



HISTORY OF MURRAY HILL AVENUE

Early History of Murray Hill, 1788-1890

Murray Hill Avenue takes its name from an early Squirrel Hill estate owned by James B. Murray, a partner in Lyon, Shorb & Company, an iron mill on Pittsburgh's South Side, and was President of the Exchange National Bank in Downtown Pittsburgh. In 1864, Murray purchased the land which would later develop into Murray Hill Avenue from John McFarland, a prominent landowner in the East End.

From 1788 to 1868, Squirrel Hill was known as Peebles Township, until it was annexed by the City of Pittsburgh in 1868. One of the first landowners in Squirrel Hill and Shadyside was Robert McFarland, who owned the estate until his death in 1834. He left equal portions of his estate to his three sons, John, Joseph, and William. In 1839, it was John McFarland who inherited the land on which Murray Hill was developed until he sold it to James B. Murray in 1864.

In July 1889, Lorenzo T. Yoder purchased the entire Murray Hill property from Annie S. Murray, the widow of James B. Murray. In 1890, the land was subdivided into residential lots known as the Ardsheil Terrace Plan of Lots and became one of the first residential streets to be developed in Squirrel

Hill. Plat maps indicate that other parts of Squirrel Hill, such as the Murdoch Farms property and other estates, remained undeveloped.

Residential Development, 1890-1910

According to Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation's *Landmark Architecture: Pittsburgh and Allegheny County* (1985), most homes on Murray Hill developed in the early part of the 1900s. "In general, this northern slope is rich in domestic architecture of the 1890 to 1920 period." Murray Hill's proximity to city amenities, made more convenient by street-car access along Fifth Avenue, combined with its bucolic residential design, earned it the Latin title, "*Rus in urbe*—a bit of country in the city."

Murray Hill Avenue takes its name from an early landowner in Squirrel Hill named James B. Murray



1171 Murray Hill is believed to be the first house built on the street.

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This 1909 view, looking up Fair Oaks Street toward Murray Hill, shows the bucolic, unfinished nature of the East End at the time.

Post World War II Era

In the post-World War II era, when many city residents fled to the suburbs and left older city neighborhoods to decay, homes on Murray Hill retained their old world charm. Many residents reversed this trend and moved to Murray Hill because of its unique character and the street's livability. However, development pressures from the adjacent college would figure prominently in Murray Hill's post-



The W.H. Brown House c. 1910.

war future (see the next section, “What We Have Lost.”)

In the early 1970s, ten homes on the eastern side of Murray Hill were demolished for the construction of the Chatham College library. Later in the decade, the W. H. Brown estate at the bottom of Murray Hill at Fifth Avenue (pictured below, left) was demolished.

As a result of these blows to Murray Hill, residents on the street became more engaged in maintaining the livability of the street—a special sense of stewardship and loyalty that continues today.

In 1992, Murray Hill's unique Belgian block street surface was in danger of being paved over, joining a growing number of cobblestone streets around the city. But Murray Hill's residents worked diligently with City Councilman Dan Cohen to prevent the cobblestones from being paved. In 1993, the blocks were restored by the City of Pittsburgh at a cost of approximately \$225,000.



The same site in 1999.

WHAT WE HAVE LOST

In the early 1960s, Chatham College sought to expand their rapidly growing library collection. The old college library, the James Laughlin Memorial Library, built in 1932, was quickly becoming obsolete. In a memo to Chatham's President Edward Eddy dated October 9, 1962, Chatham's librarian noted, "remedies cannot be found by simply enlarging the James Laughlin Memorial Library."

At this time, Chatham's options were to: 1) expand the existing library, 2) join the library with the Buhl Hall of Science, or 3) select a new location. Architectural drawings were made for the second option, seen below.

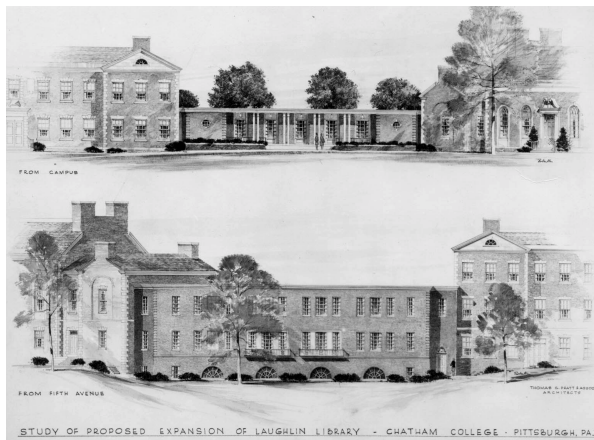
In the early 1960s, planners began to favor a new location on Chatham's campus. One internal memo recommended: "The natural and beautiful amphitheater of the Mellon Garden area with its adjacent reflecting pond might be an appropriate and pleasing site as campus development proceeds."

But for reasons that are not clear, attention began to shift to the quiet, residential street of Murray



The Murray Hill streetscape that would become the new library.

Hill as a possible location for the new library. In a report to Chatham prepared by Johnstone, McMillan & Associates, Architects, a Pittsburgh architecture firm, on June 15, 1965, "the principal consideration [for the library's location] should be a reasonably central location with a single clearly defined receiving-shipping control point served from Murray Hill Avenue rather than thru the present Campus roads." The report continued to claim that, "It is not desirable to use the already limited campus land for centrally unused



Instead of this on-campus library that would demolish nothing. . .



. . . Murray Hill lost ten Victorian houses and got this.

Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

WHAT WE HAVE LOST

paved parking spaces.”

Meanwhile, between 1963 and 1968, Chatham had quietly began acquiring the homes on the eastern side of Murray Hill (a few properties on Murray Hill had already been acquired by Chatham in the 1920s and '30s). On May 1, 1964, Chatham acquired 1155 Murray Hill; on January 4, 1965, Chatham acquired 1045 Murray Hill; and on September 1, 1965, Chatham acquired 1043 Murray Hill. All would be demolished by 1970.

In 1968, Chatham began a capital campaign to construct a new library facility, named for Jennie King Mellon, Richard King Mellon's mother (a Chatham alumnus, class of 1887) on the site of ten homes on Murray Hill Avenue.

Strong opposition to Chatham's plan was raised by residents of Murray Hill. There was little due process, few hearings were held, and the issue went before the Pittsburgh City Council in 1969. Led by long-time Murray Hill resident, John Duff, residents on Murray Hill rallied to oppose Chatham's proposed demolition of homes. Mr. Duff addressed City Council on October 26, 1969, and had this to say:

“[Chatham's plan] means the destruction of the street and we find ourselves trying to find some way to put it across as to why we find ourselves fighting this revered institution. I have to say we are like the members of a well-to-do, upper class family, living in comfortable circumstances without too many problems and all of a sudden our elegant, white-haired, well-groomed old mother is starting to come home every night, stinking drunk. We hate alcoholism, but how can you fight Motherhood? . . . We feel strongly this plan is worst of all possible plans and if the zone is changed, it means the destruction of the street.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Duff and the residents of Murray Hill lost the battle, the homes were demolished, and a new library constructed. For the first time ever, photos of these homes, taken by Chatham Math professor, Bill Beck in 1970, are published here. They illustrate what Murray Hill has lost, and what we could prevent from happening again with historic designation.



This is a bird's-eye view of Chatham College's campus, looking east, about 1959. Murray Hill homes are in the bottom of the photograph.



This bird's-eye view of Chatham's campus, looking west, in 1976 shows the library looming over homes on Murray Hill.

WHAT WE HAVE LOST

These photos show that, until 1970, Murray Hill Avenue was a quiet, genteel neighborhood of large homes along a winding cobblestone road lined with large shade trees. The photos on this page illustrate homes along Murray Hill in the Spring of 1970. Soon, this calm would be shattered.



The view of 1159 Murray Hill, from the street. June 1970.



The rear of 1159 Murray Hill.



1155 Murray Hill. June 1970.



1135 Murray Hill. June 1970.

WHAT WE HAVE LOST



Before: 1139 and 1153 Murray Hill. June 1970.



After: 1139 and 1153 Murray Hill. August 1970.



Before: 1135, 1137, and 1139 Murray Hill. June 1970.



After: The same site after demolition. Fall 1970.



Before: (left to right) 1037, 1039, and 1041 Murray Hill. June 1970.



After: The same site after demolition. September 1970.

WHAT WE HAVE LOST



Before: 1037 Murray Hill. June 1970.



After: 1037 Murray Hill. August 1970.



During: 1041 Murray Hill. August 1970.



During: 1041 Murray Hill (rear). August 1970.

THE NEXT VICTIMS

Catham College has filed demolition permits for these four homes on Murray Hill Place. These photos, taken in April 1999, may be the last images of the houses before they join the others in the rubble pile of history.



5802 Murray Hill Place



5806 Murray Hill Place



5810 Murray Hill Place



5814 Murray Hill Place

Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

INDIVIDUAL HOUSES ON MURRAY HILL

Houses on Murray Hill represent a wide variety of architectural types, materials, and craftsmanship, as well as outstanding history. From late-Victorian to early twentieth-century Queen Anne, Shingle Style, Colonial Revival, and 1950s Ranch styles, Murray Hill Avenue is considered by the Historic Review Commission to be “one of the most architecturally diverse streets in Pittsburgh.” Four of Murray Hill’s homes are represented in *Pittsburgh’s Landmark Architecture* (1997), including 1180, 1175, 1171, and 1205 Murray Hill.



1180 Murray Hill: Willa Cather Home

The significance of the houses is in both their architecture and the famous people who inhabited them. There were no less than five nationally-famous people who lived on Murray Hill:

- U.S. Surgeon General Thomas Parran, 1278 Murray Hill (more detail, page 10),
- The 1923 Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather, 1180 (page 11),



1278 Murray Hill: Home of U.S. Surgeon General Thomas Parran

- Deputy State Attorney General John Duff, Sr., 1177 (page 19), and
- nationally-recognized artists Henry Koerner, 1046 (page 20) and
- Harry Holland, 1140 (page 21).

Several homes on Murray Hill, most in the 1200 block, are distinctive for their architecture, unique styles, and quality craftsmanship.



1246 Murray Hill: One-of-a-kind Ranch style, c. 1955.

1278 MURRAY HILL

SURGEON GENERAL THOMAS PARRAN'S HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1900
- **House type:** Colonial Revival
- **History:** 1278 Murray Hill was home to U.S. Surgeon General Thomas Parran, who served under President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the sixth Surgeon General of the United States from 1936 to 1948. In 1948, Dr. Parran moved to 1278 Murray Hill and resided there until 1953. While on Murray Hill, Dr. Parran served as the first Dean of the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health. Dr. Parran is considered by the U.S. Surgeon General's Office to be "the most influential leader in the Service's history." Parran played a major role in the effort to control venereal disease in the U.S., in shaping the modern Public Health Service, in expanding the activities of the National Institutes of Health, and in the early history of the World Health Organization.



1180 MURRAY HILL WILLA CATHER HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1895
- **House type:** Colonial Revival
- **History:** The house at 1180 Murray Hill was once the home of Judge Samuel A. McClung, but is perhaps best known as the home of highly acclaimed author Willa Cather. Born in 1873 in Back Creek Valley, Virginia, Willa Cather lived in the attic apartment of 1180 Murray Hill from 1896-1906. While living on Murray Hill she authored *April Twilights* (1903) and *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (1905), a collection of short stories. Cather taught at Central and Allegheny High Schools in Pittsburgh. While she later moved to New York, Cather returned to Murray Hill to write most of *O Pioneers!* in 1913 and *Song of the Lark* in 1915 at the McClung house. Cather won the Pulitzer Prize in 1923 for *One of Ours*, a novel about a soldier in World War I. Cather died at her home in New York in 1947.



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1203 MURRAY HILL “C.K. BINNS GARAGE”

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** 1915 by Keihnel and Elliott Architects
- **House type:** Tudor Revival
- **History:** As noted in *Pittsburgh's Landmark Architecture*, “C.K. Binns Garage” was the carriage house to the Edward Hussey Binns and Celelia Kerrigan Binns estate, which stood at the corner of Woodland Road and Murray Hill Avenue. Two modern houses were erected on the site of the former estate in the 1950s. The carriage house at 1203 Murray Hill is all that remains of the massive house. Kiehnel & Elliott designed several important historic buildings in Pittsburgh, including the Oakland Turnverein Building at O'Hara and Thackeray Streets in Oakland; the Stengel House at 4136 Bigelow Boulevard in the Schenley Farms Historic District; and Engine Company Number Thirty-Eight at Lemington Avenue and Missouri Street in Lincoln-Lemington.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1201 MURRAY HILL WOLMARK HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1910
- **House type:** Prairie/Colonial Revival
- **History:** This house is an excellent example of a large prairie-style/Colonial Revival home that is rare for Pittsburgh. With a large, tree-shrouded yard, 1201 Murray Hill is one of the most prominent houses on Murray Hill. It is currently the home of Dr. Norman and Karen Wolmark.



Photo by Joshua D. Franzos

Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1246 MURRAY HILL FREDERICK-MYERS HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1955
- **House type:** Modified Ranch
- **History:** This house is an excellent example of a large Ranch-style home, featuring a cathedral ceiling and large front windows. Sited on Murray Hill Avenue as it slopes toward Wilkins Avenue, this home is easily recognized by the tall fir tree in the front yard. Far from being a "tract home" that was built in mass quantities in suburban communities during this era, this house, along with the Rea House at 1225 Murray Hill, is an excellent example of modern architecture that adds diversity to Murray Hill Avenue. It is currently the home of William C. Frederick and Mildred Myers.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1225 MURRAY HILL REA HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1955
- **House type:** Modified Ranch/Prairie
- **History:** This house is an excellent example of a large Ranch-style home, with some late-era Prairie-style elements. This home sits at a prominent corner of Murray Hill and West Woodland Road. As with the Frederick-Myers House, this house is an outstanding example of modern architecture that adds diversity to Murray Hill Avenue. It is currently the home of Margaret Rea, who has lived on Murray Hill Avenue for more than 45 years.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1208 MURRAY HILL LINZER HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1895
- **House type:** Queen Anne/Colonial Revival
- **History:** This house is perhaps one of the finest examples of the Queen Anne/Colonial Revival-style on Murray Hill. Exquisitely preserved, the home is sited on a terraced lawn on the plateau of Murray Hill, facing east. Morning sunlight illuminates the restored brick and wood features of the home. It is currently the home of Don and Elane Linzer.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1200 MURRAY HILL IMBRIGLIA HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1895
- **House type:** Colonial Revival
- **History:** This large Colonial Revival home is an exact mirror image of the Willa Cather house at 1180 Murray Hill (see inset), separated by Fair Oaks Street. Built in the same year, it likely had the same developer and architect. The rear of this house can be seen in the 1909 photo featured on page 2. Sally Imbriglia currently resides here.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1269 MURRAY HILL JANETTA HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1910
- **House type:** Tudor Revival
- **History:** Murray Hill features seven Tudor Revival homes, and 1269 is the largest. Featured prominently on a steeply terraced hillside, it commands a royal presence on the street as it slopes down toward Wilkins Avenue. Once the home of renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Peter Janetta, MD, Lou and Amy Weiss currently reside here.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1174 MURRAY HILL DUFF HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1910
- **House type:** Tudor Revival
- **History:** This large Tudor Revival-style house at the top of Murray Hill was the home of John Duff, Sr. (1915-1991), who served as the Assistant Attorney General for the State Of Pennsylvania from 1971 to 1979. It is to Mr. Duff that this nomination is dedicated for his efforts 30 years ago, in 1969, to save ten homes on Murray Hill from demolition. The homes are gone now, replaced by a utilitarian library, but Mr. Duff's spirit lives on. Mr. Duff's wife, Ann Roberts Duff currently lives here. The house is owned by Mr. Duff's son, Daniel.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1140 MURRAY HILL HARRY HOLLAND HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1902
- **House type:** Queen Anne
- **History:** Five identical speculator homes were built on Murray Hill, each with a front porch and eyebrow dormer. This house, along with 1046 Murray Hill, were the homes of nationally prominent artists who shaped the art world. Harry Holland lived at 1140 Murray Hill from 1973 until 1994, when he died of cancer. Born in Childress, Texas, in 1937, Holland not only was one of Pittsburgh's premiere artists for thirty years—he was named Artist of the Year by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in 1991—but he became an early pioneer of computer art long before it rose to prominence as a commonly-accepted medium among artists. He has had 23 solo exhibitions since 1961 and 146 group exhibitions since 1959. Holland's wife, Dena, still resides here.



“Murray Hill Avenue would be a fine street even without Cather’s presence. Its charm is considerably enhanced by the irregularities that have developed over the years in its Belgian-block roadbed, and it boasts a lovely sequence of speculator-built Queen Anne houses with eyebrow dormers in the manner of H.H. Richardson”

—Franklin Toker, author of
Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait

Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1046 MURRAY HILL HENRY KOERNER HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1902
- **House type:** Queen Anne
- **History:** Henry Koerner came to Pittsburgh in 1952 as an artist-in-residence for the Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham College) and lived at 1046 Murray Hill. A native of Austria, Koerner quickly made his home in Pittsburgh: "Pittsburgh, city of my dreams," he said. Koerner loved to work outdoors and he would often be seen drawing and painting *in situ*—on the sidewalks, parks, and bridges of Pittsburgh. Between 1955 and 1967, Koerner produced 41 published covers for *Time*, including a 1957 cover of Senator John F. Kennedy, his most famous cover. Koerner used many Pittsburgh scenes as his backdrop, including numerous studies of his home on Murray Hill. Koerner was awarded Artist of the Year by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in 1965. Koerner died on July 4, 1991.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1168 MURRAY HILL LEVINE HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1890
- **House type:** Queen Anne
- **History:** As one of the first and largest homes on Murray Hill Avenue, this house, sited on a steeply terraced yard at the top of Murray Hill, commands a sweeping view of Pittsburgh's East End neighborhoods. This house's companion is across the street, at 1171 (the Miller house). Both are rare examples of unique architecture of the 1890s. Clifford and Amy Levine currently reside here.



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

1171 MURRAY HILL MILLER HOUSE

Vital Statistics

- **Date of construction:** c. 1890
- **House type:** Queen Anne/Shingle Style
- **History:** Walter Kidney of Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation believes this to be the first house to be built on Murray Hill Avenue, around 1890, when the street was first laid out. Sited on a prominent location high on Murray Hill, overlooking the East End, it may have inspired another developer jealous enough to construct a similarly-styled house across the street, at 1168 Murray Hill. In this case, jealousy yielded two of the most notable houses on the street. This is now the home of George and Dale Miller.

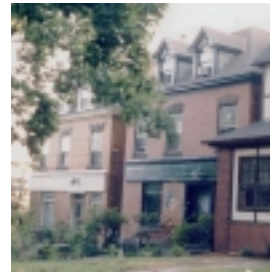


Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

MURRAY HILL STREETSCAPES

Nearly every house on Murray Hill Avenue fits into a pattern. Although there are a number of diverse historic house types, Murray Hill is best known for its streetscapes—a collection of houses which, together, form a distinct theme. Murray Hill Avenue features at least five outstanding streetscapes, but the most common theme that ties all the homes on Murray Hill together is the Colonial Revival pattern, featured on the facing page.

Streetscape 1: Colonial Revival, shows the Colonial Revival theme which unifies Murray Hill. These include 1278, 1228, and 1236 Murray Hill. The pattern repeats in the 1100 block, with 1163 and 1165 Murray Hill. The three homes at 1030, 1028, and 1026 are also similar in style.



Streetscape 2: Queen Anne (left), features house numbers 1162, 1160, 1158, and 1156 Murray Hill. 1162 and 1160 are mirror images of each other, as are 1158 and 1156 Murray Hill. Together, these houses comprise a stunning vista of Queen Anne Victorians standing proudly together along Murray Hill Avenue.

Streetscape 3: Second Empire, is a remarkable Murray Hill streetscape defined by the closely situated Second Empire-style homes at 1035, 1033, 1031, 1029, 1027, and 1025 Murray Hill, at the northern end of the street, near Fifth Avenue. This neat array of six virtually identical houses, each with large porches, is featured in Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation’s *Pittsburgh’s Landmark Architecture* (1997) and on the back page of this document.



Streetscape 4: Queen Anne with Eyelid Dormers, include house numbers 1140, 1136, 1132, 1046, and 1040 Murray Hill, are identical large brick Queen Anne style homes with eyelid dormers and large porches. These are the only ones of their kind in the City of Pittsburgh.

Streetscape 5: Tudor Revival (right), features homes at 1010, 1012, 1014, and 1016 built in nearly identical Tudor Revival styles.



STREETScape 1: COLONIAL REVIVAL



The 1200 Block (above):
1278, 1228, and 1236 Murray Hill



The 1000 Block:
1030, 1028, and 1026 Murray Hill

The 1100 Block (right): 1163 and 1165 Murray Hill



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STREETScape 2: QUEEN ANNE

Left to right: 1162, 1160, 1158, and 1156 Murray Hill



Photo by Josh Franzos

Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

STREETSCAPE 3: SECOND EMPIRE



Page 72 of *Pittsburgh. . . Views into the 21st Century*, photographs by Joel B. Levinson, Susan Nega, and others (published by J.B. Jeffers, Ltd., 1996) features two Murray Hill streetscapes.



Photo by Josh Franzos

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STREETScape 4: QUEEN ANNE WITH EYELID DORMERS

Built as the Mary Eva Stewart sub-plan of 1902, these five homes are the only ones of their kind built in the City of Pittsburgh. Clockwise from left: 1140, 1136, 1132, 1046, and 1040 Murray Hill (center)



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STREETScape 5: TUDOR REVIVAL



Left to right: 1016,
1014 Murray Hill

Left to right: 1012,
1010 Murray Hill



Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000

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Homes acquired and demolished by Chatham College:

1037 Murray Hill
1039 Murray Hill
1041 Murray Hill
1043 Murray Hill
1045 Murray Hill
1047 Murray Hill



1049 Murray Hill
1135 Murray Hill
1137 Murray Hill
1153 Murray Hill
1155 Murray Hill
1159 Murray Hill

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This image was painted by Henry Koerner from his porch at 1046 Murray Hill in the 1950s. It currently hangs in the PNC Bank branch in Squirrel Hill. The homes across the street have since been demolished.

Murray Hill Avenue Historic District, 2000