

1



### Library 8711 Germantown Ave.

The Christian Hall Library, donated to the community in 1871, was the first library on this site. In 1896, it merged with Philadelphia's Free Library. The current building dates to 1909 and was donated by industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

2

### Crossroads Germantown Ave. & Bethlehem Pike

Please see other side of map.

3



### Merchants: 8500 & 8600 Blocks (corner of Germantown & Evergreen)

Chestnut Hillers have shopped these blocks for generations. Buckinham's Grocery and John Gillies' Oyster, Game and Fish Market were here. Shoppers would often pull up in their carriages, and later in their automobiles, and give the proprietors their grocery lists for later home delivery. Miss Elizabeth Huston, an Irish immigrant who had worked as a maid, bought a store at 8616 Germantown which sold fabric, yarn, notions, clothing, and toys. She ran Miss Huston's from 1916 to 1960.

4



### Cress's Hotel 8501 Germantown Ave.

Now home to Robertson's Florist, this building was originally built as a stage route hotel by Henry Cress around 1790. This is among many inns that served as refuge for many Philadelphians when the city was hit by a yellow fever epidemic in 1793. Note: The attached greenhouse was built in the 1930s.

6



### VFW Building 8217 Germantown Ave.

This building was originally home to the Hiram Lodge, and later to several other fraternal organizations, and currently Chestnut Hill's VFW Post. Concern over removal of the third floor of the building led to a fund-raising campaign to renovate the building. The community group spearheading this project founded the Chestnut Hill Historical Society in 1967.

7



### Detwiler House 8220 Germantown Ave.

Much of Chestnut Hill's history has passed by this 1744 farmhouse, Chestnut Hill's oldest building. In 1777, British and American soldiers from the Battle of Germantown marched past. Later, the Liberty Bell may have travelled by on its way to safe storage in Allentown when the British occupied the city.

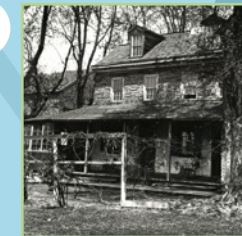
8



### The Stagecrafters Theater 8130 Germantown Ave.

An 18th-century house and blacksmith shop became the workshop for local theater group Stagecrafters in 1932. In 1936, the two buildings were joined to provide space for a theater.

9



### Abraham Rex's Great Store 8031-33 Germantown Ave.

When it was built around 1762, Rex's Great Store was the most prosperous of several "great stores" in Chestnut Hill. These stores linked farmers to urban markets.

10



### Venetian Social Club 8030 Germantown Avenue

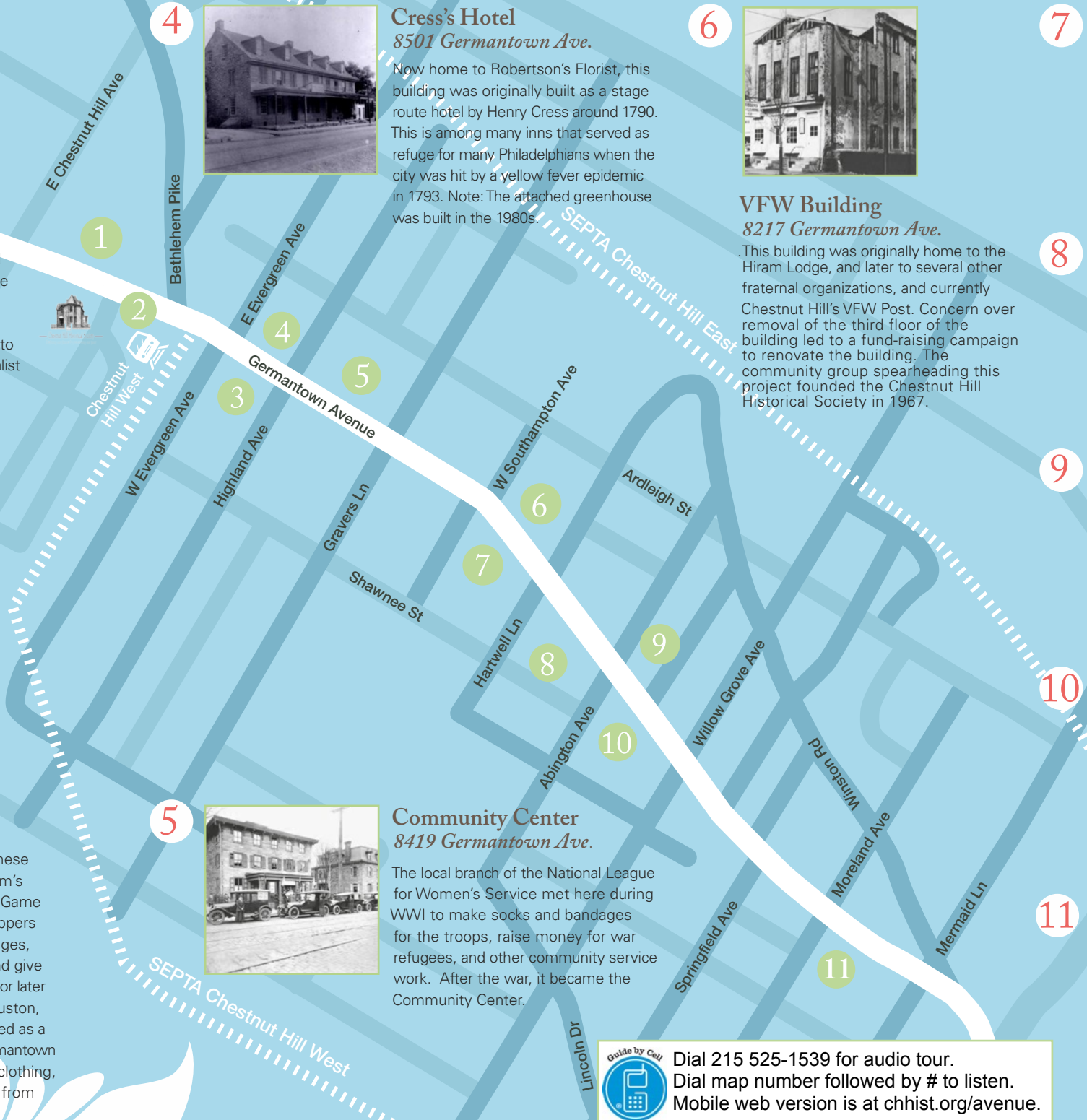
The Venetian Club was started in 1924 by a group of immigrants from northern Italy. Since the late 19th century, Italian stoneworkers had come to Chestnut Hill to work in the local quarries and as masons on the area's building projects.


11



### Wissahickon Schist Quarries 7700 Germantown Ave. & Mermaid Lane

Since the 1840s, local quarries supplied the shimmering, mica-laced stone known as Wissahickon Schist for local and distant building projects. A quarry at this site operated as late as 1948. Quarry in photo was on the 200 block of E. Willow Grove Ave.




 Dial 215 525-1539 for audio tour.  
 Dial map number followed by # to listen.  
 Mobile web version is at [chhist.org/avenue](http://chhist.org/avenue).

From as early as 1687 when it opened as “King’s Road,” Germantown Avenue has been the social and commercial core of the village of Chestnut Hill, which was first so-described in 1711 in recorded land transfers.

The evolution of rail service, starting with the Philadelphia Germantown and Norristown Railroad in 1854, attracted city dwellers to the village as a summer retreat. This tour illustrates how the very stones quarried distinguish the history of our community as well as the legacy of tavern and shop keepers—and their customers.

Most of Chestnut Hill is included in the Chestnut Hill National Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. This designation recognizes the historic significance of the neighborhood and its architectural heritage.

## 2 Germantown Avenue & Bethlehem Pike

As early farm-to-market roads, Bethlehem Pike and Germantown Avenue provided access for farmers in the surrounding areas to bring their produce to the great stores, such as Yeakel’s general store, which occupied this corner.

Stage roads connecting Philadelphia with points north and west, hotels, inns, and taverns at and near this intersection served travelers and stage drivers.

British General William Howe once briefly occupied a tavern which stood at Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike in December of 1777 as his headquarters during the Philadelphia Campaign of the American Revolution.

Later, the Pennsylvania Railroad station and the Route 23 trolley connected Chestnut Hillers to jobs, shopping, and entertainment in Philadelphia, contributing to the rise of the neighborhood as a commuter suburb.

Businesses like the newsstand and McNally’s sprang up to serve commuters and other workers. McNally’s Light Lunch opened in 1921 when the family restaurant first served the trolley drivers who would stop at the Bethlehem Avenue Loop. One of the few places in Chestnut Hill that served African Americans, McNally’s became a tavern after the repeal of prohibition in 1933, and moved to its present location across the street at 8634 Germantown.

### Photo Credits

All photos from archives of CHHS. Quarry photo courtesy of Michael Yanni. McNally’s photo courtesy of Ann McNally.



Bethlehem Pike



McNally’s

## Take the Tour

Dial 215 525-1539 for the cell phone audio tour. A mobile web version of this tour is at [www.chhist.org/avenue](http://www.chhist.org/avenue). A downloadable version of this tour, playable on most portable audio players is also available.

## Please Visit



Please visit the Chestnut Hill Historical Society website, [www.chhist.org](http://www.chhist.org) for tour updates, more about historic Chestnut Hill, and how you can learn more about your Chestnut Hill property.

Founded in 1967 to preserve and nurture the historical, physical and cultural resources, and the character, of Chestnut Hill, the Historical Society keeps a public archive of more than 20,000 items; maintains a conservation and façade easement program and provides resources to homeowners.

**Hours:** Tuesday – Friday 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

8708 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19118  
215-247-0417 [info@chhist.org](mailto:info@chhist.org) [www.chhist.org](http://www.chhist.org)

## Shop and Dine with Info Online

For shopping guides, visit [www.chestnuthillpa.com](http://www.chestnuthillpa.com)

## Sponsors

The Chestnut Hill Historical Society gratefully thanks these sponsors for tour and tour programming support:

*The Chestnut Hill Community Fund*



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# A Walk on Germantown Avenue

A self-guided tour of historic Chestnut Hill’s Germantown Avenue, with audio tour options.



Produced by The Chestnut Hill Historical Society