

chestnut hill local (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com>)

Donate now to CH Local (<https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/donate-widget/8415>)

Quita Woodward Horan: Preservationist and community benefactor

Posted on April 15, 2020 (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/04/15/quita-woodward-horan-preservationist-and-community-benefactor/>), updated on April 15, 2020 (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/04/15/quita-woodward-horan-preservationist-and-community-benefactor/>) by Contributor (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/author/contributor/>)



Quita Horan (second from left) plants a tree in Pastorius Park. She was a founder of Friends of Pastorius Park and a life-long supporter of the park and many other institutions in Chestnut Hill.

By David R. Contosta

Throughout her life, Quita Woodward Horan acted quietly and persistently to preserve the natural and built environments of Philadelphia's Chestnut Hill neighborhood, where she was born and lived throughout her life. She died on April 5, at age 86, following a long illness. She was the daughter of Philadelphia civic activist Charles Woodward and Elizabeth Prioleau Gadsden Woodward, originally of Charleston, South Carolina.

Quita inherited her somewhat unusual name, a Spanish diminutive meaning "little one" — at least for an English-speaking family — from an aunt as well as from an even earlier relative with the same name, whose naval officer father may have heard it in a port where Spanish was spoken.

Among Quita's impressive legacies was her dedication, as president of the Woodward House Corporation, to preserving the unique, planned development on the West Side of Chestnut Hill. The development was begun by her great-grandfather Henry Howard Houston, an officer of the Pennsylvania Railroad and multifaceted Victorian era entrepreneur; and continued by her grandparents, George and Gertrude Houston Woodward. Originally known as Wissahickon Heights because of its setting above the scenic Wissahickon Gorge of Fairmount Park, the development later became known as St. Martin's after the nearby church of the same name. Somewhat unusual for such developments at the time, Houston and then the Woodwards rented the residential properties, a practice that continues for some of the houses to the present day.

As it evolved, Wissahickon Heights/St. Martin's took on many characteristics of the late 19th-century English Garden City movement, complete with a greenbelt represented by the wooded Wissahickon Valley bordering the development to the west, and a commuter rail line that linked the community to Center City Philadelphia some 10 miles away. Houses that the Woodwards commissioned during the first three decades of the 20th century were largely in English and French vernacular styles and included a Cotswold Village and a French Village, as well as impressive landscapes designed by the Olmstead Brothers.

Quita was the driving force in founding the Friends of Pastorius Park, which restored and has continued to enhance this green space in Chestnut Hill, where concerts take place every summer. In addition, she supported and generously funded the open space and architectural preservation programs of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy. She extended her commitment to open space preservation by placing a conservation easement with the National Lands Trust on the Philadelphia Cricket Club's golf course in Chestnut Hill, which she owned with her brother George—on land directly abutting Wissahickon Park.

Longtime residents of the local community may remember the "The Lunchbox," a restaurant that Quita opened in the mid-1950s as a very popular contribution to the revival of Chestnut Hill's commercial district along Germantown Avenue.

Quita attended Miss Zara's School and the Springside School, both in Chestnut Hill, and afterwards the Ashley Hall Preparatory School in Charleston, the Westover School in Middlebury, Connecticut, and Briercliffe College in Bethpage, New York. Later she enjoyed classes in the Continuing Education Division at Chestnut Hill College.

A close friend reflected on the time she was introduced to Quita: "I first met her over 30 years ago when I was a young and naive Social VP of the Chestnut Hill Community Association. She was so kind, funny and a gentle force for getting things done, a true role

model and a most lovely person. ... Chestnut Hill will miss an inspiring, generous citizen."

Quita is survived by her brother George Woodward, son Charles "Chuck" Woodward, daughter-in-law Anna Cooke Woodward, and granddaughter Hayes.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Friends of Pastorius Park (<https://www.friendsofpastorius.org/donations/>). A private burial will take place.

David Contosta is a professor of history at Chestnut Hill College. He has authored many books about Chestnut Hill and its history, including "A Philadelphia Family: The Houstons and the Woodwards of Chestnut Hill."

This entry was posted in Obituaries (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/category/obituaries/>) and tagged Obituaries (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/tag/obituaries/>). Bookmark the permalink (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/04/15/quita-woodward-horan-preservationist-and-community-benefactor/>).

← Community Matters: The state of zoning in a pandemic
(<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/04/15/community-matters-the-state-of-zoning-in-a-pandemic/>)

How are N.W. Philly restaurants doing with takeout only? → (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/04/15/how-are-n-w-philly-restaurants-doing-with-takeout-only/>)