



Polish Hill Voice

We are the community ... we are one voice!

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**February
2011**

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Creating a roadmap for the future of Polish Hill

Gearing Up to Create a Strategic Community Plan



This patch of earth we call home is ever-changing. We were once known as Denny Estates, then Springfield farms, then Herron Hill, or simply "the Hill," as many still refer to it. It was only in the late 1960s that the name of the neighborhood was officially changed to Polish Hill.

More recently, we have experienced an influx of new residents and greater diversity, with younger folks and their growing families living alongside more established generations, and just about every demographic in between. As the PHCA has engaged this variety of voices in

*Brereton Street, looking west.
(photo by Leslie Clague)*

conversation about a shared vision for our community, we're finding that most indicate a desire to preserve the things we love about the neighborhood and yet move forward in an inspired way.

For many years, Polish Hill was a quiet neighborhood, known to most Pittsburgh residents only for the church domes and as a shortcut from Bigelow Boulevard down to the Strip. In the last few years, that perception has changed.

With proximity to so many other neighborhoods, a low

crime rate, fantastic views, and charming winding streets, this once-hidden village is being recognized as a desirable place to live. Polish Hill is poised to grow, but it needs some guidance.

How did we get to this turning point?

The PHCA has shepherded small-scale neighborhood development projects for many years -- from John Paul Plaza, which was initiated by then PHCA president Ann Davis, to the new-construction blue houses along the Herron curve and the ones at the end of Wiggins, to the more recently renovated rowhouses towards the top of Herron Avenue.

Although we gained experience through these singular initiatives, it is time to create a wider plan that would look at our community as a whole. This type of planning has been done across all adjacent neighborhoods. Because of our central location and various larger-scale initiatives under way, such as being a key part of the City's pending Greenway, the timing is appropriate for Polish Hill to

(Continued on page 6)

Want to keep receiving this newsletter?

We hope you do! The Voice is mailed to current PHCA members.

Make sure to renew your PHCA membership for 2011!

Use the form on page 11 or stop by the PHCA office to renew.

From our readers



Harmar Street, winter, early 1930s

Here is a photo that I thought was lost forever. This was taken in front of the house I was born in at 324 Harmar, at the junction of Wiggins (which we always called Wayne Street). This is probably the Harmar garden now. The year was in the early 30's before the Big Flood of 1936, when the river overflowed and I remember the people coming up the hill for shelter.

The snow was so white and the air had the promise of more to come. White snow was fresh snow -- heavy pollution in Pittsburgh coming out the depression era was prevalent with all the steel mills, the steam locomotive trains, coal mines and all the other sources of smog. Snow turned quickly into sooted slush. This photo was with me for all these years.

The oblong structure shows the back side, and the front side opened onto Pulawski Street. It housed a horse or two and the wagon they pulled through the streets for the vendor to sell produce. The tall building behind this barn is gone now, as is the old barn. Now one can see all the way to the church from where this photo was taken.

The fence that you see in front of the barn was around 20 inches high or so, mostly to keep out dogs and probably small children. The upright beams to the right were to hold clothes lines for the tenants in the apartment building, and also supported vines from the garden. From where the photo was

taken we do not see the utility pole that is at the curb on the left, or the Wiggins Street apartment building to the right.

I'm not sure if I took this photo or not. It's been a long time ago, but it brings back a lot of memories which cannot be taken away, and I hope that others will enjoy going down memory lane!

Marian Sarnowski, Los Angeles CA
December 21, 2010
First Day of Winter

(via Facebook)

Letter to the Editor:

Just received my copy of the Polish Hill Voice in the mail and was elated to see the front page article entitled "Empty Houses". HIP HIP HOORAY to whom-ever compiled this article. !!!i.e. writers, photographers, etc. I guarantee I will delve into this piece with rapt interest over an uninterrupted cup of coffee this evening.

How wonderful that our community is "Voice" - ing and addressing such social issues.....hopefully to be brought to the attention of Pittsburgh City Council.

It is true that there are a plethora of Pittsburgh neighborhoods with dilapidated buildings that are a health and safety hazard and they can not all receive immediate attention. But the "squeaky wheel gets the oil", as they say....and lest we get shoved to the "back burner", such published articles are providing a vehicle for Polish Hill issues to be brought to the fore when Council next meets.

Thank you all so much for being a social conscience in our neighborhood !"

Judith Adams Cain

Editor's note:

Judy has also contributed an article to this issue of the Voice: see page 8.

President's Letter

We're past the midpoint of winter, when each day has a bit more light and thoughts of spring will soon be filling our minds. As we deal with the snow, ice and low temperatures, we begin to mentally plot our gardens and think about cleaning up our green spaces. Until garden plans and dreams have their season, let's celebrate the current one.

Why celebrate winter? Ask any of the children taking a few moments to run and fall in the snow, or sledding down my favorite hill at West Penn. It may be hard to understand their answers through all the laughter. If one of the kids seems a little bigger than the others ... or you notice "Terry" written on his sled with magic marker, let me finish building my snowman before you ask why. Actually, it would be better if you just join in and figure it out as we go. It's not my fault if you don't remember that snowballs spontaneously occur ... just because. The best part of any season is embracing the changes it brings, and experiencing them by getting out and living.

Over a hot chocolate at Lili Coffee* Shop, the adult side of my mind begins to ponder. The seasons and their changes give the opportunity to reflect on past and present ... and especially the futures we can explore and build together. My mind's eye begins to draw flowcharts as I assess programs, set schedules, anticipate outcomes, and create flexible "Plan B" options. Then, I look out the window. As I see friends walking with their children and their dog, a little something from Robert Frost creeps into my head: "The woods are lovely dark and deep but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep."

The reminder is this: Let your inner child out for a bit of winter fun! Find the best place to ride your sled. Build your snowman and begin to wonder if he will enjoy the garden view you're envisioning.

Terry Doloughty
PHCA President





News and Announcements



Happy birthday, Polish Hill centenarians!

Our neighborhood has two residents who have just achieved their hundredth birthday. Mary Zollner and Leeanna Wilson, both residents at John Paul Plaza, each recently turned 100. When they were born, William Taft was President, many of the roads in Pittsburgh were still unpaved, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church was just five years old.

Many cultures around the world have traditional greeting of goodwill wishing one a hundred years of health and happiness. The Polish phrase "Sto Lat" means something like "may you live to one hundred years." We wish Mary and Leeanna a happy birthday, and best wishes for the coming year!

PHCA Board Election Results

Three board positions were up for reelection this year: vice president, treasurer and one regular board position. Nominations were mailed out in November, and the returned ballots basically sealed the election: three people were nominated, and each was running unopposed. These results were announced at the December meeting (a.k.a. the annual Holiday Potluck Party). The New PHCA vice president will be Patrick Singleton. Catherine McConnell, the former vice president, will take a position as a regular board member, in the spot vacated by outgoing board member Colleen Helwich. Finally, Treasurer Erica Moulinier was elected for a second term.

We thank Colleen for her years of service to the PHCA. We are glad that Erica and Catherine will continue to serve and we appreciate the time they have already devoted to the PHCA. And we welcome Patrick, who has already put in many volunteer hours on various PHCA projects, particularly on green projects, and parking and traffic issues. There's a lot to do in the New Year, and we look forward to working with the new board.

Our Low Crime Rate

Did you know that Polish Hill has one of the lowest crime rates in Pittsburgh? At the beginning of each month, Officer Janine Davis, our Zone 2 community liaison officer, emails our crime stats. This information reflects the number of crime reports that were filed on incidents in the previous month. We present this information at the monthly community meeting.

Each month, Office Janine says the same thing: "You guys are doing great!" In December, just two police reports were filed: A burglary on Herron Avenue, which turned out to be the work of the housecleaner's son, who stole her keys; and a non-fatal drug overdose on Flavian Street.

One reason for our low crime rate is that people here look out for each other. Let's keep this going! If you see something odd, Officer Janine encourages you to call 911. They would rather that we have a few false alarms than a real crime going unreported. If you want an incident to go on record, make sure to tell the officer that you want a report filed -- it isn't automatic. Zone 2 doesn't keep track of 911 calls; only reports.

Being acknowledged for your United Way donation

A few people have inquired about getting acknowledgments for their United Way payroll-deduction donations to the PHCA. The report we receive from United Way lists only those individuals who indicated, up front, that they wanted a letter of acknowledgment from us. This is likely a privacy issue and protects those who choose to remain anonymous. We have contacted UWAC to verify this, but as of press time we had not heard back from them.

We appreciate your donations and would like to ensure that those who want an official letter from the PHCA receive one. To make this happen smoothly, please mark the acknowl-

edgment request area on your sign-up form during the United Way campaign drive. And for those who are thinking of signing up at your job, the PHCA'S number is 258.

Pączki Fundraiser



Pączki is a traditional Polish treat, very similar to a filled donut. Traditionally, they are plain or perhaps with a bit of prune filling and are dusted with powdered sugar. The larger Americanized versions also come in plain, and are often filled with something fun like custard. This is the kind we are selling, and they received very good reviews from our residents last year.

The annual PHCA Pączki Fundraiser is now under way. A dozen pączki is \$10, with a choice of Raspberry, Custard, Plain or Raisin. If you're having a hard time making up your mind, you can always select a Mixed Dozen, which is three of each flavor. (We are sorry, but we cannot offer half-dozen orders.)

The final day to order is Friday, February 25. Payment by cash or check is due when the order is placed. To order, stop by or call the PHCA office at 412.681.1950, or visit blogski.phcapgh.org for an order form.

All orders are for pick-up only. We regret that we cannot offer shipping or delivery. Orders can be picked up on Saturday, March 5, between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Sunday, March 6, between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

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Knotweed Knockout Project wins grant

By Josie Ramsey

Knotweed has become an everyday nuisance plant in neighborhoods all over the world. Here on Polish Hill, knotweed has taken over many areas that were once open plots or vacant lots. One section that has been completely overtaken by knotweed is the "Tot Lot," at the end of Melwood Avenue near the Bloomfield Bridge. This area was once a playground, where the children on the East side of Herron Avenue would gather. Now, it's just a tangled mass of knotweed. As a way to reclaim the area and make it a productive spot in the neighborhood, I applied on behalf of the PHCA for the Sprout Fund's biodiversity Spring Grant.

In early December we got the award letter -- the PHCA received a grant of \$5,000. The project involves reclaiming a one-acre space at the "Tot Lot" by removing the knotweed and replacing it with native plants. This project will enhance the neighborhood and give Polish Hill residents a green space to enjoy. We also hope that the project will provide more knowledge about how to combat the spread of knotweed. This knowledge will be shared with other neighborhoods throughout Pittsburgh and beyond.

The first stage of Knotweed Knockout will start this spring, when the knotweed will be sprayed with non-toxic cinnamon oil, which the City has used on other sections of knotweed in our neighborhood. Next, we'll bring in heavy machinery to remove the massive knotweed root balls. As you're travelling down Melwood this spring and summer, take a look at our progress. We will also post updates on the Polish Hill Green Blog, and at our monthly community meetings.

About biodiversity:

Simply stated, biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. Our quality of life depends on how well we sustain the living



Alexis Miller and Josie Ramsey at the Sprout Fund's Spring Grant Award Ceremony in December. (Photo by Myra Falisz)

networks and systems that supply us with health, wealth, food, fuel and vital resources. We are rapidly losing biodiversity and the impact can be irreversible. The faster the loss, the greater the damage becomes to our daily support systems.

About Sprout Fund's Spring Program:

By supporting two classes of projects, \$5,000 awards and \$20,000 awards, Spring will catalyze the execution of 20 community-based projects that creatively address the challenges we face, and inspire a greater stewardship of our region's natural resources.

The awards, granted to organizations throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania, are designed to support local biodiversity initiatives in 2011. The program is generously funded by The Pittsburgh Foundation, and was created to complement Pittsburgh's status as North American Host City for the United Nations World Environment Day and the International Year of Biodiversity. Six organizations received \$20,000 awards and 14 organizations received \$5,000 awards. Sprout received a total of 75 applications for the 20 awards granted.

Port Authority Update

By Patrick Singleton

More bus and light-rail changes are in store for 2011, and they are not positive. Due in part to a statewide transportation funding crisis, the Port Authority faced a \$47 million operating deficit for the current fiscal year, resulting in proposed fare increases and a 35 percent service cut. In December, former Governor Ed Rendell provided \$45 million in discretionary funding to offset these cuts. However, foreseeing no imminent solution from Harrisburg to the transit funding problem, the Port Authority Board of Directors voted on January 12 to stretch the funds over the next 18 months.

As a result, fare increases went into effect on January 2; the base fare is now \$2.25. More importantly, a less severe but still significant 15 percent service cut is scheduled for March 27. What this means for Polish Hill is that weekday 54C service will remain the same instead of increasing, East Busway EBA service will be reduced, and 77 Penn Hills service on Bigelow will be reduced. Look for the new schedules in February.

Also, according to the Port Authority, more of our bus routes will be changing names. The EBA and EBS will become the P1 and P2, respectively. Also, the 54C will become the 54, while maintaining its alternating route between Polish Hill and Lawrenceville. Perhaps our route will be the 54B ... Brereton?

Council-to-Go
Every other month
at Lili Coffee* Shop
3138 Dobson Street
(at Hancock St.)

Wednesday, January 12
7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 9
7:00 p.m.

Come share your concerns with
District 7 Councilman Patrick Dowd
and his staff.

Celebrating Our Stair Stewards

by Catherine McConnell and Mark Knobil



Jennifer Kirk and Patrick Singleton are the stair stewards for the Dobson-Herron city steps.

(Photo by Mark Knobil)

Our city stairs are not only a link to the East busway or the bus stops on Bigelow Blvd., but they are also a link to our less car-dominated past. For generations, workers with lunch pails walked these steps morning and evening, to and from the mills in the hollow or a streetcar to another job. There was no need to take the stairs to get groceries, bread, or go to school. All of that was already in Polish Hill.

Rarely are the stairs more beautiful than when winter strips away the knotweed and dusts the concrete with crisp white, making them bold graphic shapes. Unfortunately, snow also transforms our steps into a death-defying, white-knuckle experience, especially for our older neighbors or anyone trying to carry anything up or down. Whether it be groceries or school books -- carrying any item that makes you take a hand off the railing -- is sure to raise your heart-rate in terror when the snow has turned to ice.

The good news is that clearing snow from the stairways is easier and more rewarding than you might think.

This is the second year that Jen Kirk and Patrick Singleton have volunteered as Stair Stewards and swept the snow off the city steps, caring for the pedestrian link between Dobson Street and Herron Ave. that sits next to their apartment building. Their trick is to get to the snow before too many folks have walked

on it. When the snow is fresh, a quick sweep with a broom is all it takes. They both say this speedy progress is extremely satisfying. Sweeping the lighter, fluffier snow is easier than shoveling. Where people have left their footprints, the broom leaves a thin white outline against the clean concrete of the stairs. It looks like some sort of crazy art project created from hundreds of painted footprints.

Another great thing about clearing the steps is running into folks you might not otherwise have seen that day or even sometimes people you have never met. Yes, that can still happen in our little village!

But perhaps the best thing is that warm glow you get from a job well done and a good deed completed ... which, as we all know, gives us the go-ahead for another helping of dessert or that one more beer!

Patrick often leaves for work at 6 a.m. returning at 6 p.m. on some days. Somehow he manages to muster the energy to maintain his local stairs for the rest of us to use safely. At least he doesn't have to supply his own salt!

The City's Department of Public Works has provided a salt box that sits at the top of the stairs on Dobson to be used when mere sweeping and shoveling aren't sufficient. Only the stair steward

has a key to this box.

Last year Polish Hill was the first City neighborhood to pilot a Stair Stewards program. We started with two stewards for just two sets of public stairs; from Dobson to Herron, and the long steps from Downing to Herron.

The program was deemed a success, and this winter we have three more stewards lined up for the Apollo steps, which run from Melwood to Bethoven, the steps from Bigelow Boulevard down to Harding Street, and the pedestrian overpass from Ridgeway to Bigelow. As of print time, we are waiting to find out if we will get saltboxes for these locations.

If you want to help, but don't live near any of our well-traveled stairs, consider becoming a member of the Polish Hill Shovel Brigade, and help keep our sidewalks clear of snow and ice. Contact the PHCA to sign up!

Citiparks West Penn Community Recreation Center 450 30th Street

Martial Arts

Instructor: DeWayne Adams
For kids: Mondays 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
For adults: Fridays 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
(adult class has a \$10 monthly fee)

Hatha Yoga

Instructor: Ilona Auth
Thursdays 6:15 – 7:15 p.m.
(for adults, \$7 donation per class)

Ceramics

Instructor: Patti Dobies
Tuesdays 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Weight training

is available upon request and **the game room** is open each afternoon.

West Penn hours:

10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday - Friday
10 a.m. - 3 p.m. on Saturday
Closed on Sundays

For more information about West Penn, call 412-622-7353.

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develop its own plan. In 2007, the PHCA set about raising the money to hire a firm to work with us and residents to create a strategic plan for the neighborhood.

What is a strategic community plan?

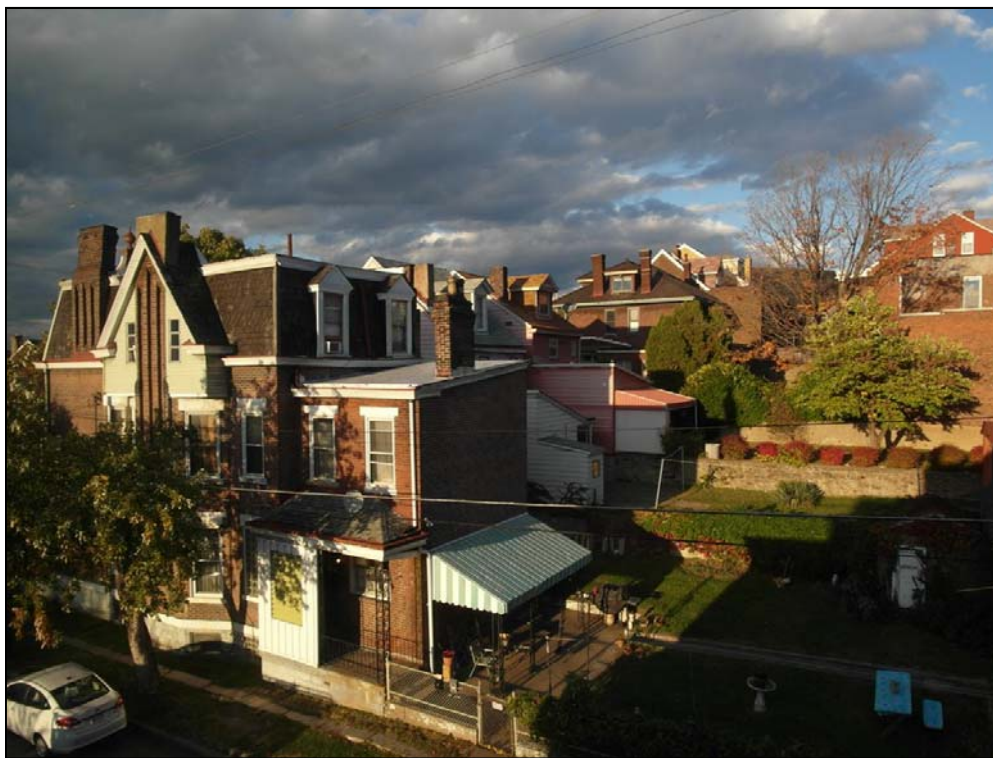
A strategic plan attempts to provide a clear course of action for the neighborhood. It allows the community to determine the next steps for neighborhood improvement as identified by the residents and businesses themselves. This could include ways we might be able to help grow our business district, and what public improvements might benefit our neighborhood such as better lighting, sidewalks, public seating, city steps, landscaping, greenways and parks. We can explore strategies to help us deal with vacant and abandoned properties, and façade enhancements to our existing homes.

A strategic plan is, essentially, a report produced by professionals after a period of research and study. It provides suggestions for ways the neighborhood could grow intelligently, and how monies could best be used to benefit the community. It allows us to create a picture of Polish Hill as we would like it to be in the future, and to create a roadmap for getting there.

The phrase "strategic plan" makes it sound like a long, dry, boring operation filled with arcane paperwork. However, that is not the case. The process is quite dynamic, and will include public meetings and feedback at several steps along the way. An essential part of this process is getting feedback from current Polish Hill residents and businesses.

Why do we even need a plan?

The process itself is important. The hope is to assemble as many voices from the community as possible. The very act of gathering opinions is an excellent chance to hear from residents who normally don't express themselves publicly. From these various viewpoints, we may discover some common threads, as well as new creative solutions to old problems. Having



the plan will help us get funding for our projects. It enables organizations interested in providing monies for community development to better understand what we aspire to do in our neighborhood and why.

What do you do with a strategic plan?

When applying for grant funding, a strategic plan is essential, like having a resume for a job interview. But instead of stating what you have done, it lists what you hope to do. It shows not only that you have thought about the future of the community, but also have a specific plan of action. There are a limited amount of funds available to small communities like ours. Having a good plan is like having a great resume, and this is one of the first things government and public agencies look at when dividing these monies.

Why do we need an outside firm to do our plan for us? Isn't this just a big neighborhood survey?

Although the do-it-yourself ethic is strong in Polish Hill, this is one area where a professional can contribute knowledge, experience and insight we don't have ourselves. It is also helpful to get input from an outside viewpoint, one who might notice things we take for

*A view from Jewel Street of homes on the east end of the neighborhood.
(photo by Mark Knobil)*

granted or areas where we as residents are too close to the problem to be objective. Planning professionals have great insights. They know the laws and regulations and can tell us what is possible, and what has been done in other communities.

How will we pay for this?

The necessary funds to pay the firm have already been acquired. The bulk of the money is a grant from the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh (CDCP), with additional funding from the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development. Three local businesses contributed: bigBUILDING LLC, Gooski's, and Cheerleaders. Later, we received another grant from the Pittsburgh Foundation.

Who will be doing the strategic plan?

A stipulation of the CDCP grant was that they would provide a shortlist of pre-qualified firms for us to approach.

On Saturday, January 15, the PHCA's Strategic Planning Committee listened

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to and carefully evaluated three firms who had the potential to partner with us and create a distinctive plan for Polish Hill. The committee selected Pfaffmann + Associates, a firm especially skilled in urban planning and historic preservation. As featured in Pfaffmann's statement of purpose: "We believe strongly that the context of community should provide real inspiration — a connection to history that helps root a new project in its neighborhood. This can be the best kind of inspiration, creating a structure that respects the past and is inspired by the future."

Pfaffmann + Associates has worked on a number of planning projects in and around Pittsburgh, including the Lawrenceville Community Plan and the East Allegheny Gateway Study. They have done work for the Central North Side Community Plan and project work for East Liberty Development Inc. Other neighborhood organizations that Pfaffmann has partnered with include the Lawrenceville Corporation, Oakland Planning & Development, Neighbors in the Strip, Mt. Washington Community Development Corp., and the North Side Leadership Conference.

When is this happening?

Initial meetings with Pfaffmann + Associates will start in February, and the public information-gathering process will start in the early spring. It is likely to take about 14 weeks to complete the process. It takes some time to arrange all the neighborhood meetings, and the information from these meetings needs to be compiled with the suggestions from our planning firm. We expect the end result will be an invaluable document we'll all be proud of.

Who can participate? How can I make sure my voice is heard?

We welcome input from everyone in the community. Public meetings will be announced and held in a variety of locations around Polish Hill, and may even include a walking tour, weather permitting. If you are unable to make it to one of these meetings, or even if you have additional thoughts after-

ward, please consider writing a letter. Sometimes it is easier to put ideas on paper, than try to express them in a public forum.

Our hope is that this process will be an enjoyable one. It will require some effort from as many people as we can get onboard, but it should be rewarding to share our ideas and to create some common goals. We're looking forward to working together to make our neighborhood an even better place to live. Whatever the outcome, we expect that the results will be uniquely Polish Hill.

This article was written by Josiah Parkinson, Leslie Clague, and Myra Falisz, with input from members of the Polish Hill Strategic Plan Steering Committee.



Are you on the computer?

Do you use the Internet?

If so, please check out

BLOGSKI

Blogski is the PHCA's online bulletin board and the most up-to-date source of news and information pertinent to the concerns of residents and friends of Polish Hill.

Just type in this address: <http://blogski.phcapgh.org/>

Keep up on neighborhood happenings, public service messages from the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, information about Polish Hill, the PHCA, and more.



Holiday Happenings

Polish Hill's Light Up the Street Night was held on Friday, December 3. As these events usually are, it was a very cold evening, but a lot of people came out to see the lighting of the tree. This year, Santa pitched his tent outside the PHCA office, and the interior was decorated with lights and a little Christmas tree, and of course, a heater. He was a distinctly Polish Hill Santa, and we want to express our appreciation for his time in our community.



Top: Lili's first photo with Santa. Bottom: Yes, even Santa has a Mom, and after all the kids had their turn, she got a photo with him too. (Santa photos by Myra Falisz)

The night also featured our first "Around the Block" event, with a number of local businesses open all evening, offering refreshments or special giveaways. The Urban Gypsy, Lili Coffee* Shop, Mindcure Records and The Copacetic Comics Company™, as well as Sarney's and Gooski's participated. Visitors were able to make the rounds, chat with one another and do some Christmas shopping. The coffee shop had free homemade ice cream and a holiday craft activity. It was a lovely way to begin the holiday season!



In the early part of the 20th century, countless families, men, women and children came directly from Poland via Ellis Island to settle on Polish Hill where they found their common language, their church and their friends. This is the story of only one such family, but it's ...

Our Busia's Story

By Judy Adams Cain

My paternal grandparents Jan Adamiec (1882-1927) and Antonina Koziel (1888-1988) grew up in Sandomierz, Poland, and married there around 1909. Their first child, Stella, was born in Sandomierz in 1910. Jan came to Pittsburgh alone to find work, and sent for his wife and baby in 1911 or '12, after he got established here in Polish Hill. They first settled in a cold-water walk-up apartment, as they were called, on Wiggins (then called Wayne) Street.

Subsequently they had five more children: Adam, my father, born in 1913, Charlie, Sophie, Johnny and Merle, who is well-known to the Western Pennsylvania Polish community as Merle Addams.

When Jan died in 1927, they had recently bought a five-unit apartment house at 326/328 Harmar Street. He was a master cabinetmaker -- quite well paid, but self-employed. He had no insurance, so Busia (that's what we grandkids called her) had to find work. Luckily she had come from farm peasant stock and thought nothing of hard, dirty work such as laying brick or installing drywall.

So she got a job down at the Roundhouse. And get this -- she would climb into the guts of the engines -- the part where the coal actually burned. Tied a rag on her head and climbed inside. Her job was to scrape out the waste products, klinkers (light-weight small stones that are the by-product of burning coal), and shovel it all into buckets for removal. Then she had to use a big wire brush and scrape the walls of the engine interior.

When she first met my step-grandad Adam Truchan, he liked her but didn't know what she looked like 'cause she was always so dirty! He was also working down in the Roundhouse and he would walk her home up Brereton Street.



Top: Sophie, Adam, Stella, Charlie, Mama Antonina. Bottom: Rosalie, Merle, and Johnny, at their Harmar Street home, 1933. (photo courtesy of Judy Cain)

At that time I think the first bridge had just been built. For the longest time, there was just a "hollow" to cross from Liberty to come up Brereton. I've seen pictures taken around then, looking down Brereton from the area of our house, and it was just a dirt road.

The reason the first bridge was built was because the horse-carts had a hard time pulling ambulance wagons up the hill to the first West Penn Hospital, which was located at the corner of Brereton and 30th Street, now the location of the church parking lot. The horses would slide down the slick mud embankments, so the city had to put in a bridge so the horse-drawn carts could make it up the muddy hill to get to the hospital from Downtown, the Strip and Lawrenceville. Brereton was still a dirt road, but the bridge helped.

Anyway ... "I digress" ... as Sophia Petrillo of the Golden Girls would say.

Busia eventually gave up cleaning out train engines within a year of their meet-

ing. And after they got married, she got pregnant with their one and only child, a girl named Rosalie ... so that made seven. Adam Truchan (Dziadzia) was a living saint -- he met and married a widow with six kids, the eldest of whom was 17. Of course, he didn't make out too badly in the deal. He became joint owner of the 326/328 Harmar property. Dziadzia lived there on Harmar 'til he died, in 1952 or '53. I was around 12 or 13 then.

There were many stories in our family about how Dziadzia, after a day working down on the railroad, was not allowed into the house until he walked down into the backyard and into the dirt cellar to take a shower under a pipe protruding from the ceiling. We had no indoor bathtubs, just a "toilet" in the hallway of each apartment. I took my "baths" at the kitchen sink until I was 14!

So, come rain or snow, Dziadzia would walk down into the backyard cellar, wash, and come back up around the building to enter again through the front door. They worked six days, and on Saturdays, before he could even take off his coat, he had to take off his cap and present it to Busia. Inside was his pay envelope. She took the money ... she ruled the roost.

Only then was he allowed to sit down in his little chair between the kitchen sink and stove, and she would go find the whiskey from where she kept it hidden. She would appear from another room carrying to him his allotted one shot-glass full of whiskey. He would drink his whiskey and smoke his *fika* (pipe). That went on for a long time, 'cause I even remember the ritual when I grew up there as a kid. And he was a happy man!



Kulig: a tradition brings merriment to the dark days of winter

By Josie Ramsey

What are traditions? By definition, a tradition is a custom or belief that we have inherited from past generations. Traditions are important to living. They help not only define who we are, but also guide us when we are not sure about how to define ourselves. Traditions give our baseline of us -- individually, socially and globally.

When a person is in a state of doubt, defiance or self-discovery, our traditions often provide an anchor or guide. Sometimes it is simply good enough to know or appreciate the tradition. Other times, it might require engaging in the tradition. Or, perhaps it's something we do automatically with even realizing it.

A typical Polish winter tradition is Kulig, a party that can occur any time between Christmas and the beginning of Lent -- whenever there's a lot of snow. It is a tradition of fun, pranks, elders bringing couples together, good times and food. The



person throwing the party would supply a banquet feast. The people attending the party would decorate their sleighs and horses. This is a tradition that people still carry on, as I've seen many a car decorated for the holidays. I really liked the one "done up" as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.

The Kulig tradition of merriment helps to take people's minds off the cold, dark and gloomy days of winter. The Polish News website has a great article on celebrating Kulig which can be found by searching "polish news kulig".



Community & Event Calendar

February/March/April

Feb 1 | PHCA Monthly Community Meeting
6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center

Mar 1 | PHCA Monthly Community Meeting
6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center

Mar 9 | Council-to-Go with Councilman Dowd
7:00 p.m. | Lili Coffee* Shop 3138 Dobson St.

Apr 5 | PHCA Monthly Community Meeting
6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center

Apr 8 | Neighborhood Clean-up and Green Space spring prep
10:00 a.m. | Polish Hill Civic Association

Polish Hill items benefit the PHCA—order here!

Polish Hill t-shirt \$12

Available in red or black.
Adult or youth sizes.

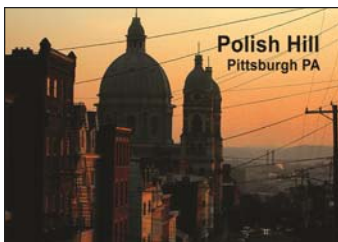


Pierogi pins and ornaments \$5
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Polish Hill cookbook \$5
almost sold out!

Button .50
Falcon on red background



Polish Hill Postcard
Pittsburgh PA

Polish Hill Postcard .75 ea

A beautiful sunset view of Brereton Street by Mark Knobil

Item	Qty	Cost	Total
Red t-shirt Circle size(s) desired Youth S M Adults S M L XL XXL		12.00 ea.	
Black t-shirt Circle size(s) desired Youth S M Adults S M L XL XXL		12.00 ea.	
Polish Hill button		.50 ea.	
Pierogi pin		5.00 ea.	
Pierogi ornament		5.00 ea.	
Postcard		.75 ea.	
Cookbook		5.00 ea.	
		Shipping	5.00
		TOTAL	

Ship to:	
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Streets of Polish Hill

By Josie Ramsey

Hidden in the maze of letters are the names of these Polish Hill streets:

- Apollo
- Bethoven
- Brereton
- Cargill
- Dobson
- Downing
- Finland
- Flavian
- Hancock
- Harding
- Harmar
- Herron
- Jewel
- Linoleum
- Melwood
- Paulowna
- Phelan
- Pulawski
- Ruthven
- Wiggins

W	O	G	A	S	L	H	A	E	A	O	O	T	O	N	L	C	R	D	L	N	B	R	L	J
N	W	F	O	D	R	A	R	L	B	I	P	W	C	A	D	M	O	L	N	K	E	R	U	R
U	O	R	I	G	O	R	U	N	E	H	P	E	F	R	K	B	U	N	N	N	C	I	N	G
L	H	L	R	N	N	W	A	H	E	K	I	H	L	O	S	I	C	E	M	O	L	R	A	N
O	A	A	N	A	L	S	N	L	A	D	A	H	M	O	W	G	U	L	L	E	R	W	M	H
N	C	W	R	L	O	A	A	I	W	L	O	N	N	S	A	B	L	R	A	O	P	R	D	G
L	T	R	D	M	E	N	N	A	N	F	O	S	R	L	E	I	E	T	E	H	N	L	E	A
H	W	S	N	D	A	E	O	D	L	G	W	L	G	G	G	V	A	A	L	O	P	I	H	H
N	P	P	N	E	K	R	L	A	W	B	C	N	O	R	A	N	A	R	L	A	H	T	L	F
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I	L	W	N	W	O	L	H	R	E	E	H	N	E	G	I	I	I	N	I	A	L	O	R	S

Want to continue receiving the Voice?

Make sure your PHCA membership is current!

Membership is just \$5 per year.

See the mail-in membership form on page 11.

Seeking articles and ads for the May issue of the *Polish Hill Voice*!

Submission Deadline	Publication Date	Months Covered
April 15	Early May	May, June, July

The *Polish Hill Voice* is published quarterly.

Advertisers/Photographers: Acceptable formats include:

- Black & white camera-ready art
- PC-based JPG, TIFF or PDF (300 dpi or higher)

Editorial content:

Submissions of news items, articles, or photos relating to the interests and concerns of Polish Hill residents may be sent via email to phcapgh@gmail.com, or by mail to the PHCA office, 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh PA, 15219.

Polish Hill Civic Association of Pittsburgh

2011 Membership | Dues \$5

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

NAME: _____

(Street Address) _____

(City) _____ (State) _____ (ZIP) _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

Yes, I would like to receive the PHCA email newsblast every other Thursday

REGULAR MEMBER _____(Polish Hill residents)	~ Or ~	SUBSCRIPTION MEMBER _____(Non-residents)
____New Member	~ Or ~	____Renewal

For office use only:
REC'D BY: _____ DATE: _____ GOT CARD _____ LOGGED _____

Make checks payable to the Polish Hill Civic Association and mail with this application to:
Polish Hill Civic Association, Membership Chair, 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh PA 15219

All members get a free subscription to the *Voice* (4 issues a year)

Members who are also Polish Hill residents get:

An invitation to the monthly community meeting and a vote on neighborhood issues

An invitation to the bi-monthly Council-to-Go sessions



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If you're hoping to buy or fix up a house, check into the loan programs at the Urban Redevelopment Authority! The URA helps low and moderate income residents buy, rehabilitate, renovate, or improve homes.

Here is just one way: the Pittsburgh Home Ownership Program provides fixed, low interest, 30-year mortgage loans for low to moderate income home buyers. The program has a low down payment requirement of 3%. A great feature of PHOP is that it offers help with your down payment and closing costs in a Down Payment/Closing Cost Assistance grant — up to \$3,000 for eligible borrowers.

Check the URA website for loan programs and income guidelines http://www.ura.org/pittsburgh_residents/pittsburgh_residents.php or visit the PHCA office for forms and information.

TELL EVERYONE IN POLISH HILL ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS!

To advertise in the *Voice*, call (412) 681-1950 or email phcapgh@gmail.com

POLISH HILL VOICE

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Pittsburgh, PA 15219

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*The Polish Hill Voice is
underwritten by a
generous donation from
PNC Bank.*

The PHCA's mission is to respect and preserve the sense of community in Polish Hill while promoting economic and housing development opportunities, and improving the quality of life for our community.

Upcoming Community Meetings:

February 1

March 1

April 5

**PHCA community meetings are open to all residents of Polish Hill —
you do not have to be a PHCA member to attend!**

**Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.
in the Senior Center on the lower level of the West Penn Recreation Center,
450 30th @ Paulowna Street.**