



# The Squirrel Hill Historical Society

**The Squirrel Hill Historical Society is a membership organization established in 2000. It is committed to gathering and preserving the history and memories of our neighborhood.**

*The Squirrel Hill Historical Society, Inc. has been determined to be exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). All contributions to the SHHS, including dues, are deductible from federal taxes under Section 170 of the IRS Code.*

## **SHHS Programs and Projects**

From its inception, the SHHS has presented a monthly lecture series on topics of interest focused on Squirrel Hill's development and institutions and other historical topics. Programs are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. except August at the Church of the Redeemer, 5700 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15217. Programs are free and open to the public. A Zoom option is also available. See the SHHS website for details.

**Check the SHHS website, [squirrelhillhistory.org](http://squirrelhillhistory.org) for updates before attending the programs.**

## **For More Information About the SHHS...**

Go to the SHHS website, [squirrelhillhistory.org](http://squirrelhillhistory.org), to find information about programs and projects, upcoming speakers and events, videos of past SHHS programs, links to other historical organizations, and other information about Squirrel Hill and the Squirrel Hill Historical Society. You can also email us at [sqhillhist@shhsoc.org](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org).



# What Makes Squirrel Hill Squirrel Hill?



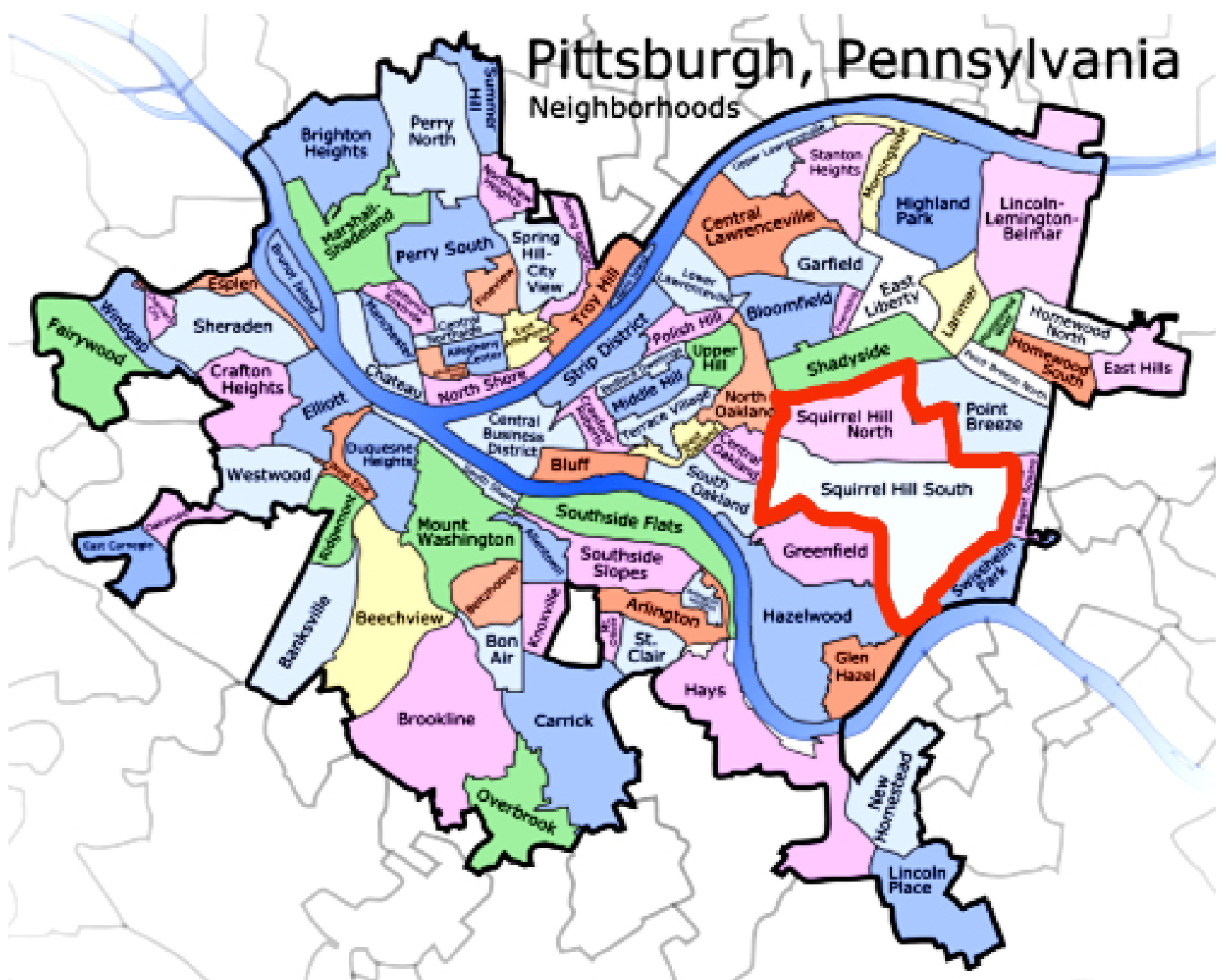
## Happy Tenth Anniversary!

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society has been presenting these displays since 2014, ten years ago. For this tenth anniversary, we're updating one of our earliest displays to bring you facts and figures about Squirrel Hill that make it unique among Pittsburgh's 90 neighborhoods.

If you'd like to see more past displays, they are online on the SHHS's website, [squirrelhillhistory.org](http://squirrelhillhistory.org). And if you have questions, feel free to email us at [\*\*\*sqhillhist@shhsoc.org\*\*\*](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org).

# Where Is Squirrel Hill Located?

Squirrel Hill is on the eastern side of Pittsburgh. As you can see from the map, Squirrel Hill is Pittsburgh's largest neighborhood.



# What Are the Boundaries of Squirrel Hill?

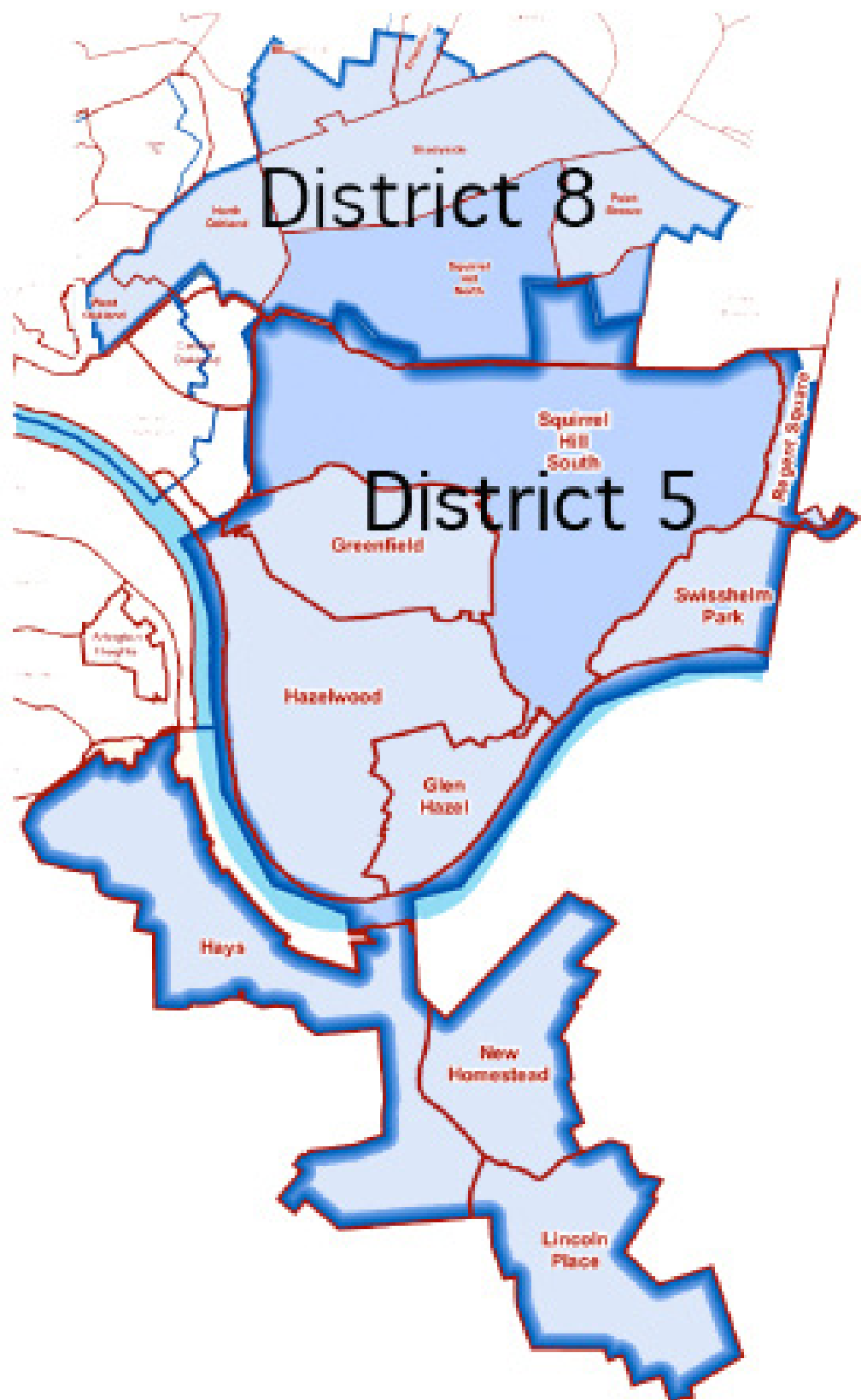
This map shows Squirrel Hill's boundaries according to the City of Pittsburgh.



# When and Why Was Squirrel Hill Divided into North and South?

The split happened in a process undertaken by Mayor Pete Flaherty and City Council in the 1970s and 1980s.

The result was that most of Squirrel Hill North is in City Council District 8 under the jurisdiction of Erika Strassburger, while Squirrel Hill South is in District 5 under Barbara Warwick.





# How Big Is Squirrel Hill?

Squirrel Hill North's area is 1.22 sq. mi.

Squirrel Hill South's area is 2.67 sq. mi.

That adds up to a total of 3.89 sq. mi.

# How Many People Live in Squirrel Hill?

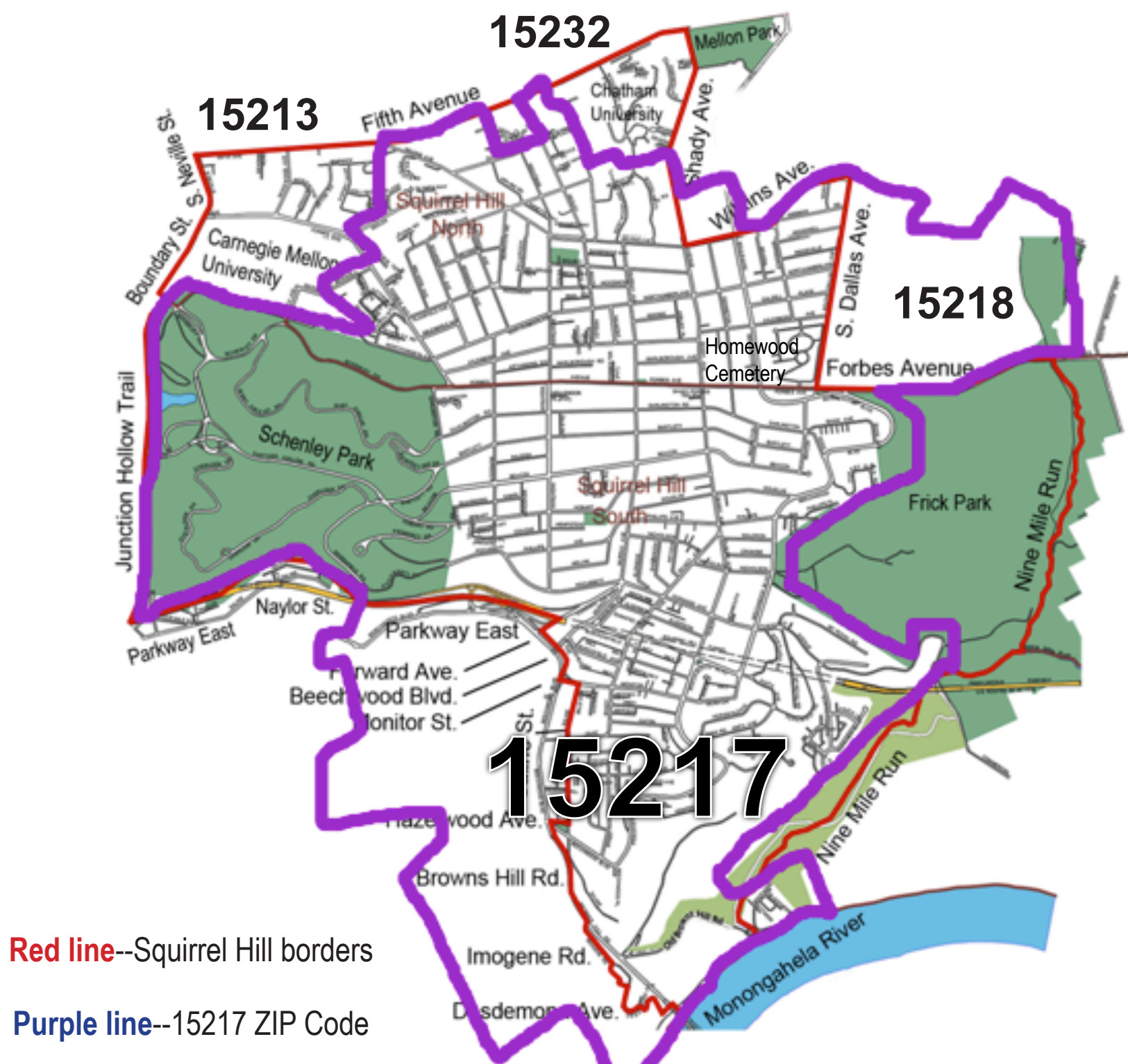
This chart shows the population of Squirrel Hill according to the 2010 Census. (The 2020 figures haven't been released yet.)

**2010 Census Figures**

	<b>Squirrel Hill Total</b>	<b>Squirrel Hill North</b>	<b>Squirrel Hill South</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>26,473</b>	<b>11,363</b>	<b>15,110</b>
White	20,919 (79%)	8,524 (75%)	12,395 (82%)
Asian	3,658 (14%)	1,935 (17%)	1,723 (11%)
African-American	855 (3%)	368 (3%)	487 (3%)
Other/Mixed	1,041 (4%)	536 (5%)	505 (3%)
Hispanic/Latino	957 (3.5%)	469 (4%)	488 (3%)

# Does ZIP Code 15217 Mean You Live in Squirrel Hill?

Yes and no. Most of the people living in Squirrel Hill have ZIP Code 15217, but so do people living in adjacent neighborhoods. Also, some people living in Squirrel Hill have ZIP Codes 15213 and 15232.





# What Is the Oldest Building in Squirrel Hill?

The oldest building in Squirrel Hill is the Robert Neill Log House in Schenley Park. Recent dendrochronological testing (tree ring dating) dated the house to 1795.



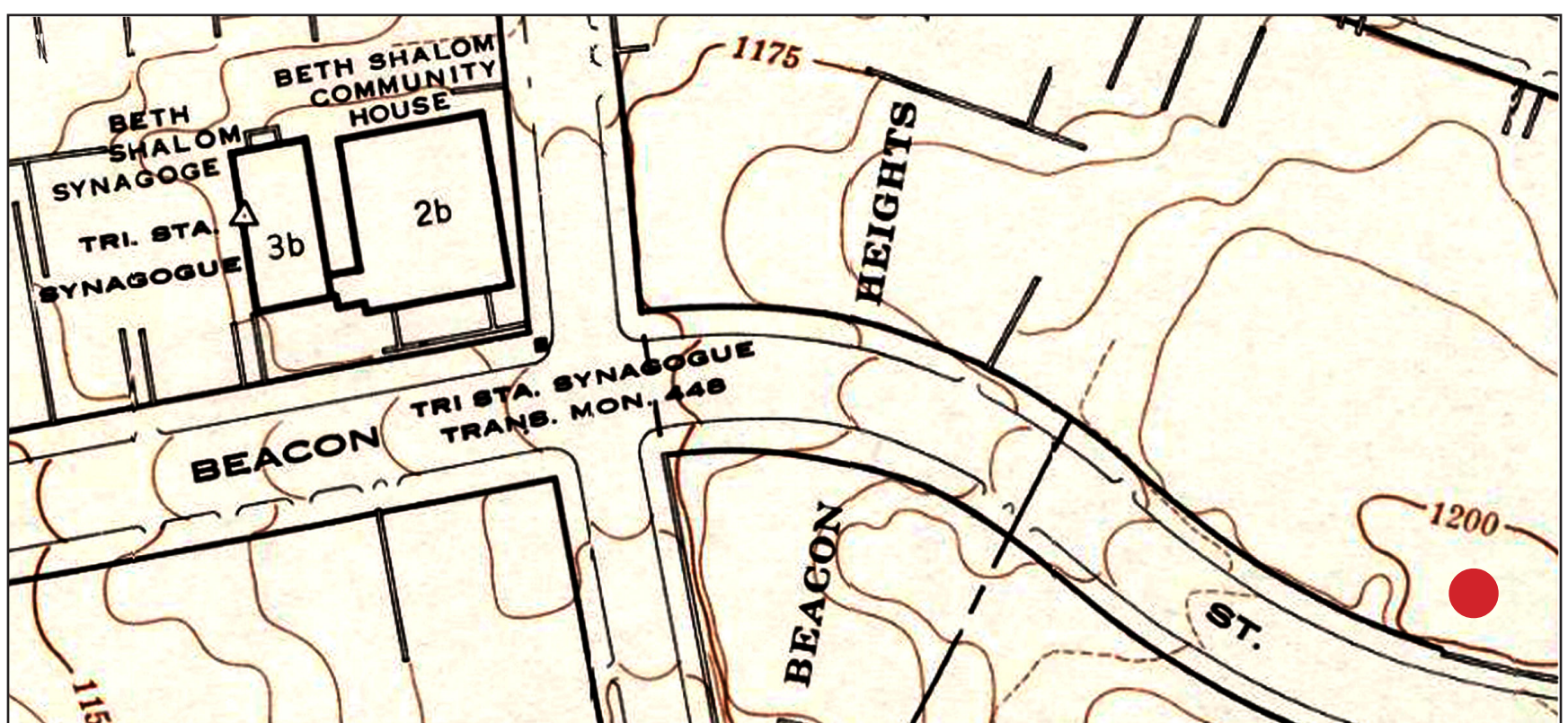
In 2023, the house underwent restoration, initiated by the SHHS and the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition (SHUC). Landscaping will be done in the spring. Plans call for the log house to be open for visitors this summer.

The SHHS website, [sqhillhist@shhsoc.org](mailto:sqhillhist@shhsoc.org), has updates on the progress of the restoration. Watch for the announcement about the grand reopening of the Neill Log House this summer.



# What Is the Highest Point in Squirrel Hill?

The highest point in Squirrel Hill is on Beacon Street a bit above the intersection of Beacon and Shady, up from Congregation Beth Shalom. It is 1,200 feet above sea level.





# What Is the Lowest Point in Squirrel Hill?

The lowest point in Squirrel Hill is at the mouth of Nine Mile Run where it flows into the Monongahela River at Duck Hollow. Elevation there is around 700 feet above sea level.

The illustration below shows the layers of Squirrel Hill looking north from The Waterfront in Homestead.

**Layer Cake of Squirrel Hill's Topography**





# What Is the Newest Building in Squirrel Hill?

That's difficult to say, because new buildings continue to be built in Squirrel Hill. One of the newest is Flats on Forward at the corner of Murray and Forward Avenues. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the 43-unit mixed use ACTION-Housing affordable housing project was held on January 18, 2024.

Flats on Forward sits beside Krause Commons, the ACTION-Housing/Jewish Residential Services building that opened in 2018.





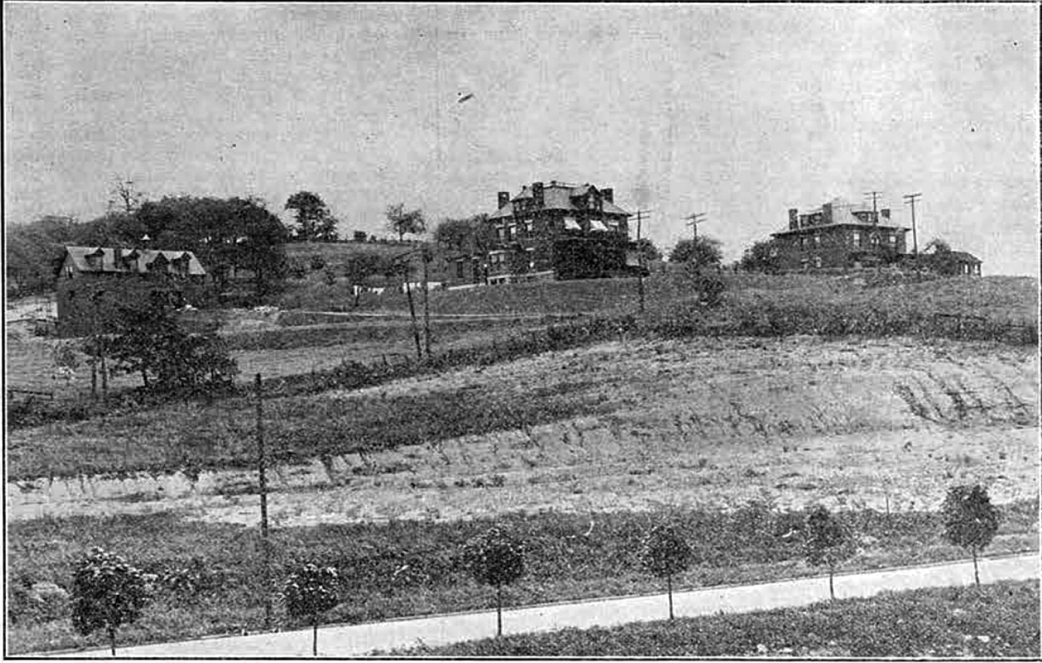
# When Did Squirrel Hill Become Pittsburgh's Jewish Neighborhood?

Jews moved to Squirrel Hill in successive waves, beginning in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Several factors happening at that time caused the northern part of the neighborhood to develop rapidly.

First was the coming of electric trolleys to Squirrel Hill in 1893. The area was sparsely populated until the trolleys opened up the district to residential development. Americanized German Jews from Downtown and Allegheny City took advantage of the trolleys to move to “suburban” Squirrel Hill while running businesses and factories in more heavily populated areas, such as Downtown, East Liberty and Homestead. Residential lots were advertised in the *Jewish Criterion* and sold quickly.

## MURRAY AVENUE LOTS

**ARE A GOOD INVESTMENT**  
BECAUSE—They are on the two principal thoroughfares in the city—  
**BEECHWOOD BOULEVARD AND MURRAY AVENUE**  
They are centrally located—surrounded by high-class improvements, in the very heart of the Squirrel Hill District.  
**The prices are Lower than any other similar lots**  
One of the finest school houses in the city is building within 200 feet of the plan.  
**The Terms are so easy—bringing a high-class lot within the reach of every person.**  
Street car lines through the property to every portion of the city—  
Directly on main line between the city and Homestead.



Illustrating the character of the property adjoining Murray Avenue Plan; showing Boulevard through Plan.

**To get to the Murray Ave. Plan:** { FROM THE CITY OR OAKLAND—Take any car marked “Homestead,” going out Forbes street.  
FROM LAWRENCEVILLE, BLOOMFIELD OR EAST LIBERTY—Take Munhall, Penn and Shady Cars.  
All these cars go directly through the Plan. Tell the Conductor to let you off at Murray Ave. Plan.

**D. BEHEN & SON, Agents**  
Both Phones 4063 Penn Avenue

This ad in the *Jewish Criterion*, 1905, says, “Street car lines through the property to every portion of the City—Directly on main line between the city and Homestead.”



# When Did Squirrel Hill's Business District Develop?

By the early 1900s, Forbes and Murray Avenues had become a trolley crossroads, leading to the development of the business district. Jews established businesses along the corridor to cater to their clientele living in Squirrel Hill.

The pace of development accelerated when automobiles came along. Cars could go wherever roads were laid, so previously undeveloped parts of Squirrel Hill beyond easy walking distance to trolley lines were opened to rapid residential development. Pittsburgh's population was burgeoning, and new housing was desperately needed.

The Boulevard of the Allies opened in 1922. It made traveling to Squirrel Hill from the Hill District and Downtown easy. Eastern European Jews, many from Lithuania, moved from the Hill District to new houses in the central and southern parts of Squirrel Hill. Squirrel Hill offered upwardly mobile Jews new housing and proximity to Jewish stores and places of worship.

In addition, developers like Thomas Watkins and Herman Kamin built gracious hotels and urban villages that offered people residential options other than single family homes. These multi-unit developments contributed greatly to Squirrel Hill's population density, which made the business district thrive.



Morrowfield Apartment Hotel, built in 1922 by Thomas Watkins.



# How Many Bridges Does Squirrel Hill Have?

The answer is, it's hard to count them all. It has at least 16 significant bridges. Squirrel Hill sits on a high hill surrounded by deep valleys. A lot of the bridges connect it to other neighborhoods across those valleys.

The map below shows the location of Squirrel Hill's most important bridges. They span city streets, an Interstate highway, and creeks and trails in Frick and Schenley Parks. There is even a railroad bridge.

Many of the bridges have interesting histories. A future display will highlight some of that history.

## The Bridges of Squirrel Hill





# How Many Roads Does Squirrel Hill Have?

From long boulevards to tiny cul-de-sacs, Squirrel Hill has over 200 roadways of all sizes and histories. Some, like Saline Street, began as ancient Native American trails. Others are put in place as areas develop. The streets of The Summerset Development at Frick Park are new, put in place as the slag dump was developed.

Below is a list of the roads of Squirrel Hill. The variety is endless, from avenues, streets, roads, lanes, terraces, courts, places, ways boulevards, and bridges. They are asphalt, brick, and Loyalhanna limestone block. There are even some “paper” streets that don’t exist anymore or were never put in place.

Squirrel Hill even boasts an Interstate highway—the Parkway East I-376—and the seventh longest tunnel in Pennsylvania—the Squirrel Hill Tunnel.

Each of those roads has a history, often related to its name. The SHHS is researching where the name of each street came from. It’s an interesting project!

## List of Squirrel Hill Street Names

Over 200 Avenues, Streets, Roads, Lanes, Terraces, Courts, Places, Ways, Boulevards, Bridges, and Interstate Highway

Albemarle St.	Burketon Ln.	Fairstead Ln.	Imogene Rd.	McFarren St.	Parkview Blvd.	Solway St.
Alderson St.	Carriage Rd.	Federal Hill Ave.	Imperial Dr.	McFarren St. Bridge	Penn-Lincoln Parkway	Squirrel Hill Ave.
Anita Ave.	Caton Pl.	Fernwald Rd.	Imperial St.	McLean Pl.	I-376	Steelview Ave.
Annette Way.	Caton St.	Ferree St.	Inez Way	Mellon Park Rd.	Penton Rd.	Summerset Dr.
Arco Way	Charles Anderson Bridge	Forbes Ave.	Inverness St.	Melvin St.	Phillips Ave.	Sunapee Way
Asbury Pl.	Circuit Dr. (East)	Forbes Ter.	Ira Way	Monitor St.	Phillips Pl.	Tech St.
Aylesboro Ave.	Circuit Dr. (West)	Forest Glen Rd.	Irma Way	Monmouth St.	Pittock St.	Techview Ter.
Aylesboro Ln.	Colma Way	Forward Ave.	Isle Way	Morewood Ave.	Plainfield St.	Tilbury St.
Barnsdale St.	Commercial St.	Frank Curto Dr.	JHF Dr.	Morrowfield Ave.	Pocusset St.	Timberline Ct.
Bartlett St.	Cosentino Dr.	Frew St.	Kamin St.	Mt. Royal Rd.	Prospect Dr.	Unger Ln.
Beacon St.	Covode St.	Frew St. Ext.	Keith Way	Mulhalton St.	Quinn Dr.	Valmont St.
Beardsley Ln.	Crescent Pl.	Frick Ln.	Kemper St.	Munhall Rd.	Raleigh St.	Ventner Way
Beaumont Ln.	Crombie St.	Garetta St.	Kinsman Rd.	Murdoch Rd.	Ridgeville St.	Victory Way
Beck Way	Crystal Way	Gatewood Dr.	Kipling Rd.	Murdoch St.	Robin Rd.	Waldron St.
Beechwood Blvd.	Dallas Ave. (South)	Gilda Ave.	Kittanning Way	Murray Ave.	Robin Way	Warwick Ter.
Beechwood Blvd. Br. (Greenfield Bridge)	Dalzell Pl.	Gladstone Rd.	Landview Rd.	Murray Avenue Bridge	Roselawn Ter.	Weak Way
Beechwood Pl.	Darlington Ct.	Greenfield Rd.	Leath Way	Murray Hill Ave.	Rosemont Ln.	Wendover Pl.
Beechwood Ter.	Darlington Rd.	Guarino Rd.	Lilac St.	Negley Ave. (South)	Rosemoor St.	Wendover St.
Beeler St.	Denniston Ave.	Guy St.	Lomar Way	Neville St. (South)	Saline St.	Westland Dr.
Beelemont Pl.	Desdemona Ave.	Hammerschlag Dr.	Ludwick St.	Nicholson St.	Sandels Way	Wightman St.
Bellerock Pl.	Devereaux Ln.	Hasley Ln.	Luster St.	Normlee Pl.	Schenley Dr.	Wilkins Ave.
Bellerock St.	Devon Rd.	Hazelwood Ave.	Lynne Haven Rd.	Northumberland St.	Schenley Rd.	Wilkins Heights Rd.
Bennington Ave.	Devonshire Rd.	Hempstead Rd.	Maeburn Rd.	Old Browns Hill Rd.	Scott Ln.	Woodland Rd.
Bills Way	Dorset Rd.	Highmont Rd.	Malvern Ave.	Olla Way	Serpentine Dr.	Woodmont St.
Biltmore Ln.	Douglas St.	Hobart St.	Maple Heights Ct.	Olympia Pl.	Severn St.	Woodwell St.
Birchwood Ave.	Dunmoyle Pl.	Hollendon Pl.	Maple Heights Rd.	Overlook Dr.	Shady Ave.	Worth St.
Boundary St.	Dunmoyle St.	Holyrood Rd.	Margaret Morrison St.	Overton Ln.	Shady Court Dr.	Yeshiva Way
Braeburn Pl.	Ebdy St.	Homestead Grays Bridge	Maria Way	Panther Hollow Bridge	Shady Forbes Ter.	
Browns Hill Rd.	Eldridge St.	Hydin Rd.	Marlborough Ave.	Panther Hollow Rd.	Shaw Ave.	
Burchfield Ave.	English Ln.	Ibsen Way	Marlborough Rd.	Parish Ln.	Shelburne Ln.	
	Fair Oaks St.	Ikon Way	Maynard St.	Parkton Pl.	Sherbrook St.	

# Why Were There So Many Gas Stations in Squirrel Hill?

People living in Squirrel Hill for a while might remember when many corners of Forbes, Murray, and Wilkins Avenues held gas stations, maintenance garages, even car dealerships.

That's because Squirrel Hill's affluence gave it the highest percentage of automobile ownership in Pittsburgh by the 1920s. By the mid 1900s, Squirrel Hill had at least eleven car dealerships, including Horvitz Motor Sales, McKean Olds, Samson Buick, Constantin Pontiac, and Kamin Chevrolet. Other dealers sold Fords, Oldsmobiles, Chrysler/Plymouths, Nashes, Dodges and Mercurys. All those cars needed to be maintained. Back when people didn't pump their own gas, service stations were located on nearly every corner of the Squirrel Hill business district.

**SQUIRREL HILL NEWS**  
SPECIAL GULF AND McKINLEY-GREGG SUPPLEMENT

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VOL. III; NO. 30. PITTSBURGH, PA., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1935 TWO CENTS

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## WORLD'S FIRST 'EXPRESS STOP' STATION IS OPENED BY GULF



**East End Motorists Benefit** | LOCATED AT FORBES & MURRAY, THIS "EXPRESS STOP" STATION CATERS TO EVERY MOTORIST'S NEEDS. NOTE THE NIGHT BEAUTY OF THE GULF-FORD OPERATION.

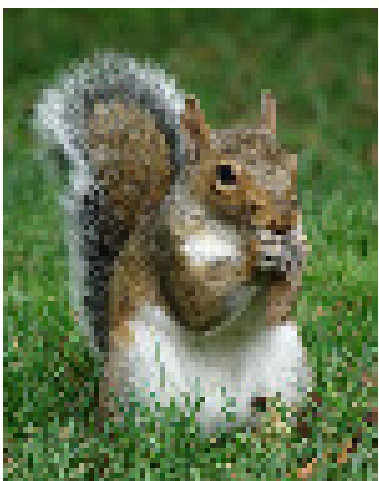


# Where Did Squirrel Hill Get Its Name?

First, Squirrel Hill is a hill, surrounded by valleys on all sides. Second, a lot of squirrels live on the hill. The name “Squirrel Hill” is very old, mentioned in the earliest documents about the area. It is believed that

Native Americans gave it that name. They came here to hunt before settlers arrived from Europe in the 1760s.

Several kinds of squirrels live in Squirrel Hill.



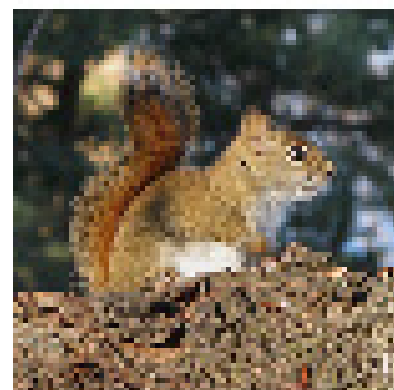
Eastern gray squirrel



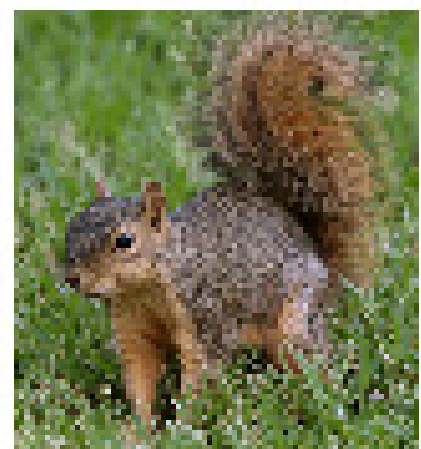
Eastern gray squirrel  
(black variation)



Murray the Squirrel  
(Squirrel Hill's mascot)



American  
red squirrel



Fox squirrel