

# The Allegheny City Society

## REPORTER DISPATCH

The Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore - Fall 2003 # 28

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### The Allegheny City Society Presents Fall Tour Series

On October 19, 2003 the Society will hold a trolley tour: *The Cottages of Sewickley and Sewickley Heights*. There is limited space available so we are taking registrations now. Call the Society at (412) 322-8807 to register

Explore the village and country roads of the Sewickley area in the comfort of Molly's trolley viewing the locations of the homes of former Allegheny families.

Making the trek up river, in the beginning was only a summer event with small homes. Later with the advent of year around living these summer dwellings became "cottages" only large monetary resources can build. Sewickley Heights the locale of : Franklin Farm, built by B.F. Jones and later the home of the Robinsons; Goodwood, the home of the Byers of Ridge Ave.; *As You Like It*, conceived and built by the widow of William Thaw, Jr. of Lincoln Ave. Impressive, virtually unchanged and carefully preserved Wilpen Hall the home to the William Penn Snyder's of Ridge and Grant Sts., Allegheny.

The Sewickley area residences: the William Walker home, Muottas, the Pontefract family home, Bagatelle.

The tour begins and ends at the Sewickley Valley History Center. Registration begins at 12:00 and the trolleys leave at 12:30 returning 4:30 p.m.

Cost for ACS members \$40.00 non-members \$50.00 Refreshments will be served at the Sewickley Heights History Center.

On November 16, 2003 the Society will conduct a walking and trolley Tour: *Noteworthy Allegheny City Residents*

Discover the lost history of the former families of Allegheny. You know the names, the B. F. Jones's Sr. and Jr., the William Penn Snyder family, the Chalfant family of Ridge Ave., the Harry Darlington family of Irwin Ave. the Thaws of Lincoln Ave., visit their city home locations.

Experience the life style, view were it all happened before the migration to the country, Sewickley began.

Visit the homes and sites that were familiar with the notable families of Allegheny City. Many of the prior mansions of the Allegheny elite have become locations for businesses, corporations and educational facilities.

Cost of this Allegheny Adventure is \$ 40.00 members and \$ 50.00 non-members. refreshments will be served at the Boggs Mansion

Registration for the tour begins at 12:00 at B.F. Jones Mansion, the trolley leaves at 12:30 returning 4:30 p.m.

Space is limited and registration is required

### The Society on the Road

On September 24<sup>th</sup> Society Historian Jon Canning talked at *Allegheny City Houses to Sewickley Country Homes* at the Sewickley Valley History Center. He discussed the romance of another era, when affluent families left their cosmopolitan life in Allegheny City for the rural pleasures

of the country and becoming a "gentlemen farmer". While the New York City rich went to Newport, well off Allegheny wealthy took the train up the Ohio River to Sewickley.

Country living had many pleasures for the families who left Allegheny City. But a social gathering place was needed to pursue the new past times of golf, riding to the hunt and motor car touring. The Allegheny Country Club had outgrown it's location in Brighton Heights so it followed it's members to the country. The Blue Book is filled with Allegheny family names, such as Byers, Jones, Robinson, Oliver, McKnight, Thaw and Snyder, listing Sewickley and later Sewickley Heights as their summer and later their permanent address.

### **Journeys End by Mary Wohleber**

You may think that everything caused by the upheaval to get to the North Hills from the Northside has left us, well, read on!

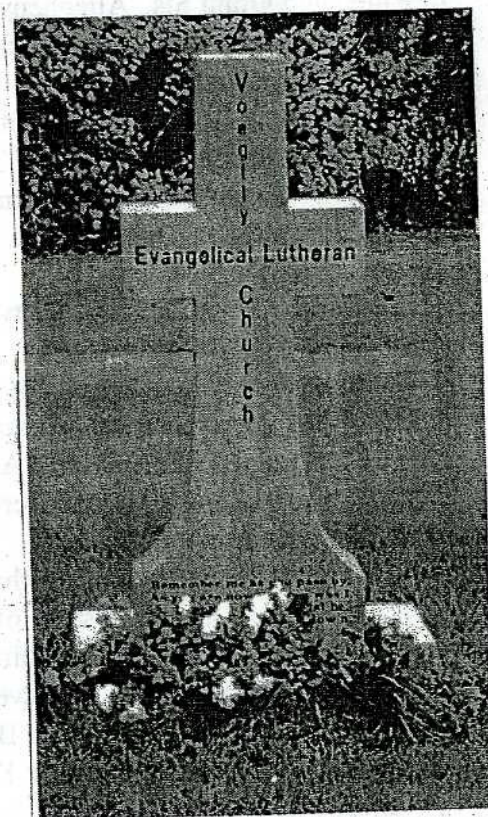
There was all that turmoil happening on East Ohio Street at the intersection of the Voegtly Evangelical Lutheran church and the Sarah Heinz House. Some of you may remember that one stayed and the other vanished, BUT one thing still remained--the cemetery in the backyard of the Voegtly Evangelical Church. The cemetery had been there since before the beginning of the church..... forgotten!

In 1852 land had been purchased on Troy Hill by Voegtly Church Council for a cemetery and some of the bodies had been removed the new cemetery on Lowrie Street, but not all of them. One must remember what it was like at that time. There was only a dirt road and just paths up the hillsides and it was the custom at the time to bury the remains of the dead in the most convenient place--in the yard of the church where they could be visited and be remembered by their loved ones.

That so many remained is not surprising. Legend has it that a fee of \$1.00 was charged to transfer and re-inter the remains on Troy Hill. For some that was a week's pay, families were large and death a frequent visitor. Also people at this time were very transient and so most of them were just left in peace. At least that is what they thought. They were, until progress came and tore asunder the earth that had for over one hundred years kept their secret well hidden.

My husband Alan and I bought a house in 1945 next to Voegtly Cemetery on Troy Hill. I immediately became interested in that open oasis of green space right outside my window. To this day, one of the tombstones thrown over the hill when a child's grave was abandoned sits in my kitchen.

There was a sexton and his family living on the grounds and they became dear friends of mine. I began to feel I had a vested interest in the cemetery and the Church. Later on, I wrote a History of the Church for the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society Quarterly.



When PennDot began work on the intersection of Route 28 and Spring Garden Avenue in 1987 they found the forgotten cemetery and came up the Hill to see me--realizing what they had on their hands--I told them no one would know how many bodies were buried there.

The State called in an archaeological team and the long process of exhuming the remaining bodies began. I visited the site quite often as I found it very thought-provoking and interesting to peer into what was once vibrant human beings that helped to develop my living space and lived a life that we only read about in books. The number of infant graves touched my heart.

The decision was made to catalogue, number, measure and to remove each separate one then to the Smithsonian for further study. This being done to ascertain what they ate, how and from what disease they died, what accidents were common and on and on. Now, they and their way of life were exposed to all the world and their peace was no more.

Come to think of it they even designed a T-shirt about it and now I remember I gave \$5.00 and never got the shirt.

Just last month I did see some trucks back at the cemetery by the Firemen's Memorial -- just thought they were getting ready for the Troy Hill Memorial Day celebration so paid no attention. On Memorial Day when I went back for the service, I gasped with surprise--there was a granite cross in a plot in the back of the Firemen's Memorial stating that here were the remains of the bodies removed from the Voegtly Church Cemetery! It is a simple gray granite cross 6 ft. high and crossbeams in proportion--inscribed on the face: Voegtly Evangelical Lutheran Church and on the base: *Remember me as you pass by, As you are now, so once was I, As I am now, so you must be, Prepare for death and follow me.*

On the Back: Incised, a rendition of Voegtly Church and, On the Base:

*This burial plot contains the exhumed remains of members of the former*

*Voegtly Evangelical Lutheran Church The unmarked burials dating from 1823 to 1860 were exhumed May--September 1987 from the Churchyard located at the corner of East Ohio Street and Ahlers Way in the City of Pittsburgh's Northside.*

*The burials were reinterred by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania October 2002 and May 2003.*

If you are in the vicinity of Troy Hill, drive straight back on Lowrie Street to the Cemetery--visit the Firemen's Memorial of Western Pennsylvania, then walk a few feet to the Voegtly Memorial and give a quiet thought to those who now....

*AT LAST REST IN PEACE*

### **Allegheny City Artist Honored with New Stamp**



An Allegheny City artist was honored with the issuance of four new 37-cent stamps in August. The stamps are to showcase the works of American arts and crafts. Mary Cassatt is no stranger to the United States postal scene. Twice before she has been honored. In 1966 the first stamp was issued and featured her painting *The Boating Party*. The second was a portrait of Cassatt and was issued in 1988 as part of the 1988 and her painting *Breakfast in Bed* was issued in 1988 as part of the Four Centuries of American Art Stamp.

Mary Cassatt was born in Allegheny City in May of 1844. The Cassatt family lived on Rebecca Street (now Reedsdale ) until 1847. Her father, Robert Cassett volunteered for public service and served on the Select Council

of Allegheny City in 1845 and 1846 and was Mayor in 1847.

Mary attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and then continued her studies in Europe. She settled permanently in Paris in the mid-1870's at the invitation of Edgar Degas and became one of the painters known as Impressionists. Cassatt was the only American to exhibit with the French Impressionists, gaining respect and success in France much sooner than in her native land. In her mid-forties, Cassatt's work focused more on the mother and child theme, for which she is best known. She also branched out from painting into printmaking and other graphic arts. Cassatt is viewed as the first great American woman artist.

In May Mayor Tom Murphy proclaimed Thursday, May 22, 2003 Mary Cassatt Day and "recognized her talent and as a daughter of our City."

The life and work of Mary Cassatt found a fan in Barbara Ruane. She recently moved to the Pittsburgh area and has with the help of the Society begun the task of erecting an historical marker near the her birthplace. Currently we are to PennDot in the hope of creating a "Mary Cassatt Garden" at the corner of Allegheny and Ridge Avenues.

### **Allegheny City Neighborhoods - Observatory Hill**

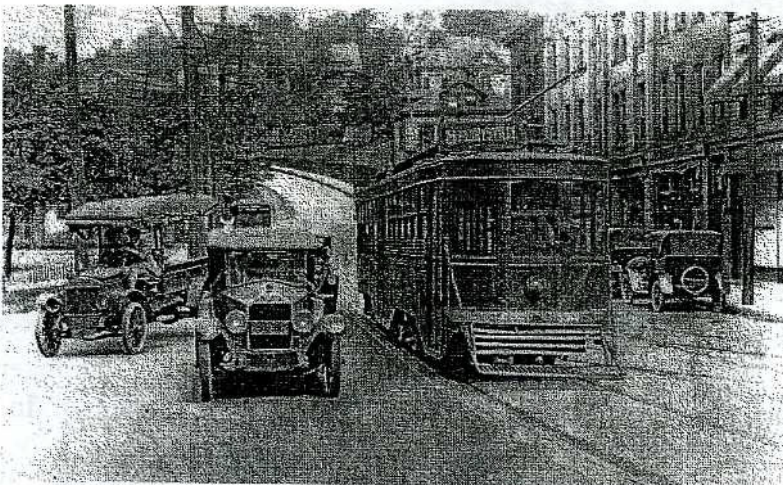
Observatory Hill is located on the Northside of Pittsburgh. The neighborhood stretches along Perrysville Avenue from the intersection of Marshall and Perrysville Avenues north to the border of Ross Township. Interstate 279, Ivory Avenue and McKnight Road form its eastern boundary. To the west, the neighborhood encompasses Riverview Park and borders on the Brighton Heights neighborhood.

Originally referred to as "The Douglas District", Observatory Hill was originally part of Allegheny City. Recorded history shows that by 1806, settlers traveled often from Pittsburgh to a fort located in Franklin, PA - hence Franklin Road, located just north of the Firehouse.

Perrysville Avenue was part of the Venango Trail, an Indian Path. This path became a convenient path for Commodore Perry when moving supplies north to Erie to build the fleet that defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812. Subsequently, a portion of 'the Venango Trail was rebuilt and 'planked'. It was named the Perrysville Plank Road in honor of Commodore Perry.

Between 1812 and 1890, most of the area was farmland. Two prominent landowners from this era were Samuel Watson and John Dunlap. Mr. Dunlap owned the landed now roughly bounded

by the present-day East Street, Perrysville Avenue, I-279 and Venture Street. Mr. Watson owned large tracts of land that straddled both sides of Perrysville Avenue and include all of the land where



**Photo Courtesy of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh  
Electric Trolleys and automobiles played a great part in the  
development of the Observatory Hill community**

Riverview Park is now located.

One of the barriers to the development of the neighborhood was the lack of convenient and reliable transportation. Although located only five miles north of downtown Pittsburgh, horses and horse-drawn trolleys had a difficult time making the climb to the neighborhood. The highest point in Pittsburgh is located in Observatory Hill. (Reservoir Hill).

The region's second electrified trolley line solved the transportation. The line opened in the mid- 1890's. Within a decade, the neighborhood was in the midst of a building boom. In 1894, Mr. Watson sold, to the City of Allegheny, the land that became Riverview Park. Mr. Dunlap sold his land to T.S. Burchfield. By 1903, the Dunlap Place Plan was in place, including the present-day streets of Richey, Ruggles, Dunlap and Cherryfield. Mr. Watson subdivided a large portion of his remaining land into the Watson Plan that is encircled by Watson Boulevard and Perrysville Avenue.

Development continued apace through the annexation of Allegheny City (and Observatory Hill) by the City of Pittsburgh in 1907. The neighborhood's signature structure, the Allegheny Observatory in Riverview Park, began operations in 1912.

Scientists at the Observatory quickly established themselves in both galactic and earthly circles. They pinpointed accurate movement of the stars and established exact hours of the day. This system of measuring time became known as 'Allegheny Time' and was used as the official time on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

With a growing population, more trolleys began to serve the neighborhood, including trolleys that ran down East Street and Perrysville Avenue. The most famous trolley in Observatory Hill was the No. 8. In fact, it is featured in an advertisement from the Mencken Real Estate Company when they marketed the Marshall Fields development around 1920. The building boom in the neighborhood continued until the late 1920s. However, as is evident by the 'hidden garages' advertised in the Marshall Fields development (and other houses developed at this time), the automobile began its ascendancy as the primary mode of transportation.

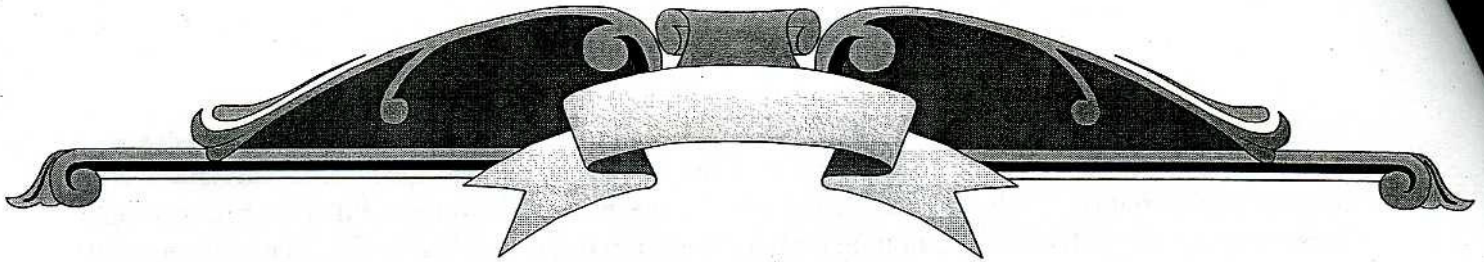
The trolleys remained in service until the mid-1960s, when they began to be replaced by buses. At the same time, many of the larger homes in the neighborhood were subdivided into apartments. By the early 1980s, many of these once grand homes had fallen into disrepair.

Toward the end of that decade, a new wave of homeowners began to filter into the neighborhood. Buying these once grand structures, this new generation began to restore the houses in the neighborhood. This activity has continued to the present. Observatory Hill continues to thrive because the high quality of life. Amenities include Riverview Park (featuring horse back riding, tennis, hiking, biking, tennis and swimming), easy access to the city and the North Hills via I-279, wonderful schools, and service-oriented neighborhood businesses.

The residents and business owners of Observatory Hill are also proud of the variety in our neighborhood - a diverse mix of long-time and new residents, skilled and professional workers, and a diverse cultural, ethnic and racial population make it a very desirable location.

Through Observatory Hill, Inc. (the non-profit neighborhood organization), we are working to preserve our past and invigorate our future.

*Reprinted from the Tour booklet of the Observatory House Tour May 19, 2002*



## 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 Mary, 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 and mail to:*

The Allegheny City Society

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