

Newsletter of the Center City Residents' Association

Vol. 16 No. 4 Spring/Summer

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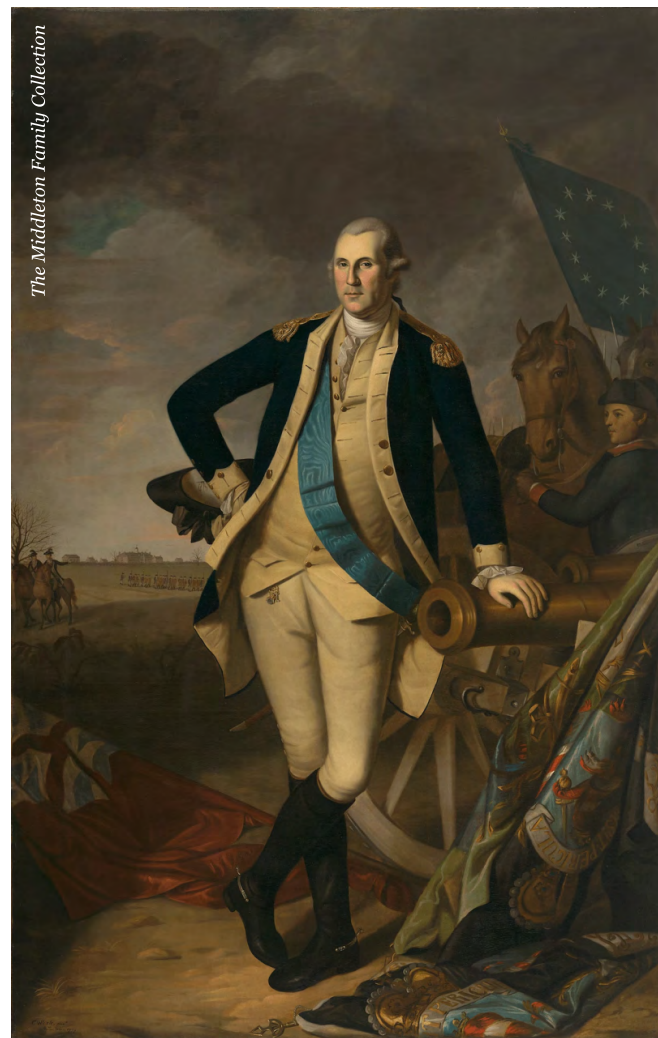
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Out & About

Philly Celebrating America's 250th In Style This Spring/Summer

By Margie Wiener



George Washington at Princeton, 1779, American, 1741-1827.

The celebration comes with many names — Semiquincentennial, Quarter Millennial, Sestercentennial, Philly 250, America 250, the Big Two-Five-Oh. All refer to one thing: 250 years since that historic Fourth of July in 1776, exactly two-and-a-half centuries since America's birth, when the Founding Fathers declared independence.

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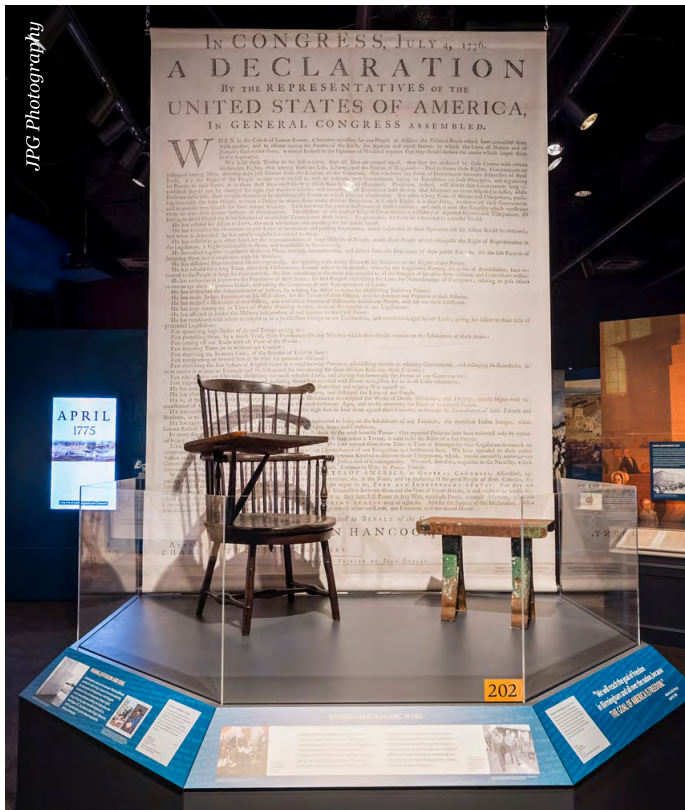
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Museums and cultural organizations across Philadelphia will offer [special exhibits and programming](#) surrounding this 250th anniversary:

[Bells Across PA](#) — a statewide art exhibition in partnership with America250PA and Mural Arts Philadelphia — is showcasing festively painted Liberty Bell replicas in all 67 Pennsylvania counties, with Philadelphia alone set to [display 20](#). Philly’s large fiberglass Liberty Bell sculptures will be installed at commercial corridors and public parks, with each bell’s design capturing the spirit and identity of a different neighborhood.

[Betsy Ross House: Celebrating 250 Years of the American Flag](#) America’s most famous seamstress and her [historic home](#) offer an awesome [lineup of events and programming](#). Don’t miss immersive tours and historical re-enactments led by the Founding Mother herself; a new exhibition showcasing rarely seen artifacts, like Betsy’s spectacles and Bible; an extra-special Semiquincentennial-themed Flag Fest (June 6-14); movie nights (summer); and more. May 25 – September 7.

[New Exhibits at the First Bank of the United States](#) From Memorial Hall in 1876 to the African American Museum in 1976, Philadelphia has a long history of institutions constructed for milestone anniversaries. The most prominent for 2026 is the reopening of the site of the [First Bank of the United States](#), which will be publicly accessible for the first time in a half-century with new temporary exhibits. The First Bank — located in [Independence National Historical Park](#) — opened in 1797 as the nation’s first centralized national bank, [under Alexander Hamilton](#). July.



At the Museum of the American Revolution, Thomas Jefferson’s Windsor chair, which he is believed to have used while in Philadelphia working on the draft of the Declaration of Independence, courtesy of the American Philosophical Society, alongside the steel prison bench Martin Luther King, Jr. sat on in April 1963, while drafting his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” on loan from the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

[Highmark Mann Center for the Performing Arts 50th Anniversary Concert](#) Called “A Hundred Years On, with [The Philadelphia Orchestra & The Crossing](#),” it is a world-premiere performance by the Orchestra and Grammy Award-winning choir The Crossing that transports listeners back in time to Philadelphia’s 1876 Centennial Exposition, which introduced such innovations as the telephone and typewriter to the public. June 17.

[America 250 Exhibits & Programming at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania](#) In addition to contributing to the [Revolutionary City Portal](#), a digital resource highlighting Philadelphia’s role in the nation’s founding, curators at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania present two [new exhibitions](#) honoring 250 years of American history:

- [Paths to Independence](#): In 10 short years, Founding Fathers and everyday Philadelphians alike went from identifying



From the Nation of Artists exhibition, Charles Willson Peale Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaëlle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale I), 1795. *The George W. Elkins Collection, 1945.*

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CENTER CITY REVIEW

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For information and deadlines, please call 215-546-6719.

President's Letter

Trash Talking in Center City

By Nathaniel Margolies, CCRA President

As I write, the snow may be thick outside, but the work of CCRA is heating up. My corny attempt at humor aside, the volunteers at CCRA have been hard at work preparing a fast start to 2026, filled with opportunities to support our neighborhood.

By the time you read this note, we will have held our Trash Town Hall. I have spent many hours on the phone with countless residents concerned about the end of sidewalk cleaning. Please know this issue has occupied more volunteer time than any other over the last few months, and we are tirelessly working on solutions. I am deeply indebted to Harvey Ostroff and Jessica Kohles, our board member volunteers leading the charge.



With the Trash Town Hall continuing the effort from the fall's forum on homelessness, you can expect to see continued opportunities to engage with civic leaders from across the city. These events give you premier access to city officials, and offer those officials a firsthand opportunity to hear what is top of mind for residents. If you have a topic you think could fill a solution-oriented town hall, we'd love to hear from you (particularly if you have ideas for potential relevant speakers).

Along a similar vein, CCRA is thrilled to be partnering with Politics PA to sponsor the congressional forum that was scheduled for February 9. National politics occupy significant airtime right now but can often feel far from home. This event was intended to bring those issues closer to home while giving residents an opportunity to learn about the candidates.

CCRA's streets committee spent the fall working through several quality-of-life suggestions from the community. Some are already in place (a much-needed crosswalk at 25th and Delancey), and others are still to come. We are partnering with the Washington Square West civic for several items as the city prepares to repave Locust Street.

Shortly, you will get more information about some of our planning for the 250th, opportunities to engage on climate resiliency, and more. By the time we hit summer, 2025-26 may end as the most packed year for CCRA programming yet.

Our board meetings have also become events in and of themselves. December and January featured Council members Kenyatta Johnson and Jeffery Young, Jr. Future meetings will include opportunities to hear from leaders across a variety of other local institutions. The goal of making our board meetings more than just committee reports continues.

I look forward to seeing you at these events, around the neighborhood, and at our annual meeting coming up this spring (watch *CCRA This Week* for details).

Until then, stay warm — and don't leave your recycling out in paper bags.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Margolies

as loyal subjects of King George III to rebels demanding independence. This [exhibit](#) traces that dramatic evolution in political allegiance and public sentiment. Through January 8, 2027.

- The second exhibition, *The Changing Faces of Independence*, answers the question “How has the makeup of who is an American changed?” Pennsylvania in the 1800s, through April 24. Pennsylvania in the 1900s, October 1 to January 8, 2027.

Mural Arts Philadelphia is heavily involved in the [America250th Anniversary](#), leading projects like *52 Weeks of Firsts*, featuring sculptures of Philly's unique achievements. Its community focus involves local artists and reflects the unique identities of Philadelphia's diverse neighborhoods. The larger murals and installations of [2026 Gateways and Corridors](#) commemorate the nation's founding while also prompting reflection on what the next 250 years should look like. New murals transform blank city walls into eye-catching homages to famous Philadelphians, local communities and more. Look for murals celebrating iconic R&B group Boyz II Men, suffragist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, LGBTQ+ trailblazers like Gloria Casarez, musician Questlove, and more.

Including more than 100 objects, [The Museum of the American Revolution's *The Declaration's Journey*](#) explores the history and global impact of the Declaration of Independence from 1776 to today, examining how it has become one of the most influential political documents in modern history. It includes rare original documents — letters, pamphlets, drafts of the Articles of Confederation, and more. A [chair that once belonged to Thomas Jefferson](#), and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s prison bench are displayed, as well as manuscripts penned by abolitionists, clergymen, and Free African Society cofounders Absalom Jones and Richard Allen. Through Jan. 3, 2027.



A scene described in the Weitzman museum's First Salute exhibition: First official salute to the American flag on board an American warship in a foreign port, 16 November 1776, depicting Continental Brig Andrew Doria receiving a salute from the Dutch fort at St. Eustatius, West Indies. The artist shows the "Grand Union" flag flying at Andrew Doria's stern and foremast peak. Courtesy of the U.S. Navy Art Collection, Washington, D.C. Donation of the artist, Colonel Phillips Melville, USMC (Retired), 1977. Courtesy of U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command Photograph

[New Galleries at the National Constitution Center](#)

The nation's [only museum dedicated to the U.S. Constitution](#) features [the addition of two new galleries](#). Opened in February, the new America's Founding Gallery tells the story of the early struggles for independence, while the second, the Separation of Powers Gallery, opening in May, focuses on the three branches of government and the balance between the federal government and states' rights. Also, an original copy of the U.S. Constitution — one of only 14 surviving — and a rare first printing of what became the Bill of Rights as they were debated by Congress will be on display throughout 2026.

[A Nation of Artists at the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts](#)

These two institutions team up with avid art collector (and Phillies' managing partner) [John Middleton and his wife and partner, Leigh](#), for this blockbuster exhibition. Spanning 300 years of American art, the collection features more than 1,000 portraits, sculptures, furniture, photographs, and more across both museums. Find some of art's biggest names — including Mary Cassatt and Charles Willson Peale — exhibited side-by-side with often-overlooked Black, Indigenous, immigrant, and historically underrepresented artists and contemporary talents. April 12, 2026, to July 5, 2027, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; May 2026 through September 2027 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

[Rising Up: Rocky and the Making of Monuments at the Philadelphia Art Museum](#)

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the release of the first Rocky film. This [new exhibition](#) is all about monuments: why we make them; who gets one; and the role they play in society. This expansive exhibit covers 2,000 years of history, and features over 150 artifacts and artworks by 50+ artists, including Andy Warhol. April 25 – August 2.

[Flash! Bang! Boom! A History of Fireworks at the Science History Institute](#)

Over the past 250 years, few things have become as synonymous with America's Independence Day as the thunderous booms and colorful sparks of a fireworks display. But the origins of the dazzling light shows are much older, going as far back as the second century B.C.E. The [Science History Institute](#) in Old City illuminates the history and chemistry of fireworks in an explosive [new exhibition](#), featuring historic rare books, fine art, the latest in modern-day pyrotechnics, and more. Opens Friday, April 10.



Edward Hopper, *The Lee Shore*, c. 1941, part of the Nation of Artists exhibition.

[TED Democracy: Founding Futures](#) is a full-day program exploring democracy and what it means to be a modern society. June 13.

[America 250 at the University of Pennsylvania](#)

At Penn, the Semiquincentennial is a great opportunity to take a look at the past, present, and future of our nation with [a schedule](#) of exhibitions, art commissions, performances, and more. Through December at the Penn Libraries.

- America's last milestone birthday — the 1976 Bicentennial — inspired both lively celebrations and meaningful discussions reflecting on the state of the nation and the contradictions woven into its founding. An homage to the protest culture of the 1970s, [Celebrate or Demonstrate](#) explores that counter-narrative with posters, buttons, pamphlets, photographs, and more, with a look back on the Bicentennial, sharing perspectives from the groups who raised their voices in protest and critiqued a wholly celebratory approach to American history. Through May 15.
- *Nursing the Revolution* at the Barbara Bates Center for the History of Nursing. Where would our country be without nurses? This [new exhibit](#) looks at how revolutionary nurses were in shaping a young America's healthcare landscape, exploring the major role nurses played during the Revolution, and showing that nursing did not begin with Florence Nightingale — as many believe. By appointment. Email nhistory@nursing.upenn.edu to schedule a visit. Through November 20.
- *Print the Declaration of Independence*, hosted by Common Press. Visit Common Press to print your own copy of the Declaration of Independence. The composition will be set in Caslon metal type and ready to print on an 1889 cast-iron handpress. This hourlong demonstration is open to all ages. Groups of up to 20 are welcome! [RESERVE A TIME SLOT](#). May 20 - August 15.

[WAWA Welcome America Festival](#)

The cornerstone of Philadelphia's Independence Day festivities is WAWA's annual [Welcome America](#) festival. This multiweek celebration begins on Juneteenth and culminates on July Fourth.



Jasper Johns, *Flag*, 1960-66. This painting and the one by Childe Hassam, above right, both appear in the Nation of Artists exhibition at PMA and PAFA.

Events in past years have included a parade and festival during the [Red, White, & Blue To-Do](#); a reading of the Declaration of Independence; the country's largest July Fourth parade; and a headline concert on the [Benjamin Franklin Parkway](#), followed by a massive fireworks show above the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#). June 19 through July 4.

The [Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History](#) marks the Semiquincentennial by overhauling its space to include two new permanent exhibit spaces and a 4,500-square-foot special exhibition. Running April 23, 2026, through April 2027, the first special exhibit, [The First Salute](#), looks at the untold story of the Jewish community on St. Eustatius in the Caribbean and its early support of the American Revolution, and features rare artifacts, original films, and immersive videos, telling of religious freedom, antisemitism in the colonial world, trade, and life on the high seas. On display are 18th century currency, paintings from prominent [Jewish Philadelphian Barnard Gratz's](#) art collection, and an actual cannon shot from the island's shores. [Colors of Creation](#), opening in July, is a family-friendly exploration of the creation story. The second permanent exhibit documents [Contemporary Antisemitism](#) in America.

For additional information, see:

<https://www.visitphilly.com/articles/philadelphia/events-festivals-2026/>

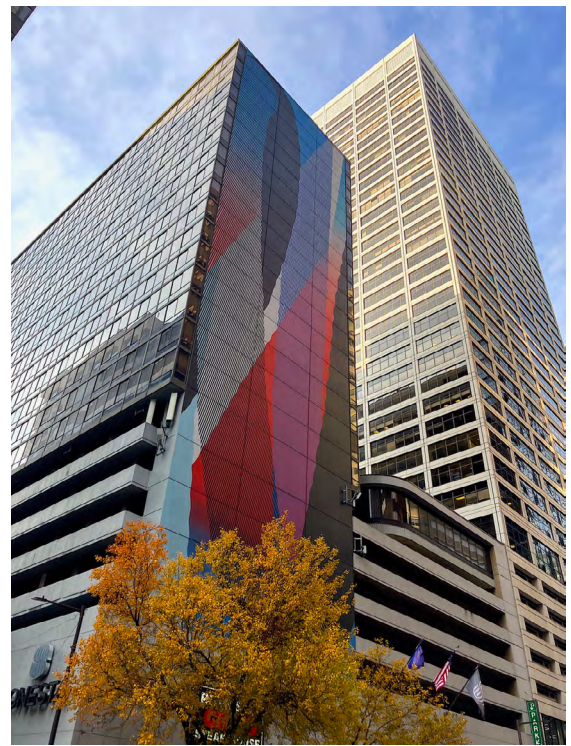
<https://www.inquirer.com/arts/philadelphia-museums-america-250th-birthday-20251228.html>



Childe Hassam, *Up the Avenue from Thirty-Fourth Street, 1917*.

I Think We Need a Mural Here **One Way to Make a Street Friendlier**

Text and photos by Bill West



I think Mr. MOMO's mural needs a mate.

Here's the canvas, viewed from Ludlow Street. There are no windows on the ground floor. The canvas extends down to the sidewalk, where it occasionally competes with some dumpsters.

The other day I was walking north on 18th Street in Philadelphia, heading for Market Street, and I looked up and saw something I had never noticed before. A blank wall. I've looked at this view more times than I care to think about, but the blank wall had never registered before. All the other buildings around have windows in their walls. This building has windows too, but not on the south side.

I think I've usually been distracted by the large olive (with pimento and toothpick) decorating the Continental Midtown restaurant, at the bottom in the picture above. But on this day, I actually managed to focus on a blank canvas.

The canvas belongs to the Sonesta hotel, which fronts on Market and runs south on 18th to Ludlow, where our blank wall resides. (The 18th Street side of the building is home to Ruth's Chris steakhouse.)

Interestingly, the north side of the building, where the front of the hotel is, also does not have windows (except for the ground floor) and already has a rather attractive [mural](#), which came to us through [Mural Arts Philadelphia](#) in 2015. It's by an artist named [MOMO](#).



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But what happens, you say, if a new, tall building goes up at the corner of 18th and Ludlow? This is not an idle question. Much of this block has already been redeveloped, and there is even a hotel, called Motto by Hilton, at 31 South 19th, which flanks a restaurant named Condesa on Ludlow. And there's another building under construction just to the east. (Don't worry: Tony's Shoe Repair is still there.)

And yes, a tall building at the eastern end of the block would obscure the view of our mural from Chestnut. But it would not obscure the view from Ludlow.

I think a mural here would make this whole area feel more inviting, and possibly even homey. That blank white wall strikes me as a bit cold and vacant.

Here's a story. I actually took two pictures of this view. The first one did not have the fire escape, just the vacant wall and the sky. I wasn't sure which one to use in this story, so I asked my 8-year-old grandson which picture would be most likely to engage a viewer and cause that person to be receptive to the idea of a mural in this location. He studied both photographs side-by-side for a few moments, and then told me he thought the shot with the fire escape would be more effective. He said of the potential donors, "They feel safer because they have a way to get out."

I'm still considering my grandson's statement. I think it works on a number of levels, and probably not just on Ludlow Street.

See also [A Mural Is Born](#), [A Few Deft Touches for Back Streets](#), [Bluestone to the Rescue!](#), [Which Side Are You On?](#), [City Beautiful Sprouts on Cypress Street](#), and [My New Favorite Alley](#).

Living History

The American Revolution: The Original “No Kings Protest”

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

In 2026, we celebrate the 250th anniversary of American independence, the Semiquincentennial. Specifically, on July 4, it will be 250 years since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

The American Revolution, a rebellion against the rule of King George III of Great Britain, began in 1775 and ended in 1783, eight years from beginning to end! Here is the [timeline](#) of the American Revolution.

In July 1776, in Philadelphia, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, officially declaring that the 13 American colonies would no longer be ruled by the British monarchy and would become free and independent states. Read the Declaration [here](#).

In 1782, Colonel Lewis Nicola wrote a letter for the army officers to George Washington, camped at Newburgh, NY, proposing that Washington become King of the United States, as a collection of 13 independent states, functioning under the Articles of Confederation. Washington strongly rejected the idea!

In 2009, the American Revolution Center released a survey reporting that although 90 percent of American adults thought that knowledge of the American Revolution and its principles is very important and should be taught in schools, 83 percent of them failed a test on their knowledge of the Revolution and the founding documents.

Founded in 2017, [The Museum of the American Revolution](#), 101 S. Third St., tells the diverse and complex stories of the Revolution through visual displays, films, and programs, with the goal of correcting “historical amnesia.” I recommend a visit to this museum to be reminded of the struggles that led to the birth of American democracy, to revive your knowledge of this important phase of history, to see it in a new way, and to honor the brave people who fought to be independent of the monarchy.

Then, visit the [National Constitution Center](#), 525 Arch St, to learn the history of the U.S. Constitution, signed in 1787, upon which our democratic form of government is based, with its three branches, each with its own coequal powers; the Bill of Rights, comprising the first 10 amendments; and later 17 other amendments. Read the U.S. Constitution [here](#).

Recommend reading: “The Unfinished Revolution,” *The Atlantic*, November 2025.



The entrance to The Declaration's Journey exhibition at the Museum of the American Revolution.

Japan Continues to Honor America’s Birthdays with Gifts of Flowering Trees

"In 1926, the Government of Japan gifted 1,600 flowering trees, including cherry blossom trees, to the City of Philadelphia in honor of the sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary of American independence," said Kazumi Teune, executive director of the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia.

"In 1998, Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia continued this legacy and began a 10-year, 1,000-tree planting campaign, which are the trees seen across the city. [It's only fitting that an additional 250 trees are being planted to celebrate the 250th anniversary of America.](#) These beautiful trees will blossom for decades and truly honor the relationship between the United States and Japan."



Do You Want to Dance? A Wealth of Dance Classes in Center City

By Nancy G. Heller, Ph.D.

Do you want to dance? Everyone can experience the joy of moving to music, with like-minded people, any day of the week, no experience required, in a huge variety of styles, at venues all over town. At the dance studios mentioned here, students of all ages and levels are welcome. The most important goal is for participants to have fun!

Have you been inspired by the extraordinary performers in this city's professional troupes, from Philadelphia Ballet and BalletX to the Koresh Dance Company, Philadanco, and Rennie Harris Puremovement? Since ballet dancers generally start training by age five it's a bit late for most of us to become Sugar Plum Fairies or noble Cavaliers. But there are many dances to learn and enjoy.

Social dance schools like [The Society Hill Dance Academy](#), 1919 Passyunk Ave., offer instruction in salsa, mambo, hustle, swing, and other ballroom dances, and more. (More exotic dance classes are available elsewhere, including instruction in Argentine tango, Egyptian belly dancing, traditional dance from West Africa, Bollywood, and even classical Cambodian court dance.)

If these options seem overwhelming, take a deep breath and begin your search by exploring the website for [Philly Dance Fitness](#), 1923 Chestnut St., 2nd floor, which offers over 35 weekly classes of all types, plus hybrid dance/exercise and straightforward workout ones such as Zumba and Barre, plus striptease and pole dancing. Last fall, they added traditional Irish dancing. Their website includes short videos, to give potential students a sense of what they'd actually be doing in each class.



Philly Dance Fitness, Jazz Dance class.

Philly Dance Fitness also offers tap dancing. Another resource for tap is the remarkable performer and teacher Corinne Karon who has tapped on every continent—including Antarctica. For further information, contact her at cktap@msn.com.

[The Koresh Dance Company](#), 2002 Rittenhouse Square, offers an impressive array of classes in all levels of ballet, plus contemporary/jazz dance, hip-hop, and Musical Theater dance, including beginner classes. Advanced students can study with the troupe's founder/director, Roni Koresh, or his longtime star, Melissa Rector, and every teacher of every class has an impressive resume.

Another venue for hip-hop dance classes is [Urban Movement Arts](#), 2100 Chestnut Street.

[The Fleisher Art Memorial](#), 711-721 Catharine Street, known for visual arts, has two types of dance classes that are difficult to find elsewhere: traditional forms from Indonesia and Cambodia. These classes began in response to interest from local immigrant communities and — like all classical movement forms — require many years to become proficient. But it is fascinating simply to observe the Cambodian court dance sessions offered by Master teacher Chamroeun Yin, a former member of the Khmer Classical Dance Troupe.

Internationally celebrated dancer Meredith Klein cofounded the [Philadelphia Argentine Tango School \(PATS\)](#) in 2008. PATS, 2030 Frankford Ave., has a busy schedule of classes for beginner/intermediate dancers, plus large social-dance sessions for people with all levels of expertise. Although tango is a couple dance, Klein said: "Almost all of our students attend without a partner. We change partners throughout the class so, even if you come with someone, you'll still be dancing with lots of different people." PATS also holds special tango events including concerts by noted musicians, workshops with celebrated guest dancers, even tango-focused trips to Argentina.



Two students dancing at the Philadelphia Argentine Tango School.

Continued on p.10

A Few Practical Points:

- No special gear is required. Some types of dance are traditionally done barefoot, but socks (or soft ballet-type slippers) are always acceptable. Ballet teachers need to see the “line” of your body, so baggy clothing is discouraged.
- The prices vary, but single adult drop-in classes typically cost between \$15 and \$25 each; discounted, multi-class cards are generally available; private lessons are more expensive.
- Double check the website of the school you plan to attend, and get on its email list to learn about weather-related cancellations or other changes. You may be asked to sign up in advance for a given session so the teacher can manage class size.
- Dance studios have changing areas and bathroom facilities, but may not offer many other amenities. As you would when attending an exercise class, bring your own water.

Nancy G. Heller is an art historian and dance historian. She is Professor Emerita at the former University of the Arts, author of several books on artists, and contributes articles on dance and art to the Philadelphia Inquirer and other publications. Dr. Heller has studied and performed Spanish dance — including flamenco — ballet, modern dance, tap, Bharatanatyam (South Indian classical dance), and Eastern European and Middle Eastern folk dance.



R. Gerard Regan

Nancy Heller with Antonio Saldaña, performing a folk dance from Asturias (in northwestern Spain).

Living History

You Can Contribute to a Photo Archive of National Historic Sites Signage

In response to the President's order to remove signs about slavery in National Park Service historic sites, the Data Rescue Project and Save Our Signs campaign have been formed to create a photo archive. Lynda Kellam, a Penn Librarian, is one of the founding members, and she provided the following information:

The Save Our Signs project was formed to preserve photographs of National Park Service interpretive signs before they can be removed or modified by the current administration. This crowdsourced, people-powered project welcomes anyone to visit a National Park or other NPS historic site, take photos of the signs, and submit them to our collection at saveoursigns.org

We want to ensure that the public retains access to the important historical and scientific information that these signs contain. National Park Service sites are each individually mandated by Congress to tell the story of the historical importance of that site, and the interpretive signs are carefully researched and crafted by National Park Service employees and experts to teach us about the land and history at each site. If we lose our history, we lose our ability to learn from the past to build a better future for everyone.

By September 20, we had 10,112 photo submissions, from 337 NPS historic sites. We are looking for signs on any topic, not just topics that people think may be at risk of removal. We want photos of all signs, and we're not asking people to pass

judgment; instead, we want to preserve the signs as they are today so that the public can access them. These signs were created with taxpayer dollars and belong to the American public.

Save Our Signs is a coalition of librarians, data experts, and public historians from across the country, partnered with the Data Rescue Project. As a crowdsourced project, we are relying on the submissions of individuals across the country to create our photo archive.

We continue to accept photo submissions, and we have started a spreadsheet to track signs that have been reported as removed or modified by journalists.

We are currently in the process of curating our first collection of photographs (everything submitted through September 17) to ensure that everything submitted is in scope (e.g., pictures of signs and not websites) and that there are no identifiable people in any of the photos. An [archive](#) was released in October. These photos are all in the public domain, and the collection will be accessible to anyone.

Information was provided by Lynda Kellam, Ph.D., Snyder-Granader Director of Research Data & Digital Scholarship, University of Pennsylvania Libraries, and Jenny McBurney, Government Publications Librarian, University of Minnesota.

The Tapestry of American History

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

My family's American history is probably different from your family's American history. My American story really starts in 1900 when my grandparents came to America from places in the Russian Empire. In my mind, my American history splits along two paths: first, the history of America's settlement and formation, governments and wars, learned at school from textbooks and teachers; second, the history of my family, their countries of origin, and how they came here, a history learned from letters written by my aunts. These two histories are like two streams joined together at the beginning of the 20th century.

Unless you are indigenous to this country, your ancestors came from somewhere else, probably a civilization much older than America. When and how they came here and how they lived is your unique history, folded into the tapestry of other American histories. There is not just one American history; there are multiple American histories, some starting back when only indigenous people lived here, followed by settlers, enslaved people, and immigrants, up to the present time. Each history is important to each individual person, family, and community.

Historians learn history not only from public sources such as official government documents like the census, newspapers, and ships' manifests, but also from firsthand accounts by participants and observers through diaries, letters, memoirs, speeches, recordings, photographs, and artifacts, preserved in

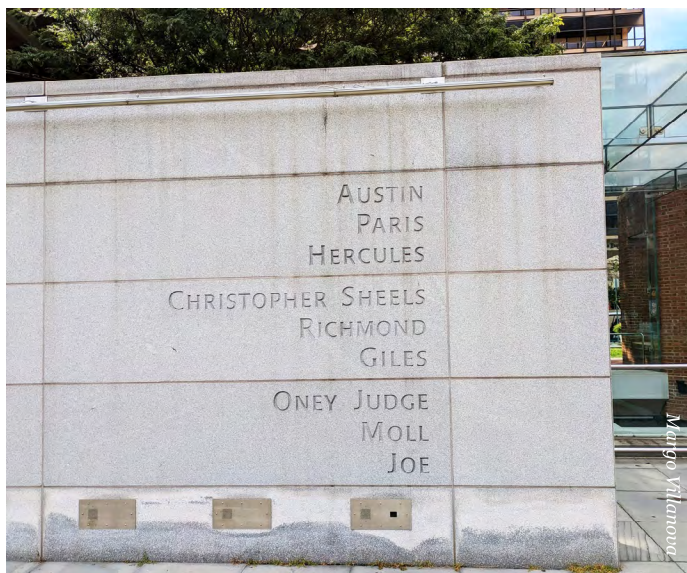
library archives, historical societies' collections, and attics. Usually, as high school students, we get the linear, summarized versions in textbooks, which omit some segments of the population and the nuances and complexity of events.

Many national historic sites operated by the National Park Service in Philadelphia and around the country include information about the forgotten Americans who lived there, including Indigenous tribes, enslaved Africans, and Japanese internees. These histories are about the lives they led, their suffering, their poverty, and their subjugation by the men in power. Visitors want to learn America's entire history, both good and bad.

Exhibitions in historical museums honoring many segments of the population — such as the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, the African American Museum, and the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia; and the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC — make history more accessible to the public and help all Americans understand the different histories that contribute to the multiplicity of American history.

All American people deserve to have their histories included in the tapestry. To help preserve national historic sites, you can donate to the [National Parks Conservation Association \(NPCA\)](#)

Written in Stone



Independence National Historical Park. Site of George Washington's House. [Memorial Wall](#) with names of nine enslaved people who lived here and worked for George Washington. "One of them, Oney Judge, seized her freedom while the Washington family was eating dinner. With the help of the free Black community and a white ship captain, she eventually made her way to a new life in New Hampshire."

Editor's note: As of January 23, the historical signage pertaining to enslavement at the President's House exhibition has been removed by the National Park Service, over the strenuous objections of the City of Philadelphia and numerous civic groups. The city has sued the NPS and the Interior Dept. on the basis that the removal is unauthorized because it violates a 2006 agreement that requires the federal government to confer with the city before making changes to the site. On February 17, U.S. District Judge Cynthia M. Rufe ruled that the Trump administration must restore the signage to the same placement and condition as of one day prior to its removal. The signs were rehung on February 19.

“Golden Age of Rittenhouse Square” Tour Operated by CCRA and Friends of Rittenhouse Square Debuts in April

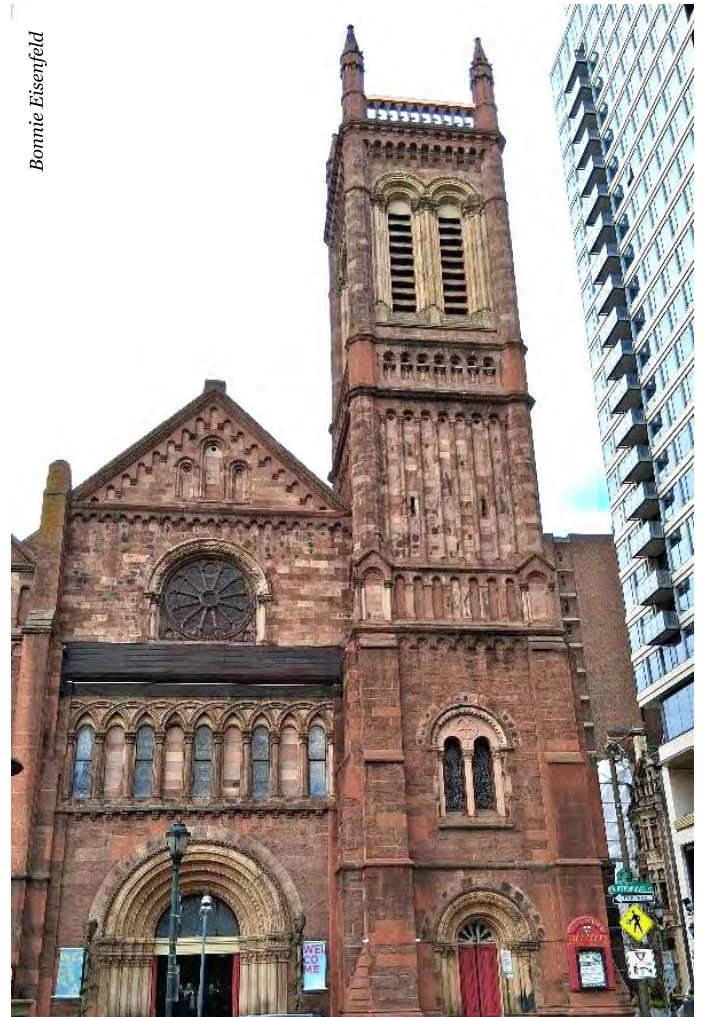
By Marc Werlinsky

It was a brief moment in time, lasting less than 100 years, but what a glorious time it was! The “Golden Age of Rittenhouse Square” Tour, cosponsored by the Center City Residents’ Association (CCRA) and the Friends of Rittenhouse Square (FoRS), will take you back to the time when the Square was ringed by the most magnificent urban mansions in the country, lived in and visited by some of the most powerful, wealthy, and famous people in the world.

The journey around the perimeter will transport participants as far back as the 1830s, when Rittenhouse Square began its metamorphosis into Philadelphia’s version of Manhattan’s Billionaires’ Row. Tour guides will bring back to life the area as it was in its glory days, with stories about the buildings, events, and amazing people who called the Square home or a desired place to visit.



Rittenhouse Club, 1811 Walnut, was a prestigious Philadelphia gentlemen’s social club, founded in 1875 for businessmen, artists, and intellectuals. The building had originally been the home of James Harper. It is now a Rescue Spa.



The Church of the Holy Trinity, 1904 Walnut St., is an Episcopal church founded by prominent Philadelphians in 1855. Its current building designed by John Notman opened in 1859.

The tour, created by Marc Werlinsky, Board member of CCRA, and June Armstrong, Executive Director of Friends of Rittenhouse Square, will consist of two approximately 45-minute explorations: the perimeter of Rittenhouse Square, led by CCRA, and the interior of the Square, led by FoRS. There will be tours for the Boards of Directors and members of the two organizations in April, followed by tours for the general public starting in May.

Member tours are offered on the following two Sundays: April 19 and April 26, at 11 am and 1 pm.

Recommended reading: *The Perfect Square: A History of Rittenhouse Square*, by Nancy M. Heinzen; *Philadelphia’s Rittenhouse Square*, by Robert Morris Skaler and Thomas M. Keels; *Rittenhouse Square Past and Present*, by Charles J. Cohen.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania Acquires the University of the Arts Archives

By Margie Wiener

When the University of the Arts abruptly closed its doors in June 2024, the shock rippled far beyond its Broad Street campus. The loss was not just an academic one — it represented the end of nearly 150 years of cultural, creative, and educational influence in Philadelphia. In the Fall of 2024, I wrote an [article](#) for the *Center City Quarterly* about UArts' tribulations since then.

Fortunately, in September 2025, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) announced it had acquired the institution's archives, preserving a legacy and safeguarding generations of artistic and academic history for future scholars, students, and community members. The two organizations worked together to prepare, catalog, and transfer an enormous volume of material. The final result is unprecedented: at 870 linear feet, the UArts archives represent the single largest acquisition in HSP's 200-year history.

For additional information and details, see:

<https://metrophiladelphia.com/uarts-archives-hsp/>

<https://www.portal.hsp.org/post/university-of-the-arts-institutional-records-are-now-housed-at-hsp> and <https://www.portal.hsp.org/uarts>

<https://archive.org/details/uarts?sort=date>



Original poster produced for the PMSIA 8th Annual Entertainment and Ball, 1920. Courtesy of Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Mutter Museum's New Human Remains Policy

By Margie Wiener

In the Winter 2023 issue of the *Center City Quarterly* I wrote about the Mutter Museum's ethical review of its online exhibits, and in the Summer 2025 issue of the CCQ, I wrote about the museum's new CEO and exhibit about five years of Covid. Now I write about its new human-remains policy.

This comes after two years of controversy involving public backlash, staff departures, and high-level leadership changes. At a public event in August 2025, museum staff talked about what they learned from the two-year process of developing a human-remains policy, as well as the research that goes into their new approach of learning more about the lives of the people behind the specimens.

Part of [the new approach](#) is to name and identify people in the museum's collection, which staff realized was possible by doing research into its own records and public archives. The hope is for museum visitors to learn more about medical science, as well as understand the historical circumstances each person faced as they tried to get treatment during their lifetime.

"Each of the human remains within our collection was, after all, once a patient just as you are today," said historian Sara Ray. She added that the museum will update guided tours, object labels, and digital materials to reflect this new policy.

For more information, see https://why.org/articles/mutter-museum-new-human-remains-policy/?mc_cid=3fa2dc03ec&mc_eid=31ce1efc34



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The Power of Belonging: Connecting with Gen X in 2026

By Harriette Mishkin, Co-Chair, Marketing and Communications Committee, Penn's Village

Are you nostalgic for simpler times, like shopping at the mall, watching daytime soap operas, inhaling the aroma of Noxzema, renting videos from Blockbuster?

Do you remember coming home from school to an empty house because mom and dad were both at work? You fended for yourself and were quite adept at doing so. You walked to and from school alone, grabbed a snack, and biked to the house of a friend who was also alone. Or you did your homework right away so you could watch TV after dinner. No social media, no cell phones.

Known as Gen X, you were born between 1965 and 1980. (There is some discussion that adds a few previous years to these dates, starting at 1961. This group calls themselves Generation Jones. They are characterized by "jonesing for" [craving] the success of their Boomer elders while experiencing economic hardships like stagflation and unemployment as they entered the workforce – feeling too young for Boomer idealism and too old for Gen X cynicism, otherwise described as "too young for the draft, too old for grunge.")

Penn's Village, a membership organization for residents in central Philadelphia who wish to stay in their own homes as long as they are able, would like to hear from you. As our members begin to age out and may require more services or move away, we want to learn more about what you, our next generation of members, are thinking about for the future: financial security, healthcare options, when to take Social Security, estate and retirement planning, how you'd like to spend your time and stay engaged with others, and how to stay relevant and useful. Will it be a part-time job, taking up a hobby, volunteering? (We have many short-term volunteer opportunities now if you'd like to try them out.)

What about the future keeps you up at night? Where or to whom do you turn for information? Perhaps your life is so hectic that



you postpone dealing with decisions you'll have to make for yourself and your family. You've got kids in college or aging parents or relatives who need your attention and oversight. Maybe you're thinking of moving and downsizing. You think, "I've got plenty of time to plan – now is not the time. Maybe next year."

If you want to explore resources that are available right in your community, share your thoughts about pre- and post-retirement issues, or avoid what happens when you don't plan ahead, get in touch, so together we can plan for the future – yours and ours. Contact us at communications@pennsvillage.org.

In Memoriam

Remembering Eugene Dichter

Eugene Dichter, age 102, died January 3. He was born and raised in Philadelphia. He loved his connection with CCRA and was very proud to serve as the president years ago. He continued his connections to CCRA for many years, and will be missed by his community, family and friends.



SEPTA on the Mend: A Review

By Margie Wiener

In the Spring of 2023 and the Spring of 2025, I wrote about SEPTA's (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) budget crisis for the *Center City Quarterly*. Again, during the Fall of 2025, denizens of Center City West were on pins and needles wondering if services would be cut. Indeed, in late August, 32 SEPTA bus routes (including neighborhood mainstay route 12) were cut, and 16 were shortened. Rail routes were cut, as well.

Actually, the crisis came to a head in September, after Philadelphia consumer advocate Lance Haver and two other riders sued SEPTA. They argued the service cuts and fare hikes disproportionately burdened Black, Latino, and low-income riders, while sparing Regional Rail routes that predominantly serve wealthier suburban commuters. They also contended SEPTA manufactured the crisis to pressure lawmakers.

SEPTA pointed out it had conducted a required equity analysis of its reduced budget, but a judge agreed with the plaintiffs and [ordered the cuts reversed](#), while allowing the fare hikes. SEPTA restored service on Sept. 14.

Gov. [Josh Shapiro shifted \\$394 million](#) in state-allocated funds for infrastructure projects to use for operations — the third temporary solution in as many years, after a broader deal failed amid Senate GOP opposition.

Then, [help from above](#) and [a new labor contract](#) bought SEPTA at least two years to recover from its *annus horribilis* and stabilize operations. In November, Gov. Shapiro announced that SEPTA would get \$220M in state funds to help with capital issues and fixing trains. The money would help the transit agency fix its aging railcars, rent some replacements, and return full service for riders.

In December, SEPTA reached new contract agreements with its major unions, including the Transport Workers Union Local 234 (TWU 234) and SMART-TD Local 1594, averting strikes with wage increases, pension/benefit improvements, and better staffing measures, with the SEPTA Board officially approving these deals in mid-December. In summary, the labor disputes were resolved, and the new contracts put in place, ensuring continued service across SEPTA's network.

In January, SEPTA announced that Regional Rail riders could start getting noticeable relief from the shortened trains, peak-hour crowding, delays and cancellations they had been dealing with during the fall. Railcars are getting safety retrofits and repairs, and being returned to the tracks.

For additional information, see:

<https://www.inquirer.com/transportation/septa-budget-announcement-bus-subway-cuts-20250410.html>

https://why.org/articles/septa-funding-pennsylvania-capital-trains/?mc_cid=27dc96b74d&mc_eid=31ce1efc34

https://billypenn.com/2025/12/31/septa-2025-in-review-overview/?mc_cid=0a74040e66&mc_eid=31ce1efc34

<https://www.inquirer.com/transportation/septa-year-in-review-2026-expectations-20260101.html>

https://billypenn.com/2026/01/07/septa-regional-rail-fires-repairs-crowding-delays/?mc_cid=4ff8c724f2&mc_eid=31ce1efc34

It's Academic

Greene Towne Montessori School Celebrating 60 Years in Center City

Julie A. Kaeli, Parent K'14 and K'12, Director, Communications & Marketing

While the United States of America marks 250 years, Greene Towne Montessori School, which has been a presence in Center City since 1966, will celebrate its 60th anniversary during the 2026-2027 school year.

As the longest-running, only accredited Montessori school in Center City, Greene Towne has served over 1000 families, including multiple generations of families, who live or work around Center City and across many Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Greene Towne's longevity is a testament to dedicated parents, who believe in the school's mission of offering a Montessori program for an ethnically and economically diverse community, to talented teachers and staff, who are committed to providing an excellent, in-depth education that provides children the building blocks for a purposeful life, and to school leadership, which has navigated both tremendous growth and some challenging times.

Continued on p.17

The Vision for Greene Towne

In partnership with a small group of parents, Portia Sperr, who later founded the Please Touch Museum, was the organizing force behind the formation of Greene Towne Montessori School. At a time when preschool options in Philadelphia were limited and rarely inclusive, Greene Towne was intentionally created as a racially, religiously, and economically integrated school grounded in Montessori principles: nurturing community, independence and confidence, and a love of learning.

Greene Towne's Homes

Aptly named for William Penn's "Greene Countrie Towne," Greene Towne has been located in the Logan Square neighborhood for 60 years. In September 1966, it opened its doors to 25 children, 3- to 5-year-olds, on the third floor of St. Clement's Church at 20th and Cherry Streets. For 34 years, Greene Towne remained in the church, expanding to the second floor.

As the school continued to grow, a search for a new home to call its own was on. When a former nightclub at 2121 Arch Street became available in the mid-1990s, a team of Greene Towne parent volunteers stepped up, negotiating the purchase of the building.

After two years of fundraising, planning, and renovating, Greene Towne's second home opened in September 2001, welcoming three returning classes and one new class into a 10,000-square-foot, three-story building that included a play deck, multipurpose room, and art room. The first Toddler class opened the following year.

Between 2005 and 2014, the school grew from one Toddler and four Primary classrooms to four Toddler and five Primary classrooms. In 2007, the school expanded to a "west campus" leased space at 2215 Arch Street to house the growing Toddler program. When the west campus was flooded for a third time by Hurricane Ida in 2021, a decision was made to find a new permanent home for the school in a unified space.



Greene Towne's first classroom in 1966 at St. Clement's Church. Desks and shelves were designed and built by parent volunteers.

It was important to Greene Towne's leadership that the school remain in the Logan Square/Center City area. A few years after Science Leadership Academy vacated its location at 22nd and Arch Streets, Greene Towne leased the space and officially moved into its new, custom-designed home at 55 N. 22nd Street in February 2023. This is the largest building in the school's history, providing 30,000 square feet of curated learning environments to meet the growing demand for high-quality, accredited, and licensed early childhood education for young families in Philadelphia.

This newest home includes 12 classrooms, separate rooms for art and music, three movement rooms, a cooking studio, a Montessori and Me room designed for infant/young toddler playgroups and parenting classes, and a 4,000-square-foot rooftop play deck.

Greene Towne still owns 2121 Arch Street and currently uses the space for parent education workshops, meetings and events, as well as specials classes for its oldest students in Lower Elementary (grades 1-3).

Montessori Programming

As Greene Towne has physically grown over the past six decades so have its programs. During the 2012-2013 school year, an all-day option was added to the Primary program for families needing late day care. In 2023, Lower Elementary launched, serving 1st - 3rd grade students. An early care program and parent and infant/child Montessori playgroups have been added, along with an expanded lunch program prepared by a professional chef and after-school enrichment classes.

Celebrating Community

As Greene Towne prepares to celebrate 60 years, we are aware that it takes a village to start, grow, and sustain a school. Former Greene Towne families, friends, and neighbors are invited to reconnect with the school. Visit Greene Towne at gtms.org to learn more.



Greene Towne's new home opened in February 2023 with classrooms designed for fostering independence and a love of learning.

Breathe Easy: The Best Indoor Plants for Oxygen

By Travis Oliver

Looking to refresh your indoor air and add a touch of green to your home or office? Certain houseplants not only beautify your space but also help increase oxygen levels — creating a healthier, more inviting environment. Here are my top choices of the best indoor plants for boosting oxygen:

Snake Plant

Also known as mother-in-law's tongue, the snake plant is a powerhouse for oxygen production. It releases oxygen at night, making it a great choice for bedrooms. Tough, stylish, and nearly indestructible, these longleaf gems are the ultimate low-maintenance houseplant. Whether you're a first-time plant parent or a seasoned green thumb, this succulent is your go-to for clean air and effortless greenery.

Areca Palm

The areca palm is an ornamental tropical palm with long, arching fronds and a bushy appearance. Also called the butterfly palm, golden cane palm, or yellow palm, this is a popular indoor palm tree. Plenty of light and humidity will keep your areca palm looking healthy and prevent brown tips from appearing.

Aloe Vera

This low-maintenance succulent requires bright light, well-draining soil, and infrequent watering. Known for its soothing gel, aloe vera also emits oxygen at night. It's easy to care for and thrives on minimal attention.

Spider Plant

Renowned for its resilience, the spider plant helps remove toxins from the air and pumps out healthy oxygen. Though they look great on a counter or tabletop, spider plants don't need to take up valuable space because you can grow them in a hanging basket. They require minimal care, which makes them ideal for beginners. Also, unlike many other popular houseplants, they are safe around pets.

Peace Lily

With its beautiful white flowers, the peace lily is excellent for cleaning the air and increasing oxygen levels. The peace lily should be close to, but not directly under a window in a warm room in your house where it will benefit from indirect sunlight. North or West facing windows are best as these do not allow direct sunlight all day. Try to avoid exposing your plant to cold air or too much sun, as these can cause the plant to become unhealthy and develop brown, shriveled leaves.

Pothos

Pothos, or its other common name, Devil's Ivy — thanks to its vigorous growth and penchant for returning to life even in the worst conditions — is the perfect beginner houseplant, as it's not

picky about its soil and thrives in both indirect, bright light and low light. This trailing vine is almost indestructible and effective at purifying air, making it a top pick for oxygenation.

Rubber Plant

With broad, glossy leaves, the rubber plant not only looks lush but also works hard to improve air quality and oxygen levels. Rubber plants are truly exceptional when it comes to their suitability for indoor environments. They possess a natural ability to adapt to various conditions, making them ideal for both seasoned plant enthusiasts and beginners alike.

Tips for Maximizing Oxygen Indoors:

- Group several plants together for a greater effect.
- Ensure plants receive adequate light and water for optimal growth.
- Wipe leaves regularly to keep pores open for efficient gas exchange.

Bringing these plants into your home can help you breathe more easily and create a cleaner, healthier, more vibrant indoor space!

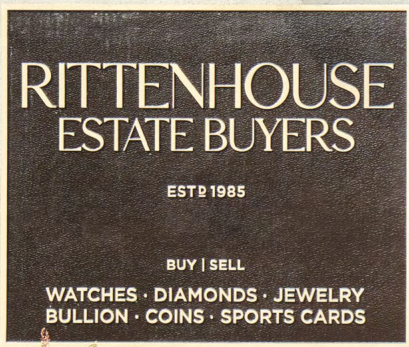
Happy planting!



Snake plant.

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CCRA Spring and Summer Calendar – Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land

For a comprehensive list of programs and exhibitions commemorating the 250th birthday of American Independence, see article on Page 1.

Native North America

Penn Museum
3260 South Street
Tribal items from four regions and contemporary Native art; new permanent exhibition developed with eight Indigenous consulting curators.

<https://www.penn.museum/on-view/galleries-exhibitions/native-north-america-gallery>

Rooted: Origins of American Gardening

Philadelphia Flower Show
Pennsylvania Convention Center
1101 Arch Street
Through Sunday, March 8
<https://phsonline.org/the-flower-show/about-the-show/rooted>

Pi Day

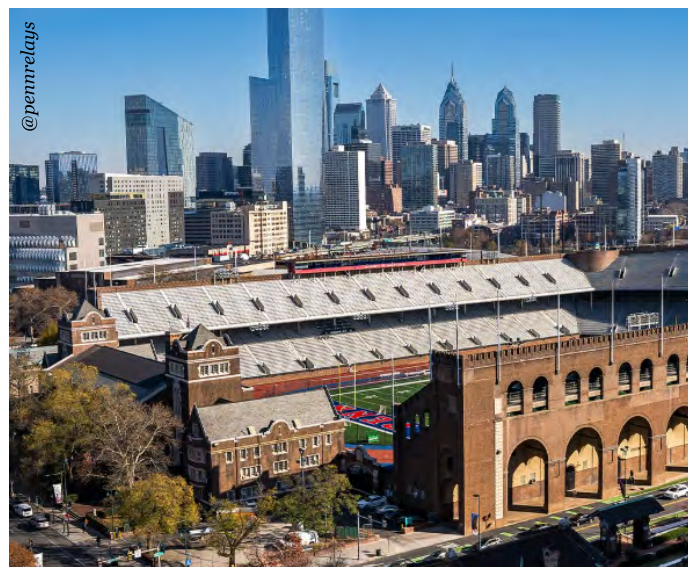
Math enthusiasts recite the infinite digits of Pi, talk to their friends about math, and eat pie.
Saturday, March 14
<https://www.piday.org/>

Botany of Nations: Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery

Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University
1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway
Saturday, March 28, 2026, to Sunday, February 14, 2027
<https://ansp.org/exhibits/botany-of-nations/>

Penn Relays

Franklin Field
235 S. 33rd Street
Thursday, April 23 to Saturday, April 25
<https://pennrelays.com/>



Franklin Field, site of the Penn Relays.



Gift of Robert W. Preucel, 2000

Delaware/Lenape floral beaded collar from the latter half of the 19th century, on display in the Penn Museum's new Native North American Gallery.

Rittenhouse Row Spring Festival

18th & Walnut Streets
Saturday, May 2, Noon – 5 pm
<https://www.rittenhouserow.org/rr-festival>

Rose Squared Fine Craft Fair

Rittenhouse Square
Friday, May 8, 10 am – 6 pm
Saturday, May 9, 10 am – 6 pm
Sunday, May 11, 10 am – 5 pm
<https://rosesquared.com/spring-rittenhouse/artists/>

Lost Creeks of Philadelphia: Burying the Streams, Building the City

Curated by Adam Levine, Philadelphia Water Department, and Joseph Elliott, photographer.
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia
219 S. 6th Street
Through Saturday, May 16

Ballet on the Square

Rittenhouse Square
Thursday, May 21, 4 – 6 pm
<https://www.friendsofrittenhouse.org/event-details/ballet-on-the-square-1>

Continued on p.21

Continued from p.20

Rittenhouse Square Fine Art Show

Friday, June 5, 11 am – 6 pm

Saturday, June 6, 11 am – 6 pm

Sunday, June 7, 11 am – 5 pm

<http://www.rittenhousesquareart.com/>

FIFA World Cup 2026

Philadelphia will host [six games](#)

Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia Sports Complex.

1020 Pattison Avenue

Thursday, June 11 to Sunday, July 19

Bloomsday Festival

The Rosenbach

2008-2010 Delancey Place

Tuesday, June 16

Major League Baseball 2026 All-Star Game

Citizens Bank Park

Sunday, July 12 at noon

and

MLB All-Star Week

Pennsylvania Convention Center

1101 Arch Street

Saturday, July 11 to Tuesday, July 14

<https://www.mlb.com/phillies/fans/all-star-game>

Philadelphia Young Pianists' Academy

14th Annual Piano Festival

Academy of Vocal Arts

1920 Spruce Street

Saturday, July 25 to Sunday, August 2

<https://www.pyapa.info/festival>

Curtis Institute of Music

Student and faculty recitals

1726 Locust Street

<https://www.curtis.edu/performances/>



Curtis Institute of Music students and faculty will perform recitals throughout the spring.

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<https://americasgardencapital.org/>

Schuylkill Navy Rowing Events

<https://boathouserow.org/schuylkill-river-schedule/>

Preservation Alliance for

Greater Philadelphia Walking Tours

<https://preservationalliance.com/walking-tours/>

To get the latest news about events in Center City, sign up for (IN) Center City, the e-newsletter of the Center City District:

<http://www.centercityphila.org/incentercity/signup.php>

To learn about 52 weeks of firsts in Philadelphia, go to

<https://www.visitphilly.com/52-weeks-of-firsts/>

To learn about more festivals and events in Philadelphia, go to

<https://www.visitphilly.com/>




The annual Rittenhouse Row Spring Festival draws large crowds enjoying a stretch of Walnut Street closed to vehicle traffic.



Center City Residents' Association

centercity@centercityresidents.org
www.centercityresidents.org
215-546-6719

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TUESDAY MAY 19	Primary Election in Pennsylvania. Click here to See Polls

Learn about primary elections [here](#).
Polls are open 7 am – 8 pm on election day.

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026



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