

*Schuylkill River Heritage Center*

# Phoenix Columns

Winter 2024

The Schuylkill River Heritage Center (SRHC) celebrated our 14th Heritage Award Celebration in October by honoring **The Hankin Group** for their extraordinary accomplishment in transforming the major portion of the Foundry Building into a unique and historic place to have a special event. Whether it is a corporate event, a wedding, or a high school prom, the Foundry has become a very popular place to have a gathering. Because of the Hankin Group's investment and commitment, the Foundry Building has also become an extraordinary anchor in Phoenixville's Downtown Historic District.

The SRHC is located in the other portion of the building. The SRHC benefits from its location since event guests often explore the interactive exhibits and displays at the SRHC while they are attending a special event at The Foundry. When requested, event guests are given a tour of the museum.

The Hankin Group also donated the restored 1871 Phoenix Column bridge to Phoenixville Borough. This change in the property line has given the public easy access to the Schuylkill River Trail that is located on the north side of the French Creek.

The SRHC recognizes and thanks our sponsors for the Heritage Award Celebration. It would not have been possible without their generous support! Proceeds for this special event will be used to support the Phoenix Wheel project. This project campaign will proceed in 2024 so the SRHC will be able to recreate and install this historic and unique piece from the past.

Our event sponsors are **Aqua, An Essential Utilities Company Beausang Butera Cohen & Brennan, Attorneys at Law Carnevale Eustis Architects Carroll Engineering Corporation Chester County Economic Development Council Chester County Industrial Authority Colonial Gardens Michael & Karen Czajka Gern & Whitney Jaeger Richard A Kunsch, Sr. Malvern Capital Wealth Management James & Joan Moore Phoenixville Federal Bank & Trust James & Janet Reading Sly Fox Brewing Company and Steel City Displays.**



Pictured here are **Michael Hankin**, representing The Hankin Group, receiving the Heritage Award from Chester County Commissioner Chair Marian Moskowitz

Shown here are **Jolie Chylack**, an SRHC board member, and **Elyssa Hilton**, an SHRC member who also serves on our Phoenix Wheel Fundraising committee, welcoming guests to the celebration.



## Here is a Photo Collage of Guests at our Oct. 19th Celebration



### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

**Mr. and Mrs. Bill & Liz Anderson**

**Mr. Richard Ferguson**

**Mr. & Mrs. James & Nancy Evans**

**Mr. Stephen Griffin**

**Ms. Mary T. Holloran & Mr. David J. Proctor**

**Mr. Richard Melsheimer & Ms. Cynthia King**



## Frank Furness – The Industrial Age Architect

In September, Allan & Barbara Cohen presented the story of Frank Furness since the speaker originally planned for this event had to cancel his visit. Frank Furness was born in Philadelphia in 1839. His father was the pastor at Philadelphia's Unitarian Church and was a very active proponent in the movement to abolish slavery. During the Civil War Frank Furness served as a captain of a volunteer Cavalry Division and received the Medal of Honor for his bravery at the Battle of Gettysburg.

It is a significant coincidence that Frank Furness's lifetime was also a period of great population and industrial growth in the USA. The latter part of the 19th century was a time when many changes were happening. Because of the turmoil in Europe, many immigrants were coming to the US seeking freedom and stability. As a result of the population growth the number of states also expanded. Along with this combined new growth, the country was becoming more industrialized. Another important change was that was that railroads were rapidly expanding since the country had grown so much. After the war, Frank Furness established his architectural career and was hugely successful. Furness became one of the most sought after architects in the late Victorian era. He designed over 600 buildings, many of which were located in the greater Philadelphia and Wilmington region. Because of the huge expansion of the railroads, new stations were needed and built to accommodate this growth. In the 1880's, Frank Furness became the architect for the Baltimore & Ohio and the Reading Railroads. Many of the stations he designed still exist today.



This is the B & O Station in Wilmington.



Here is the Mt. Airy station in Phila.



Shown here are SRHC members (l to r.) Frank & Joanne Kollar, Billie Goldstein and Kathy & Det Tauber



Pictured here (l.to r.) are Tom & Helen Zern, Allan Cohen & Charles Henry

## Planning Chester County Trails

Stephen Buck serves on the Chester County Planning Commission as its Trails Planner. He presented an excellent comprehensive overview of the existing and future trails planned for the county. He noted that the goals of the Master Plan include improving existing trails and increasing their connectivity to regional trail networks. The plan also includes increased trail accessibility, resource protection and creating a positive trail user experience.

In order to gain insight, the Planning Commission sponsored a public survey. The results showed the most important things that people wanted. The responses reflected that people wanted to have proximity to a trail. They also wanted trail scenery and a pleasant environment surrounding the trail. Respondents also expressed their wish to be able to park their cars safely and securely at the trail location.

The public was also asked what factors would increase their use of a particular trail. The top three factors in this survey were that they wanted more trails to be installed closer to where they live. Respondents also indicated that they wanted trails to be connected to a place where they were going to visit, and once again, they wanted to securely park their cars.

Mr. Buck noted that Chester County already has an interconnected trail network that supports active recreation along with convenient, safe access to the county's various resources. This provides vibrant, active and connected communities throughout the county with an important resource. Included in his presentation were several regional maps that illustrated how the county's trails were connected to other regional trails, as well as growth areas in the county.



Pictured here are SRHC members Peggy Whitaker, Stephen Buck, in the middle, and Bob Heck.



This is the Safe Harbor Bridge trail in Enola located high above the railroad on the ground level.



This map shows how Chester County trails Connect with other trail networks.



## Happy and Sad Happenings in the Fall

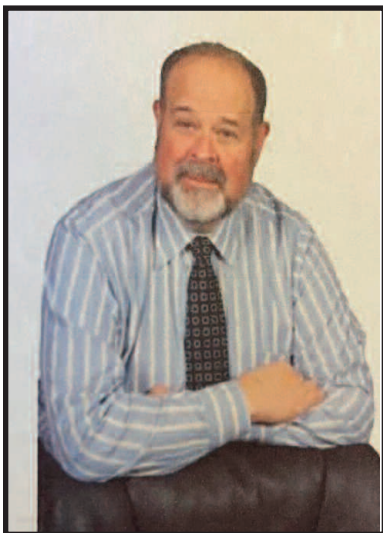
In early November, second grade students had a wonderful time visiting the Schuylkill River Heritage Center and Renaissance Park.



### Community Leader - Charles M. Henry Passed Away

It is very sad to let everyone know that Charles Henry passed away this past fall. He was an extraordinary leader in so many community organizations. He was on our Board at the Schuylkill River Heritage Center for many years as our Treasurer. He was also a very active leader in Phoenixville's Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce and the Phoenixville Community Health Foundation.

As a CPA accountant, he brought his special financial skills to so many community groups. He was also an avid bicycle rider and hiker who enjoyed the outdoors. He was a true friend to all of us. We will think of him and miss him very much.



# UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE HERITAGE CENTER

Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 7:20 PM

**Justin Spivey**, a professional engineer and a leader of the Association for Preservation Technology will present **Crossing the Schuylkill River: Two Centuries of Building Bridges**

Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 7:30 PM

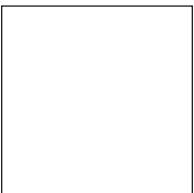
**Holly Komoneczi** the Executive Director of the Lumber Heritage Region in Curwensville, PA will present **The Story of the Lumber Industry in PA**

Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 7:30 PM

**Marilyn Michaelski** a member of the Board of the PA Bluebird Society and also a member of the SRHC will present the **The Current Status of Pennsylvania's Cavity Nesting Birds**

The SRHC continues to welcome many visitors. We hope that you will visit our museum and explore many historic artifacts on display as well as our interactive exhibits. Most especially is the interactive **Path to Freedom Trail** which tells the story of the Underground Railroad in Chester County

**We are open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM**



Schuylkill River Heritage Center  
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Change Service Requested