

# REPORTER DISPATCH

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## Summer Walks in The Commons

Four informative tours conducted by ACS members  
by John Canning

This past summer the Allegheny City Society led four, evening walks through the Allegheny Commons. During each *walk and talk* program we focused on one particular section of the Commons as well as the adjacent community. Members of the Society took an active role in explaining the history of each section of the park as well as of the significant homes and institutions that were built along the bordering streets.

There were many stories to be told about park designs, monuments, churches, fraternal organizations, nearby houses, and of course, the Garden Theater. Tim Zinn, a resident of Allegheny West, and recently elected historian of the Elks Lodge on Cedar Avenue, provided some great new data about the Elks building and the role of the Elks in maintaining the section of the park across from its lodge hall. Tom Wilson shared the story of Friend Jenkins, the Alleghenyian who died in the Spanish American War, and the origin of the Maine Memorial adjacent to the National Aviary. Ruth McCartan, ACS president and Civil War authority, provided great information about the Allegheny County Civil War monument, or what is left of it, as well as the Hampton Battery monument. 'DZ' Zeilman, ACS newsletter editor, and ACS board member, Dave McMunn shared some great historic photographs of Allegheny's Masonic Hall, and the Garden Theater. As always, David Grinnell, who is the ACS representative on the Allegheny Commons Steering Committee, brought to the walks many pieces of information about the historic significance of the park and those folks who lived close by it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Each evening there were about 25 or 30 folks who turned out for the walk. We learned that a 90-minute time frame was hardly enough, but, fortunately, the sun set and the each walk came to its end. Many thanks to all who participated as either walkers or presenters. It is a series that we will repeat sometime in future years. Two "naming rights" questions remain unanswered: why was Lake Elizabeth so named? and who



Tim Zinn speaking about the Elks Lodge on Cedar Avenue.

was Sue Murray, after whom the swimming pool at Cedar and Stockton was named?

What ever proceeds were made from the fees, were shared with the Allegheny Commons Initiative's program to restore and improve the Commons as a park for all.



Ruth McCartan talking about the Hampton Memorial statue in East Park

# John Alfred Brashear

Part 3 : We have loved the stars too fondly ...

by Janet Gunter

## World Traveler

John Brashear, the great lens maker and former millwright, not only received support from scientist and inventor Samuel Pierpont Langley, and industrialist William Thaw, but from other prominent Pittsburghers as well.

In 1888, Henry Phipps asked Brashear to chaperone Phipps' son on a trip through Europe. Thaw agreed that it would be a good idea, and offered to help fund the trip. Time was spent in England, Scotland, Ireland, Paris, Switzerland and Germany. Together, young Phipps and Brashear toured the great museums and institutions of science throughout Europe.

In 1892, Andrew Carnegie suggested he go to England for rest and recreation. Brashear visited the Royal Academy and several observatories while there.

In 1911, the University of Pittsburgh requested that Brashear go to Scotland to be a delegate at the celebration of the University of St. Andrews' 500th anniversary. Brashear was reluctant to attend, as his beloved wife Phoebe had recently passed away, but the munificent Andrew Carnegie had invited any members of the Board of Trustees of Carnegie Institute to visit the Carnegies at Skibo Hall, all expenses paid. Brashear decided to attend. While there, he visited scientific research friends in Germany and Belgium.

In 1916 Brashear visited a friend in Cleveland. The friend had received an invitation to a dedication of a Science Building at Nanking University, and wanted Brashear to go with him. Brashear (of course!) humbly protested, but before the month was out, his busy schedule was cleared for him to visit the Orient. Just two days before his 76th birthday and two days before his departure, nearly four thousand people crowded into the Frick Building to say *bon voyage*. Eventful and beautiful times were shared with governors, ambassadors, Prime Ministers, Consul-Generals, and Premiers in Japan, Korea, China, Manchuria, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the Hawaiian Islands.

## A Busy Mover and Shaker

James Keeler was appointed Director of the Allegheny Observatory when Langley left in 1887 to become third Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. John Brashear was appointed to the Board of Directors at the Observatory and served as Chancellor of the Western University of Pennsylvania from 1901 to 1904.

In the 1890s Pittsburgh experienced a development boom. Andrew Carnegie decided that the Western University of Pennsylvania needed to evolve. He expanded his original

foundation to include an endowment for an "Institute" covering several acres in the East End of Pittsburgh. He organized a team of eighteen men, including a subcommittee that included Brashear. Brashear was instrumental in the planning committee for the Fine Arts and Museum departments, and was named by Andrew Carnegie to head the committee for founding the Carnegie Institute of Technology. In 1909 the Western University of Pennsylvania took down its sign and became the University of Pittsburgh. John Brashear remained on the Boards of both Universities for the rest of his life.

In the late 1890s Brashear realized that the existing Allegheny Observatory was inadequate and set about securing two acres in the footprint of Riverview Park. The cornerstone for the new Observatory was laid in 1900 and completed in 1912.

The twelve years between cornerstone and completion were busy for Brashear. In addition to his duties as Acting Chancellor and member of the Board of Trustees of the Western University of Pennsylvania and member of the Carnegie Institute, he was also Chairman of the Observatory Committee, a member of the Sanitation Committee, and created the citywide Academy of Science and Art where he served as its Councilor from 1892 to 1896.

In 1915 Pennsylvania Governor Martin Grove Brumbaugh named John A. Brashear "Pennsylvania's Most Distinguished Citizen." In November of that year a great 75th birthday party was held.

Brashear was so significant in the creation of both the University of Pittsburgh and what was then known as the Carnegie Technical schools, that both schools contributed to the huge celebration. So many hundreds of people tried to crowd into the Soldiers and Sailors Hall that the crowd spilled into the surrounding streets. Congratulatory messages were read from President Woodrow Wilson, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and from scientists and educators from all over the country.

Brashear, a modest man, was bewildered by the commotion, and worried: "Maybe they are breaking me in for something else!"

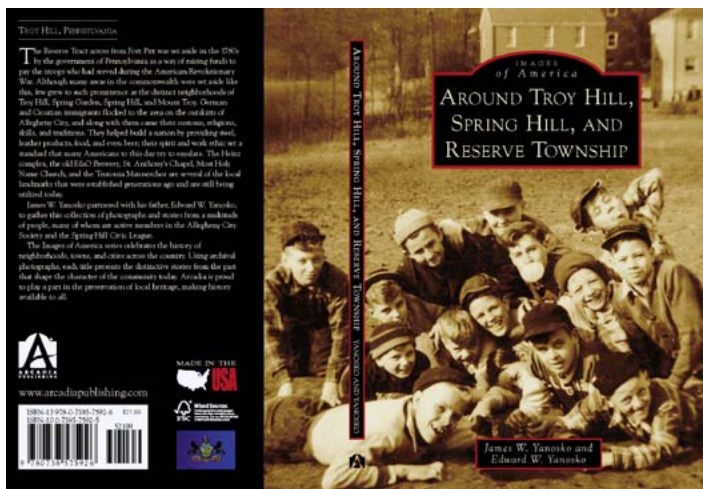
## Rest for the Weary

Remembering that Henry A. Rowland was laid to rest where "... his ashes lie in a niche in the stone wall of the ruling-engine vault ...," a bereft John Brashear laid his wife, Phoebe's ashes to rest in a crypt beneath the Allegheny Observatory upon her death in 1910.

John Brashear himself died in August of 1920, and their ashes lay together there, along with a line from a favorite poem by Sarah Williams, *The Old Astronomer to His Pupil*:

*We have loved the stars too fondly  
To be fearful of the night.*





## Celebration and Book Signing

New Arcadia publication titled *Around Troy Hill, Spring Hill, and Reserve Township*

Over the past year or so, the father-and-son team of Ed and Jim Yanosko have gathered together great pictures and information for a new Arcadia Book titled *Around Troy Hill, Spring Hill, and Reserve Township*. The group of ACS members who produced *Allegheny City 1840-1907* knows full well the hours spent crafting such a book. We applaud the Yanoskos for their commitment to this project. Their work will indeed add to a better knowledge and greater appreciation of the hill and valley communities of the North Side's eastern section.

Put a circle in your calendar around Wednesday, November 2, 2011.

The Allegheny City Society working with the Yanoskos and the Penn Brewery's *We Care Wednesday* program are having a great book signing program in the main dining room of the Brewery – a perfect location for such an event. From six to nine that evening, folks can come to the Brewery for dinner or a beer, and purchase a copy of the newly published book.

At 7:30, Ed and Jim will share some of their many experiences in producing their new book. All books purchased at this event will be signed by the authors.

When you enter Penn Brewery be certain to pick up an Allegheny City Society pin and a program flyer. The detachable ticket on the flyer should be given to your server when you pay your bill. A portion of your payment will be given to the Allegheny City Society.

We encourage all ACS members and their friends to join us at the Penn Brewery to celebrate with the Yanoskos in the publication of this new piece of North Side history.

## Doo Dah Days

Society invited to participate in annual event

by Ruth McCartan

On July 9, for a few hours, Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville became a Victorian-era playground with period music, ladies in hoop skirts, and men in stove-pipe hats. The phenomenon was Doo Dah Days, the celebration of the life and music of Stephen Collins Foster, and it was the place to be that fine sunny summer day. Foster, at the time of his death in 1864, left a legacy of 286 songs and musical compositions and became one of America's most beloved composers.

The Allegheny City Society was invited to set up an informational table at the Butler Street entrance. As you know, Foster was born in Lawrenceville and is buried in Allegheny Cemetery but the most musically productive time in Foster's life occurred not in Lawrenceville, but in Allegheny. William Barclay Foster, Stephen's father, planned the area of Lawrenceville, naming it after Captain James Lawrence of War of 1812 fame. But when Stephen was six, the family moved across the river to Allegheny, with William being elected the City's mayor in 1842. Tutored by the noted educator, Rev. Joseph Stockton, and attending Allegheny Academy, Foster penned his first composition *Open Thy Lattice Love* the year his father was mayor. Many more songs would be created in Allegheny, such as *The Old Folks at Home* and *Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair*.

The mission of the Allegheny City Society members during the event was to inform the attendees that Stephen Foster may have been born and buried in Lawrenceville, but is also an honored citizen of Allegheny City.



Allegheny City Society table at Lawrenceville's Doo Dah Days



## All Aboard!

Allegheny City Society's Fall Tour, Saturday, October 15th:

### "Allegheny City and the PA Oil Boom"

*An all-day tour to Franklin, Oil City and Titusville*

*See!*

- ~ The **Osterling-designed Hospital** at Polk
- ~ The **Tiffany Windows** at St. John's Church in Franklin
- ~ The **Drake Well Historic Site** in Titusville and an
- ~ **Autumn Leaf Excursion** on the  
**Oil Creek and Titusville Railroad!**



**Reserve by Oct. 1st**  
by calling Amy @ 412-766-5670,  
Ruth @ 412-364-6132, or  
John @ 412-322-3974



**Cost: \$85**  
(includes all fees, box lunch  
and dinner!)