

# ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY  
CITY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



July, 2009

<http://www.uchs.net>

Mike Hardy, Editor

## WEST PHILADELPHIA: BUILDING A COMMUNITY

David J. Kennedy, *Southeast Corner of Market St. & Darby Rd., 1874, watercolor. (HSP)*



This summer and fall, we in **University City** and **West Philadelphia** have a must-see exhibit to savor close at hand, so you have no excuses if you miss it and the special events that accompany it.

**West Philadelphia: Building a Community** opened at the **Arthur Ross Gallery, 220 S. 34th Street** at the **University of Pennsylvania** on July 7, 2009 and will be on display until October 11, 2009. This exhibition documents the area's 19<sup>th</sup>-century architectural and urban development while it features highlights of today's dynamic, multicultural community. The earliest works in the exhibition include watercolors by self-taught Scottish immigrant, **David J. Kennedy**. Kennedy's watercolors, drawn from the collection of the **Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP)**, depict West Philadelphia houses, institutions, and streets between 1836-1898. Many of these have never been exhibited or published, according to the directors of HSP and the Arthur Ross Gallery.

City land maps, early photographs, and post cards also reveal the neighborhood's rapid expansion and growth then. Through the use of 21<sup>st</sup>-century technology, the web and video, visitors can

discover West Philadelphia and its history today, **The West Philadelphia History Center** website, [www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/wphila/index.html](http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/wphila/index.html) recently launched at Penn by historian **Walter Licht** and Penn archivist **Mark Lloyd** is also included. The Gallery is open Tuesdays thru Fridays, 10 am to 5 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays, 12 to 5 pm. Please consult the Arthur Ross Gallery's website, [www.upenn.edu/ARG/](http://www.upenn.edu/ARG/) for additional details.

David J. Kennedy, *Southeast Corner of 44th and Chestnut Streets, 1879, watercolor (HSP)*



A series of free public lectures on West Philadelphia's fascinating history is offered during September and October. So, mark your calendars now for:

**Thur, September 10th 5:30 pm, Arthur Ross Gallery - Picturing Early West Philadelphia** by **Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, Senior Lecturer, Growth and Structures of Cities Program, Bryn Mawr College**

**Weds, September 16th 5:30 pm, Arthur Ross Gallery - Before the Arrival of the University: David Kennedy and "West Philadelphia"** by **Dr. Martha Mel Edmunds**

**Weds, September 23rd 6:00 pm, HSP, 1300 Locust Street - Lights & Shades: William Birch's Legacy to David Kennedy** by **Kim Sajet, President & CEO, The Historical Society**

of Pennsylvania, [www.hsp.org](http://www.hsp.org)

**Weds, September 30th 5:30 pm, Arthur Ross Gallery - West Philadelphia Community History Center by Dr. Walter Licht, History Department, U of Penn and Mark Lloyd, Director, University Archives and Records Center, U of Penn**

**Weds, October 7th 5:30 pm, Arthur Ross Gallery - Building Bridges: Penn and West Philadelphia**, a panel discussion, moderated by **Dr. Ira Harkavy, Associate Vice President and Director, Netter Center for Community Partnerships, U of Penn**

**And, of special note: Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, from 11:00 am to 2 pm, the Gallery will be host to a FREE FAMILY DAY, with activities, food, and fun for all children and adults!** You will also have the chance to meet many of those who put this project together and learn from Mark Lloyd about one of the archive's latest additions, the complete collection of post cards of UCHS friend and supporter, **Robert Morris Scaler**, which formed the basis for many of his publications, including **West Philadelphia: University City to 52<sup>nd</sup> Street**, in the **Images of America** series from **Arcadia Publishing, 2002** and still available from UCHS. If additional tours, workshops or lectures develop, we will report them in the next "On the West Side" or the UCHS Grapevine.

## TAP REPORT

By **Richard Dretsch, UCHS Board**

UCHS has chosen six UCHS members as recipients to participate in a program to be provided the services as outlined in the **UCHS Technical Assistance Program (TAP)**. This year, due to funding and scheduling conflicts, the services will be provided by preservation architects who are also UCHS board members.

Homeowners were asked to briefly describe their house's exterior problems or projects in their application. This year's recipients will be provided a two-hour house examination and assessment, recommendations made for repair, and a hierarchy of work provided if necessary. A brief written report listing the observed conditions, recommendations, and "best practice" maintenance methods will

be provided along with a copy of **UCHS's Contractors and Suppliers List**, another benefit of UCHS membership.

Most of the problems outlined in the applications were paint problems, porch, roof and window repair and water-related damage; all problems with which most owners of old houses are too familiar. Several past recipients have shared their findings, recommendations and contractors with neighbors and friends, further expanding the effectiveness of this type of assistance program.

As in previous years, UCHS will sponsor TAP and other programs again next year in an effort to bring all our neighborhood's houses to a condition of good repair and better maintenance, while providing homeowners more free time.

## BETTER RECORDS ACCESS

UCHS was recently contacted by genealogist **Tim Gruber** who is leading a grassroots efforts to get the **Pennsylvania** state death certificates that are at least 50 years old (currently that means from 1906-1958) available online similar to how the states of **Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and West Virginia** have already done. For approximately 30 other states, there are extracted data and/or indexes of death records online. However, Pennsylvania has no publicly accessible index and continues the outdated and costly manual processing of each of its older death certificates one at a time. Without an index it can become an expensive (since fees are not refunded) and not always successful guessing game.

The **Board of UCHS** agreed to join some 230 organizational endorsements for this cause including the **Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations** and the **Historical Society of Pennsylvania**. A letter from the society will be sent to **Governor Rendell**, our state representative and state senators, asking for better public access to approximately 6.7 million death certificates held by the **Commonwealth of Pennsylvania** from

before 1960. This is a mountain of genealogy data that is under the current restricted system. Greater access would make doing research in Pennsylvania vastly easier whether trying to trace back or finding the descendants of a common ancestor.

If you would like to add your voice to this effort, go to [users.rcn.com/timarg/PaHR-Access](http://users.rcn.com/timarg/PaHR-Access) for full details, sample letters and information about contacting your elected representatives. Tim Gruber can be contacted at [timarg@rcn.com](mailto:timarg@rcn.com) or 610-791-9294.



## SCENIC SCHUYLKILL RIVER BOAT CRUISES

Take advantage of a chance to see and learn about the lower **Schuylkill River** and tour **Bartram's Garden**. Upcoming dates are on Sundays at 1 pm on September 6 and 20 and on October 4 and 18

Tours depart from the Walnut Street dock and are approximately 2.5 hours long. Tickets are \$25 for adults; \$20 for students and children 12 and under.

## UCHS WEBSITE RENEWAL

Check out the UCHS website, [www.uchs.net](http://www.uchs.net), and you will discover a new format and new materials thanks to **Board Member Michael Jones**, who has volunteered to be our webmaster and who, with others on the board, has developed a new easily-read layout

with imagery from historic University City. Added as well is the Historic Resources report from intern **Alexander Balloon** and coming soon, a complete list of properties in the area already on the **Philadelphia Register of Historic Places**. Thanks, Mike, for great work and we look forward to more information and imagery to come.

## RECOGNITION DESERVED

With summer upon us and more gardening and facade improvements underway, now is the time to send in your suggestions for "**Gift to the Streets**" and "**Green Gift to the Streets**" commendations for your neighbor's efforts which benefit us all.

Just get us the address and what you see that deserves a letter of commendation and we will take care of it..



## JOIN IN KEEPING BALTIMORE AVENUE IN BLOOM

If you would like to join other volunteers in the upkeep of some of our public gardens along the **Baltimore Avenue** corridor this fall, check out [www.ucgreen.org](http://www.ucgreen.org) and note the Saturday morning outings planned to weed and renew these green landmarks while enjoying the new food vendors and cafes which are blooming there as well. Call **UCGreen**, (215) 573-4684 for details.

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## SPECIAL THANKS

to those who recently renewed their annual UCHS dues, especially those who made additional contributions as **Friends of UCHS: Howard Deck & Marvin Brown; Michael Jones; Molly MacDonald; Jeff Rubidge & Grace Kao; Rich Kirk; Jim Littrell, Rector, St. Mary's Church; Ronald & Mary Elizabeth Pfeil; Fiona Proctor & Frank Purcell; Dan Biddle & Cindy Roberts; Jonathan Eells & David Sims; Catherine Carr & Louis Tannen, Fine Carpentry;** or as **Sustainers of UCHS: Nicholas & Eleanor Cernansky, The Castle; Roy Harker & Bob Ranando.**

Or, if you are receiving this newsletter by email, by emailing in your "ballot" to [info@uchs.net](mailto:info@uchs.net).

**Please do so by August 1, 2009.** Thank you.

Sylvia Barkan, 420 S. 47th Street  
 Michael Hardy, 446 S. 43rd Street  
 Roy Harker, 4514 Chester Avenue  
 Joanne Kellerman, 208 St. Marks Square  
 Judy Lamirand, 5543 Webster Street  
 Edwin Robinson, 4607 Springfield Avenue  
 Elizabeth Stegner, 4816 Windsor Avenue

## ELECTIONS

The **Nominating Committee** of the UCHS **Board** recommends the reelection of these seven members to additional three year terms. Please indicate your agreement by placing a check next to those you endorse and returning this page to UCHS.

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## *ON THE WEST SIDE*

*THE UNIVERSITY CITY  
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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