Hill history hunt illustrates community’s past with modern technology
This photo of 8616-8618 Germantown Avenue, built circa 1870, is part of The Chestnut Hill Conservancy’s Archives’ slideshow Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, Before and After. Projection Sponsor: Millan Architects.

by Lori Salganicoff, Chestnut Hill Conservancy

Now there really is a good reason to walk and stare at your phone!

Enjoy a fun and educational jaunt down Germantown Avenue by linking your smartphone to a game that challenges users to spot architectural characteristics and points of interest in the Chestnut Hill History Hunt, a feature of the Night of Lights, sponsored by the Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

By linking to the mobile website via a smartphone or smart device, the participants spot clues to a series of questions involving buildings and points of interest along Germantown Avenue.
The History Hunt begins at the top of the Hill at the corner of Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike with the first quiz involving the historic Baptist Church and ends with the last question involving a building on the corner of Willow Grove Avenue. A series of questions involving buildings and points of interest down Germantown Avenue are accessed via the History Hunt mobile website. Historic factoids pop up with each correct answer.

Chestnut Hill has served as the gateway between the city of Philadelphia and the countryside with Germantown Avenue acting as the neighborhood’s artery since before the Revolutionary War. The Avenue became the area’s main street after Francis Pastorius was one of the first investors to the area and an agent to early German investors of land in Cresheim and Sommerhausen, the original names for what is now Chestnut Hill. The Avenue continues today as a transportation and retail corridor and a link to our past. The History Hunt connects users to the past and allows them to get a closer look at features along the street.

Once you complete the History Hunt trek, you become a Certified Chestnut Hill History Hunter and can redeem a prize from local businesses, via a mobile link at the end of the quiz. Accessing the History Hunt is easy and can be done from any smartphone or device by texting 56512 and entering the keywords Chestnut Hunt.

“The Chestnut Hill History Hunt is a lot of fun for anyone interested in local history and a great educational activity for students of any age,” says Dan Macey, a board member of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy who helped put the quiz together. “The hunt allows us to explore our own neighborhood and learn about aspects of architecture and history that they may otherwise walk right by.”

The History Hunt can be accessed via the mobile website at any time from October 9 through October 25, during the Night of Lights celebration presented by the Chestnut Hill Conservancy. This is the fourth year that the Conservancy has organized the Night of Lights, which shines a light on the neighborhood’s history in a host of windows along Germantown Avenue in the form of a public art installation. The storefront windows are illuminated with slideshows that tell stories culled from the Conservancy’s extensive archives. Unique architectural features of historic buildings along Germantown Avenue will also be illuminated with colorful lights. Many businesses will also remain open to enhance the welcoming spirit of a neighborhood stroll.
As part of the Night of Lights, printed Pastports are available at participating retailers and projection locations that offer a map and guide to each of the eight projections. Visit each of the slideshows and win a prize provided by the following area businesses: Chestnut Hill Brewing Company, El Poquito, Bredenbeck’s, Made by ME, Artisans on the Avenue, El Quetzal, Weavers Way Next Door and Zipf’s Candies.

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