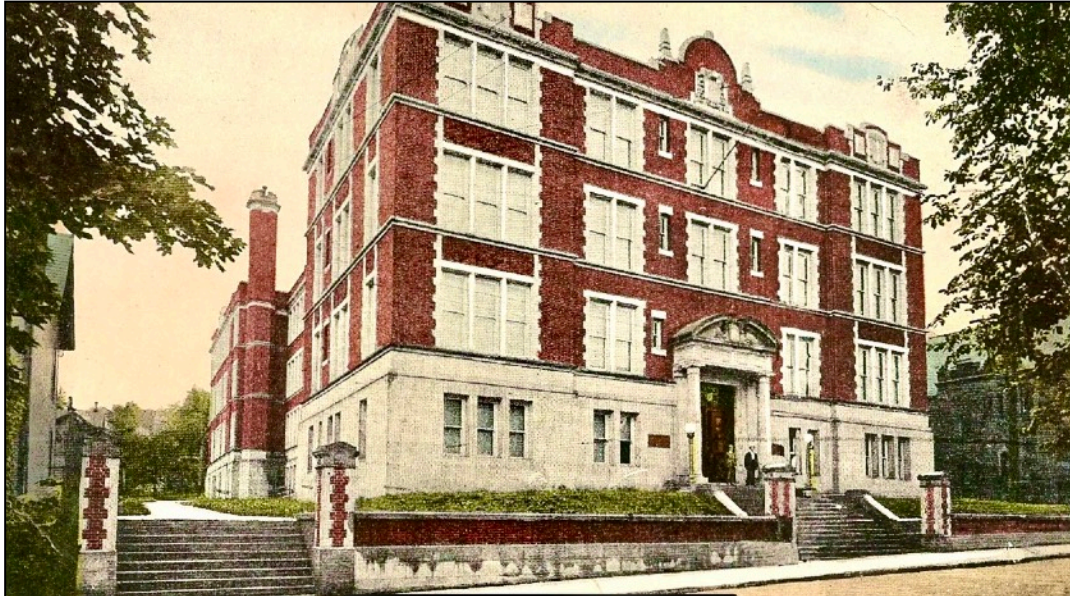




# Archives

OCTOBER  
2023

WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME 29, ISSUE 9



Wilkinsburg High School at 747 Wallace Avenue in Wilkinsburg is depicted in this 1911 postcard image. Prior to 1911 classes were held in the four elementary schools in the borough. The Wilkinsburg School Board of Directors realized that division of classes destroyed the unity of the school. The Board advocated for construction of a high school building large enough to house all classes and to offer each member of each class a thorough college preparatory education. Students canvassed every house in the borough, urging the citizens to vote for the bond issue. Some citizens objected, saying that the proposed building was too large and that it would not be filled in twenty years. Wilkinsburg's population was growing rapidly and so the building construction was approved. The architect was Thomas H. Scott. Construction by the C. H. Kerr Co began in 1910 and the dedication of the spacious school for grades 9-12 was March 31, 1911. By 1928 the building was overcrowded so a massive addition was constructed on North Avenue which contained the 1600 seat auditorium and a large gymnasium above it. The basement of the addition included auto shop, electric shop, wood shop and several store rooms. The original 1911 auditorium became the school library. Several physics, chemistry and biology laboratories were added to the old school. Much later a cafeteria was added to the Wallace Avenue side.

As family size decreased, enrollment dropped to less than 250 students. The high school building housed the 7th through 12th grade students until 2016 when Wilkinsburg students began to attend Westinghouse Academy in Homewood. The WHS building was used for two years as an educational facility for intermediate students while Turner School at 1833 Laketon Road was being renovated. Since 2019 the building has been vacant, proposals have been considered for re-use of the building and community meetings have been held. The Wilkinsburg School District is close to finalizing a sale of the beloved WHS building. The plan is to convert the building to apartments. More details will be published in the Archives as final decisions are made and definite plans are in place.

**Music in Sacred Spaces Tour**, held on September 9, 2023 was a delightful opportunity for the public to enjoy Wilkinsburg’s churches and the history, art, architecture, music, song and dance that was part of the tour. Attendees expected to see beautiful buildings and hear great music and were not disappointed. Some wanted to know more about the dance performances that were part of the days events. The dancers were all part of the Shana Simmons Dance group. During an interview, Shana explains. “Shana Simmons Dance (SSD) is a professional contemporary dance organization which focuses on unique and engaging dance performance experiences, education, and community support. Each church had its own style with both architecture and music. Simmons set a loose movement guide based on the feel of the space and tone of the composition. As SSD performances love to be interactive, Madisyn Montgomery at South Avenue United Methodist worked the crowd, sitting next to them, wrapping fabric around them, and interpreting interaction and movement in the moment. Each piece was unique to the space and style of the church.



At South Avenue United Methodist Church, dancer **Madisyn Montgomery** performed to Deborah Webb's soprano song "Give Me A Clean Heart" at the Music in Sacred Spaces Tour. Jan Stivanson, organist, played the immense 3-story organ.



At St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, corner of Pitt Street and Franklin Avenue, organist Soon Choi played "Amazing Grace" and "Canon in D". **Brittany Nettles** accompanied the music with interpretive dance. Brittany is a member of the Shana Simmons dance organization. These were two of the historic Wilkinsburg churches that participated in the **Center for Civic Arts** Music in Sacred Spaces Tour.



Dream City Magic Gala was a truly enchanting evening for all!



Magician Jon Tai amazed the crowd!



This image shows the Dream Team employees of the WCDC who have made magical progress in Wilkinsburg for the people of Wilkinsburg.

These talented people are:  
(l to r) Gordon Manker, Marlee Gallagher, Tracey Evans (Executive Director), Evaine Sing, Monica Garcia, Moses Workman.

All images are courtesy of Greg Sculli Photography.



(left) Singer, songwriter, producer INEZ performed vibrant R&B songs throughout the evening. (right) The train station had a magical glow as varied performers and attendees ate, drank and were merry.





## Penn Avenue, looking east - same view 1907 and 1962



This 1907 postcard view of Penn Avenue at Wood Street shows buildings that are still recognizable today. The Hunter Building on the far left was the largest and one of the first apartment buildings in Wilkesburg. Across Wood Street is the First National Bank, now PNC Bank. The bank building originally had a corner entrance. Half of the first floor was a hardware store. Next door to that was Puffinbergs Furniture, now Pittsburgh Asian Market. The six-story building further down was Smith Storage, now the Harold Young Parklet.



Penn Avenue on October 6, 1962 when huge crowds gathered for a parade celebrating Wilkesburg's 75th Birthday. Faller Furniture later became Pittsburgh Asian Market. The six story brick storage building (with Coca-Cola advertising) was later razed to create a parklet.



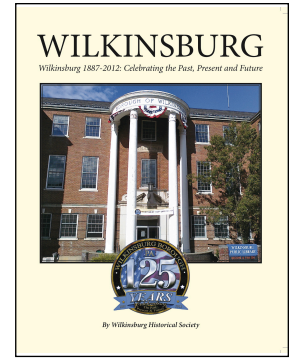
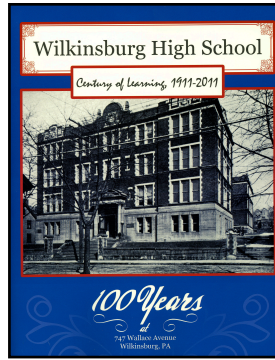
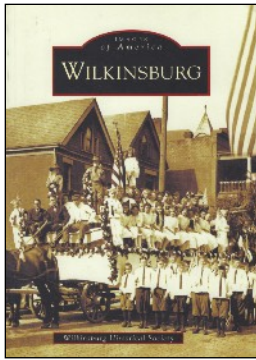
Little Amal, internationally known symbol of acceptance, unity and hope visited Wilkinsburg.



**Little Amal** came to Wilkinsburg’s Whitney Park on Thursday, September 21 to play and interact with children in the Whitney playground. Little Amal actually is a 12 foot tall puppet representing a ten year old Syrian refugee girl. This year she has journeyed over 6,000 miles across the United States to spread her message of unity and hope. In each place she visits a different theme is presented. In Whitney park the theme was **“Imagination is my playground”**. Amal wanted to play with kids in the playground but none of the equipment is her size. She created her own games and was soon surrounded by children who welcomed her. This unique event was provided by Casey Droege Cultural Productions, with Hatch Arts Collective and partnering with the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation. More than 150 people came to Whitney park to support the message that we need to be kind to each other and welcome the friendship, diversity and culture of others.



Over 150 people, many of them children, came to Whitney Park to walk with Little Amal. Whitney Park is on Wilkins Avenue at Verdi Way in Wilkinsburg and covers an area of 1.9 acres. There is a basketball court, large playground, benches, picnic tables and beautiful trees. When Little Amal left Wilkinsburg she and her team went to Cincinnati, Columbus, and Akron Ohio..



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.

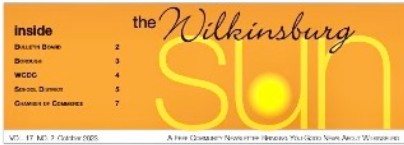
On the far left is ***“Images of America - Wilkinsburg”***, a 128 page soft-bound book printed by the Arcadia Publishing Company. It includes over 220 black and white photos depicting the history of our town from the early land patents in the late 1700s up to the 75th celebration of Wilkinsburg in 1962. 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.

<p>Make check or money order payable to: <b>Wilkinsburg Historical Society</b>          Orders can be mailed to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O.Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235</p>			
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 _____	





**Happy 136th Birthday, Wilkinsburg!**

Historian Anne Elise Morris takes us on a journey back to a past birthday celebration



So far, so good. The 136th birthday celebration was held on October 10, 1910. The celebration was held at the Wilkinsburg High School. The celebration was held at the Wilkinsburg High School. The celebration was held at the Wilkinsburg High School.

**First Phase of Government Study Commission Complete**  
The report of the 1910-1911 Commission on the Government of Wilkinsburg was published in 1911. The report was published in 1911. The report was published in 1911.

**Special Halloween Activities at the Children's Library, page 6**

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 usually 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.

Contributions are needed for "Lights for Lincoln", to get improved lighting for the Lincoln Plaza area. Abraham Lincoln stands in the dark after sun-down. Your donation can help us illuminate this outstanding area overlooking the Lincoln Highway.

**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.