

# REPORTER DISPATCH

Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore

## AN ALLEGHENY CIVIL WAR HERO

The story of James Harvey Childs

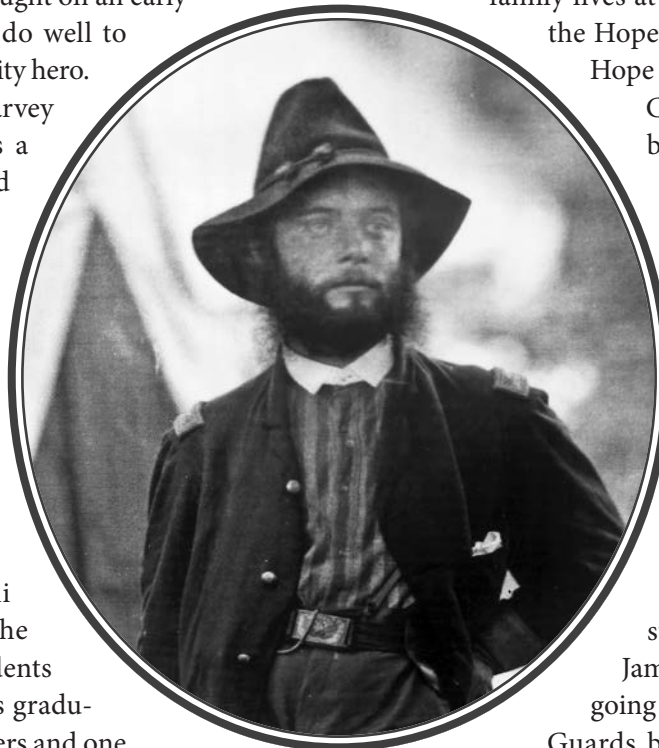
by Ruth McCartan

“Tell Howe to be a good boy and a good man and true to his country” these were the last words spoken by Colonel James Harvey Childs, commanding the 64 Regiment (4th Penna. Cavalry) as he lie dying on the battlefield of our nation’s bloodiest day September 17, 1862. On this the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam, fought on an early fall day in September 1862 we do well to remember this local Allegheny City hero.

Born on July 4, 1834 James Harvey was the son of Harvey Childs a shoe wholesaler, iron factory and cotton mill owner. His mother Jane Bailey Childs née Lowrie was the sister of Walter H. Lowrie, a former Chief Justice of Pennsylvania. One of the socially prominent families of Allegheny the Childs family lived near the South Commons.

James Harvey graduated from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio in the class of 1852. Miami was considered the “Yale of the West” opening its doors to students in 1824. Sixteen men were in his graduating class, seven became ministers and one, Benjamin Harrison, became the 23rd President of the United States. Returning to Allegheny after graduation to work first with his father, he then started his own dry goods business, Wilson and Childs, on Wood Street in 1856.

Mary Howard Howe, another South Commons resident and eldest daughter of Hon. Thomas Marshall Howe, became his wife July 14th 1857. The Honorable Thomas M. Howe was the President of the Exchange Bank, twice member of Congress, a steel and cooper manufacturer and a well known philanthropist. During the Civil War, he served as assistant adjutant general on the staff of Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin, who had defeated him narrowly in the previous gubernatorial election.



The City directory of 1857–59 has no employment listed for James Harvey and shows that a few generations are living at the Childs’ South Commons location. By 1860, Childs has started James H. Childs and Co. which owns the Hope Cotton Mill located near the Allegheny River. His father in law, Thomas Howe is also a partner of the Childs Company as is his father Harvey. The 1860 Census shows him as married with two children, Howe and Mary, the value of his personal estate at \$25,000, and listing him as a cotton mill owner. The family lives at East Commons and Liberty with the Hope Mill at the corner of Lacock and Hope Streets.

Childs was a citizen-soldier, a member of the local militia group, the Pittsburgh City Guards, which volunteered a few days after the firing on Fort Sumter, April 1861. He left behind his cotton business, wife Mary and children to defend the union. In the *History of Allegheny County* Childs is described as “six feet in height, well proportioned and of good general health.”

The 12th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry was recruited under the supervision of Brigadier General James S. Negley with field command going to Col. David Campbell. The City Guards become Company K, of the 12th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, a three-month unit. Company K was commanded by Captain William H. Denny with 1st Lieutenant James Harvey Childs as second in command. The 12th Pennsylvania included other local militia units, Company A was the former Jackson Independent Blues and Company B the Duquesne Grays. This unit did not experience any combat while guarding important railroad lines leading south, but this limited service gave them military training that would serve them well in the years to come.

August 1861 after their enlistment was over in the 12th Pa., Childs and Campbell started recruiting a three-year unit, the 64th Pennsylvania Regiment also called the 4th Pennsylvania

*continued*



ADVERTISEMENT HEADLINE for James H. Childs and Co. owners of the Hope Cotton Mill that was located near the Allegheny River

Cavalry. By October the regiment was complete with David Campbell becoming the Colonel and Childs the Lt. Col. The regiment was full of loyal sons of Allegheny with names like Parke, Herron, Gillespie and Robinson. The 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry regiment consisted of three battalions of four companies each. The unit rendezvous at Camp Curtin in Harrisburg and were mustered into national service in September 1861 at Washington D.C., spending the winter there. In March 1862, Col. David Campbell was transferred to the 65th Pennsylvania Regiment, and Childs was promoted to full Colonel, commanding a regiment of over a thousand men. With the spring advance on Richmond the unit saw limited action during the Peninsula Campaign and arrived too late to the field for the Battle of Second Manassas in August 1862. During the Battle of Antietam September 17, 1862, the regiment was in the Third Brigade of Alfred Pleasonton's Cavalry Division. The 4th was given the order to support the artillery in an around the Antietam (Middle) bridge on the Boonsboro turnpike which leads to Sharpsburg. The bridge was in a crossfire of Confederate artillery with sharpshooters in front. The cavalryman accompanied several batteries of horse artillery across the bridge at a gallop and took up positions on the left and right of the road driving the enemy back. After performing an inspection of his skirmish line and returning to his headquarters location with his staff Childs is hit. A solid cannon shot fired from a Confederate artillery battery in front of his location hits him above the right hip "tearing out most of his abdominal cavities and intestines." Falling from this horse he is moved to a nearby tree, medical care is useless. In great pain and quickly losing blood he has a message sent to his second in command James K. Kerr that he is now the commander of the 4th. Lastly he sends for his Assistant Adjutant General Captain Henry King from Allegheny and gives him his last message for his son Howe. Childs lived for 40 minutes after being hit and the last 20 he was unconscious. So ends the military career of 28-year-old Col. James Harvey Childs loyal son of Allegheny who left a wife Mary and three children all under the age of four to grieve for him.

Captain King was the son of Joshia King of King and Pennock owners of the Eagle Cotton Mill in Allegheny and a personal friend of the family. King telegraphed the family on September 18 to tell them the tragic news. The King dispatch briefly stated that "Colonel Childs fell by my side; his body will be sent to Washington to be embalmed" Child's death was announced in the Evening Gazette the following day listing a brief history of the Colonel and telling of his wife's deep distress. Mary Childs had lately been experiencing feeling of "painful foreboding that all was not well with her husband," the paper stated.

Captain King accompanied his Colonel home and upon arrival conveyed the body to "his late residence East Commons Allegheny". His body was too damaged so embalming could not be performed and the funeral took place a few hours after arrival. The Howe and Childs families were some of the original incorporators of Allegheny Cemetery and Childs was buried in the Howe family Circle Section 20, Lot 1, grave 5 on September 20, 1862.

When Thomas Howe moved his family to the suburbs, present day Shadyside, in the 1860s and built his large stone gothic mansion *Greystone* he built a 2½-story gatehouse at the entrance to his estate for his widowed daughter Mary and her three children. Mary Childs died there in 1903 and is buried with her husband and family in Allegheny Cemetery. Today the Childs gatehouse recently renovated is the welcome center for Chatham College.

The 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry served with distinction at Gettysburg. The majority of the unit reenlisted after their three years of service was up in 1863. Fighting at the siege of Petersburg. with the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse their service was over, mustering out July 1865.

History shows that Howe Childs was a good man and true to his county as was his father dying wish.

#### References

*A Brief History of the Fourth Pennsylvania Cavalry*, William Doster, 1891  
*History of Allegheny County*, Samuel Durant  
*Evening Gazette*, September 19,20,21, 1862

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## WINTER FILM SERIES RETURNS

Back by popular demand!

The Allegheny City Society will host movies relating to Allegheny City and environs again this winter. Allegheny Unitarian Universalist church on West North Avenue will be our theatre for the series. Tuesday evenings during February and March, you can gather with your fellow classic film lovers, drink a glass of wine with your popcorn and watch movies with an Allegheny flavor. Watch the Societies web site and newsletter for more information on the 2013 Allegheny City Film series.

## ALLEGHENY CITIZENS

Addison Lyle, prominent merchant, and his daughter  
by Michael Shealey

Of all of the photographs of residents of Allegheny that survive from the 19th century, the subjects few portraits are identified by name. Most portrait photographs of the time are in the form of CDVs – photographs mounted on cards about 2 x 4 inches in size.

The names of the man and child in the CDV photo shown at right, Addison Lyle and Carrie, survive only because the CDV was given as an apparent gift “To Cousin Agnes Brown” as written on the back of the card. The photographer is identified as Cargo Photographer with offices located at 81 Federal Street, Allegheny and the Dispatch Building on Fifth Street in Pittsburgh. Using the dates from City Directories in which Cargo Photographer had studios at both locations to date the card on which the photograph is mounted, gives an approximate date for the card of 1864 to early 1868. These were the only years that Cargo had studios on both Federal Street and in the Dispatch Building. However, the photograph mounted on the card was taken well after 1868.

Census records indicate that Caroline Patton Lysle (Carrie) was born on August 9, 1868. She was the only child of Annie Haslen Lysle, the second of Addison Lysle’s three wives. Annie Lysle died on April 8, 1870 at about the age of 22. At the time of her mother’s death, Carrie was a few months less than two years old. It is especially to be noted that Annie



Lysle does not appear in the photo placing the date of the photo most likely after her death in 1870. Also, Carrie appears to be about two to three years old in the portrait. The time of her mother’s death and the apparent age of Carrie in the photograph places a reasonable date on the photograph to about 1870–1872.

In 1889, at the age of 21, Carrie Lysle married William G. Stewart, a 22-year-old notary, and later stockbroker in Pittsburgh. Widowed after only 10 years of marriage and without children, Carrie died in Washington, D.C. in 1914 at 46.

At the time Addison Lysle, Carrie’s father, posed for this photograph, he was a coal merchant working with at least two of his brothers for his father’s coal mining, coal transport and coal sales company. Addison eventually succeeded his father as the head of the family-owned business.

He went on to become a director of the Union National Bank, a director of the Third National Bank of Allegheny, a director of the Allegheny Gas Company, a director of Uniondale Cemetery, a manager of the Allegheny County Workhouse and one of the original directors of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce. Later in life, Addison was known respectfully as Captain Lysle due to being “for many years associated with the river coal trade as a large operator.”

He moved to Los Angeles in 1902 for health reasons, and died there on November 29, 1908 at the age of 75 years.

*Special thanks to my sister, Kelly, for estimating the age of Caroline Lysle in the photograph based on a comparison with her daughters Maddie (4) and Caroline (18 months).*

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## ALLEGHENY & PITTSBURGH RETAIL

1899 journal compares retail spirit in both cities

Comparing Allegheny to Pittsburgh was a preoccupation both within the two cities and as a subject of consideration for outside observers. The two cities could be compared in any number of ways including parks, quality of life, government efficiency, but interestingly, in the October 21, 1899 issue of *Interstate Architect and Builder*, retail stores were compared:

*Allegheny, PA, is hard to distinguish from Pittsburg until you enter a retail store – there the difference is so absolutely noticeable as to be almost a shock. It is like going to sleep in Chicago and waking up in St. Louis. Slow, sleepy, don’t care – you know.*

So Pittsburgh is a booming retail metropolis like Chicago, and Allegheny has the retail shopping characteristics of the still-almost-a-frontier town of St. Louis.

At a distance of 112 years from this observation, it is still possible to find it worthy of consideration. If there is some truth in the comparison between the two cities, it might indicate that a noticeable cultural difference existed between Allegheny and Pittsburgh. If shopping was a different experience in Allegheny than in Pittsburgh, then perhaps other differences existed as well.



Boggs & Buhl

## GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY ARCHIVES

Allegheny City Society recipient of historical resources  
by John Canning

Over the years the Allegheny City Society has become the recipient of many artifacts, book, papers, records and maps that help us preserve the history of Allegheny City/ North Side. Over the past few months several additions to our archives are worthy of note.

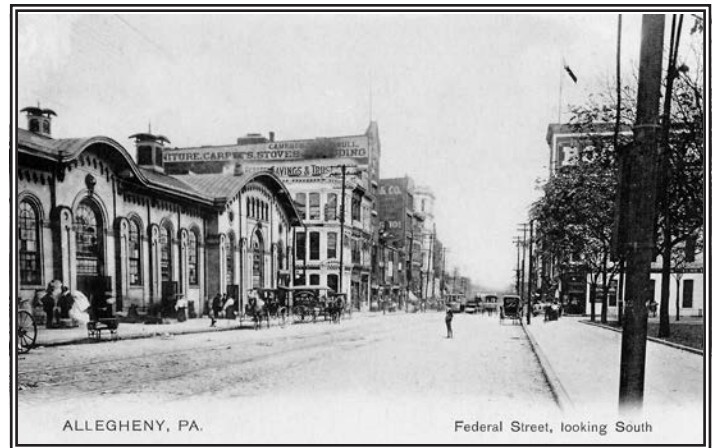
The Society has a small but growing collection of year-books from North Side high schools: *Wah Hoos* (Allegheny), *Perryscopes* (Perry), and *Omicrons* (Oliver). With the closing of David B. Oliver High School this past Spring, the school librarian gave the ACS a collection of over 30 yearbooks. We will list the years on our website during the winter months.

As one of the North Side's older funeral homes was moving from the area, the Society acquired a fascinating record book that documents many early members of the St. Nicholas (Croatian) Roman Catholic Church prior to their purchase of a parish cemetery in Ross Township. David Grinnell, Archivist and ACS Board Member is working to find ways to interpret and preserve these new records.

A copy of an anniversary program of the First United Presbyterian Church of Allegheny (now The Community House Church) was given by Nancy Ewing.

Several months ago the Society was given a wonderful volume of Sanborn maps focusing on the communities of the lower North Side. This gift from Donald Zeilman, ACS Board Member and newsletter editor, provides great insight into the changes of land use in those neighborhoods in the early 20th century.

We encourage any of our members and all other folks interested in Allegheny City/ North Side history to consider adding to our archival collection as they sort through family, institutional, and business materials.



POSTCARD view in Allegheny City



CANNA PLANTS in the lower garden across from Heinz Field



NEW TREES planted by the City's TreeVitalize program

## GARDEN REPORT

Beautification at the Cassatt Garden

by John Canning

Several years ago the City Society joined in an effort with PennDOT to improve the greenspace along Allegheny Avenue between Heinz Field and Ridge Avenue. The site includes the historical marker honoring Allegheny-born Mary Cassatt. Thus the name, Cassatt Garden. No easy feat in that the old Manchester Boulevard is but a few inches beneath the green and gravel surface. This year some definite improvements occurred under the leadership of ACS Director, Dr. Jean Binstock.

Jean volunteered with a G-Tech program on the North Side and was able to help the Society plant a large bed of multi-colored Canna plants in a rough area directly across from Heinz Field. Jean and G-Tech also connected the City Society with a group of community volunteers from ALCOA. In one day in May, the Cannas were planted and several planting beds along Ridge Avenue were prepared for summer. Early in September the TreeVitalize program of the city planted six new trees in the area. As we move into 2013, the Society hopes to continue working with PennDOT, G-Tech, the Steelers, and ALCOA to build on the improvements of 2012.

## MARKER FOR ARCHITECT COMÈS

First Pittsburgh Architect to receive historical marker

by David McMunn

First off, let me say that at this writing, I do not know of any Roman Catholic churches in Pittsburgh's North Side that were designed by prolific ecclesiastical architect, John T. Comès. Certainly, the Saint Francis Xavier Church on California Avenue bears many trademark design elements of Mr. Comès, but there is enough evidence to name William P. Hutchins (1883–1941) as the architect.



During the first two decades of the twentieth century, John T. Comès was perhaps Pittsburgh's most active and prominent ecclesiastical architect. He was Roman Catholic and his commissions stemmed largely from that religious body. Four styles suited Comès—Italianate or Italian Renaissance Revival, Romanesque Revival, English Gothic Revival, Spanish Renaissance Revival, and Lombardy (a form of Romanesque Revival). He left behind a sizable legacy in church architecture design and decoration.

John T. Comès' influence as an architect spanned the United States with projects in many cities as far west as Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. Comès was passionate about restoring beautiful Roman Catholic art and architecture to parishes that were seeking to construct new churches and parochial buildings in rapidly growing communities during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

As you read through *Catholic Art and Architecture*, a booklet that is a result of his lectures to Roman Catholic seminary students and parishes seeking a new church architect, Comès

The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission will hold a dedication ceremony and reception on Sunday, January 27, 2013, at 3 pm at the Saint Agnes Center of Carlow University, the former St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church, which Comès designed. Free parking is available adjacent to the St. Agnes Center. Plan to attend this event (rain or shine) held in the beautiful St. Agnes Center, that remains fairly unchanged since its dedication in 1917.

relates—even preaches—the importance of constructing beautiful and tasteful churches and parish buildings and the responsibility of the builders and parishes to pass on the rich legacy of the Roman Catholic Church.

John Theodore Comès was working in church architecture alongside the likes of Charles McGinnis, Ralph Adams Cram, Bertram Goodhue, Rutan and Russell, and others that sought to move church architecture into the new and progressive century lying ahead of them. The Victorian age of building concepts was clearly at an end.

John Theodore Comès (1873–1922) was born in La Rochette, Luxemburg on January 29, 1873. His father was a woodcarver. The family emigrated to St. Paul, Minnesota in 1881. John studied architecture at Mount St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, Maryland. He arrived in Pittsburgh in 1894. He first worked for F. H. DeArment and the Pittsburgh office of Peabody & Stearns, of Rutan and Russell, and of the Beezer Brothers. He is credited as the catalyst behind the founding of the Pittsburgh Architectural Club in 1896. Comès designed churches for Rutan & Russell and Beezer Brothers before opening his own firm in 1902.

By 1921, the practice had grown to include William R. Perry and Leo McMullen. Comès died April 13, 1922 at the age of 49 at his home at 3242 Beechwood Boulevard. The firm continued as Comès, Perry and McMullen until 1928 when the partnership was dissolved and the remaining partners formed their own design studios.



ST. AGNES CHURCH Oakland, John T. Comès, 1916–1917

## SUMMER MUSIC SERIES A HIT

Buhl Community Park was site of 2012 music series

A new city park at a historic location was the site of the Allegheny City Society's 2012 Summer Music Series. Under the leadership of the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, the new park appropriately named *The Buhl Park in Allegheny Square* was opened to the public at the beginning of Summer. It is located on the site of one of the four public squares in the original plan of Allegheny Town.

During the subsequent centuries the this public square was used as a Hay Market, then as Ober Park, Buhl Park, and the as a park that was part of the "Brutalist Style" design of Allegheny Center. With the decline of the Allegheny Center Mall, the deteriorating park was little used. The new park is a wonderful interactive public space that complements the entire complex of the Children's Museum and the nearby buildings of Allegheny Center.

Working with a grant from the Buhl Foundation along with support from the staff of the Children's Museum and the New Hazlett Theater, the Program Committee of the

Society organized a series of four musical programs. These programs were held on four lovely summer evenings in July and August. It was quite appropriate that the Allegheny Brass Band opened and closed the series.

North Side resident and well known pianist, Tom Roberts worked with the Society in organizing two additional programs. Many Society members who attended the Gala in 2007 recognizing the 100th anniversary of Pittsburgh's annexation of Allegheny City will recall that Ton Roberts composed *The Allegheny Rag* for that occasion.

Roberts and a guest artist provided the audience a warm July evening with a program filled with great early jazz. Two weeks later Roberts coordinated an extremely exciting program with *Aqui Tango*. This program transformed the new park into an outdoor plaza in Buenos Aries with the sounds and dance of the Argentine.

Audience responses to all four programs reminded many folks of the summer music programs in the Allegheny Commons bandstand of years past. Hopefully the 2012 program is the first of a new tradition of music for a summer evening.

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