

# The Allegheny City Society

## REPORTER DISPATCH

The Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore - Fall 2002

### Old Allegheny's Forgotten Playwright By James Wudarczyk

Although Bartley Campbell was one of the most popular dramatists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, today he is almost completely forgotten. Campbell, a contemporary of Bret Harte, Mark Twain and Joaquin Miller, was one of the first Americans to make playwriting a profession. He wrote for a theater that demanded popular dramas with stirring action, pathos and thrills, and the uncompromising triumph of virtue over evil.

Not only was Bartley Campbell a dramatist, but he was also a journalist, novelist, and poet, as well as the founder of some short-lived Pittsburgh newspapers and a New Orleans literary magazine.

In 1858 at the age of fifteen Bartley Campbell was working for *The Pittsburgh Post* as an office boy. Although he was a good writer, Campbell hated the dull routine of gathering news. By 1864 Bartley Campbell was actively involved in politics and established a reputation as a wild-eyed Democrat. As Percy F. Smith pointed out in his book, *Memory Milestones: Reminiscences of Seventy Years of a Busy Life in Pittsburgh*,

"Bartley Campbell, when not on a stump making the most wild-eyed Democratic campaign speeches, was writing for some of the papers, not only news but stories. He could think of a story or a play and grind it out almost in a night. He was never known to be in a bad humor and was a universal favorite. He was unattractive in appearance, but made up for all of his shortcomings by his charming disposition." Smith also pointed out that Campbell once libeled a clairvoyant in Allegheny City, for which he spent some time in jail.

When Campbell left the Post in 1865 to join John Pittcock as co-founder of *The Pittsburgh Leader*, he was the youngest proprietor in the country. Campbell married Emma Woodhouse of Allegheny. While working for the Leader, Campbell lived on Central, now Goebel Street (in the Manchester section of ) the North Side, and was a neighbor of John Orr, an Allegheny councilman. Orr once remarked to Edward C. Sykes, a columnist for *The Sun Telegraph*, "Some people thought Campbell was a bum, but when he received \$65,000 for *My Partner*, so he told me, persons who were his worst critics, were first to pat him on the back." Three years later Campbell left the Leader to establish *The Pittsburgh Mail*, a newspaper that folded shortly after its first publication. As a journalist Bartley Campbell was an ardent opponent of political corruption, and was summoned to stormy encounters with investigating committees in Harrisburg.

Following the collapse of the Mail, Campbell drifted south, eventually moving to New Orleans, where he worked briefly for *The New Orleans Picayune*. In 1869 while in New Orleans he left the newspaper business in order to establish a literary journal called *The Southern Monthly*. Although he had several contributions for his first edition, Campbell did most of the writing himself. It was clearly a task that was too enormous for one man to handle. The first issue included fiction, poetry, book reviews, humor, articles on journalism, lotteries, yellow fever, marriage, and Chinese pirates, as well as the initial installment of his original novel, *Who Killed Him?* His first novel, *Almost Lost*, had been serialized in *The Pittsburgh Leader* the previous year.



Playbill for *The Galley Slave*



The magazine received good reviews and gave Campbell an opportunity to exercise his skills as a poet. Unfortunately the magazine folded after a few issues, proving to be a too massive of a task for one



*Playbill for Siberia*

man to handle. With the folding of the magazine, Bartley Campbell eventually returned to Pittsburgh where he was the founder of *The Paper*, which quickly folded. His son, John, was born in Pittsburgh. He also had a daughter who died at the age of five months. The failures of the newspapers and magazine did not discourage Campbell from his writing career. His first dramatic work is generally considered to be *America, A Grand Historical Allegory*, which Samuel Barr of Pittsburgh copyrighted on May 22, 1871. To understand the writings of Bartley Campbell, one must understand that he was caught up in the romantic spirit sweeping the nation. It was a time when the West, though largely unsettled, was diminishing, and the South was still not reconstructed.

*Peril; or Love at Long Branch* was Campbell's first commercial success. He copyrighted the three-act play on November 1, 1872, although it was originally performed at the Pittsburgh Opera House on October 23, 1871. It was completely rewritten and released as *Matrimony*.

No matter what the critics wrote, Campbell continued to prove that his pen was quite prolific. Tradition has it that Campbell wanted to get away from the noise of Fleet Street in London. So he found sanctuary in Saint Paul's Cathedral where in the silence of the vaulted corridors of Christopher Wren's magnificent dome, he wrote the first outline of *A Heroine in Rags* on the back of an old envelope.

In 1877 Campbell wrote *Clio* and *The Lower Million*. *The Lower Million* was a labor and capital play that concerned itself with the Pittsburgh railroad riots of 1877. Many of the plays, however, were not commercial successes.

He once again found himself in financial difficulties. One hot day in June of 1879, a friend saw Campbell with a heavy coat that was completely buttoned. The friend realized that Campbell was trying to hide the fact that he did not have a clean shirt. So the friend bought Campbell lunch and gave him five dollars. Campbell used the money to buy pencils and tablets, which he used to write the first act of *My Partner*. The play brought a reversal to his fortunes.

Paul M. Potter, drama critic for *The New York Tribune*, wrote, "*My Partner* - won the fame of its author in a night." This play was exceptionally popular and was made into a motion picture in 1909. On April 17, 1880, *The New York Dramatic Mirror* wrote, "It is not an exaggeration to say that *My Partner* is Campbell's best play, and not only that but the best American drama by an American author ever written and put upon the stage."

Two weeks after the opening of *My Partner*, Campbell opened *The Galley Slave* at the Chestnut Theater in Philadelphia. Campbell did not repeat the mistake of selling the rights to the production. A motion picture version of *The Galley Slave* was made in 1910 with Teda Bar in the lead role.

Bartley Campbell considered *Fairfax* to be his favorite play. Perhaps it was because he was a poet and he received praise for the play from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Longfellow wrote, "I have rarely been so entertained, and I see in it the promises of an American dramatic literature."

On April 3, 1882, *The White Slave* opened at Waverly's Theater in New York and became one of Campbell's most profitable plays. One of Bartley Campbell's most quoted lines was taken from this play, "'Rags are royal raiment when worn for virtue's sake; or rather a hoe in my hand than self-contempt in my heart.'" Robert Campbell, Bartley's son copyrighted the play in 1909. Over the next several years this play was an annual attraction at the important theaters throughout the country. Campbell continued to produce plays, some of which were very successful and some that were not.

While it was said that Bartley Campbell was shrewd in business, he never turned his back on his needy friends. In the Pittsburgh area alone he loaned thousands of dollars in small loans and never tried to collect them. Along with Lester Wallack, Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Campbell helped to incorporate the Actor's Fund of America, an organization to provide assistance to people in the



entertainment profession.

He was working on two plays, *The New World* and *A Romance of the Rockies*, when in November, 1886, he suffered a complete physical and mental collapse, which resulted from overwork and financial burdens. Campbell was committed to an asylum in Middletown, New York, where he died on July 30, 1888. The Actor's Fund, which Campbell helped to establish and was very generous toward, helped to pay his hospital bills and funeral expenses. Upon the request of his family, Campbell's body was returned to Pittsburgh and buried in Saint Mary Cemetery.

Campbell's plays remained popular until the first two decades of the twentieth century. On April 9, 1940, Robert Campbell, son of the Allegheny playwright, donated a portrait by Lysander Thompson of his father to the North Side Carnegie Library, but the painting was believed to have been lost during the extensive renovation of the building between 1968 and 1972.

A revival of Campbell's work *My Partner* was performed from April 16 - 18, 1940, by the Allegheny Theater Guild at Allegheny High School, with George Eyrich, June Williams, and Elmer H. Maier in the lead roles.

Today only the tombstone on the grave of Bartley Campbell serves as a monument to the noted playwright and poet. The plain, but impressive, gray stone marker bears the inscription:

*Bartley Campbell 1843 -1888 Rags are royal raiment when won for virtue sake.*

*Mr. Wudarczyk, is a customer service representative and a long-time resident of Lawrenceville, with a passion for history.*

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## Frederick Osterling Tour



F. J. OSTERLING

The Fall tour by the Society of the houses designed by Frederick Osterling was held on a beautiful day. With temperatures in the high 70's, who could not enjoy a walking and trolley excursion though the Brighton Heights section of the City. Starting at the Brighton Heights Presbyterian Church with an introduction into the life and the various projects designed by Osterling. Ending at The Greater Allen Chapel for a photographic display and refreshments completed a rewarding day. The private homes open for this one day to the public was well worth the cost of the tour.

John Canning, the Society's knowledgeable tour guide developed a descriptive booklet to accompany the event. Beautifully written and full of historic information about Allegheny's premier architect Frederick Osterling. If you missed the tour and would like a copy of the booklet send \$ 5.00 plus \$1.50 shipping and handling to: The Allegheny City Society, P.O. Box.

100255, Pittsburgh, Pa 15233.

## Grant's Tree by Ruth McCartan

A serious postcard collector would have scanned right by the card. Its original colors had faded and hand writing was visible on one corner and on the base. The subject of the card was a plain simple tree missing most of it's leaves with a short iron fence around it. Behind the skinny lifeless tree was a indistinguishable streetscape. For a collector interested in local history, specifically Allegheny City history the card was a find of the first magnitude. The typed caption read "Tree planted by U. S. Grant, West Park, Allegheny, Pa." Under the heading was hand written "I see this every Sunday as I go to church." What was a post card addressed to a Miss Goldie M. Walter of Blairsville, Pa. from her loving friend Emma, sent on February 24, 1908 doing in a second hand store in Westin, Missouri ?

Questions needed answered:

1. When did the planting occur,
2. Where was the tree planted by General Grant later President Grant?
3. Was the tree still alive?
4. Who were the friends Emma and Goldie, who exchanged this post card?

Wouldn't it be nice if you stared at a image long enough, cleared your mind of all distractions



and really concentrated the answers to your questions would be revealed. But alas this is not a movie. Some research was needed.

An historical timeline featured in Stephan Lorant's book, *Pittsburgh, an American City* states Grant was in the Pittsburgh area four times. But which one of these visits was the one in which he planted a tree in West Park? The most significant visit for the City of Allegheny was in Sept. 14, 1869, when then President Grant attended a German gathering after the dedication of the Humbolt Monument in the Commons. Maybe a special tree was planted as part of the dedication ceremonies to the German scientist and explorer. Looking through the newspapers of early Sept. 1869, no mention of a tree planting by Grant was found.

Historian Sarah H. Killikelly, in her book *The History of Pittsburgh* published in 1906 tells of a visit not listed by Lorant. A visit in Dec. 1879 by former president Grant, while on the final leg of his 2-year world tour.

This visit by Grant I ruled out because naturally you don't plant a tree in the middle of winter. Wrong, the correct date of the planting of Grant's tree was discovered from a photograph found in *In and About Allegheny* published exclusively for J. G. McCoy & Co. in 1904. On the page entitled West Park Views is the same leafless tree as the postcard Emma sent to Goldie. The picture's caption answers our first question, when. "Tree planted by Gen. Grant, Dec. 14, 1879."

An article in *Evening Chronicle* of December, 15, 1879 entitled *Planting the Linden* confirms the date and even the way a tree is planted in December. "...for the purpose of planting the American Linden that had been removed from another location earlier in the day. The hole had been already dug, and a small heap of dirt lay on each side. The tree was placed in position and a spade handed the General, who threw a few shovelfuls of the mound around the roots."

Question number 2: The location would be harder to discover. The parade route given in the newspaper accounts of the day gives North Ave. at the Second Ward school house as the site where the procession was halted. It does not tell us the specific location on North Ave. Just that the procession stopped, "General Grant alighted and entered the park at this point,"

The background of the postcard shows nothing distinctive to help pin point the site of Grant's tree. According to the Allegheny Commons, Visitor's Guide published by the Garden Club of Allegheny County, in 1997 an American Linden is to be found just as you turn the corner from Cedar on to North Ave. Could this be the tree?

John Makur, a Allegheny City Society member helped solve the final mysteries of Grant's tree. A collection of pictures, he discovered in the *Roto* section of a 1930's *Pittsburgh Press* reveals the answers to questions 2, location and 3 is the tree still alive. It states "Grant's tree died and cut down in 1908." Revealed behind the dead but historic tree is a building which answers the question of the exact location. A four story brick apartment building, with distinctive corner covered balconies is shown. This structure is found at the intersection of Palo Alto Street and the 300 block of North Ave. It looks the same today as it did in the early 1900's when the picture was first published. All you need do is compare the two images and the exact spot, is made known. Children's play equipment now cover the location of the long dead tree that General Grant planted one cold December day.

All the Grant tree questions have been answered. The mystery of who Emma and Goldie are and their personal history is still to be discovered.

*The writer is the Treasurer of the Allegheny City Society*



*Grant's Tree in West Park*



### **Allegheny City Society Inaugurates First Families of Allegheny City**

The board of directors of the Allegheny City Society is pleased to present the First Families of Allegheny City (FFAC) project. Borrowing an idea from the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society, the ACS is offering this program as an opportunity to promote a history of those individuals who can trace their origins to this region of Allegheny County in 1840—the year in which the Borough of Allegheny was incorporated as a first-class city in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

This project is open to any and all who can trace their family residence back to Allegheny City via birth, marriage, and death certificates as well as the United States census. Family histories submitted will be compiled as an archival record of this area for future research. A \$40.00 application fee will be levied to cover the cost of proofing research, to properly store this archival material, and to cover the cost of an elegant certificate of acceptance into this project. Please contact David McMunn (412.231.1316 or [LTEMcMunn@msn.com](mailto:LTEMcMunn@msn.com)) for more information or for the research kit necessary for application into FFAC.

### **Tiffany Window Restored and Installed in North Side Church**

On September 15<sup>th</sup> Calvary United Methodist Church during regular services the Louis Comfort Tiffany Ascension Window was presented. Later that afternoon the Allegheny Historic Preservation Society, who had raised the money for the restoration, held a special presentation service for the window.

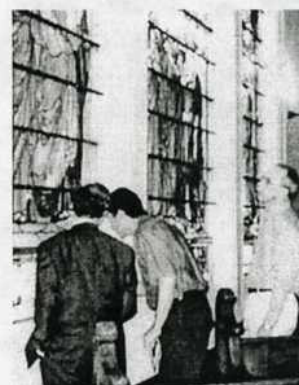


*Restored Ascension window*

"There were 8,227 pieces of glass that were cleaned," said Kirk Weaver of Stained Glass Resources, Inc. It took over 4,000 hours of work to restore making about that about half an hour for each piece of glass."

Pastor Tom Funk called Calvary an "important community resource." This was echoed by John DeSantis of the Allegheny West Civic Council who praised the effort saying, "The church is the heart of the Allegheny West Community and the restored window is spectacular.

Plans are to restore the remaining two Louis Comfort Tiffany windows restored by 2004. Already the Resurrection Window has been removed and restoration and cleaning have begun.



*Visitors inspect the newly reinstalled Tiffany Window*

### **Book On the Allegheny City Fire Department By Mary Wohleber Makes a Debut**

For Mary Wohleber, (at right) the fire station on Troy Hill was a "urban sanctuary" where "only goodness happens." So it was only natural that her first published book would be written about the Fire Department of Allegheny City

"It was ten years in the writing," says Mary, Troy Hill and North Side historian, referring to her book newly published *The History of the Allegheny City Fire Department*.







*Mary in Union Dale Cemetery at the grave of the first Fire Chief of Allegheny City James E. Crow*

As part of the celebration of the publication, the Allegheny City Society along with the firefighters from the Troy Hill Station planned a book-signing by Mary, on August 25, 2002 at the Troy Hill Fire House.

At the signing Mary recalled her youth when "the horses were exercised in front of the station and the kids of the neighborhood would come and watch." She also spoke of how the Troy Hill Fire House #39 is the oldest in the city and the last to use horse-drawn equipment.

"Over the years the Fire House has stood as a reminder to neighbors of their community. The Fire House bell, rededicated six years ago, has marked births, deaths, and the annual Troy Hill New Year's Eve celebration," said Mary.

The Fire House filled as friends, relatives, and students who were taught by Mary came not only to receive an autographed book, but to pay tribute to one of North Side's favorite daughters.

The book traces the history of the Department from 1829 when the Borough Council purchased two engines and hose carriers that were manned by volunteers, through the organization of a paid Fire Bureau that ended with the annexation of Allegheny City by the City of Pittsburgh.. Using historic records and other sources, Mary listed every fireman who served the City of Allegheny. Also, the types of equipment that was used is documented. The major fires that plagued Allegheny City are recounted. The book has a number of hard-to-find photos or the Allegheny City Firehouses many of which have been razed

A second printing of only 300 copies are available. They are signed by Mary. The cost per book is \$19.95 including tax. Books can be mailed for an additional \$3.50. For information on how to receive a copy call the Allegheny City Society at (412) 322-8807

### **Engine Company Number Three**

At the corner of Arch Street and Jacksonia (Jackson) Street stands the oldest remaining fire station of old Allegheny City. Built in 1877 to the design of Bailey and Anglin, architects, the style of this red brick and sandstone firehouse is indeterminate though the banding of the arches has a medieval Italian air that is doubtless due indirectly to the propagandizing of John Ruskin (1819-1900), the British essayist, critic and social reformer of this time period who advocated Italian Gothic as a style for the architecture of his own time. The overall composition, though, suggests the Italian Villa style, the tower—which once had an open cupola—being placed at the exact center of the front. This placement is unusual; most old firehouses, whose towers were used for hanging hoses to dry, had them to one side. Matthew Grebner now owns the space at 1410 Arch Street and uses it as a studio for himself and other area artists.

### **Fifth Annual Pittsburgh Civil War Soldier's Fair**

The Fifth Annual Pittsburgh Civil War Soldier's Fair will be held on Saturday June 14 and Sunday, June 15, 2002 in West Park in front of the National Aviary. The event is held annually to raise money for the Civil War Soldier's Monument in West Park.

During the day re-enactors will skirmish, cannons will fire and soldier's will drill. On Saturday evening a special luminary display around Lake Elizabeth will be held to honor the 4,000 Allegheny County residents who died during the Civil War. Also planned are a dress ball in the Aviary Tent. Craftors, exhibitors, and storytellers will be on hand. There is something for everyone so plan on coming to the Fair this year. Volunteers will also be needed for the event. If you have some time join in and help make the Fair another success.



*Luminary display around Lake Elizabeth in 2001*



## Upcoming events

### December

☞ Allegheny West Christmas House Tour December 13, 14 & 15 Call (412) 323-8884 for ticket and reservation information

### February

☞ Trolley Tour of the Harmony Short Line March 2003.

### April

☞ Third Annual Civil War Seminar April 5, 2003 at the Babcock with special speaker Bob Zeller, showing Civil War photographs in 3D. The Civil War Seminar raises money for the restoration of the Soldier's Monument in West Park

☞ Annual Meeting date and place T.B.A.

### May

☞ National Genealogist Meeting May 2003 at the new Convention Center

### June

☞ Fifth Annual Pittsburgh Civil War Soldier's Fair June 15 - 16, 2003 West Park in front of the National Aviary

**The Society also will be sending speakers to Northland Library and other locations.  
Watch in the next issue of the Reporter Dispatch for more information**

The Allegheny City Society Reporter Dispatch is published quarterly by the Allegheny City Society. If you have an article or information or idea about an Allegheny City subject that you would like to have or see published please contact:

Newsletter Editor  
Allegheny City Society Reporter Dispatch  
P. O. Box 100255  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233



## Allegheny City Merchandise For Sale

### ***The Story of Old Allegheny City***

Originally published by the Allegheny Centennial Committee in 1941, reprinted by the Allegheny City Society in 1994..

Hardbound Edition: \$30.00 Members; \$33.50 Non-Members Softbound Edition: \$20.00 Members; \$21.50 Non-Members

### **The Official 1899 Map of the City of Allegheny**

Full color lithograph originally published by the City of Allegheny in 1899, reprinted by the Allegheny City Society in 1994. It is wonderfully detailed with major buildings, institutions, traction companies, inclines, engine houses and much more scaled at 1 inch = 1000 feet.

The map measures 19 ¼" wide by 17 ½" long and is printed on heavy paper stock suitable for framing. \$15.00 Members; \$18.00 Non-Members

### **Pa Pitt and Miss Allegheny Postcard**

Originally published by Meda Logan in 1907, reprinted by the Allegheny City Society in 1996. 3 Postcards for \$4.50 Members; \$5.00 Non-Members

### **Coffee Mug - The Allegheny City Society**

Very nice ceramic coffee mug, white with black image of the Allegheny City Society seal on one side and the Allegheny Free Public Library on the other. Mugs are available while they last. \$5.00 for members and \$7.00 for non-members.

**Tour Booklets** From different annual tours of the Allegheny City Society. The multiple page booklets are chock full of historical details and numerous illustrations: **Brighton Heights (Davisville), Troy Hill,**

**Duquesne Boro, and Frederick Osterling in Allegheny Pa.**

Booklets are \$5.00 each for members and \$7.00 each for non-members.

**Booklet - *When I Look Back and Think***, by Susan Cooper Walker - a former resident writes about growing up and her life in Brighton Heights.

Cost \$8.00 members and \$9.00 non-members

**Book -*The History of the City of Allegheny Fire Department* by Mary Wohleber** already in the second printing, relates the history of the Fire Companies of Allegheny City and the men who fought and risked their lives to make Allegheny City safe. The book is autographed by Troy Hill and the Northside's most noted historian.

Cost: \$19.95

All prices include sales tax. A one-time shipping/handling fee of \$2.50 must accompany any mail order for multiple "ship to" addresses add \$2.50 for each address. Please make check or money order payable to The Allegheny City Society

These items may also be purchased at: McCartan's Hardware - 2101 Perrysville Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15214 (412) 231-1747