

THE NEWS of BELLA VISTA

Spring 2017

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BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

The Bella Vista Neighbors Association is a Registered Community Organization that serves residents of Bella Vista, which is bounded by 6th and 11th Streets and South Street and Washington Avenue. BVNA encourages civic involvement, provides a neutral and public discussion forum, preserves and augments our institutions and character, supports the delivery of government services, and promotes dialogue with elected officials. We are an independent and nonprofit organization.

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The history below

Before indoor toilets, there were brick-lined holes in the ground called privies. Probably every home in Bella Vista – and the rest of the civilized world – had a privy. A Bella Vista privy was typically housed in a backyard outhouse. All privies were cleaned out and covered toward the end of the 19th century, when indoor plumbing arrived. But not every privy was cleaned out properly. And it wasn't just their effluvia that people dropped into privies. They also dropped things like marbles, toothbrushes, smoking pipes, porcelain dolls, false teeth, casks, and bottles. Turns out human waste preserves things like that nicely.

John Fries has recovered hundreds – maybe thousands – of centuries-old items like that from privies all over the city. A carpenter who specializes in historic rehabs, John excavates privies as a hobby. He enjoys retrieving everyday objects from centuries past because they connect him with people long gone. Often objects he finds were beautifully crafted from a time before mass manufacturing. "An object that was once utilitarian, now reborn, touches the past, which gives it a soulful quality," he said inside his Fairmount home, which houses his collection.

It is a physically taxing hobby but one that offers the prospect of an exciting find. There is always the chance John will recover a bottle or other item from a highly-regarded artisan. Like finding a rare baseball card in a flea market, uncovering a minor treasure from yesteryear is reward in itself. He notes the value of what he finds can range up

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John Fries with a centuries-old pipe and other artifacts at his home museum.

A Pretty Busy Library



The Santore branch is one of the busiest libraries in Philadelphia.

By Brandy Bones

The Charles Santore Library, near 7th & Carpenter Streets, is one of the busiest in Philadelphia's library system. Last year it circulated 154,000 books and held 800 programs attended by 19,500 people. All managed by seven full-time and three part-time staff, and supported by about a dozen volunteers.

Its children's activities include an afterschool homework program Monday through Thursday and a Tuesday morning children story time. Activities like these foster a lifelong love of books, says the children's librarian, Lindsay Friedman.

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A Playground for the soul

By Laura Burtner

Samuel Fleisher started an art school in 1898 for Philadelphia's then-burgeoning population of immigrants. Many worked at the Fleisher Yarn Company in Southwest Philadelphia. His goal was to create a space "where beauty and inspi-



ration may be gathered" by the hardworking thousands "whose lives are unavoidably cast upon a background of routine and sameness." For them he wanted to create "playgrounds for the soul."

It was a popular idea. Fleisher's playground for the soul, then called the Graphic Sketch Club, started in the Jewish Union, 422 Bainbridge Street. But it moved in 1906 to 740 Catherine Street for more space. In 1916, it took over the abandoned St. Martin's College for Indigent Boys across the street. Fleisher's idea continued to grow, perhaps tracking the size of the immigrant population. The school acquired the Church of the Evangelist in 1922, the parking lot on the south side of Catharine Street, and the building that houses the Fleisher Works on Paper gallery on Christian Street.

The Graphic Sketch Club was renamed the Fleisher Art Memorial after Fleisher's passing in 1944. Today it delivers art experiences beyond its physical plant through its artists-in-residence outreach program, and its mobile art studio, ColorWheels, which rolled out in 2012. It has grown far beyond being a Graphic Sketch Club, offering a full spectrum of art disciplines and studio



Fleisher welcomes all ages, backgrounds, and artistic ability.

facilities.

But Fleisher's staff remains true to its founder's commitment. They strive to engage everyone in the community – longtime neighbors and new arrivals – with a sanctuary for creative self-expression through art. Fleisher is always welcoming and inclusive to all ages, backgrounds, and artistic ability.

Fleisher is exploring opportunities to partner with interested parties in the community to develop its parking lot. They have issued a Request for Expressions of Interest and enlisted a steering committee to ensure the endeavor honors Fleisher's vision. The community is invited to a presentation of the master plan on May 31st at 7 pm. Visit www.fleisher.org for updates/details. ■

The author wishes to thank Elizabeth Grimaldi, Executive Director of Fleisher Art Memorial, for her insights in writing this article.

Fleisher Art Memorial, 719 Catharine Street, (215) 922-3456, Fleisher.org



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HISTORY *Continued from Page 1*

to \$50,000. There are people all over the east coast who share his interest, always looking for opportunities to excavate privies.

The best opportunity to excavate is when a homeowner is renovating, installing a new patio, or swapping in new pavers, he explains. Best to do it then because covering the privy

with foundation will not only seal it underneath, it may destroy it too. A scrupulous urban archeologist, John always asks permission to dig and carries \$2 million insurance and liability waiver. ■

If you are interested in John visiting your property to discuss unearthing the history below, he welcomes your telephone call at 215.416.8355.

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LIBRARY *Continued from Page 1*

For adults, Santore offers classes on English as a Second Language, yoga, knitting and crocheting, and a book club. Adults can also visit Santore for technology assistance, job searching, and to work on resumes.

Jeanne Hamann, Santore's branch manager and adult and teen librarian, loves working there because she sees in the neighbors a genuine desire for cultural interaction. "There is so much diversity in this neighborhood and interest in getting to know each other," she says.

This past February, *Philadelphia Inquirer* architecture critic Inga Saffron devoted an entire column to the library's design, praising the midcentury modernist building for its accordion roof and glass ceilings.

Formerly the Southwark Library, it was renamed the Charles Santore Library in 2004 to honor lifelong South Philadelphian Charles Santore, born in 1910 at 707 South 7th Street. Santore was a boxer, Republican ward leader, and founder of Municipal Employees Union Local 696. When he passed in 2002 he was the oldest active ward leader in the city.

Santore Library faced funding cuts, staff shortages and threats of shortened hours in the 2000s, so the Friends of Santore Library group restarted itself in 2007. Mitchell Bach, Friends of Santore Library Board member, moved to Queen Village in 1980 and fondly recalls spending a lot of time at the library with his children. "The role of the Friends group," he says, "is to provide a voice that



Santore's building won praise from the Philadelphia Inquirer's architectural critic, Inga Saffron.

represents and supports the library and its interests."

Santore's Friends has raised funds for new lighting, new exterior gates, and planting a garden with outdoor seating. Grants from the city pay for children's books and children story time. Councilman Mark Squilla and Beginnings Learning Center, 10th Street near Bainbridge, are longtime Santore supporters.

The library is a vibrant neighborhood asset. If you've never been, or it's been a while, stop by this spring to visit the lovely courtyard, attend a program, borrow a book, or involve yourself in the Friends group. ■

Want to Support the Friends of the Charles Santore Library?

Contact santorelibrary@gmail.com or visit www.santorelibrary.org to:

Join the Friends;
Volunteer your time;
Participate in the new Speaker Event Series featuring local writers and artists events; or
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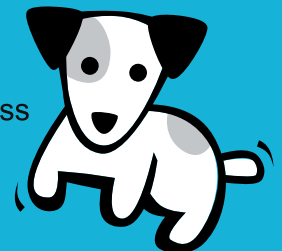


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Recycling DOs and DON'Ts

The more you know about recycling, the easier it'll be to keep it clean. Philadelphia picks it up weekly. Here are DOs and DON'Ts.

Do	Don't
Rinse out all containers	Put out your recycling (or trash) before 7pm the night before pickup
PLASTICS	
Hard Plastic Takeout Containers Plastic Cold Drink Cups and Lids Detergent and Shampoo Bottles Pump and Spray Bottles Plastic Pails, Buckets, Garden Pots	Plastic Bags Styrofoam Food/Beverage Containers
PAPER	
Newspapers and Inserts Magazines, Brochures, and Catalogs Junk Mail, Envelopes, Writing Paper Scrap Paper Paper Bags Phone Books Paperback Books Greeting Cards, Gift Wrap (non-metallic)	Waxed Paper Plates, Cups, and Takeout Containers Tissues, Paper Towels, and Napkins Wet or Food-Soiled Paper
CARTONS	
Milk, Juice, Ice Cream, Wine and Soups	Food Waste
METAL	
Recycle Metals Including: Aluminum, Steel, and Tin Cans Empty Paint Cans Empty Aerosol Cans Metal Trays and Baking Dishes Jar Lids and Bottle Caps Clean Aluminum Foil	Light Bulbs Cassette Tapes (VHS and audio) Garden Hoses Needles and Syringes Electronics
GLASS	
Bottles Jars	Porcelain Non-Container Glass
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You are the eyes and ears of the community

By Brandy Bones

Bella Vista now boasts one of the lowest crime rates in the city, but public safety remains a priority of the Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA). BVNA used to be called the Bella Vista Town Watch. Neighbors concerned about crime and blight started the town watch in 1992.

Lieutenant Mike Goodson, who commands the South Street Mini-Station, says the key to effective policing is strong community relations. "The police are usually the first line of defense when a crime happens," explains Lt. Goodson, "but our success depends on our relationship with the neighborhood – its citizens and business owners. You are the eyes and ears."

Crime prevention efforts in Bella Vista focus on increasing the risks and costs of committing crime and reducing the rewards, provocations, and excuses that motivate crime. Relamping all the South Street pedestrian lights with brighter, white LED bulbs is an example of increasing the risks of committing crime – the extra light increases the chance of getting caught in the act. The South Street



Headhouse District was the big mover in making that happen.

BVNA's Public Safety Committee Chair Joe Alkus, who is a Temple University criminal justice professor, agrees with Lt. Goodson that the community is key to public safety. With the spring in full swing, be vigi-

lant. Increasing temperatures mean increasing crime because more people are out, and out

later.

This is particularly true on South Street where late night activities for locals and out-of-towners are the norm. As Joe Alkus puts it, "We all have a part to play; be conscientious of your surroundings and remove opportunities for criminal activity to occur in the first place." ■

If you are interested in getting involved via BVNA, contact crime@bellavistaneighbors.org. And everyone is welcome to attend PSA1 meetings on the first Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm at the Charles Santore Library.

Support the South Street Police Mini-Station

The Friends of the South Street Police Mini-Station, founded by long time Bella Vistan, John Smyth, raises funds for building maintenance, computers, bikes, office furniture and other material the City doesn't pay for.

- Contact the Friends of the South Street Police Mini-Station via policeministation@gmail.com
- Donate to the Friends of the South Street Police Mini-Station at www.policeministation.org/donate

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BVNA events and meetings

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Tuesday, May 23 7:00 p.m.

Palumbo Recreation Center

ZONING

First Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Palumbo Rec Center, 10th & Fitzwater. Open meetings for community input on building and renovation projects requiring variances to the zoning code.

PSA1

First Wednesday, 6:30 pm, Santore Library, 7th & Carpenter. Meeting between police leadership and stakeholders in Police Service Area 1 of the 3rd District. Review of monthly crime statistics.

BVNA BOARD

First Monday, 7:30 pm, Palumbo Rec Center. Board of directors' monthly business meeting.

All meetings open to the public.

Check our website and social media for schedule changes.

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