



# Archives

JUNE  
2020

## WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER VOLUME 26, ISSUE 5

### **No meeting of the Wilkinsburg Historical Society in June.**

There will not be a physical, In-person meeting of the Wilkinsburg Historical Society in June. This pandemic year has changed many things for everyone. Although the coronavirus is waning, it is still an issue to be considered for everyone's safety. Many businesses and organizations are opening back up and resuming operations with new protocols and limitations. Our Historical Society meets in church space that we don't own and is not yet open for public use. As such, we have no control over disinfecting procedures that are being developed for use of the space to keep everyone safe. Some places that are opening take temperatures of participants, require face masks to be worn, do not serve refreshments any longer, and have a strict regimen for disinfecting items that may be touched by anyone. For the foreseeable future we are not certain what those protocols should be and will not be meeting in person.

### **Lincoln Monument area is nearing completion.**



Work has continued at the **Penn Avenue and Lincoln Highway intersection** where the earliest transcontinental roadways have intersected since 1913. The Lincoln statue monument area has been completely reconstructed with a massive retaining wall to ensure total stability of the hillside.

The landscape company has built a solid foundation where the new granite pedestal and statue of Lincoln will be installed. There will be a concrete area created with benches, along with a railing for safety. Over the next few months the granite pedestal will be placed and then the new bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln. The statue project is the most ambitious undertaking that the Wilkinsburg Historical Society has ever attempted. Funds are still needed and donations are gratefully accepted. Contributions to the statue fund can be made to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P. O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235 or through GoFundMe Lincoln Statue for Wilkinsburg. The link to the site is:

<https://www.gofundme.com/Lincoln-statue-for-Wilkinsburg>

## Woodlawn Cemetery (1460 Penn Avenue in Wilkinsburg) Memorial Day, 2020



The Historic **Woodlawn Cemetery** at 1460 Penn Ave. was officially established February 28 1903. Some grave markers predate the official establishment and are dated from the late 1870s. There are over 35 acres of rolling hills in Woodlawn Cemetery, with thousands of Wilkinsburg's early residents buried there, most in marked graves. One of the most prominent monuments in Woodlawn Cemetery is a statue of a Civil War Union soldier. Placed about 1905 it originally was flanked by two large cannons and a pyramid of cannon balls. The monument is simply labeled "In memory of our soldier dead". The Veteran's area in the east section is adorned with American flags every year for Memorial Day.

~~~~~



**Sacred Spaces Tour III** is planned for Saturday, September 26 from 10 AM to 5 PM. This event is hosted by the Religious Architectural Heritage committee (R A H), a branch of Preservation Pittsburgh. The Sacred Spaces Tour in Wilkinsburg has been awarded a Neighborhood Allies Grant to help fund the popular tour that has been held in Wilkinsburg for the past two years.

There may be some additional limitations due to Covid-19 safety plans. The churches who agree to participate will be informed of all existing regulations that may be in place at that time to safely accommodate the tour. Final decision about restrictions will be made by mid-July if there is any question about conducting the tour safely. If by July 19 the tour needs to be postponed, it will be rescheduled for late spring 2021. The RAH committee is hoping for safe conditions, good weather and a successful event.



## High profile Wood/South lot is transformed into a beautiful new park.



Preparations are made for a semi-permeable walkway in the new park. Storm water is managed better with permeable walks.



Looking toward Wood Street, the corner lot on NE corner of South Avenue is being transformed.



Crushed stone is part of the foundation for the permeable walk to be installed next.

Work has begun on the new park at the corner of Wood Street and South Avenue. This important project is a partnership between the Borough, the Center for Civic Arts, and other funding sources. The park will include a permeable paver sidewalk meandering through it, benches, signage, bio swale, specimen trees and dozens of carefully selected plants.

This lot is the site where Dasch's department store was built nearly a century ago. The building had deteriorated and bricks were falling off, jeopardizing public safety. That structure was torn down over ten years ago. A long awaited new park is becoming a reality.

Director of Center for Civic Arts Jody Guy stated, "Naming this new green space in Wilkesburg will be a community decision. Located in the center of the Business District and surrounded by hundreds of vehicles passing by daily, we need travelers to stop and patronize Wilkesburg's businesses. What about Wilkesburg do we want people to know? Should we honor an every day Wilkesburg hero or signal that we are a community of peace, and title the green space Garden of Peace?"

Anyone can send a naming suggestion to [civcarts211@gmail.com](mailto:civcarts211@gmail.com) Multiple people from Wilkesburg will make the final name selection including Wilkesburg's Council members. This is a beautiful example of blight to bright."

## Linear Park work resumes after winter and pandemic pauses.



The Ardmore Wall park, also referred to as the Penn-Lincoln Linear park, extends along Ardmore Boulevard from Franklin Avenue to Penn Avenue. For nearly a century this 950 feet long strip of land was divided into 18 parcels of home sites. The old homes had been vacant for decades, were deteriorated and un-restorable. The blighted structures were razed and just one home remains and is occupied. This entire project included restoration of the Ardmore wall and re-establishment of the sidewalk on top of the wall. A new hand-rail atop the wall will be installed for pedestrian safety. There will also be benches, lighting and low-maintenance vegetation. This entire project is a collaboration of the Wilkesburg Borough Council working together with the State to secure funding and grants through the Keystone Communities Grants. State Senator Jay Costa and Representative Edward Gainey have been invaluable in securing funding that was used to beautify this important gateway to Wilkesburg.

The newly established park is not yet officially named, but community input is welcome. This beautifully crafted park ends at the Penn Avenue intersection where the Wilkesburg Historical Society will be installing a new bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, at the exact location where the sheet copper Lincoln stood for a century. (The deteriorated copper Lincoln has been carefully removed and permanently displayed inside the Municipal building.)

### **Please continue to support our local businesses!**

During the past four months the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way everyone lives. It has caused disruption in every aspect of our lives. As businesses in Wilkesburg gradually reopen, many with mandated restrictions to ensure public safety, PLEASE be sure to support all of the Wilkesburg places that have chosen our Borough to operate in. Many of these are small, locally owned shops that have struggled to exist during the quarantine. These owners are our friends, our neighbors, and the heart of our business community. They need our business!



### **Center for Civic Arts (South Avenue at Mulberry Street)**

Volunteers spent time on June 4 preparing side yard for a large community garden.



Center for Civic Arts (CCA), directed by Jody Guy, is a non-profit organization that acquired the former Mulberry Presbyterian Church for re-use as a space for creative arts and economic revitalization. The century-old stone church needs many repairs to open up the interior for programming. However, the side yard on Mulberry Street just needed volunteers, mulch, compost, tomato plants and sunshine. Many vegetables have been planted and anyone/everyone is welcome to join the project. Volunteers can share time together to plant, water and weed. Currently, volunteer times are Tuesdays 10 to noon and Thursdays from 4 to 6 pm, weather permitting.

The garden will be named the George Floyd Community Garden to remind everyone involved that the community work represents a unified community, planting and harvesting together, with social justice at the forefront. Questions may be directed to Jody Guy at [civicsarts211@gmail.com](mailto:civicsarts211@gmail.com)

### **Wilkesburg Public Library has wonderful news for all Wilkesburg fans.**

A long-awaited resource is now available for anyone with internet access. For many decades the Wilkesburg Public Library has served as a repository for all types of information regarding life in Wilkesburg. Over the past few years that information has been saved digitally. Now, thanks to Wilkesburg Librarian and Acting Director Anna Newborg, it is online. This is really exciting news, as you can now virtually access hundreds of historical documents, pictures, articles and more about the Wilkesburg Community! Get free access through the Wilkesburg Library's website: [www.wilkesburglibrary.org/historical](http://www.wilkesburglibrary.org/historical)

Ms. Newborg states, "We had hundreds of historical documents about Wilkesburg on a flash drive at the library that I just finished uploading online. You can access all of it through our webpage" [www.wilkesburglibrary.com/historical](http://www.wilkesburglibrary.com/historical)

Additionally, the Wilkesburg Public Library is developing a walking tour of Wilkesburg which will include an interactive app that mobile phone users may utilize for information about our Borough. The Wilkesburg Historical Society is working with the library to help provide information to be included.



Don't miss out on **The Wilkinsburg Sun**, a free monthly community newsletter published by the volunteer Wilkinsburg Community Newsletter Board, with the support of the Wilkinsburg Borough, the Wilkinsburg School District, the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation.

The Sun accepts submitted articles provided they are related to Wilkinsburg and are civic-minded.

<https://wilkinsburgsun.wordpress.com>

Sign up to receive The Sun by email at [eeurl.com/v0iBP](mailto:eeurl.com/v0iBP) and friend The Sun on Facebook.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society has a website, to share more information about the history of Wilkinsburg. [wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com](http://wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com)

Mailing address: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

We usually meet on the third Monday of months March, June, August and November at the South Avenue United Methodist Church in Wilkinsburg. HOWEVER, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CHANGED EVERYTHING AND WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO MEET IN PERSON DURING 2020. SAFETY IS OUR UTMOST CONCERN AND NEW PROTOCOLS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED. The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is still published monthly, March through November.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society yearly dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society are:

\$20.00 INDIVIDUAL Member, \$35.00 FAMILY Membership

\$10.00 STUDENT or ASSOCIATE Members (for out of towners who usually can't attend

### Wilkinsburg Historical Society - Membership application Help promote the valuable history of Wilkinsburg.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \$20 Individual membership

( ) \$35 Family membership

( ) \$10 Student or associate membership

( ) \$\_\_\_\_\_ Additional donation

Please make check payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**

**PO Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

Anytime is a good time to pay your dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society. We have many preservation projects going on, plus the cost of sending out the Archives and providing displays for Wilkinsburg events. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your membership dues. Please use the address on the form, our PO box.