeply pitched turret. To Robert Venturi, a passionate advocate for Furness, it's "insane short story of a castle on a city street."⁴

The chief characteristics of Furness's style, as evident, for example, in the Pennsylvania Academy of

the Fine Arts, have been much studied and admired: his bulk is considered muscular, his application of ornament organic, his eclecticism celebrated as exuberance. Hale never found a champion, and his legacy has never been able to shrug off the negative reaction to his castle on Chestnut Street, once considered "Perhaps the most bizarre looking skyscraper of the nineteenth century."⁵

Yet the Hale Building survives, trying to hold on to what dignity it has left while sharing the block with gaming arcades and a bowling alley. Over the years, it's been abandoned, trashed, and left for dead. But recently it's been rechristened, in marketing-speak, as a "Philadelphia landmark" and "architectural gem," offering "a creative hub for restaurants, retail, and offices—designed for innovative people."⁶

If you find yourself near the Hale Building, look for an inconspicuous plaque nearby paying tribute to another Philadelphian who suffered professional scorn and rejection. It's dedicated to Thomas Eakins, who briefly had a studio at 1330 Chestnut Street. ■



Another Hale survivor, the Lorraine Apartments, opened in 1894. It became a widely recognized fixture in North Philadelphia as the Father Divine Hotel and Mission.



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

Notes

- 1 Montgomery Schuyler, "Architectural Aberrations: The Hale Building," *Architectural Record*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1893), 207.
- 2 William Weightman: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Weightman.
- 3 Ian M. G. Quimby, Review of *Frank Furness: Architecture and the Violent Mind* by Michael J. Lewis, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 126, no. 2, (April 2002), 348.

- 4 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, (Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 56.
- 5 Joseph J. Korom, Jr., "Hale Building," *The American Skyscraper, 1850-1940: A Celebration of Height*, (Branden Books, 2008), 144.
- 6 The Hale Building—Ecosystem of Innovation: <https://thehalebuilding.co>; Hale Building: <https://hale-building.wherew.com>.



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Oskar Stonorov and Aristide Maillol: Learning from the Master

Rebecca Yamin

Oskar Stonorov, who was the designer of Hopkinson House, studied architecture at the University of Florence between 1924 and 1925 and at the University of Zurich from 1925 to 1928, but he also studied sculpture during that period. Letters from Stonorov to the distinguished French sculptor Aristide Maillol reveal that he already considered himself a sculptor, and he wanted to learn more from the celebrated master.

In his response to Stonorov's appeal to him, Maillol expressed appreciation for the fact that Stonorov declared himself "a sculptor," but that was not enough to make Maillol want to take on the architect as a student. He was too busy, Maillol said of himself, his own studio was too far away—in the far south city of Banyuls-sur-Mer where he had been born—and he knew it would take too long to teach Stonorov through the mail. In the same letter, however, Maillol changed his tune. If Stonorov would postpone his visit, he could visit Maillol between June and October when the sculptor was in his studio at Marly-le-Roi near Paris. Maillol goes on in that letter to comment on the photographs Stonorov had sent him of his own sculptures, and he suggests "exercises" Stonorov needs to do—ideas that he will explain in greater detail when the architect comes to his studio. With such encouragement from Maillol, the young Stonorov couldn't wait until

summer to visit him. He went to the studio within days of receiving the letter and, welcome or not, began an apprenticeship that lasted for several months.^[1]

Maillol was at the height of his powers in this period. He had begun studying painting and sculpture under Jean-Paul Laurens, among others, at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1885. But by 1893 he was disgusted by the teaching of fine arts and switched to tapestry, apparently inspired by the work of Paul Gauguin and Maurice Denis. Besides tapestries, his first exhibit included wood carvings, small sculptures, and enameled ceramics. Then by 1900 he had turned exclusively to sculpture, encouraged by his circle of friends that included Maurice Denis, Ker-Xavier Roussel, Édouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard, and eventually Henri Matisse. Once supported by wealthy art collector Harry Kessler, Maillol began to develop his distinctive style. Major early works were *Méditerranée*, a seated woman originally done in plaster and later in marble, and *Pomone*, also first in plaster and finally in bronze.

Pomone (Fig. 1) was considered "a celebration of restrained power, of sensuality stripped of mere prettiness." Maillol, and other members of a group that called themselves the Nabis, regarded a work of art as an expression of an idea made perceptible by its form. Maillol's sculptures were abstractions, not portraits. The Russian

collector Ivan Morozov was impressed with *Pomone* and commissioned three additional sculptures—*Summer*, *Spring*, and *Flora*—for the music room in his Moscow villa. Along with *Pomone*, they became known together as "The Seasons," although it is not clear if winter is represented. These bold female sculptures, completed in 1912, were probably well known to Stonorov when he began his apprenticeship in the late 1920s.

Maillol's sculptures of women were modeled after the beautiful young Catalan women he had known in his youth (Fig. 2). Both *Pomone* and *Summer* are voluptuous figures shown at the height of their fecundity. *Pomone* holds apples in her lowered hands, presumably to represent abundance or, perhaps, fertility. She was the Roman goddess of trees, gardens, and orchards. *Summer*, with one hand by her side and another bent at the elbow, seems totally at ease in her skin. *Spring* and *Flora* both hold garlands, the first with the garland in front of her chest and the second with the garland held between her lowered hands. These two are represented as younger women than *Pomone* and *Summer*, with more lithe bodies. Maillol was inspired by Greek sculpture—his patron, Kessler, had taken him to Greece—and approached sculpture in a formal way, but at the same time made figures that were serene and sensual. Art historians have emphasized the harmony in Maillol's sculpture and its

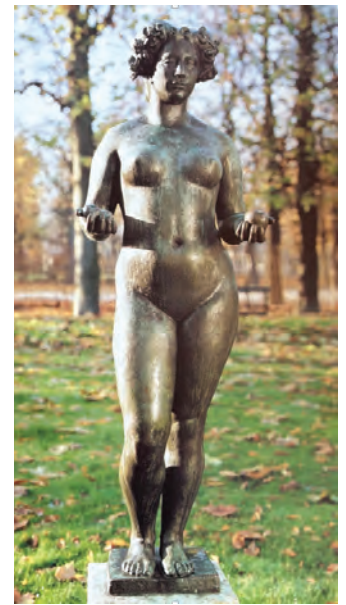


Fig. 1: Bronze *Pomone*, first sculpted in plaster by Aristide Maillol, 1910. Later cast in bronze.

rootedness in naturalism. He was different from his contemporary, Auguste Rodin, whose work was much more emotional.

Not all Maillol sculptures were standing female figures. A celebrated sculpture called *L'Air* shows a woman with outstretched, almost completely straight legs (Fig. 3). The nude figure balances on her hip and looks toward her raised hand. Maillol made the plaster model of this sculpture in 1938, but it was not cast in bronze until after his death in 1944. There are bronze copies in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris, the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and the Kröller-Müller Museum in Hoge Veluwe National Park, Otterlo, the Netherlands, among others. This is long after Stonorov's

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Oskar Stonorov and Aristide Maillol: Learning from the Master

continued from page 21

apprenticeship, but he may have seen the sculpture on his travels in Europe.^[iii]

Stonorov, who moved to Philadelphia in 1930, went back to Europe in 1951 to work on an exhibit dedicated to Frank Lloyd Wright at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. Stonorov had originally developed the exhibit, which previewed at Gimbels in Philadelphia. It was during that time that he met the sculptor Jorio Vivarelli and first visited the Fonderia Michelucci at Pistoia, not far from Florence. Stonorov and Vivarelli became collaborators and life-long friends, a friendship Vivarelli called so close they were “like brothers.” When Stonorov died, Vivarelli said it was like missing “half of myself.” According to one scholar, the affinity with Vivarelli was “born of the fact that Stonorov had studied sculpture with Aristide Maillol.” From him he had learned plaster modelling, which he combined with the great manual ability of Vivarelli. Their first

collaboration “in dialogue” was what they called a “ciclo di altordievi” (cycle in high relief) of bronzes representing the seasons as vivacious young women, done for Hopkinson House in Philadelphia. Referred to now as “The Four Seasons,” the four bronze female figures flanking the building’s elevators are signed by Vivarelli, but the influence of Stonorov’s Maillol training is evident. Even the subject matter has a counterpart in Maillol’s work. The Hopkinson House bronzes date to the completion of the building in 1963.^[iii]

Stonorov and Vivarelli did another sculpture for Hopkinson House in 1965, this one signed by both of them. We do not know whether the horizontally stretched out figures of *Adam and Eve*, a central focal point in the courtyard behind the building, were inspired by Maillol’s *L’Air* sculpture, but there is a resemblance. The *Adam and Eve* sculpture was originally designed as a fountain, although it never

seems to have functioned as one. Stonorov and Vivarelli designed several other fountains together—*The Rites of Spring* (1964) for Philadelphia (never installed), and *The Bathers* (1967) for a piazza at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. They also collaborated on the *Tuscan Girl* fountain for The Plaza apartments on Philadelphia’s Benjamin Franklin Parkway (1966; now The Terrace apartments) and *Caryatids* for the Black Lake Center on Lake Michigan.

There is also a small sculpture in Chestnut Hill that was apparently another collaboration between Vivarelli and Stonorov. This was done as a preliminary study for the sculpture *Giovani*, which was eventually erected in Detroit, Michigan in 1967. Stonorov gave the small study version, called *Rondo*, to Chestnut Hill, also in 1967 (Fig. 4). Both *Giovani* and *Rondo* resemble the famous Matisse painting, *La Dance*. An invitation to a cocktail party celebrating

Stonorov’s gift to Chestnut Hill was found in the Chestnut Hill Conservancy archives. Several newspaper articles have also been found that mention the “gift of Mr. Stonorov and beautification-minded Chestnut Hill citizens” (Fig. 5). Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wolf of 9198 Germantown Avenue were “involved in the efforts to have the statue cast and installed at the ‘21 West’ mall in association with the Chestnut Hill Realty Trust.” The mall (really just a breezeway) no longer exists, but the sculpture is still in place on the north side of Highland Avenue across from Killian’s hardware store.^[iv]

Thus Oskar Stonorov was not just an architect. The Italian historian, Bruno Levi, claims that the few months Stonorov spent with Aristide Maillol exposed him not simply to “the depth of genius and folk sources but to the exacting standards of the sculptor’s art.” The experience may have been what convinced him that



Fig. 2: Standing bronze female figures by Aristide Maillol as they are displayed in the Musée d’Orsay in Paris. Front row from left to right: *Flora*, *Summer*, *Nude Bather*.

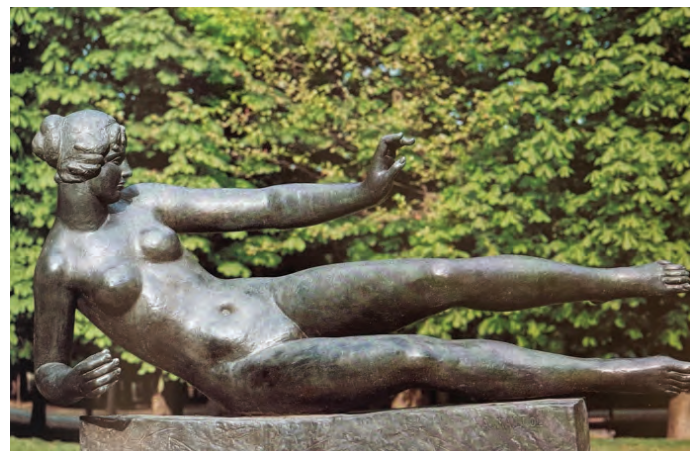


Fig. 3: *L’Air*, lead sculpture by Aristide Maillol, 1938

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Oskar Stonorov and Aristide Maillol: Learning from the Master

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Fig. 4: *Rondo*, bronze sculpture given to Chestnut Hill by Oskar Stonorov in 1967

he couldn't be an architect and a sculptor at the same time, at least not until he had achieved success in the architectural profession. But he didn't seem to have been able to stay away from sculpture, either. As demonstrated in Hopkinson House, Stonorov included sculpture in his architectural

designs. There are the lively bronze ladies by the elevators and *Adam and Eve* in the courtyard. Even the walls of the hallways are sculpted. The concrete blocks undulate in a pattern that Victoria Kirkham thinks is reminiscent of Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara, Italy. And the protruding balconies on



Fig. 5: Announcement of the Stonorov sculpture to be placed in Chestnut Hill, July 23, 1967

the outside of the building create a sculpted pattern some liken to diagonal staircases. In Stonorov's hands, modernism did not preclude all decorative

detail, but any such detail should be integral to the building, meaningful in the context of creating a desirable place to live. ■

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Alex Bartlett for searching the Chestnut Hill archives for information on the Chestnut Hill sculpture. I am also grateful to Victoria Kirkham for her companionable guidance through the Italian texts and for her comments and corrections on the first draft of this article. When I first came to Hopkinson House, I was excited to see sculptures that looked like the Maillol sculptures I had seen on trips to the Museum of Modern Art in New York when I was a little girl. That the building's architect had apprenticed with Maillol was a wonderful surprise, and it has been a great pleasure to learn about their relationship.



Rebecca Yamin is a retired historical archaeologist, specializing in urban archaeology, and former manager of the Philadelphia branch office of John Milner Associates.

Notes

ⁱ Excerpts from the Stonorov-Maillol correspondence are included in Oskar Stonorov, *Una villa per Jorio Vivarelli come ponte ideale tra Stati Uniti e Italia*, by Stefano Veloci and Rachele Tuci. *Metilene*, 2024, pp. 67-69.

ⁱⁱ Much of the information on Maillol's development as a sculptor and style is drawn from a dissertation entitled, "Aristide Maillol (1861-1944): Pioneer of Modern Sculpture," by Linda Konheim Kramer, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, 2000. A book called simply *Maillol*, by Bertrand Lorquin, presents Maillol as one of the pioneers of abstraction and modernism in sculpture (Lorquin 1995:7). Lorquin also discusses Maillol's role in a group of French artists who called themselves the Nabis and were influential in moving away from impressionism. The web page for the Maillol Museum in Paris (museummaillol.com/en/maillol and his work) was also consulted, especially relating to the disposition of the sculptor's major works. Art historian Mario Negri makes the distinction between Maillol and Rodin (www.marionegri.org/scritti-dell-artista/aristide-maillol).

ⁱⁱⁱ Stonorov's first meeting with Vivarelli at the Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit and his first visit to Fonderia Michelucci at Pistoia are discussed in the book, *Vita Universa, Jorio Vivarelli, Scultore 1922-2008* by Paola Goretti con testi di Veronica Feretti, *Metilene* 2022, p. 93. Goretti also describes the close collaboration and friendship between Stonorov and Vivarelli as do Veloci and Tuci 2024, p. 85. The reference to the first collaboration between Stonorov and Vivarelli is referred to in Veloci and Tuci 2024,

p. 91. Victoria Kirkham discusses "The Four Seasons" high-reliefs beside the elevators in Hopkinson House in her *on the House* article, Summer 2013.

^{iv} There is some confusion about the relationship between the *Giovani* sculpture by Vivarelli and the preliminary study, called *Rondo* in Chestnut Hill, but originally called *Girotondo*. Goretti (2022, p. 93), however, says *Girotondo* was a preliminary study for the sculpture, *Giovani*, and was done in "the happy period of collaboration with the friend architect Stonorov." The measurements for *Girotondo*, included in Goretti's discussion, are identical to those of *Rondo*. The announcement of the gift to Chestnut Hill appeared in both the *Chestnut Hill Local* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Alex Barlett, the archivist at the Chestnut Hill Conservancy, hunted down the records of Stonorov's gift.

^v Bruno Levi's long article, "Design as Political Action," in *L'architettura, Cronache e Storia*, anno XVIII n. 2, giugno 1972, portrays Stonorov as an enormously complex person. Levi recognizes Stonorov's attraction to sculpture and being a sculptor, but he mainly emphasizes his commitment to using architecture in a socially responsible way. It comes out in a letter Stonorov wrote to Walter Reuther which Levi quotes at length. Reuther, and Stonorov holding him up as a model, wanted to make the world more beautiful, in the sense of abolishing the slums and eliminating poverty, planning a financial economy that benefited everyone and preserved the dignity of every individual. Including art in Hopkinson House, I think, was one way Stonorov democratized beauty. He wanted everyone to have access to the creative art he could provide.

The Ardent Gardeners of Washington Square

Martha Cornog

8:00 a.m., Saturday, May 2. A small truck pulling an aluminum trailer appears in Washington Square and stops in front of the Victorian Guardhouse near 6th Street. An eager waiting crew begins unloading the contents: some 350 plants in disposable containers. These people are “bed mentors,” and the beds in question are the 15 plots of flowering plants scattered around the square. Song sparrows and robins sing as our gardeners sort their booty by color.

Soon a long row of containers extends along the walkway, flowering plants of all hues from vivid blue to pale purple, crimson, yellow, and white, plus the greens of ferns. The plants have come from Berwyn’s Jenkins Arboretum. Joggers and dog walkers stop to watch, move on. Someone unlocks the guardhouse, bringing out a handcart and revealing spades and other gardening gear inside. People hover over the plants, discuss with each other. Some claim theirs and head off to their personal territory. More bed mentors appear, consult their lists, scoop up plants, and walk away. Some borrow the handcart or use carryall bags. Bed number 1 is nearest the guardhouse; numbers increase around the square counterclockwise, to end with bed 15 across the walkway from number 1. Snatches of conversation: “These are dead.” “No,

they’re not—they just haven’t come out yet.” “I’m gonna have stuff left over, but I’m labelling it.” All beds have several mentors attending them.

By 8:30 a.m., truck and empty trailer drive off as the bed mentors “dig in” to make their new plants feel at home. Hopkinson House residents Dennis McGlade, Rebecca Yamin, and Barbara Gold are among them.

A retired landscape architect with horticulture in his blood, Dennis managed a small flower bed in Bella Vista’s Cianfrani Park when he lived across the street. Upon moving to Hopkinson House, he joined our Landscaping Committee and also delights in the larger gardens to mentor outside our building.

Says Rebecca, a retired urban archaeologist: “Gardening in the park is one of the great pleasures of living here. The minute I found that it was volunteers who made the magic, I tried to find out how to volunteer. Sherley Young, who was then heading up the effort, tried me out on a trim-the-hydrangeas Saturday.”

Retired pediatrician Barbara confesses, “When we moved here, I left behind three large gardens. First year of settling in and learning to garden on a balcony didn’t fulfill the itch to play in the dirt! I love it because I get to be outside making something that so many people enjoy.”



With kneepads, stool, shovel, rake, and trowel, Dennis McGlade digs homes for 90 new plants.

By the end of Saturday, the new plants will be safely planted, and this army of devoted gardeners will head home for cleanup and dinner. Most live in nearby condos and in Society Hill. A second group operation happens in the fall to plant bulbs, and periodic maintenance projects carry on throughout the growing season: weeding, pruning, cutting back shrubbery, “deadheading” fading blooms.

Some 180 species fill these beds, including blue asters, golden black-eyed Susans, rosy azaleas, ferns of many hues of green, narcissus, lily of the valley, bleeding hearts, purple coneflowers, coral bells, blue bells, hydrangea and azalea bushes, iris, hostas, and the flowering grasses. Many have bee-appeal that attracts pollinators, preserving insect species critical to food farming. A 36-page Excel spreadsheet lists all the square’s plants: photos,

botanical and common names, geographic origins, periods of bloom, growing conditions, seasonal maintenance guide, and bed numbers where planted.

Most Washington Square plants now are native species adapted to this area, but some are imports, like the cold-tolerant hellebores that originated in Europe and Asia. A notable feature of the square’s ecosystem is its variability. Beds in the south of the square such as those mentored by Dennis, for example, bloom several weeks later than Rebecca’s plot in the north of the square because of the cooling shadows cast by Hopkinson House. Other surrounding buildings and the wind corridors of 6th and 7th Streets also influence each bed’s microclimate.

Society Hill resident Sherley Young initiated this comprehensive

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The Ardent Gardeners of Washington Square

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Rebecca Yamin and Ruth Ann Fenton confer over where to plant what.

effort, asking the then-president of the Society Hill Civic Association if they needed help with the square's gardens. What came out of this was the independent group of committed volunteer bed mentors and their allied helpers, now called the Washington Square Committee. Remember those "Washington Square Affair" evening parties? The funds raised have gone to support these gardens and gardeners; the fund-keeper is a separate nonprofit, the Independence Historical Trust (INHT).

Now, another fundraiser is planned, to be held at a to-be-determined location outside Washington Square. The National Park Service, with authority over the square as part of Independence National Historical Park, disapproves of any more partying on top of Revolutionary War graves. The park had served centuries ago as a potter's field for thousands

of the war's soldiers as well as victims of a local yellow fever epidemic plus enslaved and free Black people. And, therefore, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier lies at the square's center, guarded by a statue of George Washington.

What threatens our square's gardens? Rats, thoughtless visitors—especially unrestrained children and dogs that tromp all over the beds—and vandals who remove the labels on the trees. (The labels were put up in 2022 when the park was officially accredited as an arboretum.)

Opportunities for enjoying gardens in this part of the city extend beyond our own square. The charming so-called "secret gardens" of Independence National Historical Park include the 18th Century Garden (between 3rd and 4th Streets off Walnut), the Rose Garden (bounded by Locust and Walnut Streets and 4th and 5th Streets), the



Barbara Gold plays in the dirt and encounters a tiny fellow gardener. Earthworms help plants by aerating the soil and contributing droppings as fertilizer.

Magnolia Garden (Locust Street between 4th and 5th), the Bishop White Garden (corner of 3rd and Walnut Streets), and the Benjamin Rush Garden (6th and Walnut Streets).

Old Saint Joseph's Catholic Church on Willing's Alley has founded the Freedom Garden of herbs and flowers at 4th and Walnut Streets, tended by homeless volunteers as a way of giving back to the church's "Faith, Food & Friends" group lunches. Gardening help has been provided through the Washington Square Committee. Hopkinson House's Bill Stigliani has been involved in setting up this program. Want to help our gardens grow and get your hands dirty for a beautiful cause? To join the Washington Square bed mentors, contact Washington

Square Committee co-chair Lisa Flynn: flynnlisa@hotmail.com. Besides bed-mentoring, there are periodic group projects and the ongoing maintenance of weeding and pruning that anyone can join, under Lisa's oversight. To assist with those "secret gardens," go to the INHT website (inht.org), where there is a volunteer sign-up form with a box labelled "Garden & Ground Maintenance."

Financial assistance to the Washington Square gardening efforts can be arranged through a restricted donation at the INHT website: inht.org/washingtonsquare/. Or you can donate to the INHT general fund for the wider variety of projects and programs they support in partnership with the National Park Service. ■



Martha Cornog reviews graphic novels for Library Journal and graphicmedicine.org.

Golden Polenta Crusted Ricotta Pie with a Bright Seasonal Salad

Chef's Corner

Move over quiche. This savory ricotta pie in a golden polenta crust is summer's answer to the classic brunch bake: lighter, lower in fat, yet full of bright flavor and satisfying texture. The cornmeal-parmesan crust, flecked with fresh parsley, bakes up crisp and fragrant, almost like a sheet of irresistible parmesan crackers, and

happens to be completely gluten-free. Both the crust and the filling can be prepared a day ahead, making this a wonderfully flexible dish for entertaining or easy weeknight cooking. The herbed ricotta filling achieves a rich, velvety smoothness without a drop of cream, relying instead on fresh herbs, good ricotta, and gentle baking.

We served ours with a spiral zucchini-tomato salad for a fresh counterpoint, but a simple green salad would be just as lovely. A spoonful of salsa on the side adds a bright, summery kick. Bon appétit! ■

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 at frenchgardener@comcast.net.



Johanne Lamarche is a French Canadian who came to the U.S. to study periodontics, stayed for love, and is enjoying a second career as an artist.

3 Cheese Ricotta Pie in a Polenta Crust

Serves 6–8. Adapted from Canadian Living Magazine.

Ingredients

Crust:

- 3 cups water
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- fresh ground pepper to taste

Filling:

- 2 large eggs
- 1 lb ricotta cheese (low fat or whole milk)
- ½ cup grated mozzarella, Gruyere, or Swiss cheese
- 2 tablespoons flour (gluten-free or regular)
- 2 tablespoons each chopped parsley and fresh basil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoon grated parmesan to sprinkle on top

Directions

- 1 To make the crust: In a small saucepan, combine water, cornmeal, and salt. Bring to a boil and stir for 2 minutes on high heat. Reduce heat and stir for another 5 minutes until polenta thickens. Remove from heat, add parmesan and parsley. Let cool 15 minutes. Preheat oven to 425°F.
- 2 Grease a 9-inch Springform pan with butter. Pat the polenta on the bottom and up the sides. Do not make the bottom any thicker than a regular pie crust would be. Depending how your cornmeal expands during cooking, you may have a bit extra. Bake for 20 minutes at 425°F until polenta is golden and crisp. Cool.
- 3 To make the filling: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Beat the eggs until fluffy and pale yellow. Add the ricotta, mozzarella, parsley, basil, salt and pepper and mix until just combined. Spread evenly in the cooled polenta crust. Sprinkle top with parmesan cheese.
- 4 Bake 20 minutes until filling is set but slightly jiggly.
- 5 Set oven to broil and bake 3-4 more minutes until top is golden. Watch carefully so the pie does not burn. Let cool 5 minutes before removing the sides of the Springform pan.



Golden Polenta Crusted Ricotta Pie with a Bright Seasonal Salad

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Spiral Zucchini Salad with Zesty Dijon and Mustard Dressing*Serves 6.***Ingredients****Salad:**

- 4 cups of spiral-cut zucchini noodles
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 4 tablespoons chopped chives

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- 1** In the bottom of a large bowl, whisk together the mustard, lemon juice, and olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- 2** Toss in the zucchini noodles, and the chives to coat.
- 3** Mix in the tomatoes before serving. Enjoy!

**Art Group**

Last fall, a group of artists living in Hopkinson House started an art group, which has been meeting monthly. Members' work can be seen around the city in multiple venues, including the 3rd Street Gallery, the Plastic Club, the Sketch Club, the Cerulean Gallery, and the Fleisher Art Memorial.

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