

The Allegheny City Society

REPORTER DISPATCH

The Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore - February 2002

With the recent publicity generated by the Regional Renaissance Initiative, Pittsburgh's North Side looks to expand greatly with the development of industrial sites, the construction of new stadiums and improvement of transportation linkages. These concepts are nothing new, as author David Wohlwill demonstrates through this look at Allegheny City, the predecessor to Pittsburgh's North Side

Old Allegheny, Transportation and Baseball

By David Wohlwill,

Business Development and Planning *Port Authority of Allegheny County*

Until annexed into the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny City was a separate municipality comprising most of what is now the North Side. At its peak, about 130,000 people lived there, including some of Pittsburgh's major industrialists. The first Carnegie Library, the predecessor to the University of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Pirates all called Allegheny City home. Many of Pittsburgh's most important transportation facilities were developed there.

The Early Days

The first inhabitants of land along the Allegheny River were the Seneca and Shawnee Indians. They blazed an east-west trail that began at present day Lawrenceville, crossed the river at Herr's Island (now called Washington's Landing) and followed the future alignment of West and East Ohio Streets. The trail continued along the present path of Western Avenue and Ohio River Boulevard to Rochester in Beaver County.

General George Washington used this trail on a visit to meet the Senecas on the north bank of the Allegheny River. Washington met with Queen Aliquippa, head of the Senecas, to whom he gave a woolen coat and a bottle of rum. The rum, according to his account of the meeting, was "thought much better the present of the two."

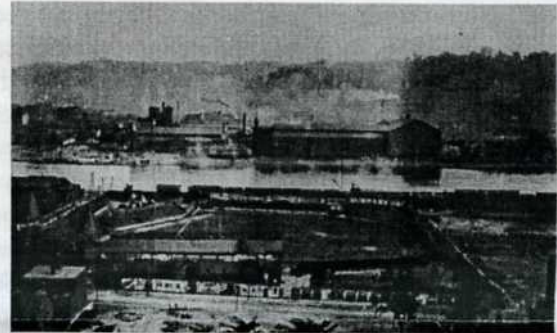
Ferry service was established in 1784 when the Pennsylvania legislature granted Daniel Elliott the right to operate an Ohio River crossing on a route which followed the present West End Bridge. The service operated until 1915, when a new bridge was completed between the Point and the North Side. Two other ferries operated to the foots of Alcor and Federal Streets from Pittsburgh. One of these ferries was operated by James Robinson whose son William would later become the first Mayor of the City of Allegheny

An act of the Pennsylvania legislature set aside land north of the Allegheny River to be given to Revolutionary War veterans as compensation for their service. In 1787, Benjamin Franklin appointed surveyor David Redick to prepare a development plan for a town site across the Allegheny River from Pittsburgh. His plan for the proposed Allegheny Town included 102 acres set aside for common pastureland. This land later became known as North, South, East and West Commons, on which landowners were privileged to graze their livestock.

In 1828 Allegheny incorporated as a borough. It grew rapidly, from 2,809 residents in 1830 to 10,989 people in 1840, before it was incorporated as a city. William Robinson was elected the first of Allegheny City's 27 mayors.

The Sixth Street Bridge

As Allegheny continued to grow during the early 19th century, improved access was needed for further development. In 1810, a charter was granted for the first St. Clair Bridge over the Allegheny River connecting Pittsburgh with Federal Street. Construction began in 1818 and the bridge opened for



Exposition Park c 1903

Photo courtesy of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

service two years later. It consisted of two arches resting on stone piers with a covered walkway before it was replaced in 1860 by a suspension bridge designed by the renowned John Roebling.

Because traffic continued to grow on the second St. Clair Bridge a new structure was required. The Sixth Street Bridge was erected in 1892 as a structure with two, 440-foot bowstring trusses. In the 1920's, the United States War Department declared the bridge a hindrance to navigation and ordered its removal. Accordingly, the two trusses were removed, placed on a barge and floated down the Ohio River to Coraopolis, where the trusses were reassembled to become the Coraopolis-Neville Island Bridge. The recycled structure, which saved Allegheny County taxpayers about \$250,000, opened in 1928 and was demolished in 1994.

The fourth bridge opened in 1928 and became, along with the Seventh and Ninth Street Bridges, one of the "Three Sisters," the only identical trio of bridges in the United States. The Sixth Street Bridge won an award from the American Institute of Steel Construction as the most beautiful bridge built in 1928.

The Railroads

Allegheny City was the first community in the Pittsburgh area to be served by railroad. The Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad was incorporated in 1848 with William Robinson as president. Three years later, passenger train service began between Allegheny City and New Brighton.

In 1856, the Ohio and Pennsylvania incorporated into the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad. A year after that, the railroad reached Pittsburgh on the first of three structures known as the Fort Wayne Bridge. This span was also called the "Poor Man's Bridge" because pedestrians would use it instead of the other bridges that assessed penny tolls to foot passengers. A year later, the railroad reached Chicago. It was eventually acquired by the Pennsylvania Railroad.

In 1851, the first of three stations was built at Federal Street. President Abraham Lincoln disembarked from a train at this station and rode a carriage across the St. Clair Bridge to Pittsburgh to make a speech at the Monongahela House in 1861. The last station, erected in 1906, was a handsome brick, stone and terra-cotta building with a steep, green-filed roof and a clock tower. It was demolished in 1955.

The first locomotive produced in Pittsburgh was built by the Pittsburgh Locomotive and Car Works in 1867 in a plant partially located on the present site of Port Authority's Manchester headquarters. The company built up to 150 locomotives per year until production ceased in 1919.

The Transit Lines

The first rail transit lines were composed of horse-drawn cars on tracks of light strap iron attached to wood stringers embedded in the roadways. A team of horses provided the power. In 1858, the Pittsburgh, Allegheny and Manchester Passenger Railway began operating in Allegheny City and Manchester (at that time a separate borough). By 1889, it operated two routes into Pittsburgh. The first began at Penn Avenue and Sixth Street, crossed the Allegheny River to Federal Street, and continued on to Ohio Street, Western and Beaver Avenues to Manchester. The other route utilized Federal, General Robinson, Scotland and Rebecca (Reedsdale) Streets, joining the first line at Western Avenue. A car house was located adjacent to the Pittsburgh Locomotive and Car Works at Beaver and Island Avenues. Passengers boarded and exited the cars through a rear doorway. Oil lamps attached to the walls or ceiling illuminated the cars at night. Vivid striping identified the car's exteriors and bells alerted pedestrians to oncoming horses.

Baseball

The area's first professional baseball team played in Allegheny City. In 1876, the Alleghenies were formed and played their first game at Recreation Park, located near Allegheny and Pennsylvania Avenues. The following year, all the players left and were replaced with inferior athletes and the club disbanded in 1878.

Four years later, a new team of Alleghenies formed as a member of the American Association. The Alleghenies, though, felt they would do better as a National League team, so when the expulsion in 1887 of Kansas City from the National League created a vacancy, Pittsburgh quickly filled it. The Alleghenies won their first National League game, a 6-2 victory over the Chicago.

In 1891, the Alleghenies moved to Exposition Park, located in roughly the same place as Three Rivers Stadium, and changed their name to the Pirates. The final game of the first modern World Series was played before 7,455 fans at Exposition Park in 1903. The Boston Red Sox won the series.

Exposition Park was susceptible to flooding during early spring, forcing the Pirates to establish a tradition of playing early season games away from home.

Because of these flooding problems, and the perception that Pittsburgh was growing in the East, the Pirates decided to move to Forbes Field in Oakland. On June 29, 1909, the Pirates played their final game in Exposition Park, defeating the Chicago Cubs, 8-1. The next day, Pittsburgh opened Forbes Field and lost to Chicago, 3-2.

Annexation and the Legacy of Allegheny City

On June 12, 1906, voters in a public referendum in Pittsburgh and Allegheny City approved unification of both cities. The following year, the City officially annexed Allegheny City and became a city of 521,000, the sixth largest in the country.

Although Allegheny is no longer a separate city, its transportation and sports legacies live on. Water taxis are being considered to serve attractions along the Allegheny River. The Sixth Street Bridge is still an important connection between downtown and the North Side. The Pittsburgh Fort Wayne and Chicago line which passes along Chateau Street across from Port Authority's headquarters, is now one of Conrail's busiest routes. PAT's 16A and 16D bus routes are the successors to the services established by the horsecar lines. The Pirates returned to the former Exhibition Park site in 1970 to play at Three Rivers Stadium.

This article appeared in February 1997 PATways, a publication of the Port Authority. Since this article was written the North Shore (or as Northsiders call it "North Side's South Shore") has experienced a tremendous rebirth. In 2001, Three Rivers Stadium was imploded and now PNC Park and Heinz Field are home to the Pittsburgh Pirates and Pittsburgh Steelers respectively. Other new additions include the Andy Warhol Museum, Alcoa World headquarters building and new parking garage. In 2001 ground was broken for a new building on E. General Robinson Street between NorthSide Bank and the Warhol Museum. Also, more development is expected on the land occupied by Exposition Park between the two new stadiums.

Upcoming Allegheny City Society Programs

March 9, 2002 - 11:15 a.m. Woods Run Carnegie Library - It seems there was a song on every Pittsburgh street corner in the 1950's and early 1960's. Dave Crawley, feature reporter for KDKA-TV has interviewed many of western Pennsylvania's vocal legends from the North Side's own Marcells and Johnny Angel to Tony Butala of The Lettermen and Chuck Blasko of The Vogues, Lou Christie, and Jimmy Beaumont of the Skyliners. Through photographs and vintage video clips, he will share his conversations with these past and present vocalists. After Dave Crawley's presentation, view a display of photographs from the Woods Run Settlement House and hear John Canning discuss the history of the institution.



The Skyliners

This program is free and open to the public, however, seating is limited to the 40 persons Seating is on first come - first serve basis

This presentation is a program of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council supported in part by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

April 11, 2002 - Allegheny City Society Annual Meeting Wine reception 6:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. Dinner at 7:00 choice of London Broil or Stuffed Chicken Breast, redskin potatoes, seasonal fresh vegetables and dessert. \$20.00 per person 7:45 p.m. Brief business meeting followed by a free program: *Fifty Years of Caregiving at Allegheny General Hospital* Allegheny General Hospital McGovern Conference Center - Parking \$1.00 at the James Street Garage

April 5, 2002 - Pre Civil War Seminar Reception and Concert 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Holmes Hall 719 Brighton Road in historic Allegheny West. Holmes Hall is an 1870's masterpiece built in the Renaissance Revival style. Unsurpassed details include pier mirrors and exceptional mantels. The hand-painted mural on the ballroom ceiling is not to be missed. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Civil

War era musical entertainment by The Home Front - cost \$10 per person donations to Pittsburgh Civil War Soldier's Monument restoration

April 6, 2002 - Second Annual Civil War Seminar - Bitter April - co-sponsored by the Allegheny City Society and the Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Roundtable Speakers are Christopher Calkins: *The Final Blows: Five Forks, the Waterloo of the Confederacy*; and *Black Thursday, the Battles of Sailor's Creek*; William Lazenby: *The Breakthrough at Petersburg and Its Aftermath*; Ronald Wilson, *Dawn of Peace: Surrender at Appomattox*; and Dr James Bud Robertson who will speak on *The Making of the United States: What Did Not Happen at Appomattox*- Dr. Robinson's talk is free and open to the public. The Babcock call (412) 321-4502 for information and brochure.

June 22 & June 23 - Fourth Annual Pittsburgh Civil War Soldier's Fair - West Park 10:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. Saturday, June 22 and 10:00 a.m. till 3:00 p.m. Sunday. The theme for this year's event is *Women In War*. The two-day event will feature speakers, re-enactors, crafts, wonderful food, period music, artillery demonstrations, skirmishes. Special appearances by Generals Grant and Lee, President Abraham Lincoln and others. Fun for the entire family

Calling all Allegheny City residents born before 1907 -- you are invited to attend our annual meeting as out guest - Please call (412) 322-8807 for more information

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Pittsburgh, PA
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Reporter Dispatch
Published by
The Allegheny City Society
P. O. Box 100255
Pittsburgh, PA 15233-0255