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Quita Woodward Horan, steward of Chestnut Hill community, dies at 86

by [Bonnie L. Cook](#), Updated: April 17, 2020



COURTESY OF THE WOODWARD FAMILY



Quita Woodward Horan, 86, a leading member of a family known for its stewardship of a historic residential community in Chestnut Hill, died Sunday, April 5.

Her death at the Hill at Whitemarsh, a senior facility in Lafayette Hill, was due to complications from a stroke as well as the coronavirus, the family said in a statement.

As the longtime president of the Woodward House Corp., Mrs. Horan acted behind the scenes to maintain the houses and green space that were part of the Woodward family's planned community on Chestnut Hill's west side dating from the 1800s. She was born and lived there.

The development was begun by her great-grandfather Henry Howard Houston, an officer of the Pennsylvania Railroad Co. and a Victorian-era entrepreneur. Henry H. Houston School, a public elementary school in Mount Airy, is named for him.

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Preservation of the community was continued by her grandparents George and Gertrude Houston Woodward. Originally known as Wissahickon Heights because of its site above the Wissahickon Gorge in Fairmount Park, the development later was renamed St. Martin's after the nearby Episcopal Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

In an unusual move for the times, Houston and the Woodwards rented out the residential properties for a nominal fee. Some of the houses are still under rental agreements.

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As it evolved, the development adopted aspects of the late-19th-century English Garden City planning. That plan contained homes, industry, and agriculture bordered by green space.

The daughter of Philadelphia civic activist Charles Woodward and Elizabeth Prioleau Gadsden Woodward, Mrs. Horan was named Quita after a relative.

In addition to her stewardship of the Woodward homes, Mrs. Horan was the cofounder and driving force behind the Friends of Pastorius Park, a nonprofit that restored the place that her grandfather built after visiting London's Hyde Park in 1914.

Under Mrs. Horan's leadership, the park was renovated in the late 1980s and again in the mid-1990s when a pond was drained, cleaned, and relined, according to an online history.

"This work [on the pond] was funded entirely by the Friends of Pastorius Park through a generous donation by the family of Quita Woodward Horan, then president of the Friends," the group said on its website.

In 2017, the group honored Mrs. Horan with its Founders Award.

She was a member of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy, whose open space and architectural preservation projects she funded.

She placed a conservation easement with the National Lands Trust on the Philadelphia Cricket Club's golf course in Chestnut Hill. The land, which she owned with her brother, George, is adjacent to Wissahickon Park. With the easement in place, the 45-acre plot cannot be developed.

She also opened the Lunchbox restaurant in the mid-1950s. The eatery was her contribution to the revival of Chestnut Hill's commercial district along Germantown Avenue. It closed in the early 1960s.

Ms. Horan graduated from the Westover School in Middlebury, Conn., and Briarcliffe College in Bethpage, N.Y. Later, she took classes in the Continuing Education Division at Chestnut Hill College.

Besides her brother, she is survived by a son, Charles, and a granddaughter. She married John M. Horan in 1962; they divorced.

Burial is private. Memorial contributions may be made to the Friends of Pastorius Park via <https://www.friendsofpastorius.org/>.

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