
The Allegheny City Society **REPORTER DISPATCH**

Fall, 2008

The Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore

Number 44

Antebellum House Tour a Great Success

By Ruth McCartan

After months of planning and research, October 11th finally arrived with a cool, sunny day for the Allegheny City Society to tour houses built before the Civil War. Our intrepid group met at the Commission Baptist church on Federal Street Extension for a short history of the conditions the citizens of Allegheny faced: no running water, out-houses, dirt roads and the effects of breathing coal smoke, to name a few.

The first antebellum house on the tour was the current home of Bill and Lorraine Casey on Federal Street Extension. Bill gave us a history of the house and a guided tour of the interior. Restoration of this house has been a labor of love for the couple and the results show. For those who study the Civil war, Bill has a sofa once owned by General Alexander Hays, hero of Gettysburg and once a resident of Allegheny City. To many this house was well worth the price of the tour.

Our rental school bus was waiting for us and off we went to explore historical sites of this time period. A few of the sites visited in Fineview were the former location of the St. Clare Ladies Seminary, the Henderson-Metz house and Heathside Cottage. In the Mexican War Streets neighborhood we viewed the architecture of John Chislett's Pittsburgh and Allegheny Orphans Home built in 1836. We followed the tow path of the Pennsylvania Canal on South Canal Street and saw the location of the aqueduct, where the canal boats were transported over the Allegheny River into Pittsburgh.

Allegheny City in 1860 had six cotton mills which employed over a 1,000 people, mostly young women and boys. The cotton strike of 1848 and its social and economic consequences was discussed as we drove by the locale of the protest. Slowly the bus drove down Pressley and Lockhart Streets, viewing the period houses on both sides of the streets. Stopping on Nash Street in East Allegheny in front of a present day gravel parking lot, (the place that Charles Avery once lived) David Grinnell told of Avery and the Institute

he created for the "classical education" of African-Americans in the 1850s.

A boxed lunch was enjoyed under the trees of Arbors, a bed and breakfast located on Perryhilltop, which in another era was a farm house. Special thanks goes out to Jim of Arbors for his help in the food department.

The next house on the tour was on Maginn Street. This was a Greek Revival structure built in the 1850s. Walking up the front yard into a restored entrance foyer was a fitting introduction to this home and a wood fire welcomed us into the front living area. Two floors were open for us to explore. Our gracious hosts Craig and Mike had a special treat in an upstairs bedroom – two antebellum quilts.



Back in the bus for the second leg of our tour, we stopped briefly on Hogback hill (now the upper parking lot of CCAC) and proceeded down Western Avenue to see the former location of the Robert and Kate McKnight house. Anderson Manor, built in 1830 on Liverpool Street in Manchester, was our next stop,. The home of Col. James Anderson, iron manufacturer and mentor of Andrew Carnegie, lived here until his death. It is believed this gesture of opening his personal library to young boys, helped influence Carnegie to his wealth to do the same thing all over the world. In 1880 the house was purchased by the Women's Christian Association of Pittsburgh and Allegheny and used as a home for unwed mothers and the elderly for over 100 years. The Manor today is the headquarters for Family Hospice and Palliative Care. Management has done an excellent job of working with the elements of the house to give a peaceful and restful feeling upon entering. A special thanks goes out to Ms. Thompkins for taking time out of her busy Saturday to open the house to us.

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We left Anderson Manor and Manchester and proceeded to the Woods Run area. We stopped briefly at the locations of the House of Refuge, Globe Plow Works and the Marine hospital. Driving down Morrell Street you would never think that the large red house near the end of the street was antebellum. John Canning gave a brief history of the family and the house as we left the Brighton Heights locale. Nearing the end of the tour we drove by the Thomas Marshall house on Marshall Avenue which had just received a new exterior painting. As the end of our journey neared we gave Connie, our bus driver, a round of applause. She is a Northsider and loves showing the old Allegheny City houses off to others. We left the tour wondering which building was the oldest and were there other antebellum houses still left to discover. But that is for another day.



Panorama of Pittsburgh at the Frick Art and Historic Center

On August 9th, members of the Allegheny City Society toured the Frick Art and Historic Center to view “A Panorama of Pittsburgh – Nineteen Century Printed Views”. During the nineteenth century, commercial printmaking flourished. Prints were made for myriad practical purposes and as illustrations for many types of books, newspapers, and magazines. Even though most of these commercially-made prints were not created to function as “art”, this exhibition demonstrated the artist talents of their creators.



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The above image is titled “*Penitentiary Near Pittsburgh*”, 1839 by Karl Bodmer. The view is of the Western Penitentiary that stood in West Park until 1886. The present National Aviary occupies the site today.

ACS Phone Out-of-Service

In order to economize on our expenses, the ACS Board has decided to cancel our phone service. To get in touch with us, use our email through our web site at www.alleghenycity.org and click on “Contact” or drop us a note at P.O. Box 100255, Pittsburgh, PA 15233.

Upcoming Dinner, Talk, and Tour of Allegheny Observatory

On January 16, 2009, at the Allegheny Observatory in Riverview Park, members of the Allegheny City Society have

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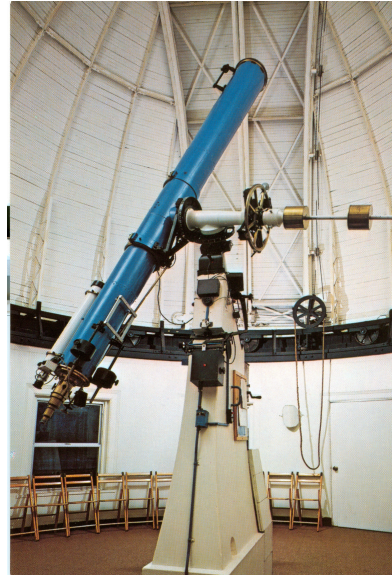
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Society have been invited participate in exclusive event to be at the observatory 7:00 PM. Reservations required because only people can attend this event. Make your reservation calling Ruth McCartan,

Senior at (412) 364-6132. A light dinner and a talk about John Brashear will precede a tour of the facility. If the weather cooperates, attendees will be able to view the heavens through the 13” refractory telescope put in service in 1860. The telescope was given to the observatory by the Allegheny Telescope Society.



Graduation – 111 Years Ago

By Ruth McCartan

Graduation from high school, that life-marking event in all our lives, was different in Old Allegheny 111 years ago. In 1897 many children were not given the privilege of attending school after the age of 13. A state law passed in 1896 mandated compulsory education only to the age of 13 and the attendance requirement for the year was for 80 days.

For the 74 graduating seniors from the Allegheny High School Class of 1897, sitting on the stage of the Alvin Theater, life had already been good to them. Their families’ economic position afforded them the opportunity to attend school and not seek employment to help feed the family.

In the late 1890's Allegheny's education system was divided into three sub-divisions: primary, grammar and high school. The first two sub-divisions each had 16 specific steps that a student had to accomplish before advancing to high school. The various step requirements were printed in the Board of Controllers annual report for each year

In the 1887 annual report for each step, 16 specific questions were asked such as:

- What are the principle exports of Indo-China?
- Name two of her largest cities?
- What is the net result of investing \$750 for three years, 7 months and 10 days, at 7 1/2 per cent?

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In the 1897 requirements, a few specifics under step 16 were

- Mental arithmetic – “finish book, omitting lesson 13 on page 165”,
- Geography – “Mathematical Geography, as much as is in Harper's Geography”.

The distinct difference in using specific questions in 1887 and citing textbook requirements in 1897 was probably because textbooks had recently been given free for the students use during the school year. Early in the 1900's the various 16 educational steps were combined and adjusted to produce the different grade levels that are more familiar to us.

The 1897 graduates were one of the first classes given the choice of selecting from four different courses of study. Those choices were Classical, Latin-Scientific, Commercial, and Normal.

The Classical program stressed a formal academic training: four years of Greek and Latin, ancient history, rhetoric, algebra, and trigonometry. Graduates from this division were able to go on to study medicine or law.

With the industrialization of the area, the Latin-Science program was created to fill newly established positions expanding in industry. This program had Latin offered in the first year, but for the remaining three years the student could elect to study German instead of Latin. (Selecting German over Latin was the only decision the student in any of the courses we able to make.) The science courses were physiology, chemistry, physics and physiography.

The Commercial program was only three years long: one year of Latin and German, a strong emphasis on bookkeeping, short hand, typewriting, and commercial law. Graduates in this program found willing employers in the businesses and industries of Pittsburgh and Allegheny.

The Normal program, also with three years in the classroom, contained Latin and German, mathematics, physics, and geometry. The last year was spent observing actual teaching in ward schools. The Normal program had the objective of providing teachers for the rising population that needed to be educated and trained to be productive American citizens. As was the sign of the times, most women elected the Normal program of study.

Today's graduates have different choices open to them but basically an academic or technical career path is still decided in high school.

The Allegheny High School Class of 1897 attended school in building that was only eight years old with an enrollment of 508 students. Monthly reports were sent home by the teachers that evaluated the students' attendance, scholarship and deportment. The evaluation had to be signed by a parent or guardian and returned to school the following Monday, or the student would not be able to take his or her seat. The school day was divided into two sessions; the morning session commenced at 9:00AM and closed at noon. The afternoon session started at 1:30PM and closed at 4:00PM o'clock; a little shorter than the current school day.

(Reprinted from the Reporter Dispatch of 1997)

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