

REPORTER DISPATCH

Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore

THE YEAR IN REVIEW 2015

Another banner year for programs, tours and events
by Ruth McCartan

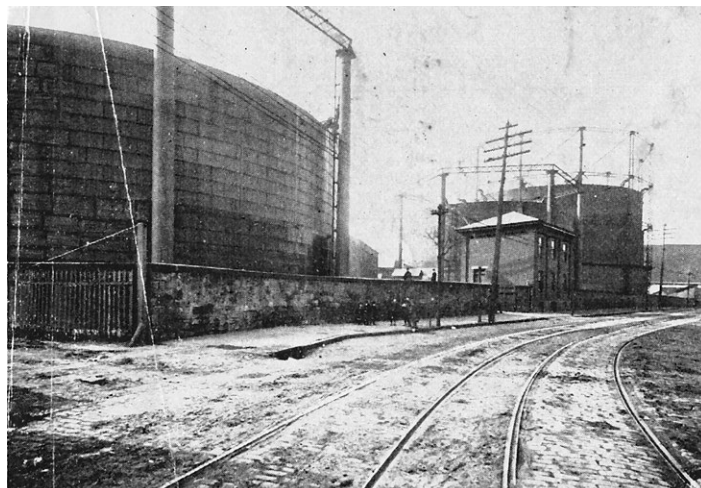
It sure seems that these years keep flying by but we don't seem to be slowing down at the Society. Remembering the past year and once again I am amazed with all we do. So let's review the last year.

The Dinner and a Movie film series at Bristro to Go got the year started. Tom Wilson once again did a super job with obtaining movies relating to Allegheny City. His first selection was *Mrs. Soffel* starring a young Mel Gibson as one of the Biddle boys who became involved with the wife of the warden, Diana Keaton. A romantic relationship developed and she helped them escape the Allegheny County Jail in 1902. The group passed through Allegheny on their way north and hopefully freedom. *I was a Communist for the FBI*, was the second film of the series a black and white feature relating the story of North Sider, Matt Cvetic's infiltration of a labor group during the communist scare of the 1950s. Finishing out the series was *The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing* starring Joan Collins, as Eleanor Nesbit and tragic consequences of her marriage to Harry Thaw.

David McMunn developed something new for the Society this year, a speaker series using the Allegheny Carnegie library as the venue. It was a great success with topics such as the old movie houses of Pittsburgh, with popcorn and lemon heads, the great gas explosion and finally the Presbyterian churches of Allegheny. Thanks to Dennis Bell who sold our books at each event. David has planned a wonderful series for 2016.

Once again this year the Society worked with the Greater Pittsburgh Civil War Round Table for a car tour of the Niles and Youngstown, Ohio area. President James McKinley was featured prominently in visiting both his reconstructed boyhood home and the McKinley memorial in Niles. The McKinley memorial was built with financial donations from prominent and wealthy donors. Old Allegheny money, such as the Byers and Snyder families, got their bronze busts featured in the court of honor with Grant and Lincoln. Because of scheduling conflicts this annual event will move to the fall with a tour of Butler County in 2016.

The Great Gas Explosion of 1927 was the topic of Steve Mellon's talk at the Society's Annual Meeting last April.



Mammoth tanks of the Allegheny Gas Co.

Mr. Mellon, a staff photographer for the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* and the 2015 Rimmel awardee showed vivid photographs of the effects of the explosion and its aftermath on North Side. An add treat that night was having in attendance a person who experience the explosion first hand Mr. Sam Cammarata. The Rivers Casino was the featured location for the dinner this year it was in the blast radius of the explosion in 1927. The view from the Allegheny room on the second floor of the Casino at sunset added to the beauty of the night.

The Society once again gave out two Cassatt art awards this year to students from the City school district. The awards were given at the ceremony at the Manchester Craftsmen Guild to Emma Kennedy and Breanna Stanton. The money will be used to further their educational plans.

"Neighborhoods in the Wings" was the title of our June event which was a morning and afternoon bus tour of the Spring Garden and East Deutschtown. Underwriting help for the project came from a Sprout Grant which the Society received in April. The main thrust of the Neighborhood in the Wings project was to highlight neighborhoods not normally featured in the various house tours on the North Side. A few longtime residents joined the bus tour and added their personal memories of the neighborhood and its unique history. Writing for this grant introduced the Society to the wonders of crowd sourcing and internet giving. A special "Thank You" to all who gave. The event could not have happened without the members

continued

of the St. Michael and All Angels Lutheran church who gave of their time and talents to make this a successful outing.

Music filled the late summer for the Society with a gala event at the Wigle Whiskey's Barrel House on Spring Garden Avenue in September. The group the "The Spring Hillbillies" helped make this fund raiser a success. The group features two Board members, Tom Wilson and Frank Seanez. The night also included a tour of the barrel house, a brief talk on the history of bitters and the life and times of David Hofstetter. Wigle Whiskey provided an array of their signature drinks aged right here on the North Side.

The outdoor music series featuring "Breakneck Creek" and "Ken Karsh and Friends" was forced – because of the weather – to move inside. The saviors of the night were the owners of Allegheny City History Gallery, Bill and Kim Gandy (Bill recently elected to the Board of the Society) for offering their location to get the series out of the rain. What a way to enjoy music, surrounded by the images of Allegheny City.

After a feature article in the *Post Gazette* about old Allegheny City, John Canning and David Grinnell conducted a sold-out tour of the Allegheny Commons. Our resident historians included stories about madams and magnets living in the Commons area during the walk.

The Society was asked by the Spout Fund to apply for another grant to expand on our concept of establishing a sense of place



an instill local pride. This fall the Society was awarded another larger grant to produce our "Heartland Project" featuring the neighborhoods of Perry South, Fineview and the Charles Street Valley. Planning is ongoing and the events relating to this project will be in the summer of 2016.

The Society's programs, tours and events don't just happen, it takes hours of meetings, research and did I say meetings to push forward the mission of the Society. A special thank you to all who helped make 2015 such a banner year. Please join us in 2016. To keep informed on the Society's upcoming events visit our website at www.alleghenycity.org and like us on Facebook.

THE HEARTLAND PROJECT

Major Initiative by the Allegheny City Society
by John Canning

Last June, the Allegheny City Society developed a program focusing on the history and present day developments in the North Side neighborhoods of East Allegheny and Spring Garden. We were fortunate receive funding for this event from the Buhl Foundation. Many of our members as well as residents of those communities also contributed financially through a crowd sourcing program overseen by the Sprout Fund. All in all, it was a great success in terms of active participation by many neighbors who attended.

Building on that success, the Society Board agreed to expand the format of that approach to the communities of the North Side located between the flats and the two northernmost neighborhoods of Brighton Heights and Observatory Hill. We chose to identify this "middle ground" as the Heartland. Included in the scope of this year's program are the neighborhoods of

Brightwood (Marshall-Shadeland), Cal-Bride, Charles Street (Pleasant Valley), Perry Hilltop, and Fineview.

Using the previous model, the goal of the program is to develop tours and discussion programs that will tell the story of when and how these neighborhoods developed, how they have changed over the past century, and what options exist for renewed development in the coming years. For the Society, this is an ambitious undertaking.

In order to create, organize and deliver an effective program we applied for and received a grant from the Buhl/Sprout collaborative of \$10,000. As we move from winter to spring we will be working with a residents in these Heartland communities to share with them the story of their neighborhood and to learn from them their hopes for the future.

As the program develops, the ACS membership, many of whom have personal ties to the Heartland, will be informed of events. Any stories or pictures you might have are indeed welcome. Contact us at info@alleghenycity.org.

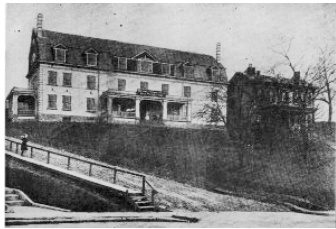
Stay tuned to this new adventure of the Society.

118 YEARS OF SERVICE

The Reformed Presbyterian Home's long history
by **Bill Weir, RPHome CFO**

Perched on top of one of the northern ridges of the old City of Allegheny on Lafayette Street (census tract 2614), the Reformed Presbyterian Home opened its doors in 1897 to several seniors who had no family or appropriate setting in which to live by themselves. For all of its 118 years of operation this non-profit corporation has been operated by the Reformed Presbyterian Woman's Association.

The first wood frame structure, still standing near the top of the hill above Lafayette Street prior to the mapping of Seabright Street, became home for the first group of residents. Tales have been told of the difficulty for both people and horses to get to the Lafayette Street structure, and the Board recognized quickly the need to be closer to the main avenue. Sometime during 1903, an opportunity to buy the corner lot on Perrysville Avenue and East Burgess Street presented itself, and the Home jumped at



the chance to move approximately 200 yards downhill to a large house more suitable to the resident's needs! There it has remained in the City of Pittsburgh and Perry Hilltop serving senior adults for the past 112 years.

Horses, trolly cars, buses, and automobiles have provided direct access along Perrysville Avenue for residents, employees, and visitors to the RP Home. Shortly following the move to the corner lot, in 1907, a dormitory style building containing 32 rooms was added at the north end of the property towards East Burgess Street, providing an expansive front porch for residents to enjoy overlooking Perrysville Avenue. Another new wing toward the west was added in 1957 that provided elevator access to all five floors and more attractive accommodations for nursing care. The standards for building safety began to increase in the 1970s, and in 1980 the Department of Health Life Safety surveyors threatened the RP Home with closure unless old buildings were replaced. Over a period of 36 months to the very day, the Board of Directors made the decision to remain as an anchor

to the Perry Hilltop neighborhood, secure the services of an architect and contractor, secure approvals from all authorities, secure the necessary financial funding, tear down two of the oldest buildings, build 42,000 square feet of new building all the while maintaining operations, and then dedicated the new RP Home to the ministry of the Lord for generations to follow. Modern accommodations for both retirement living and health care were a welcome improvement. Recognizing once again the change in landscape and the consumer desire for independent living, the RP Home added another 35 unit apartment complex in 2007.

It is difficult to describe the faces of change in operations that have occurred over the 118 year history of the RP Home. In the beginning, care of the sick was a mutual obligation with residents helping residents as each was able. There have been house matrons, aides, unlicensed caregivers, and licensed caregivers who have dedicated their lives to caring for people in need. The household model of operation gave way to the medical model, and in recent years the medical model has changed shape and size in many ways. The RP Home operated in its first 70 years without any license, but then the demands of regulations thrust the Home into licensure as a health care facility in 1970. In 1983 the RP Home opened its new building for the first time as a licensed and certified skilled nursing facility. In 2007 the RP Home became what is now known as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), and our campus has the capacity for 58 skilled nursing beds, 30 Personal Care beds, and 35 independent apartments some of which are under the wing of The Upper Rooms, Inc.

The RP Home cares for people from all walks of life with a host of different cultural backgrounds. The RP Home continues to serve a special blend of members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the local Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania populations. Long term care, short term rehabilitation, personal care, and independent living are all housed on the 2.5 acre campus. It has been an employer for hundreds of people from the North Side, and has been a place of refuge for many seniors in need of health care or who wish to be relieved of the responsibilities of property ownership and upkeep. Visitors will quickly understand the sense of community and family when visiting with those who live there.



Dormitory-style building built in 1907 next to the house that was purchased by the RPHome in 1903. Both buildings were replaced in 1983.

BREWERIES OF ALLEGHENY

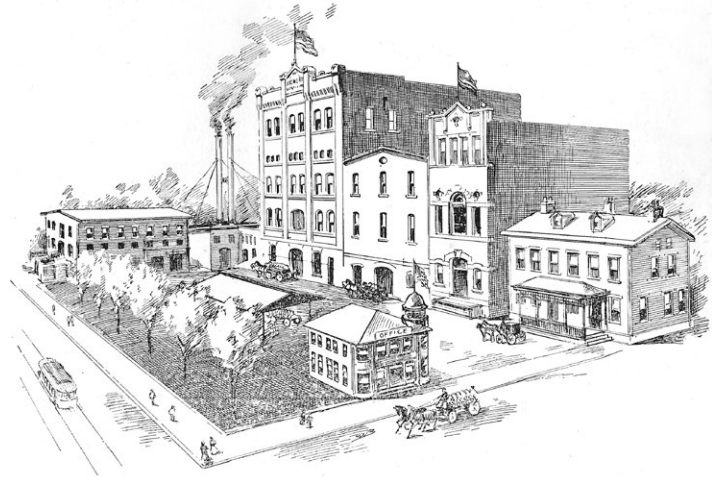
Program celebrates local brewers past & present

by John Canning

The program of the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Allegheny City Society will focus on the history and future of beer making in Allegheny City and the North Side. Please take note of the particulars of the April 27th meeting on the facing page.

It is not surprising that the brewing businesses of Allegheny City flourished in the eastern wards of the city where there was a heavy concentration of German-speaking immigrants from the Alsace, Wurtemberg, Bavaria, and many of the principalities along the Rhine valley. The earliest breweries in the region were those producing beers, ales, and porter most associated with the British Isles. But the lager beers, first introduced to the region by the John Straub in 1849, were produced at his brewery on Third Street (now Tripoli Street) in 1849. Within the next decade Conrad Eberhart opened his brewery at the foot of Troy Hill Road (1850), and Damas Lutz and Xavier Walz assumed ownership of the Lion Brewery which had been established along Spring Garden Avenue (1854). By the close of the 19th century many separate breweries, large and small, were operative throughout the eastern neighborhoods of Allegheny City.

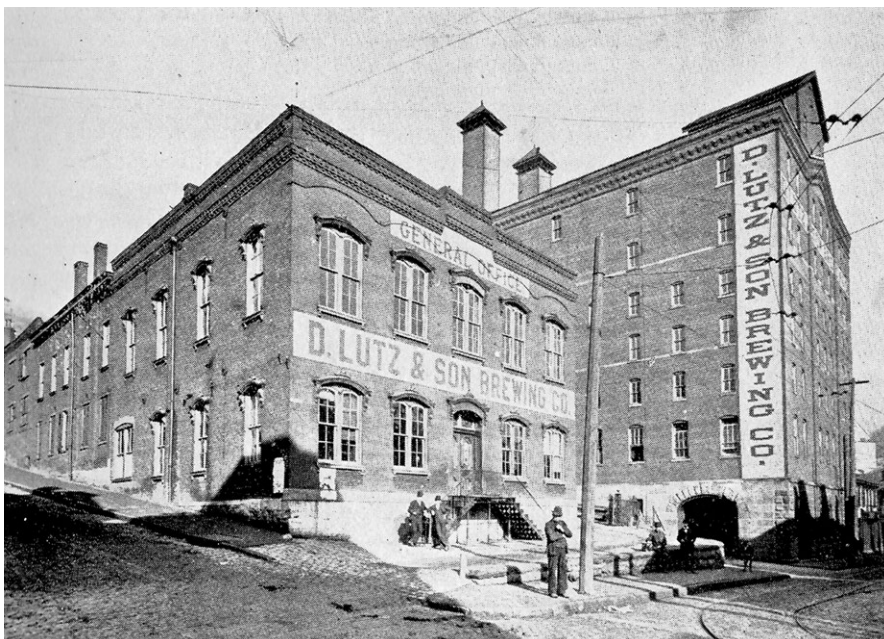
By the turn of the 20th century many of these small breweries had combined into two major trusts: the Pittsburgh Brewery Company and the Independent Brewers. These two groups dominated the brewing industries of much of Southwestern Pennsylvania until the coming of Prohibition.



Isaac Hippley & Son Brewery, 314–322 Spring Garden Avenue

Local small-scale craft brewing is a more recent phenomenon. The leader in this movement was the Penn Brewery established in 1986 by Tom and Mary Beth Pastorius. Tom and Mary Beth (ACS Rimmel Awardees) led the way in the State for the introduction of their line of fine beers brewed at the location of the 19th century site of the Eberhart and Ober Brewery. Penn Brewery, under the guiding hand of Tom Pastorius, chalked up many State and national awards for the extraordinary products coming from the copper kettles in their brauhaus.

Following in the Pastorius's footsteps, several new and small craft breweries have appeared on the North Side in the past year. They are: the Pig Hill Brewery on Troy Hill, the Spring Hill Brewery on Buente Street in Spring Hill, the Allegheny Brewery on Foreland Street in Historic Deutschtown, and the Mexican War Streets Brewery located in one of the Allegheny City firehouses on Arch Street in the Allegheny City Central neighborhood.



D. Lutz & Son Brewing Company main office at Chestnut Street and Spring Garden Avenue

Ed Vidunas, creator of the website, Pittsburgh Brewers (pittsburghbrewers.com), will be the featured speaker at the Allegheny City Society's Annual Meeting. Along with Ed, several of the local craft brewers will be present.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED
TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
The Allegheny City Society

Wednesday, April 27, 2016

Doors Open 5:30 pm, Cash Bar & Dinner 6:00 pm, Program 7:30 pm

James Street Gastropub and Speakeasy,
422 Foreland Street, North Side

Free Parking in the Gastropub Parking Lot on James Street

Free Parking in the Public Parking Lot on Foreland Street

Mr. Ed Vidunas will speak on the
“Breweries in Allegheny City Past and Present”
The talk will include a tasting of beers brewed on
the North Side today!

Please complete response form below. Cash bar. An all-inclusive plated dinner will be served with a balanced selection. Vegan/vegetarian option available upon request. Please place reservations early! Come meet old friends and make new friends. Come find out what is new in your Allegheny City Society!

.....
Name

Phone

e-mail

..... Yes! I will be there for dinner and program

..... I am attending the program only

..... Sorry, I cannot attend. Keep me posted on other events

Please enclose a check for \$42.00 to cover to cover the meal, and mail to:
ALLEGHENY CITY SOCIETY, PO BOX 100255, PITTSBURGH, PA 15233

Mail your response to the Society by April 9th

For more information, call (412) 766-5670 or (412) 860-6348

THE 2016 ACS LECTURE SERIES

Topics from the rich history of Allegheny City

by David McMunn

Join us at the Allegheny Branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh as we explore interesting topics from the rich history of Allegheny City and from Pittsburgh's North Side. There are so many stories to tell of the great place many of us call home. The North Side and the former Allegheny City was home to great thinkers, writers, artists, and political and social heroes and advocates. Not to mention some wonderfully diverse architecture. This ongoing program is sure to trigger great memories and great conversations.

All talks will be held in The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Allegheny Branch, 1230 Federal Street, North Side. The programs begin at 6:30 pm and will finish by 8:00 pm.

Parking is available in the Medical Building Garage on Federal Street. There is free metered parking along Federal Street and North Avenue after 6:00 pm.

Be a part of it! The fourth Monday, four months a year!

Monday, March 28

The Irish Community on Pittsburgh's North Side.

Guest Speaker Gerry O'Neil

The first in our Lecture Series, Gerard "Gerry" O'Neil, archivist at the Gumberg Library, Duquesne University will speak about the Irish community in Pittsburgh and will touch upon the Irish community that populated Allegheny City very early. He has written a book, *The Irish in Pittsburgh: Erin on the Three Rivers* that will be for sale at the lecture.

Monday, June 27

Famous Outlaws The Biddle Boys on the North Side!

Guest Speaker Bill May

Monday, September 26

The Methodist Churches and their Ministries.

Guest Speaker David Grinnell

Monday, November 28, Subject to be determined

