

The Allegheny City Society

REPORTER DISPATCH

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Society Holds Annual Meeting at Calvary United Methodist Church

May 13 was the date of the annual meeting of the Society at Calvary United Methodist Church. Members and guests were treated to a magnificent display of the recently restored Apocalypse Louis Comfort Tiffany window. The guest speaker was Judith H. O'Toole Director/CEO of Westmoreland Museum of Art who discussed Pennsylvania Artists in 19th- and 20th-Century France. She talked about American artists who flocked to France at the end of the 19th and the early 20th centuries to see the great art collections of Europe, study with master teachers, join a community of artists, and exhibit their work at the salons. Ms. O'Toole discussed those

Pennsylvania artists, starting with Benjamin West in the early 19th century and continued through the Impressionists and, later, the Realists, who studied in France and then brought their skills back to their native state.



Board Member David Grinnel with Ms. O'Toole

Sixth Annual Civil War Soldier's Fair to be held in West Park on June 12

One again the cannons will roar in West Park in front of the National Aviary on June 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This year's event was scaled back from two days because of budgetary considerations.



General Robert E. Lee with scouts from Troop #83 who helped the Society during the Fair.

However, the event still promised to bring something for everyone, even non-Civil War enthusiasts. Two artillery batteries, Hampton's and Carpenter's, will be in attendance as well as Union and Confederate troops. General Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Jeb Stewart and John Reynolds will be on hand to discuss military history and tactics. President Abraham Lincoln and Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln will

debate Confederate spy Rose Greenhow. This year also marks the return of the First Medical Battalion. Also scheduled is a special memorial ceremony for Paul Hansen and Corporal Billy, reenactors who have passed on since last years fair.

To top off the event fair goers will be able to see the restoration now in progress of the Soldier's Civil Monument and should be in full swing during the Fair. Be sure to mark May 12 on your calender and plan on attending.

Society Mary Cassatt Events

During the week of May 17 to the 22, the lobby of the City County Building in downtown Pittsburgh featured an exhibition of Mary Cassatt's work and life. The exhibit is part of the celebration of Mary Cassatt Week in Pittsburgh that culminated on Saturday, June 22, with the unveiling of plans for the Mary Cassatt Garden at the corner of Ridge and Allegheny Avenues. May 22, 2004 is the 160th anniversary of the birth of Mary Cassatt in Allegheny City. Over the past several months the Allegheny City Society has been preparing a program to commemorate this event. The program brought to Pittsburgh, Nancy Mowil Mathews Ph.D. of Williams College, one of the major authorities of Cassatt's life and work. Dr. Mathews spoke on the relationships that existed between Cassatt and the Allegheny/ Pittsburgh community. That program was held on the eve of Cassatt's birthday (May 21) at the Community College of Allegheny County's, North Side Campus.



The Cassatt booth at the Pittsburgh Home and Garden Show

On the following morning a Pa. historical marker was dedicated at a site close to the location of the Cassatt homestead. (In 1846, Robert Cassatt, Mary's father, was the Mayor of Allegheny City.) Following the dedication of the marker plans were unveiled for the establishment of an "impressionist-style" garden on the green space adjacent to the marker. At present the "green space" is a rather poorly maintained plot of ground at a large highway intersection near the Heinz Field. The Society is working with a local landscape architect, Lisa Kunst-Vavro. Lisa is presently chairing the landscape architecture program at Chatham College. The proximity of this site to the Community College of Allegheny County prompted the Society to begin a working relationship with the College and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in planning for the design, establishment, and maintenance of the "Cassatt Gardens."

During the Pittsburgh Home and Garden show, March 5 - 14, the Society set up a booth that proved to be very successful. Lois Yoedt and other volunteers welcomed people to join the Society and attend upcoming activities commemorating the life and legacy of Mary Cassatt. Approx. 1,500 programs were handed out and about 500 tracings given to children. Many thanks to John DeSantis for his generosity and expertise. And a special thanks to all the board members and other who took time to work at the booth.

Charles Avery: Allegheny City Abolitionist by David R. Grinnell

For about a century and a half, visitors who enter Allegheny Cemetery from Butler Street have been drawn to the massive Avery Monument located in Section 3. The monument is situated on top of a small hill, standing some thirty feet into the surrounding trees, and draws visitors in with its detailed carvings of wreaths, down-turned torches, statues of "Charity" and "Justice," and the front relief panel depicting the rise of African-Americans through education. Topping off the structure is the larger than life figure of the man whom the monument commemorates, Charles Avery. "The monument was created by a New York sculptor named, Louis Verhaegan, who is perhaps more widely known for his statue of Daniel Webster. The monument was constructed between 1858 and 1860 at the staggering cost of \$12,000. Most visitors would ask, "Who was Charles Avery and why this huge monument?"



Charles Avery

James Parton, a writer for *Atlantic Monthly* was one of the first visitors to ask such a question. Parton was so inspired by the monument and the life of Avery that he included a biographical sketch of him with details about the monument in the book titled, *People's Book of Biography or Short Lives of the most Interesting Persons of all Ages and Countries*, published in 1868. Other national publications soon followed suit. Descriptions of the monument also appeared in *Scientific American* and the *Christian Recorder*, the newspaper of the African Methodist Episcopal Denomination.



Avery's grave in Allegheny Cemetery

Charles Avery arrived in Pittsburgh about 1812 from New York at the age of twenty-eight. His intent was to establish himself as a druggist, a trade he had learned as an apprentice in New York City. Soon, he became partners with a Mr. Van Zandt and formed the firm Avery and Van Zandt. This partnership did not last long and by the publishing of the 1819 Pittsburgh directory, Mr. Avery is listed in partnership with James Stevenson. Stevenson later served in the U. S. Congress as a Representative from the Pittsburgh area between 1825 and 1829. It was during the partnership with Stevenson that Avery branched out into the manufacturing of white and red lead. These early partnerships were just the beginning of Avery's associations with other industrialists of Pittsburgh and Allegheny.

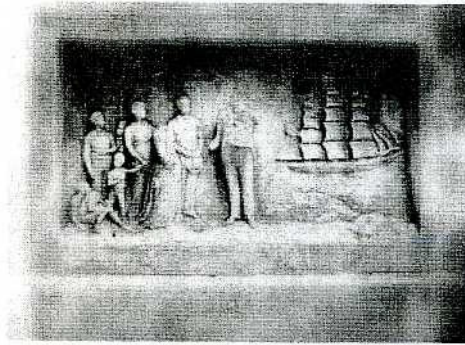
By the mid-1840's several cotton mills were located on what is today's North Shore. Avery in partnership with John and Thomas Arbuckle (later made famous because of their coffee distributing interests) formed the Eagle Cotton Mill. Later partners in this firm would include Josiah King and J. M. Pennock. It is through Mr. Avery's interest in this industry that he created the foundation of his wealth. However, it was Avery's later investment with Thomas M. Howe and Curtis G. Hussey in the Pittsburgh and Boston Mining Company that provided him with substantial wealth. Avery was, until his death, the President of this company.

The Copper Region in the Northern Peninsula of Michigan was ripe for exploration during the 1840's and Avery, Howe and Hussey pioneered this area by sinking the first mine. The Cliff Mine produced an abundance of raw copper. The pieces of copper that were mined were often so large that the smelters in the Boston area were unable to place the raw materials in their equipment. Thus, the trio of Avery, Howe and Hussey set out to build the C. G. Hussey Company in Pittsburgh to accommodate the vast size of the raw material. After the material was smelted and run into sheets, the copper could then be shaped into buckets, pots, pans and other useful household items.

Many of the individuals who knew Charles Avery, and recorded their observations for later generations, have maintained that Avery took very seriously the responsibility of his great wealth. Inscribed on the monument is the scripture "The tree is known by its fruit," from the Book of Matthew. Avery gave liberally to civic and religious organizations. Having been an early reformer in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Avery is considered one of the organizers of the Methodist Protestant Denomination. It is through Avery's church relationship that many of his activities are recorded, some in the denominational histories and others in the autobiographies of several of the leading ministers who served in this region. Additionally, Avery was very civic minded and participated in the formation of several projects which created a better living and business environment in Pittsburgh. He is listed as one of the original incorporators of Allegheny Cemetery and was active in the construction of bridges, the formation of the Monongahela Navigation Company and the creation of a natural gas company.

Perhaps the most significant recipients of Avery's liberal gifts were those of African descent living in North America and in Africa. Avery's activity as an abolitionist is perhaps the role that he is most remembered for today. One of the first indications of his anti-slavery activity

came during the 1830's with the Amistad incident where Africans had been captured and transported to North America after the slave trade was outlawed. He was known to give to the Amistad African's defense and provide funds to educate one of the young women, Sarah, at Oberlin College in Ohio. Later, Avery would also support Sarah as a missionary back in her native land through the American Missionary Association. It was with his support that the Mendi Mission was created and maintained for many years in Africa.



Detail on Avery Marker: behind Avery (head missing) is outline of Allegheny Institute at to right a schooner ready to transport "the transformed" to spread Christianity in Africa

The area that set Avery apart from other abolitionists of the time was his attitude that Africans and African Americans had intellectual equality with whites. With the influences of African American leaders in Pittsburgh like John Peck and Lewis Woodson, Avery created the Allegheny Institute and Mission Church exclusively to educate the African American population in North America.

This college was the first such institution to be formed in the United States and was later known as Avery College. Unfortunately, this institution only survived some 60 years before it was forced to abandon its mission. The only remnant of the school is the Avery Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church on California Avenue. From its beginnings, this congregation was connected with the Avery College.

Photographs of the old Avery College and Church Building prior to its destruction in 1968, making way for the construction of 1-279, show some interesting hidden doors that lead to a passageway underground. This was believed to be evidence of hiding places for the runaway slaves who were passing through Pittsburgh and Allegheny via the Underground Railroad on their way toward a free home in Canada.

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law 1850, Avery and several other leading citizens of Pittsburgh and Allegheny called public meetings in which they gave eloquent speeches against this law. It was because of this issue that Thomas Howe would become a successful candidate to represent Pittsburgh in the U.S. House of Representatives. Many of the words spoken by Avery and Howe at these public meetings were recorded in local newspapers.

Charles Avery died in 1858 on the eve of the Civil War. Today, his monument in not only a testament to his importance as an industrialist and civic leader of Pittsburgh, but to the political movements of his day. In his book, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slave*, Kirk Savage writes that the relief panel at the base of the Avery monument "is the first known instance of African American representation in marble or bronze." Therefore, the preservation of this monument, and so many more located within the boundaries of "God's Beautiful Acres" at Allegheny, is vital to the role of this important Pittsburgh cemetery.

This article appeared in the Allegheny Cemetery Heritage and is reprinted with permission.

David R. Grinnell is a board member of the Allegheny City Society and an Acquisitions Archivist for the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania at the Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center

Other News

❖ Two City of Pittsburgh school students were the first to receive \$50 awards from the Mary Cassatt Awards. The students are Louise Pierce, a sophomore at CAPA and Scott Cruz a senior at Brashear High School. The awards were given at the 2004 Pittsburgh Public High Schools All City Arts Showcase which is organized and hosted by the Manchester Craftsman's Guild.

Bishop Matthew Simpson - a Brief Biography by John Lyon

On March 14, 2004 Calvary United Methodist Church rededicated the Apocalypse Window. In the center panel it is written *In Memoriam Simpson*. What does this mean and who was Simpson?

Matthew M. E. Simpson was born in Cadiz, Ohio on June 20, 1811. 90 years later Cadiz Ohio would be the birthplace of movie actor Clark Gable.

When Matthew was two years old his father died and he was instructed by his uncle, Matthew, after who he was named. Matthew's uncle had severed in the Ohio State Senate for ten years and had been a judge in the County Court system. He was familiar with Greek and Hebrew, and gave his nephew many advantages that boys living in the west did not have.

When Matthew was 16 he left home and became a student at Madison College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. (This would later become Allegheny College at Meadville)

Because of his uncle's early teaching and his hard work study habits he became a tutor before he was 19 years old. He also apprenticed himself to physician. He continued to study medicine and in 1833 began his practice. At a camp meeting he gave his heart to Christ. He began to feel inward pressure to preach. However, Matthew was very shy and this seemed impossible. He began to speak at religious meetings and gradually gained more confidence. After nine months gave up his practice when Charles Elliott, a Methodist educator, asked him to become a circuit rider. (*see note below) On April 5, 1834 saddled his horse and rode out on his first circuit.

The shy boy from Cadiz Ohio became a master educator, the most influential Methodist of the day. He was a powerful speaker who never uses notes. It was said that audiences wept, clapped and leapt to their feet during his sermons. He was asked to repeat favorite messages over and over again. Abraham Lincoln considered him "the greatest orator he had ever heard."

Matthew was appointed to Liberty Street Church in Pittsburgh. It was here he met Ellen Verner. They were married in 1835. In 1837 he was asked to become vice president



of Allegheny College and a professor of natural sciences.

He accepted the presidency of Indiana Asbury (DePauw) University in 1839. It was during his presidency that he helped change the university from a Methodist experiment in as semi-wilderness to an established four-year college. In his spare time he found time to spy on the increasing student body by posing as student and taking part in "sprees" and to "wage war upon Mrs. Larrabee and her school" (Female Collegiate Seminary in Greencastle).

In 1844 Simpson was elected to the general conference and in 1848 was re-elected. In 1852 he was elected bishop.

An abolitionist, he became a close person friend to Abraham Lincoln. He often prayed with Lincoln at the White House. His powers as an orator made him admired and earned the gratitude of the nation. When Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, it was Simpson who preached the funeral sermon at the White House and in Springfield. He was the only person beside family members and the honor guard allowed in the private railway car that carried Lincoln's body to Springfield.

Simpson published several books including *Hundred Years of Methodism*, *Cyclopaedia of Methodism* and after his death a volume of *Sermons* was edited by Rev. George R. Crooks. He attended the general conference in 1884 but was in poor health and could not sit through the sessions but his farewell address was well received. Matthew Simpson died on June 18, 1884.

When Calvary Church was built the Verner family wanting to honor this great man donated and dedicated the Apocalypse window in his memory. A window in his memory is to be placed in City Road Chapel, London, where John Wesley preached. Information for this article was taken from the following web sites:

Depauw University

www.edauw.edu

Christian History Institute:

www.gospel.com

Virtual American Biographies

www.famousamericans.net

Annual Report of the Allegheny City Society Year 2003

The 2003 Annual Meeting of the Allegheny City Society was held at the McGovern Conference Center of Allegheny General Hospital. The William Rimmel Award was presented to Mr. Albert Mazukna for his lifetime of documenting the buildings and scenes of the North Side. A presentation of the Rimmel slides was given by Mary Wohleber.

During 2003 the Allegheny City Society concentrated its efforts in three major areas:

1. The preservation of the Civil War Monument in West Park- the Society continues to work with the City of Pittsburgh, Department of Public Works to insure the completion of the restoration of the monument. While the City of Pittsburgh's financial problems temporarily put a halt to the project, in early January 2004 word was received money has been allocated for the completion of the project.
2. Restoration of the Allegheny Commons. The Northside Leadership Conference, National Aviary, Garden Club of Allegheny County, and the City of Pittsburgh continue to work toward implementation of the master plan. Society board members continue to be active participants in the meetings and committees.
3. Mary Cassatt. In 2003, the Society began planning for events in 2004 to commemorate the 160th anniversary of Mary Cassatt, Allegheny City's most famous artist. The events begin with the annual meeting on May 6. On May 21, Nancy Mowll Mathews will speak on Mary Cassatt's ties to Pittsburgh and on May 22, the Mary Cassatt state historical marker will be dedicated at the corner of Ridge and Allegheny Avenues. The Society is working with Community College, Chatham College, PennDot and others to plan and construct a garden at the site of the marker.

In February the Society sponsored a tour of the Harmony Short Line. The bus tour began at the Boggs Mansion on W. North Avenue, stopping at points along the line that ran from the North Side to Butler and New Castle. Board member John Makar was instrumental in providing the history of the Short Line and locating the various landmarks that still exist along the route.

In April, the Society partnered with the Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Roundtable and John Heinz History Center to hold the 3rd Annual Civil War Seminar, *The Civil-War-A-Thon* at the Babcock in North Hills. More that \$1,500 was raised for the preservation and restoration of the Soldier's Monument in West Park.

In the Spring and Summer of 2003 the Society embarked upon joint programs with the Sewickley Historical Society to explore the common threads of Sewickley and Allegheny City. Many of the rich of Allegheny began the migration to the Sewickley area in the early 1900's. John Canning visited the Sewickley Historical Society and talked about the early history of these families as they lived in Allegheny City. This was followed in the October by at bus tour of the Sewickley Heights area and the homes of those who moved from Allegheny to the "Heights." The final part of the program was a tour of the Ridge Avenue area of the homes and other landmarks of the

families before their migration. The combination bus/walking tour visited homes along Ridge, Lincoln, and Beech Avenues before ending at Jones Hall.

The Fifth Annual Civil War Soldier's Fair was held in June in West Park. More than 1,000 visitors including Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln, Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee attended the event. With the help of Boy Scout Troop 83 from West View 1,000 luminaries were placed around Lake Elizabeth in remembrance of the 4,000 from Allegheny County who gave their life during the Civil War. The Sixth Annual Civil War Soldier's Fair will be held in West Park on June 12, 2004. The event will feature a memorial service for Paul "Doc" Hanson and "Captain Billy" longtime re-enactors who died in 2003-2004.

During the year the Society's Speakers bureau was on the road. John Canning visited a number of places during the year talking about the Germans of Old Allegheny and other subjects. John Lyon discusses Civil War Railroads at the Cranberry Library and John Makar talked about the Harmony and other inter urban railroads in the Pittsburgh area. The Allegheny City Society has a number of programs and speakers that are available at no charge to nonprofit and community groups.

This year the Society offered for sale reprinted booklets from our tours. The booklets are: *Along the Towpath, the River Road - A Historical Sketch of Duquesne Borough, the Eight Ward of Allegheny City* - 2000. *Davisville to Brighton Heights, A Trip Through Time* - 1998; *Hemat in Allegheny City, Troy Hill* - 1998; *The Czech Community of Allegheny City* - 2001; *When I Look Back and Think*, by Susan Cooper Walker and sold to Catherine S. Barker. The book covers the personal recollections of Susan Walker whose parents came to Pittsburgh in 1831 and moved to Davisville (now Brighton Heights in the 1850's) and *The History of the Allegheny City Fire Department* by Mary Wohleber.

The Society continues to publish our official newsletter, The Allegheny City Reporter Dispatch and answer questions and inquiries by telephone, letter or e-mail. The sale of The Story of Old Allegheny and other history-related items is ongoing. Members of the Board of Directors serve on a number of nonprofit boards and committees on the North Side and throughout the City of Pittsburgh.

The Society thanks the members of the Board of Directors and the community for their participation and support of our activities as we strive to preserve the history of our community and enhance the positive view of the North Side.

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