

The Allegheny City Reporter

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Annual meeting of the Allegheny City Society Scheduled for April 23, 1998

The Annual Meeting of the Allegheny City Society will be April 23, 1998 at in Calvary United Methodist Church, corner of Beech and Allegheny Avenues. A business meeting will begin at 6:30 PM and will be followed at 7:30 PM. by John Burt, Esq.

Mr. Burt will speak on The Freedom Trail in Western Pennsylvania. In this talk he focuses on the dynamic anti-slavery forces in the state and their historic contributions to the pre-Civil War Freedom Trail. He is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council.

The meeting is free and open to the public. Please call 322-8807 to make reservations. (See the article on the next page of this newsletter about an Allegheny City Family that was a part of the Freedom Trail)

Allegheny City Society Program to Focus on Victorian Baseball



The Allegheny City Society will explore the roots of baseball on Pittsburgh's North Side (Allegheny City), in a program on Victorian Baseball. The event will take place on May 2, 1998 at Three Rivers Stadium.

Yes, long before Plan A or B, and before sacred Forbes Field, there was baseball in Allegheny City. As our nation was preparing for its Centennial, Pittsburgh area's first professional baseball team, the Alleghenies (Alleghenies), was organized just twenty days after the National League was born in New York City.

However, Pittsburgh was not yet big enough for the major leagues. The Alleghenies played in the first minor league, the International Association.

The club was organized on February 22, 1876 and played their first game at Union Park on April 15th of that same year where they downed the local Xanthas team by a score of 7 to 3.

Union Park, later known as Recreation Park, was located on property in Allegheny, surrounded by West North Avenue, Allegheny, Pennsylvania and Grant Avenues. The outfield was bordered by Pennsylvania and Ohio Railroad tracks.

Union Park could only handle a meager crowd of 2,500 in its stands, and eventually the team moved to the larger Exposition Park on the northern shore of the Allegheny River. The seating capacity at Exposition Park was around 10,000. This park was officially abandoned as Pittsburgh's official baseball stadium. The Pirate's final game there on June 29, 1909. The following day, Forbes Field was opened to a crowd of 30,338. (The actual seating capacity of Forbes Field at that time was around 25,000).

Not only will the Society's program highlight those early teams, parks and names from local baseball history, such as Honus Wagner, Uncle Al Pratt, Barney Dreyfuss, Fred Clarke, Connie Mack and others, but it will also focus on the many, now seemingly humorous rules and colorful terms used in those early days of baseball.

The program will begin at 5:30 PM on May 2nd. North Side baseball enthusiast Mark Fatla will relate tales and events of the early days of baseball. The statistics, equipment, style of play and early strategy of the game will be discussed. In addition a multimedia display of memorable events, characters and the ball parks of one of the "Great American Pastime" will be featured.

The night will be topped off with a ball park buffet and seats in the right field pavilion for a 7:05 PM "Logo Cap Night" game against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

For information call the Allegheny City Society at 322-8807. Seating is limited so make your reservations early.

Learn more about Allegheny City
Visit the Allegheny City Society's Home Page
on the World Wide Web

<http://trfn.clpgh.org/acs/>

Coming in June 1998....

Spend a day like your Victorian grandparents. Visit Union Dale Cemetery (the former Mt. Union Cemetery.) This is where the elite Scotch-Irish Presbyterian's of Allegheny City are resting. Learn the history of the famous and infamous that are buried in Division 1 of the Cemetery. The tour will be on June 13, 1998 at 2:00 PM - The cost is \$8.00 for members and \$10.00 for non-members. For reservations, call the Society at 322-8807

Even on the cloudiest day in 1st English Evangelical Lutheran Church, the face of the main figure in the center lancet is illuminated. But then, isn't that the way with Tiffany windows. The artist, Frederick Wilson of the House of Tiffany, has beautifully characterized with favrile glass, Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd.

The theme of the Good Shepherd caring for this flock is the central motif of this three-part stained glass wall. Known as the Black Memorial Window it was dedicated with a special service on April 24, 1898, a gift of the Black family children who gave the window to their home church The First English Evangelical Lutheran Church on Grant St. in downtown Pittsburgh as a memorial to their parents.

The inscription reads: *In loving memory of Father and Mother. George Black died, August 5, 1872. Jane Black died, May 7, 1896*

The elder Blacks were long time members of First Church and financially supportive of many Lutheran missions in Western Pennsylvania.

The North Side connection to the Black family is that their home was in an affluent part of antebellum Allegheny City. The Blacks took up residence in the former Brewer mansion on Western Avenue in the 1860's and adapted the mansion to accommodate their large and growing family.

George Black, one can only believe, was involved in all the humanitarian undertakings that were developing during the Civil War. William Thaw and B. F. Jones, his friends from canal days in the 1840's, were prominent members of The Subsistence Committee of the Committee of Public Safety who provided food to Union soldiers in transit.

Gilbert Love, wrote in *The Pittsburgh Press* on July 31, 1938 that local neighborhood lore had it that the (Black) mansion was used as a stop on the underground railroad.

He said "The legend says that a tunnel ran from the house to the Allegheny River." Love went on to say that runaway slaves on the freedom trail to Canada were given shelter in the sub-basements of the mansion.

Annie Clark Miller writing in the *Western Pa. Historical Magazine on Old Houses and Estates in Pittsburgh*, published in 1927, describes the Black mansion and tells of "a passage back through the gardens to an underground ice storage space". Could this be the remains of the fabled escape tunnel?

No documented evidence can be discovered to provide credence for this legend. That is not unusual, when trying to substantiate this period in our history. Mystery and secrecy were imperative if you were breaking The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

The children of the Blacks could not have chosen a better subject than that of the Good Shepherd to honor their parents. One can almost visualize a runaway slave coming into the dark sub-basement, hoping the Blacks were that "good shepherd." For if the legend and stories are true, the Black family did watch over and protect all who stopped while on the Liberty Trail.



✦ On March 29th, the Allegheny City Society held a program at the Victoria House Bed and Breakfast on Western Avenue. Barry Paris, author and Pittsburgh Post Gazette writer talked about Marcia Davenport and Allegheny City. Mr. Paris has written about Ms. Davenport for *The New Yorker*. During his talk, he related stories about Ms. Davenport and played taped portions of his interviews with her. Over 150 people attended this delightful event that was followed by a screening of the film, *The Valley of Decision* starring Greer Garson and Gregory Peck. Thanks to board member John Canning for organizing the talk and to the cookie bakers of the Society: Maureen Uhler and Ruth McCartan, Sr.

✦ On May 9th board members of the Allegheny City Society will lead a tour of Allegheny City Civil War sites. The tour is being given by the Westmoreland County Civil War Roundtable. Some tickets are available. If you would like to attend, please call Carol Werner at 836-1800.

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