

## Tour a Great Success

Meadville Civil War tour visits sites and archives

by Ruth McCartan

Rain, Rain and more Rain was the order of the day for the April 16 Meadville tour. But a few rain drops, let alone an all-day rain, would not dampen the spirits of these history buffs in search of stories from the Civil War.

The Meadville Unitarian Church was the first stop. It was built in 1836 by George Cullum, a West point engineer who helped build Fort Sumter, and financed by Harm Jan Huidekoper, a Dutch land agent and Calvinist turned Unitarian. The church building has not changed much since the founding families dedicated it. After a tour of the sanctuary the group visited with the members of the Meadville Civil War Roundtable in their library at the Historical Society. Anne Stewart told of Capt. David Dickerson of Co. K, 150th Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers, this Meadville unit was detailed to be President Abraham Lincoln guards at the Summer Cottage just outside of Washington D.C. A map with an Allegheny City connection was brought out of storage for viewing. Alexander Hays, who worked for the Allegheny City engineering department before the Civil War, created a large map of the Meadville area while a student of Allegheny College. Hays, was to go on to become a general and was killed at the Battle of the Wilderness. He is buried in Allegheny Cemetery. The library was worth a longer visit but lunch reservations needed to be met. The Market Grill had our table ready with warm drinks and a home-cooked meal. The Grill is located in the old Market House.

The Library at Allegheny College was our next stop to hear a short talk on the Allegheny College Volunteers and their battle colors. The battle flag is the same flag given to the unit by the ladies of the town, the protective panel was removed for our visit. The rain didn't stop while we walked around the Greendale Cemetery. We visited the grave of Hannah Moore, a leader in the Civil War relief work in the Meadville area along with a few members of the Lincoln Guards. Seeing Medal of Honor winner Monroe Reisinger's grave finished off the tour of the cemetery. Reisinger earned his medal for heroism at Gettysburg.



The grave site of John Brown's first wife and their infant child in the cemetery in New Richmond was a stop on the tour.

The sun came out for the last stop on the tour, the tannery of John Brown outside the city of Meadville in New Richmond. John Brown is most remembered for his actions in the attack on the Harpers Ferry Armory in October 1859. Many historians believe this attack was the start of the Civil War. But before all his work in Bleeding Kansas, he was a tannery owner with over 50 people working for him. Here at the tannery site, in the 1830s, he conducted church services, educated his children (and the children of the area), and helped escaped slaves to freedom. The stone walls of the tannery are all that remain of that prosperous business. Donna Coburn, led the group to the grave site of John Brown's first wife and their infant child who died while the Brown family lived here.

continued on page 2

He married again while in New Richmond, a local girl Mary Ann Day who supported his work to free the country from the evils of slavery.

A footnote to the Harpers Ferry raid: two of the terrorists or freedom fighters escaped after the raid and made their way over the Allegheny Mountains and hid out in this area evading government agents. Ending the tour with a musical salute to John Brown, we sang *John Brown's Body* (as sung by many a union soldier on their way to battle) as we headed home.



## Evening Walks in the Commons

The Commons tell the story of Allegheny City

by John Canning

A commitment to the preservation and restoration of Allegheny Commons has been an objective of the Allegheny City Society from its founding days. The Commons is a marvelous way to tell the story of Allegheny City. This summer, the Allegheny City Society is sponsoring a series of evening walks through the various sections of the Commons. The first walk was on June 21 where we focused on “The Groves,” that section adjacent to Brighton Road and Ridge Avenue.

On Wednesday, July 13, the group gathered in front of the Allegheny County Civil War Monument near Lake Elizabeth and toured West Park and the North Promenade.

On Wednesday, August 17, we will be gathering at 7:00 by the large flower bed across from Allegheny General Hospital and then walking along the East Commons.

The final walk will be on Wednesday September 14. We will gather at the Anderson Monument and focus our attention of Allegheny Square Park, a park that has experienced many reincarnations.

Each tour will cost \$10. All proceeds after the costs will be shared with the Allegheny Commons Initiative.

Reservations can be made by calling Amy at 412 766-5670 or Ruth at 412 364-6132 or John at 412 322-3974.

## John Alfred Brashear

Part 2 : To Allegheny and Beyond

by Janet Gunter

The trip up the Perry Plank Road in the spring of 1876 was certainly a turning point for John Brashear.

His destination was the Allegheny Observatory, where he was to meet with Samuel Pierpont Langley. Langley had recently entrusted the silvering of a heliostat mirror to Brashear. When Brashear returned the mirror to Langley, another man was present who was intrigued by the excellent job of mirroring Brashear had done. To Brashear's surprise this second man was none other than the great William Thaw. By 1842, Thaw owned the Pennsylvania and Ohio Line of steam canal boats. His company added canal, portage railroad and other steamboat lines. His main source of wealth at the time of their meeting was from the Pennsylvania Railroad, in which he was a large shareholder.

Thaw asked Brashear to visit him at his home in Pittsburgh, and the following night visited the Brashears in their Holt Street home on the South Side. Thaw was a great supporter of cultural activities in Pittsburgh and started the society called The Improvement of the Poor.

In the 1880s, Thaw told John and Phoebe to mock up drawings of what they'd like to see in a lens-making and machine shop. They stayed up all night deciding what they had to have and what they could do without. They imagined a building twenty feet by forty two feet with an engine, boiler, and two lathes, a drill press, grinding and polishing machine and miscellaneous tools. By the time the building was finished the equipment was ready to be installed.

In 1886 that area on what is now Perrysville Avenue was a challenge to deliver the ordered equipment. It took five men all day to get the ten horsepower engine and the boiler up the steep grade.

That year, Thaw moved what had been Brashear's Holt Street shop on the South Side, to the Perrysville location. Soon, a new dwelling was constructed on the property, close to the factory building. Phoebe was astonished at the 14-room house, but over the years she and John managed to keep it filled with friends and family.

Before long, the new shop had many contracts and employed five assistants, a mechanic, and John and Phoebe's son-in-law, John McDowell.

Brashear went on to make every component of fine telescopes, and insisted on printing instructions on how to produce telescopes if one wanted to undertake this task at home. These little booklets included prices: \$135 for a fully mounted

continued on page 3

telescope with a 5½-inch lens, to \$700 for a 12½-inch telescope. Also mentioned were \$4 to \$12 for glass alone, so you could make your own telescope.

Brashear's shop produced many things other than telescopes. Worldwide, astronomers in the late nineteenth century were turning their attention to the study of the physical nature of the stars, and great advances were taking place in the field of astrophysics. It was Brashear's shop that turned out spectroscopes, prisms and *Rowland Diffraction Grating* plates. These plates became prized due to their precise gratings and were prepared to be ruled to a thousand parallel lines to the inch. Thousands of these plates were made. Brashear wrote "We were to furnish the plates, Rowland was to rule them and send them back to us, we were to act as distributing agents for them .... Several thousand of these plates were made at our shops [in Pittsburgh] and distributed ... As I write this note more than thirty-five years later, we are still making those beautiful plates and distributing them to institutions of learning all over the world. Rowland has passed on and his ashes lie in a niche in the stone wall of the ruling-engine vault ...."

Langley began encouraging Brashear to give lectures on lenses and correcting optical surfaces. The first of these was in 1884 when he read his first paper before the Philadelphia meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Even though Brashear was worried about speaking before such a large group of scientists, it turned out well and his talk was well received.

Brashear's name and factory became known internationally for its manufacturing expertise. The Brashears first trip to Europe in 1888 came about when Henry Phipps asked John to travel there as chaperone to his son John. After conferring with their friend William Thaw, the Brashears agreed. The Brashears were astounded by foreign lands and customs and were treated to meetings with many prominent scientists and astronomers. In 1892 Andrew Carnegie learned that Brashear, overworked, had collapsed with exhaustion. Carnegie insisted John should have a vacation in Great Britain. Brashear insisted that Phoebe should accompany him. This was the first of several trips to Europe and one to the Orient by the couple.

(story continued in Part 3)

---

## Society's Annual Meeting

Successful 2011 Annual Meeting includes Rimmell Award to Manchester's Stanley Lowe

The Society held its annual membership meeting at *Bistro Soul* on April 27. This meeting is always held in April as established by the original Society members in the 1950s to celebrate the incorporation of the City of Allegheny in April of 1840. This year, the members gathered at a new eatery on East Ohio Street that once was a record shop. During the social hour, raffle tickets were sold for a gift basket of unique Allegheny City items with the proceeds going to the Allegheny Commons Initiative.

Before the savory dinner of chicken, rice and green beans prepared by the *Bistro Soul's* chef, several of the members of the Board of Directors with expiring terms were reelected. Michael Shealey, who was stepping down as Secretary conducted the election. David Grinnell, a long-time board member was elected to take over the position of Board Secretary.

David McMunn presented this year's Rimmell Award to Stanley Lowe of Manchester. Mr. Lowe has for years been a driving force for the neighborhood of Manchester in its revitalization. It can well be said that without the work of Lowe and Manchester Citizens Council, the beautiful houses, tree lined streets—the total fabric of the neighborhood—would have been lost to urban renewal.



Stanley Lowe (left) receives the Rimmell Award from ACS Board member, David McMunn

John Canning gave a brief history of Manchester which was the prelude to a video produced by the eighth graders of Manchester Academic School entitled *Growing up in Manchester*. The presentation featured Ruth O'Connor and John Suber, Manchester residents, telling of their growing up and their memories of the neighborhood (Ruth remembered needing a skate key).

Thanks to all ACS members and the Board of Directors for another informative and festive occasion. See you in the Allegheny Commons for our summer tours.



# Allegheny's Freemasons Hall

Home to Allegheny lodges and history

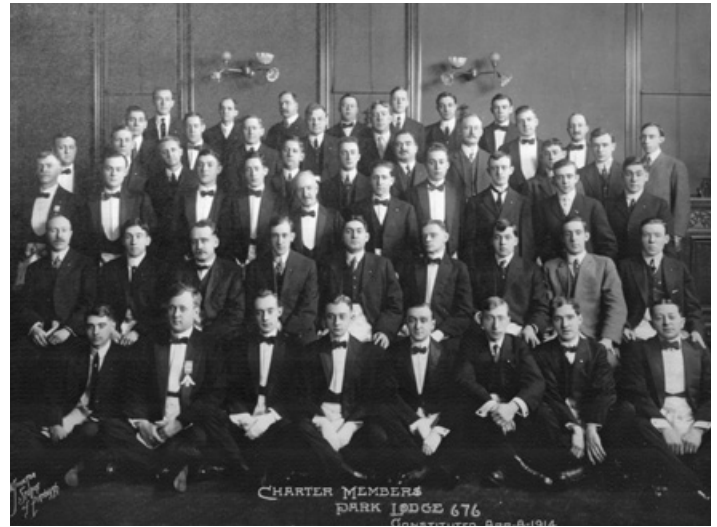
by Donald G Zeilman

The Freemasons Hall in Allegheny was the setting for the charter of at least one new lodge during the Hall's long history. In the charter photograph of April 11, 1914, there are many youthful faces in evidence. These optimistic men probably had no idea that the golden age of American fraternal organizations was actually nearing its end.

They must have been aware, though, that they were chartered as a Pittsburgh lodge, ending a historic distinction that had made it possible to build an Allegheny Freemasons Hall in the first place.

As early as 1759, there were Freemasons at Fort Pitt. Later, actual blue lodges (the basic organization of Freemasonry) began to be chartered in Pittsburgh by the The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania—the first of these being Lodge NO. 45. Following the Anti-Masonic period in the 1830s, more lodges were chartered, and by the 1850s there was even growing interest in having separate lodges in Allegheny City.

Jefferson Lodge NO. 288 was chartered in 1854 when some Allegheny members from Pittsburgh's Solomon Lodge NO. 231 wanted to form a lodge closer to home. Other Allegheny lodges followed—McKinley NO. 318 in 1858 and Manchester's Davage NO. 374 in 1866, for example.



Lodges would often share meeting space, either rented halls or purposely constructed quarters. Early on, some of Allegheny's lodges associated together to rent space above a print shop on Water Street.

Associations would also be formed when a new building project was contemplated. The association would raise funds, oversee construction, and be responsible for the on-going administration of the shared meeting place. This arrangement would become more and more important as fraternal organizations, experiencing a period of unprecedented growth in the latter half of the century, faced an ever greater demand for more and larger meeting space.

Pittsburgh's expanding lodges formed an association to build and administer a new Freemasons Hall that was dedicated in June of 1889. It was a stone-faced Richardsonian Romanesque structure by the Boston firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge (the firm that grew out of Richardson's architectural practice). The new six-story hall was located on Fifth Avenue, downtown.

Allegheny's Masons were not far behind. Some of the lodges came together to form the *Masonic Hall Association of Allegheny City, Pa.*, chartered on June 18, 1892. The value of the Association's capital stock was \$75,000, each share valued at \$25. Certificate No. 1 for ten shares was issued to Frederick D. Eshelman on April 1, 1893. Members in each of the associated lodges were expected to buy as many shares as their personal finances allowed.

Some of the lodges participating in this Association were: Allegheny NO. 223, McKinley NO. 318, Stuckrath NO. 430, and Ionic NO. 525. Not all of Allegheny's Masonic lodges and organizations were participants, though. Some followed a different Order, some had their own place of meeting, and some chose to associate around ethnic and cultural ties (such as Germania Lodge NO. 509). Manchester's Davage NO. 374



From the *American Architect and Building News*, July 22 1893. With the exception of the stone balcony/entablature, the elaborate parapet, and the recent modification to the horizontal side window, this is how the building appears today. Storefronts immediately to the right of the Hall are the site of the future Garden Theater of 1914/15.

met in a second-floor hall at Pennsylvania and Beaver Avenues until 1919, when they lost their space and moved to the Allegheny Freemasons Hall. Jefferson NO. 288 met in the German Masonic Hall at Washington Street and Madison Avenue in the Fourth Ward.

The cornerstone for Allegheny's new Freemasons Hall at the corner of Race (Reddour) Street and North Avenue was laid on August 7, 1893. The Association had chosen a prominent site facing Allegheny Commons. The architects were Bartberger and East, and it should come as no surprise that Charles M. Bartberger was a Mason himself.

The new stone-trimmed brick masonry building was three stories in height. The practical and familiar arrangement of having the first floor dedicated to commercial uses was repeated here. The second floor contained the ritual meeting rooms, with the associated lodges (noted above) meeting on their assigned evenings in the front room, and the Allegheny Chapter, Council and Commandery holding their meetings in the back room. The third floor contained a dining room

at the rear (seating approximately 200) and a banquet room at the front seating larger numbers.

The second floor lodge room was the setting for the charter photograph described above. When that lodge had to decide upon a name, they looked across North Avenue to the Commons and chose "Park" Lodge (NO. 676).

Allegheny's Freemasons Hall served the Masonic community for nearly 100 years, with the Hall in use until approximately 1990. Over those years, the Hall had become a focal point for North Side Freemasonry as lodges merged and other halls were torn down. When the time came to close Allegheny's Freemasons Hall, many lodges and Masonic bodies (such as the combined McKinley-Stukrath Lodge) found a home in the new Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center.

My thanks to Mr. Ken Faub, 33rd Degree Mason, archivist and originally a member of Park Lodge No. 676 (now merged with Milner No. 287), for access to the library at the Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center and its collection of materials on Allegheny's lodges—much of which he has collected and archived—and for sharing his time and extensive knowledge.

---

## Local History—Local Pride

Manchester School third grade learns about the history of their community

by John Canning

For three days in May, a team of folks who have a keen interest in the history and the future of Manchester carried out a program with the third-grade class at Manchester School.

This team effort of the Allegheny City Society and the Allegheny Historic Preservation Society as well as the principal and teachers carried out the program with a *North Side Charms Micro-Grant* from the Children's Museum. A similar program was carried out last Spring at John Morrow School in Brighton Heights.

The main objective at both schools was to help the youngsters learn about the history of their community and about the North Side as a whole. Manchester's history is indeed noteworthy in that so much of the community was demolished in the 1960s. Sam Cammarata, who attended the old Manchester school in the 1920s and Michelle Jones, who attended in the 1950s held the students attention with their respective stories. On the final day the students were taken on an all-day bus trip, stopping at several North Side *charms* and landmarks. The trip concluded with a great musical presentation by the Ortner-Roberts Duo and, of course, a stop at Gus and Yia-Yia's ice-ball stand.

Our hope is that the experience will increase the pride these third graders have in Manchester and the North Side.



Photos courtesy Renee Rosensteel



# Cassatt Scholarship Awards

Scholarships awarded at Visual Arts Showcase

by Amelia Gehron

On May 19th, the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild had the honor of hosting this year's Pittsburgh Public School All City Visual Arts Showcase featuring the theme *My Story, Our World*. The theme certainly embodies the winners of the annual Allegheny City Society Mary Cassatt Scholarship Award, Brianna Berry and Noel Peterson, both CAPA seniors.

Brianna's artist statement "represents her fascination with the human face, form and experimentation with color." Noel's artist statement reflects "an expression in self exploration, through her painting, *Pride*." Both of these young women's works make us aware of their world and those who share it.

This showcase continues to allow students from across the City to exhibit their talent and to share what they have learned from each other. It is only with the continued support of the Friedberg family and many other local community organizations that this Pittsburgh Public School event is so successful for our leaders of tomorrow.



NON-PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PITTSBURGH PA  
PERMIT 3842

Allegheny City Society  
PO Box 100255  
Pittsburgh PA 15233-0255  
return service requested

