

The Allegheny City Society

REPORTER DISPATCH

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Society Annual Meeting

This year the Annual meeting of the Allegheny City Society was held at Allegheny General Hospital. The meeting featured a talk by John Canning, *Fifty Years of Caregiving at Allegheny General Hospital* and presentation of the William Rimmel Award. The Allegheny City Society has established the William Rimmel Award to recognize and honor an individual or organization for outstanding achievement in preserving and interpreting the history of that portion of the City of Pittsburgh that was the City of Allegheny.

This year the Rimmel award was given to Jane Johnson. She was born on the Northside about a decade after Allegheny City was annexed by Pittsburgh. Except for a brief period when she and her husband Ross settled in Bedford, Pennsylvania, Jane has lived in a number of Northside neighborhoods. Recently she moved into a lovely apartment in The Allegheny on the site what early Alleghenians called the Second Bank.

Jane's grandfather, Joseph Ford had emigrated from Ireland to Allegheny City in 1849 during the horrible years of the potato famine. Joe Ford settled in the Fourth Ward of Allegheny and established himself in the hauling business, eventually known as Excelsior Express Company. This company was eventually part of the Railroad Express Agency, Joseph Ford married Annie Daeveritz, the daughter of immigrants from the Kingdom of Saxony. The Daeveritz family home still stands at the foot of Troy Hill Road. That's the old canal house that's boarded up waiting demolition as part of the Route 28 widening.

Jane grew up in the Perry Hilltop community and graduated from Allegheny High in 1939. Shortly thereafter she married Ross Johnson, an outlander from the Windgap area, long the western "frontier" of Pittsburgh. Jane and Ross raised a family of 5 children in their home on Western Avenue. As a tireless community activist, Jane helped organize a neighborhood group in the late 1960's. It was Jane who suggested the term Allegheny West as the name for their community.

Jane joined the Calvary Methodist Church in 1932 and for the past 70 years she has taken an active role in the programs and preservation of that Allegheny landmark. For several decades she has told the story of the congregation, the building, and the magnificent Tiffany windows. Whether as a docent for Pittsburgh History and Landmark Tours or those of the Allegheny Preservation Society or as the kick-off speaker for the Allegheny West house tours, Jane has uniquely blended together the history of Allegheny City with that of Calvary Church.

She has definitely employed Bill Rimmel's approach of interpreting the history of Allegheny City's people and institutions in a sensitive and a personal manner to thousands of people. The Allegheny City Society owes much to Jane in that she has kept alive Allegheny's story.



Jane Johnson receives the William Rimmel Award from Society Vice President Mike Coleman

Monument Restoration Begins

Since 1871 the Civil War Monument has stood as a reminder of the 4,000 residents of Allegheny County who gave their lives to preserve the Union during the Civil War. In the 1920's the monument was moved from its initial site to lower West Park on the edge of Lake Elizabeth. Four years ago the Allegheny City Society, North Side's historical organization, held the first Pittsburgh Civil War Soldier's Fair. The purpose of the Fair was to raise money for the restoration of the monument. This includes cleaning, repointing, and refurbishing the current plaza and retaining wall. In addition to the Soldier's Fairs, the Society has jointly sponsored with the Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Roundtable two seminars to raise money for the monument restoration. The Fairs and seminars have raised a total of \$12,000 toward the monument restoration.

This year the City of Pittsburgh has kicked in \$50,000 for the restoration and cleaning of the monument which began on June 4. Scaffolding is being erected and the entire monument cleaned and repointed. The remaining landscaping and restoration of the plaza and surrounding area will be completed after the cleaning. However, the project is about \$15,000 short of the total amount needed for the complete restoration. Several grants have been written and the Society may have to rely on in-kind services from Allegheny County and other organizations. Another fundraising activity this year will be held during the Fourth Annual Civil War Soldier's Fair that will be held on June 22 and 23. The Society will be selling luminaria that will be placed around Lake Elizabeth on Saturday night, June 23 at 8:30 p.m.. For more information on the Soldier's Fair see the next story.

Fourth Annual Civil War to Aid in Monument Restoration



At a ceremony honoring the troops who gave their lives during the Civil War a volley salute was given the re-enactors following a march from the fairgrounds to the Solider's Monument

This year the Pittsburgh Civil War Solider's Fair will be a two-day event with re-enactors encamped on the Commons Saturday night. This year both Union and Confederate troops will be represented. Also two cannon batteries will be in attendance. The purpose of the Fair is to raise money for the restoration of the Civil War Soldier's Monument.

The Fair will include mock drills and skirmish. In addition to the military activities there will be crafters, exhibitors, storytellers, lectures and other events.

One highlight is a wreath-laying ceremony at the Solider's Monument at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. The ceremony will be preceded by a march of all the re-enactors lead by Generals Grant and Lee and President Abraham Lincoln. Following the ceremony, a volley salute will be fired and a dove release will be held. Plan on attending both Saturday and Sunday. Learn about the

Civil War and the effect it had on both Pittsburgh, Allegheny City and the nation. The Fair will open on Saturday at 10:00 a.m. and the ground close at 9:30 p.m. Candlelight tours of the campgrounds will be available. On Sunday, activities begin at 10:00 a.m. and the Fair will close at 3:00 p.m. with the unfurling of the largest American Flag in Allegheny County.

Allegheny City Municipal Records Find New Home

While Allegheny City officially ceased to exist on December 6, 1907, the history of that twin city to Pittsburgh still lived on in the municipal records of the government of Allegheny City - City Council minutes, committee meetings records, department reports, plans, and maps. These are the materials scholars wishing to learn about how a city was governed, what ordinances were passed and other official information use to piece together the story of a city. The question remained what happened to the official records of Allegheny City? Now we know.

In November 2001 at the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society's monthly meeting



Photo by Ruth McCartan
John Canning a board member of the Allegheny City Society examines the municipal records of Allegheny City

the guest speaker, Dr. Dennis East of the University of Pittsburgh's Archives Service Center, described 19 skids of documents - each 4 feet high and 20 feet long - the Allegheny City records - that came from City Law Department to Pitt's Society of Industrial Research via a library basement. From there, it was on to the Point Breeze ASC warehouse where the records sat in an unheated warehouse since 1969.

After the WPGS meeting a member notified the Allegheny City Society, North Side's historical organization, about the find. Members of the board of the Society visited the Warehouse in February of this year and met with Dr. East.

"There's a lot of 'stuff' and a lot of mold and red rot," says Society Treasurer Ruth McCartan. "The State archives seem to be the best place for these records but followed up to make sure the State knows of our interests, had a viable timetable, and makes provisions for accessing the records," she said.

While a great deal of information from newspapers and other publications remains in the Carnegie Library, Allegheny Regional Branch, Pennsylvania Room of the Carnegie Library in Oakland, and the John Heinz History Center in the Strip District, the official records of Allegheny City were not something that should be left in an unheated warehouse anywhere.

Last August the Pittsburgh Post Gazette published an article about another warehouse, located on the North Side. In the former Serta Mattress Factory building in the Chateau area, more than a "million pounds of records, packed in 50,000 numbered boxes are stored. Following this article an editorial stated "You can tell a lot about a society by how it preserves its heritage. And the city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County are treating much of their heritage like an odd relative who lives in the attic." The editorial went on to press for a "proper archive" to keep the history of the area intact.

It would now appear the Allegheny City stood a better chance than those of Pittsburgh's and Allegheny County. Approximately one month ago the records were moved to Harrisburg where they will be properly stored.

Civil War Seminar a great success

The second annual Civil War Seminar sponsored by the Society and the Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Roundtable was very well attended.



Lois Sundgren who portrayed Letitia Holmes with the Home Front - The Home Front will be visiting the Civil War Soldier's Fair on June 22 and 23

Over 70 people enjoyed four very informative speakers in the beautiful surroundings of the Babcock ballroom. Allegheny County Controller Dan Onorato welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

New this year was the inclusion of display tables. Charles Gray, created a special stamped envelope for the "Bitter April" seminar. Proceeds from his sales went to the restoration of the Soldier's Monument. Other displays included photographs and civil war era weapons that kept everyone interested during the



Ulli Baumann and Allison Barash (standing) who helped organize the seminar with Lesley Gordon one of the speakers

In keeping with the future plans, to have the seminar become a weekend event, this year a wine reception was added. The Friday night reception was held in the superbly restored Holmes Hall on Brighton Road. Graciously hosted by former Rimmell Award winner John De Santis. Guests were greeted at the door by Letitia Holmes, former owner of the Hall, played by Lois Sundgren. Rounding off the evening was a concert by "Home Front" playing period music. The surroundings and the music got everyone who attended into the past century. Thank you for making this project so successful. Plans are currently underway for next years event. Keep early April 2003 open.



On March 9, KDKA-TV reporter Dave Crawley talked about his conversations with Western Pennsylvania's vocal legends. The talk was held at the Woods Run Library

**Watch your mail for an exciting
announcement regarding a new book on
Allegheny City history**



Photo By the Northside Chronicle
President Abraham Lincoln; Generals Grant, Lee and Pickett lead Union and Confederate troops to the base of the Solider's Monument at the Third Annual Pittsburgh Civil War Soldier's Fair held June 24, 2001 The Soldier's Fair is held annually to raise money to restore the Pittsburgh Civil War Monument in West Park. This year the Fair will held on June 22 and 23 with an overnight encampment in West Park.

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