

CHAPTER 5

Life in the Neighborhoods

Pittsburgh is truly a city of neighborhoods. As residents branched out from the Point across the rivers and hills to create new communities, they built a tapestry of distinct places. Some are known for their ethnic heritage, such as Polish Hill or Deutschtown. Others are marked by their topography, such as the South Side Slopes, the Hill District, and Fineview. Each has a distinct personality and boundaries are closely held. Many History Center photo collections document daily life in the neighborhoods—church and school activities, hanging out at the corner store, playing in the street. Crucial rites of passage are recorded as well such as weddings and confirmations, school plays, and First Communion. Some photos are particularly evocative of their location. A “Salute to Israel” parade winds through the largely Jewish neighborhood of Squirrel Hill. Women gather for a card game in the planned common grounds at the garden community of Chatham Village.

Not all neighborhoods are represented equally, however. Perhaps because East Liberty was once known as Pittsburgh’s Second Downtown and it experienced so much redevelopment activity, its history is particularly well represented in a variety of collections. Photos showing the transformation of the Point are also numerous. In contrast, photos from other neighborhoods like the newer suburban developments of Penn Hills and the South Hills are more sparse.



A parochial school class visits the Carnegie's traveling museum, 1950s.

A nun guides a group of boys into the Carnegie Museum of Natural History's traveling museum in an image representing multiple touchstones of life in Pittsburgh for some children during the Baby Boom of the 1950s. By 1954, the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh listed 201 elementary schools and 51 secondary schools teaching more than 90,000 students. Many of the teachers were nuns, who left a vivid impression on their young pupils. Another sign of growth during this period, the Carnegie started its traveling museum program in 1950. The "museum in a trailer" journeyed to schools, parks, and playgrounds bringing natural history specimens that children could examine and touch. This included live animals such as squirrels, rabbits, guinea pigs, snakes, and, best of all, Jackie the raccoon, who would let children stroke and pet his fur.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Allegheny Conference on Community Development, MSP 285.B3.F10.



Pittsburgh Public School students in a curious performance, 1950s.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Allegheny Conference on Community Development, MSP 285.B18.F25.



St. James AME Sunday School in East Liberty assembles for a photo, 1943.

Standing proudly in their Sunday best, the students and teachers of St. James AME church pose for a group photo in 1943. The image was one of a series taken for a printed program that St. James produced commemorating the 76th annual conference of the Pittsburgh AME Church, hosted in September that year. Formerly known as the East Liberty Mission, St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church is one of the oldest black churches in Pittsburgh's East End. Through the years, as the church grew and prospered, it had many homes. This image shows the building that once stood at the intersection of North Euclid Avenue and Harvard Street.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Andrea Bullock, MSP 504.



Students tend the garden at a Beechwood School, Beechview, 1916.

The Edible Schoolyard Project of the 1990s really isn't a new idea. The women of the Pittsburgh Playgrounds Association who turned unused land around schools into summer playgrounds also turned vacant school property into children's gardens. The Association used funding from the city budget to help run the program. Fortunately, the Board of Education felt the gardens were an asset and took them over as part of the public school curriculum.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Pittsburgh Public Schools, MSP 117.B22.F3.



Open Air School, Hill District, 1910s.

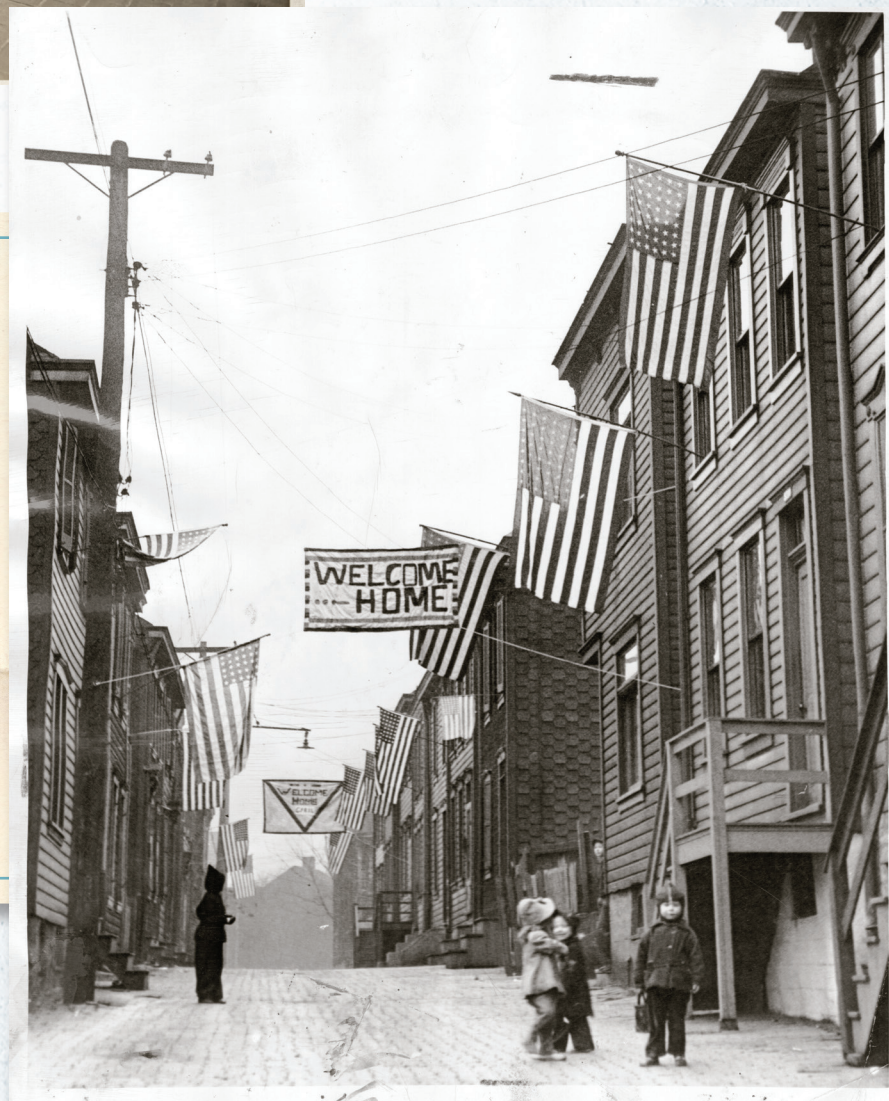
The women of the Civic Club of Allegheny County raised money and advocated for an Open Air School for children suffering from tuberculosis. In 1911 it opened on the roof of the Irene Kaufmann Settlement in the Hill District.

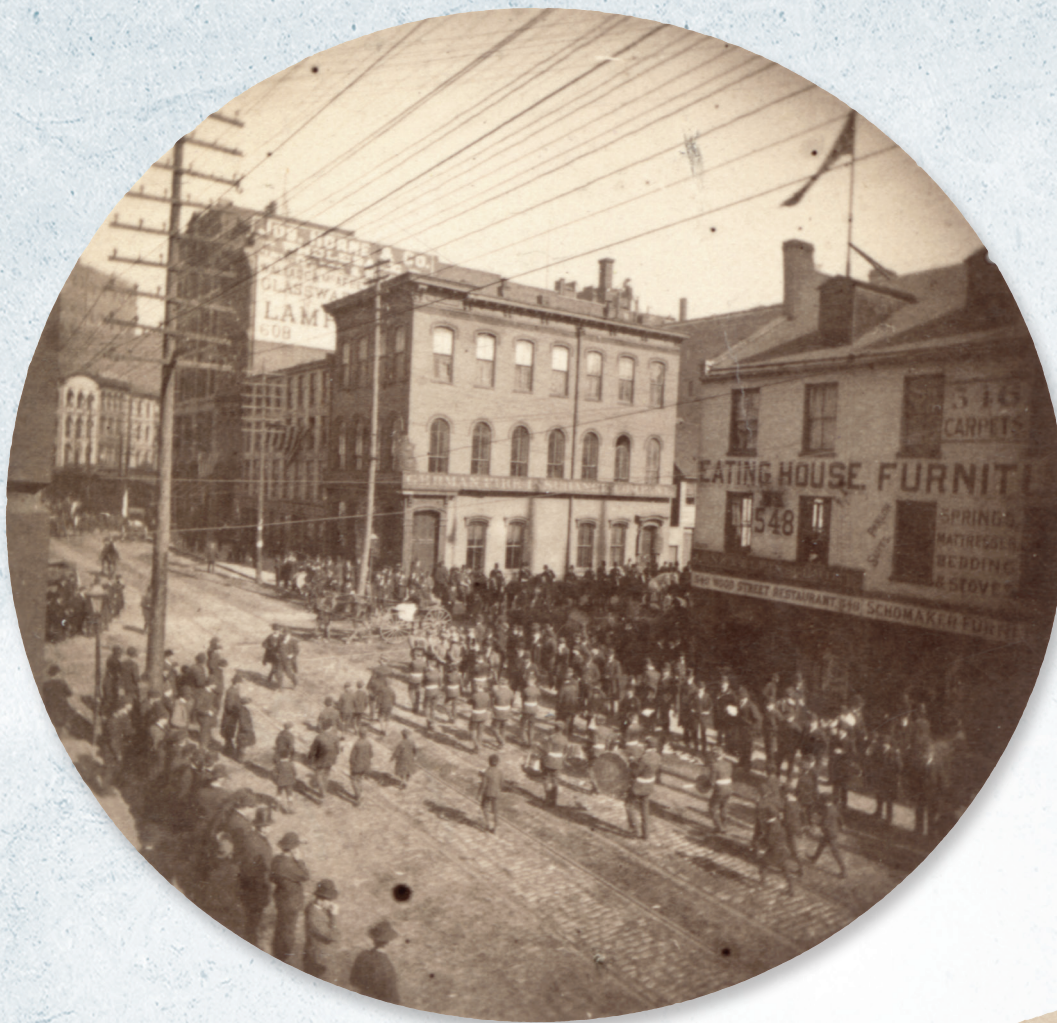
HHC Detre L&A, gift of Pittsburgh Public Schools, MSP 117.B23.F6.

Goebel Street in Manchester decked out to welcome home WWII soldiers, 1945.

A snapshot captures the impromptu V-J Day celebration of residents living on Goebel Street in the North Side following the end of World War II. Neighborhoods across Pittsburgh erupted in celebration, prayers, and relief following the Japanese surrender in August 1945.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Charlotte Gebert, PFF 0075.





George Washington's birthday parade on Wood Street, downtown, 1889.

Pittsburgh has always loved a parade and in 1889 George Washington's birthday was honored with two massive processions. In the morning, the first parade of about 10,000 people gathered and marched for over 90 minutes through downtown, the Hill District, and the Strip. In the afternoon, a second parade of 10,000 people marched through the streets. James Benny caught the second parade as a band marched down Wood Street. Railroad companies estimated that they brought 60,000 people into the city by train to watch the festivities.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Ann Darsie Thomson, PSS 20.

James Park's house on Fifth Avenue, Shadyside, 1889.

This vignette captures Fifth Avenue in its early suburban days as Pittsburgh's Millionaire's Row. James Park built his three-story stone mansion on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue at Negley Avenue with money from his family's steel business, the Black Diamond Steel Works.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Ann Darsie Thomson, PSS 20.



Kids cool off in water from an open fire hydrant on Goebel Street, Manchester, c. 1950.

Enjoying a man-made “shower,” happy neighborhood kids cool off on a summer day in Manchester. Pittsburgh sporadically opened a few fire hydrants for neighborhood use back in the 1940s and ’50s. But by the 1980s and ’90s, city officials annually pleaded in the local papers for city residents to refrain from the illegal practice, which could lower the water pressure in affected neighborhoods and damage hydrants.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Charlotte Geberi, PFF 75.



Pittsburgh's first light up night, 1929.

In October 1929, Pittsburgh joined with the rest of the country to celebrate Light's Golden Jubilee, the 50th anniversary of Thomas Edison's invention of the light bulb, by illuminating bridges and downtown buildings.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Robert Garland, PSS 9.

Children of Edgar Thomson steel workers in Braddock leave the main office building with their Christmas gifts, 1920s.

Carrying bags filled with popcorn and candy, children of employees at the Edgar Thomson Works in Braddock depart past a giant Christmas tree during one of the steel plant's annual holiday celebrations. Started in 1920, the yearly Christmas treat distributed tons of candy and popcorn balls to thousands of children, all of it packed by company volunteers. Gathering to greet Santa at the plant's general administrative offices, children sometimes waited for hours in a candy line that stretched for five blocks.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Kenneth Brooks, PFF 0074.



Hanging out at the shoe shine parlor, Hill District, 1930s.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Zerbie E. Swain, MSP 455.



Wedding party, 1950s.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of the estate of Frances Manko, MSS 0869.

Aerial view of Sewickley, c. 1910.

John Frederick Haworth experimented with early kite photography. By strapping a camera to a large box kite he was able to capture aerial views around Pittsburgh and the Sewickley Valley. He became so well-known that he was sent to photograph Hawaii's Kilauea Volcano.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Gilbert Hays, PFF 9.





Enjoying the outdoors at Camp Horne, Emsworth, 1920s.

Camp Horne was the dream of Albert H. Burchfield, a manager at the Joseph Horne department store and son of one of its founders. Opened in the summer of 1910, adult employees at Horne's set up a summer camp where "juniors," (teenagers who worked as errand boys and package wrappers) could spend a week away from the smoky city camping in the outdoors. They slept in tents, played baseball, swam, hiked in the woods, and in the evenings danced in the pavilion or were entertained by the adult employees of Horne's.

Camp Horne proved so attractive that everyone wanted to stay there. By the 1920s, anyone who worked at Horne's could register to stay at the camp for a small fee. The company ran a bus during

the summer so employees could leave directly from the store, stay at the camp overnight, and return to work in the morning. The campgrounds featured large canvas tents on wood platforms with metal beds and wardrobes for clothes. A fully equipped kitchen and staff fed 150 people at a time. By the mid-1920s, the camp had grown to become a small village with its own streets.

Camp Horne's use diminished with the Depression, but it remained the venue for the store's annual picnic through the 1940s and it became so well known in the area that the original name of the road in front of it was changed from Lowries Run to Camp Horne Road. Both the camp and the department store are gone, but the setting lives on as Avonworth Community Park.

HHC Detre L&A, GPC.B19.F14.



Salute Israel parade, Squirrel Hill, 1977.

Holding their banner aloft, four young people join a parade marking the 29th anniversary of Israel with a Youth Salute to Israel parade on Sunday, April 24, 1977. They joined more than 40 local groups that marched in a procession that wound its way through Squirrel Hill to Frick Park.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of the American Zionist Federation of Pittsburgh, MSQ 87.



A War Bond parade in East Liberty, 1944.

Santa Claus, Uncle Sam, and the Toyland Express all head down Penn Avenue in East Liberty during the Sixth War Loan parade on November 25, 1944. The parade doubled as that year's holiday celebration, since it took place on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Even before World War II, East Liberty was one of the city's busiest residential neighborhoods, and Penn Avenue was long known for hosting some of the largest and most popular parades in the Pittsburgh metro area each year.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Michael Tortorete, 2002.0074.



**East Ohio Street
with the Carnegie
Library (center),
Buhl Planetarium
(left), and the old
Post Office (far left
with dome), 1960s.**

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Al Mazukna,
1998.0030.



**Craft sale in Allegheny
Center, 1970s.**

Redevelopment of the North Side in the 1960s included a large swath of demolition along East Ohio Street which was replaced by an open, sunken plaza. The Old Post Office and Buhl Planetarium remain in the background.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.



Crowds wait to board a streetcar during a snowstorm, c. 1964.

Patrons wait their turn hoping to board the 38/42 Mount Lebanon-Beechview line during a typical Pittsburgh winter. Some type of electric street railway served the metro region's mass transit needs for nearly a century, from the late 1890s through September 4, 1999, when the last "Drake Shuttle" 47D to and from Castle Shannon made its final run.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.



Larkins Way looking east toward South 28th Street, South Side, 1949.

Gathered on their front steps in the densely packed South Side flats neighborhood, these Larkins Way residents seem focused on some specific event as they look toward South 28th Street. Three blocks back from the main business avenue on East Carson Street, Larkins Way was within easy walking distance of the massive Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Steel plant. In the 1920s and '30s, this area was filled with eastern European immigrants such as Lithuanians and Poles, most of whom had come to work in the steel industry. By the 1940s, residents were largely first generation Americans. During World War II, the 2700 block of Larkins Way was lauded by the local newspapers for having the highest percentage of men serving in the war. Out of 26 houses on the block, 17 had at least one son, and some as many as four, in the military.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of anonymous, 2001.0078.

Boys and girls celebrating First Communion at St. Michael's Church on the South Side, 1950s.

Working hard to keep their youthful energy in check, these girls and boys joined generations of children who had made their First Communion at St. Michael's Catholic Church on the South Side since 1848. Started as a German ethnic parish during one of the waves of immigration that shaped Pittsburgh's neighborhoods in the 1840s and '50s, St. Michael's became known for their yearly celebration of "Cholera Day," an event derived from the church's vow to St. Roch when 75 parishioners died from a cholera epidemic in 1849. Alas, such vows couldn't save the church in the 20th century. Sharing the fate of many of the city's ethnic Catholic parishes when Pittsburgh's population declined in 1970s and '80s, St Michael's was consolidated with other South Side parishes and the church building closed in 1992 as part of a major diocesan reorganization.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Ruth Zapinskis, MSS 874.





Phillip Silverman storefront, Uptown, 1880s.

Displaying his wares for all to see, Philip Silverman operated a dry goods store at 363 Fifth Avenue from the late 1870s to the mid-1890s. Although not much is known about Phillip, city directories suggest that he may have clerked at another Silverman dry goods store in the mid-1870s before opening his own establishment. It is likely that the group pictured amidst the display of carpets and oil cloths is his family and that they all lived above their store, a typical practice of the time.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Celeste Silberstein Behrend, MSR 0073.



Commercial buildings along Beaver Avenue in Manchester, 1960.

Initially a commercial street in Manchester on the North Side, Beaver Avenue became a casualty of the construction of Ohio River Boulevard. That stretch of Route 65 split the neighborhood, isolating the western portion along the Ohio River. The name Beaver Avenue remains, but the businesses are gone replaced with an area resembling an industrial park.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.



Dancing at Bill Green's nightclub, Pleasant Hills, 1950s.

"All roads lead to Bill Green's" proclaimed the advertising slogan. The club served as one of Pittsburgh's hottest night spots through the 1950s, welcoming performers such as Lawrence Welk, Sammy Kaye, and the Ink Spots.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of William Green, Jr., MSP 0204.



Women play cards outdoors in Chatham Village on Mount Washington, 1930s.

Gathered on the lawn for a game of cards, these women exemplify what planners hoped their new garden home community of Chatham Village would do: foster a sense of neighborhood for middle income families.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of the Buhl Foundation, MSP 187. B3.F1.

Marie Kirkwood surrounded by four budding baseball luminaries, 1953.

HENRY SIERKA RAY CONWAY CLIFF KUNTZ JOE BELANTI



1953 MARIE KIRKWOOD

Is there a more all-American photo than a group of 13-year-old boys in baseball uniforms? The one on the right, with his arm around Miss Kirkwood and the self-assured attitude—has an intriguing story to tell. At age 10, Joe Bellante already carried a gun and had committed his first robbery. Growing up in East Liberty and having a father who was a numbers runner, Joe knew what he wanted out of life—money, women, nice clothes, and a new Cadillac every year. Strong and fearless, by age 20 he was working for the mob as a loan shark and enforcer.

In the summer of 1972 Joe got a call to meet his friend Santo. They had grown up together in the East End. Obliging, Joe followed him to the Penn Hills Shopping Center where they both parked. As Santo approached Joe's car he pulled out a .32 caliber pistol and fired, spraying the car with bullets. They pierced the hood and roof, flattened a tire, then hit Joe. The first bullet crushed Joe's right cheek and the next hit his chin and throat. As Santo sped off, Joe could feel his lifeblood drain away and prayed, "Lord let me live."

An off-duty fireman heard the shots and came running and two police joined them shortly. "Left for dead" was their assessment. But Joe was in too good a shape to die and God had other plans for him. His conversion from the mob to the ministry took some time, but Joe walked away from a life of crime and gave his life to the kids who were growing up on the streets like he had. Joe tells his story in the book, *Left for Dead* and calls himself "the only man to retire from the mob."

HHC Detre L&A, GPC B13.

Life, Death, and Rebirth of Neighborhoods— The East Liberty Story



Penn Avenue looking toward Highland Avenue, 1930s.

In its heyday before World War II, Penn Avenue featured drug stores, department stores, specialty shops, and theaters.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Barbara Latterman, PFF 68.

Not all neighborhoods are represented equally in the History Center photo collections; some are barely covered while others are thoroughly documented from their earliest days to the present. East Liberty is the most prominent of neighborhoods found in the collections of the Detre Library & Archives. What is it about East Liberty that led it to be photographed so frequently over the years, and for those photos to be preserved in such large numbers?

In the mid-19th century, East Liberty was home to wealthy families who could afford to live five or so miles from the already-smoky city of Pittsburgh. They owned large parcels of land and gave their names to East End streets such as Mellon, Roup, Baum, Winebiddle, and Negley. In the 1850s, when relatively few Pittsburghers could afford to have a single daguerreotype taken of themselves, Thomas Mellon had one taken of his house.

Penn Avenue in East Liberty, the main artery from downtown to the East End, became a vibrant business district, growing over the years to become the third largest commercial area in the state—often called Pittsburgh's second downtown. Photos show it bustling with activity

from the 1870s through the 1930s. But after WWII, as living and shopping patterns shifted toward the suburbs, the commercial district in East Liberty declined.

Pittsburgh's Post War Renaissance, transforming the Point downtown and the lower Hill District, received national accolades. By the early 1960s, that work was largely complete and the Urban Redevelopment Authority turned its attention to East Liberty. Although the East Liberty Redevelopment Area included housing rehabilitation and new construction, the plan is mainly remembered for turning the business district into a car-free outdoor shopping mall. In an effort to mimic European shopping patterns and burgeoning shopping malls, planners blocked traffic on Highland and Penn Avenues, installed a ring road around the business corridor, and unintentionally choked off the retailers they meant to make more accessible. Photos document the redevelopment process from the demolition and rehabilitation of buildings to the installation of the new Penn Avenue pedestrian mall. In recent years, many of the urban renewal ideas of the 1960s are being undone.



Thomas Mellon house 401 Negley Avenue, East Liberty, 1850s. Daguerreotypes taken outside of a studio were quite a rarity. Lawyer and banker Thomas Mellon not only had daguerreotypes of his family, but of his house as well.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of James Ross Mellon, Cased images, B5.

Aerial view of East Liberty, 1971. The Redevelopment District provided low income housing in addition to turning Penn Avenue into a pedestrian mall. The high rises are East Mall (upper left straddling Penn Avenue), Penn Circle Towers (center, now the site of Target), and Liberty Park (right edge of photo).

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.B1.



East Liberty Pedestrian mall, c. 1970. Closed to vehicular traffic, Penn Avenue became a pedestrian mall.

HHC Detre L&A, gift of Elenore Seidenberg, MSP 566.B1.