



# Archives

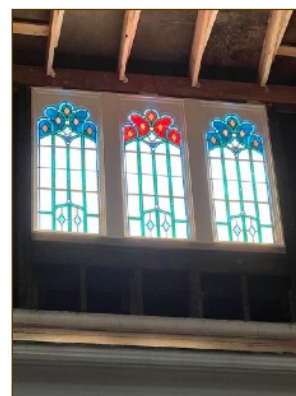
APRIL  
2022

## WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER VOLUME 28, ISSUE 2

Former Mulberry (Second) Presbyterian Church is now being transformed into the non-profit Center for Civic Arts. The 1911 sanctuary roof had substantial damage and was replaced during the winter. The large, formerly sacred space, will be a substantial performance venue in the future. After decades of neglect and vandalism, the entire complex of the former church and education center is under the conservatorship of the non-profit Center for Civic Arts.



From Jody Guy, Director of CCA: “Civic Arts received funding from the Hillman Foundation and the State Historic Preservation Office in order to remediate the failing roofs over the prior Mulberry Second Presbyterian sanctuary and the adjacent education wing. Additional funding proposals are pending. Over the winter two major beams, in two locations, have been replaced in the 1911 Sanctuary. Additionally a hand blown stained glass window was reframed, cleaned, and restored to its former glory, thanks to the work of Jeffrey Greene. Jendoco Construction is doing the work from both the inside of the building on scaffolding, and from the outside with lifts. In June, repairs will continue on the flat roof over the education wing. We are pleased to announce that Jack Scalo, CEO of Scalo Roofing and Solar, has donated 68 Solar Panels for the flat roof. This donation is Wilkinsburg's first significant investment in solar power.”



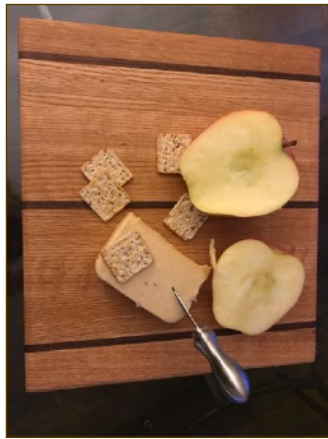
## **The Center for Civic Arts**

**VISION:** The Center for Civic Arts will inspire civic engagement through the arts and humanities.

**MISSION:** The Center for Civic Arts values citizens as the creators of culture, and stewards of their environment. CCA will expand opportunities for people to connect through arts education, public arts and creative place-making. We value the arts as the thread that defines who we are, and the light that empowers communities.

Preserving historic structures takes time, effort, and substantial funding. You can be part of the future by contributing to the Center for Civic Arts. Center for Civic Arts is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, based in Wilkinsburg. Contributions in any amount are appreciated!

Special thank you gifts have been created in appreciation for your generosity. For a \$150 tax deductible donation, you will receive a solid wood cutting board as a thank-you gift. For a \$75 donation, you will receive a pew wood set of coasters. (see photo below)



**Click here to make a donation in any amount!**

<https://civicarts211.wixsite.com/website-1>

The 100 year old wood in these thank you gifts came from church pews in the Children's Chapel where Mulberry Second Presbyterian school-aged children worshiped. The Chapel is in a 24 classroom school at 710 Mulberry Street in Wilkinsburg, and 500 children attended after WWII. Imagine the children who sat on the pews from 1928 - 2010, reading from the bible, singing hymns, and listening to the sound of the organ music.

The inlaid maple adds a decorative touch to these cutting boards, finished with organic coconut oil. Sizes vary slightly, generally 12" x "13" x 1".

The Wilkinsburg Historical Society supports and advocates for projects in Wilkinsburg that preserve our shared history, beautify the area, engage the community and empower Wilkinsburg's citizens.



This distinctive building at **901 Wood Street** is one of Wilkinsburg's important landmarks. In January 1896, a group of men met in Wilkinsburg to discuss the need for a bank to serve the community. Present were: Andrew Mellon, Richard Beatty Mellon, Henry C. Frick, J.A Strickler, J.A.Patterson, J. L. Srodes and others. Out of that meeting the Wilkinsburg Bank was organized, then received its charter on April 23. A house and lot at 901 Wood Street was purchased, the house torn down and a new building, fourteen feet wide, was built. It was the first home of the Wilkinsburg Bank and opened for business on June 1, 1896. The narrow structure served as banking rooms, but within eight years the Wilkinsburg Bank had outgrown the space. In 1904 the bank appointed a committee to secure an architect to draw plans for a new bank building. The narrow building was physically moved to the back of the lot to be used while the imposing new stone and marble bank building was constructed. The new bank was forty feet wide on Wood Street, and opened on November 16, 1908. Women visitors the first day received roses, men got cigars - and for both there were souvenir postcards.

In November 1947 the bank was officially renamed Mellon National Bank & Trust Co. It remained as Mellon for more than fifty years. In December 2001 it became Citizens Bank of Pennsylvania. In January, 2020 Citizens Bank closed its doors in Wilkinsburg, ending 125 years of continuous banking service from 901 Wood Street.

At this time, definitive plans for the future of the building are not available.



The left postcard image, circa 1909, shows the newly built Wilkinsburg Bank on Wood Street. Part of the flagpole can be seen mounted on the roof. Right image, circa 1911, shows the bank's new neighbor, Rowland Theatre at 907 Wood Street. The Rowland, with seating capacity of 1120, featured vaudeville shows, silent pictures, plays and movies. It was closed in February 1965 and demolished in 1976.



The interior of the Wilkinsburg Bank, later known as Mellon Bank, then Citizen's Bank, featured massive marble columns and teller windows. This impressive interior was designed by Mowbray & Uffinger, architects from New York. Louis Mowbray (1867-1921) and Justin Uffinger (1871-1948) formed their partnership in 1895. They specialized in bank buildings and bank vaults, designing over 400 banks across the country.

Expert vault engineers Mowbray & Uffinger designed Wilkinsburg Bank's extraordinary safe. The safe deposit vault door had the mechanism viewable due to the glass liner.

The postcard printing company, Valentine & Sons Publishing Co. of New York and Boston labelled this image "Safe Deposit Vault Door Weighs 18 Tons, Wilkinsburg, Pa Bank"



In the basement of the Wilkinsburg Bank was Zener's Barber Shop. It was opened at the same time that the new bank had its debut. Outfitted with six chairs, barber services were available here for over 50 years. Customers entered via the outside stairs descending from the Ross Avenue side.



Banks often provided small gifts to patrons to ensure loyalty and gain new customers. This etched aluminum bank was a gift from the Wilkinsburg Bank. Other competitive banks in Wilkinsburg were First National Bank on Penn Ave. at Wood (later PNC) and Central National Bank on Wood at South.

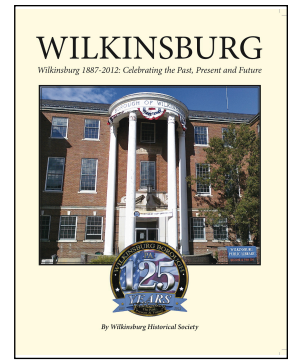
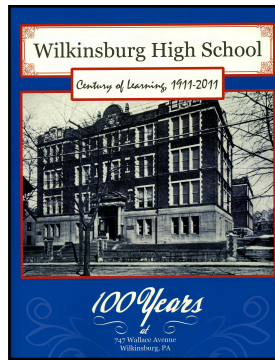
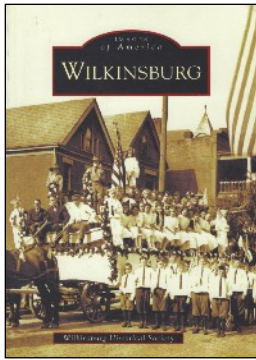
## Green Building Alliance tour at Wilkinsburg's Train Station



Green Building Alliance recently (March 24, 2022) partnered with the WDCD to host a tour of the historically restored Wilkinsburg Train Station. Leslie Montgomery, Vice President of Education & Communications of Green Building Alliance organized the tour. After introductions, WDCD staff members M. Gallagher and Moses Workman gave overviews of the six-year restoration process. Wilkinsburg Historical Society's Anne Elise Morris was asked to present the early history of the building and its importance to the community. MCF architecture's Wm. Szymczak and Christopher Watt as well as Chris Michaels from Sota Construction led attendees through the building to see the rehabilitation/restoration results. Representatives from various trades attended, and saw first-hand the amazing 1916 building.



In the left image, attendees listen to scheduled speakers discuss the historic restoration of the station. It was noted that the PRR emblem covering the clock space was the same method used a century ago to cover the clock face when it was not keeping accurate time. In the center image a large, 400+ pound plywood crate sits in the main room of the station. The crate contains the restored clock, awaiting installation in the next few weeks. The far right image shows the newly installed bronze plaque listing the primary supporters of the WDCD's Wilkinsburg Train Station Restoration Project.



These are the three books that the **Wilkinsburg Historical Society** wrote and published during the past twelve years. They help to promote and preserve the history of Wilkinsburg and raise funds for the various projects of the Society. All three books are still available to purchase from the Society. Another way to support the activities of the Historical Society.

On the far left is ***"Images of America - Wilkinsburg"***, a 128 page soft-bound book printed by the Arcadia Publishing Company. It includes over 220 black and white photos depicting the history of our town from the early land patents in the late 1700s up to the 75th celebration of Wilkinsburg in 1962. The book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$20.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The middle book above is ***"Wilkinsburg High School - Century of Learning 1911-2011"***. This book chronicles the history of the local high school from its early start in the late 1880s, the creation of the magnificent structure in 1910, and each decade since with highlights of the events that were important in the lives of the students and the Wilkinsburg community. For over 100 years the Wilkinsburg High School served the Borough of Wilkinsburg students and this book has several hundred photos showing much of this important history. This *Century of Learning* book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$15.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The book on the far right is ***"Wilkinsburg - 1887-2012, Celebrating the Past, Present and Future"***. This book was produced by the Historical Society in 2012 to recognize the 125th anniversary of Wilkinsburg's incorporation as a Borough. This soft-bound book has 196 pages and includes chapters on the history of Wilkinsburg, the celebrations from the past, information about Wilkinsburg's government, and all the events that occurred during the 125th celebration. There are several chapters about the clubs and organizations in Wilkinsburg as well as the churches and worship centers in the Borough. The "future of Wilkinsburg" section recognizes advertisers and sponsors who helped to fund the creation and printing of the book. This book, originally \$15.00, is now available for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

Make check or money order payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**

Orders can be mailed to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O.Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Images of America - Wilkinsburg (\$20.00 + \$3.00) = \$23.00    Quantity\_\_\_\_\_    Total \_\_\_\_\_

Century of Learning 1911-2011 (\$15.00 + \$3.00) = \$18.00    Quantity\_\_\_\_\_    Total \_\_\_\_\_

Wilkinsburg 1887-2012 (\$10.00 + \$3.00) = \$13.00    Quantity\_\_\_\_\_    Total \_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_ Address\_\_\_\_\_

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



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:

<http://eepurl.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**

The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is published monthly, March through November.

We do not publish the Archives during the three Winter months of December, January and February.

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** Please keep your membership dues up to date.

## 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, 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.