

REPORTER DISPATCH

Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore

THE YEAR IN REVIEW 2016

Society oversees a very productive year
by Ruth McCartan

Once again this year I was wondering if the Allegheny City Society had done enough to fill a page in the first newsletter of 2017. I didn't need to worry, we are a small group of over-achievers as this column will show. But before I can begin to list the historical programs, bus and walking tours, creative writing, speaking engagements, original research, government report filing, and attendance at various neighborhood meetings, I would personally like to thank the Society's Board of Directors who work very hard and give thousands of hours to keep this little non-profit chugging along.

The first quarter of the year included planning the Society's year. Our all-day annual retreat at the Arbors Bed and Breakfast allows the group to finalizing the yearly plan and talk about what they would like to accomplish. The first of the 2017 speaker series, managed by David McMunn, took place at the Allegheny Carnegie Library in March. The first of the Society's three newsletters is published in April and membership renewals also go out.

With April came our first big event of the year – the Annual Meeting – held upstairs at The James Street Gastropub and Speakeasy. The William Rimmell award was presented to Pittsburgh History and Landmarks for their work not only on the North Side but for their total body of work in the tristate area. Louise Sturgess was on hand to accept the award for the organization. Ed Vidunas gave a talk on local breweries and three brewers sent samples of their work for a taste test.

May found the Society preparing to give the Mary Cassatt Art Award to selected artists from the Pittsburgh Public Schools. The Society gives two monetary awards every year to honor this Allegheny City artist.

As the weather improved, Board members started to walk the designated "Heartland neighborhoods," placing door hanger advertisements for our bus tour of each of those neighborhoods. This type of target advertising is hard, sweaty work but it was rewarded with buses full of people who wanted to learn about their neighborhood. The Heartland Committee was also researching, writing and formulating the layout for the program booklet entitled *Spotlight on the Heartland: Quality of Place*



Annual Board Retreat 2017. Top row L–R: Tom Wilson, David McMunn, Amelia Gehron, Joann Siriano, and John Canning. Bottom row L–R: David Grinnell, Donald Zeilman, and Janet Gunter.

on Pittsburgh's North Side. Attendees would get a complimentary copy of this booklet which told of the history, lore and recent developments around their neighborhood.

June found the Society giving two bus tours of the first group of Heartland neighborhoods: Cal-Bride and Marshall-Shadeland. Then two weeks later, two more bus tours were conducted, this time of Charles Street, Perry Hilltop and Fineview. Thanks to the Spout Fund for awarding us a grant to underwrite this series of bus tours. The month ended with Bill May giving a talk on the Biddle Boys and their escape from the County Jail. Sounds like a great movie.

Over the summer, we watched the renovations of the Allegheny County Civil War Soldiers Monument in Allegheny Commons. The monument received a "face lift" and a cleaning. Ever since the 1990s, the Society has been working to get this forgotten historical veteran monument repaired. In October, with the work done and thanks to the McGinley Family Foundation and the City of Pittsburgh, a rededication ceremony of the Soldier's Monument took place.

The Northside Veteran Monument Initiative, of which the Society is a founding member, sponsored a five-monument cleanup day with the members of the Student Civic Engagement Council at the University of Pittsburgh. A very dedicated group of college students picked up trash and pulled weeds to help honor those who had served their country. Thanks go out to the Allegheny Elks and Molly's Trolleys who helped make this a successful day.

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Fall found board member David Grinnell giving Allegheny Commons tours a few evenings after the work day to those interested in learning the history of the first public park west of the Alleghenies. Before the weather forced us inside for the year, John Canning gave an historic tour to students of the Pittsburgh Project to help them with their endeavor of creating an entrance mural on Federal Street extension for the Perry Hilltop and Fineview neighborhoods.

The Society had an information and sales table at the Allegheny West House Tour in December. Going to the various North Side house tours throughout the year helps the Society

connect with interested people, telling them of the mission of the Society and the great work that it does. The last edition of the 2016 newsletters went out to our members before Christmas containing well researched articles and historic photographs.

So there it is, the Year in Review 2016. Can't believe how much we do. We have some big plans for 2017, so quickly renew your membership. Along with our web site at www.alleghenycity.com and a Facebook page, we have joined the social networking world with a MeetUp site that allows us to get information out on programs and events quickly. Join us at Allegheny City (North Side) History meetup. See you in Allegheny City!

A PIECE OF NORTH SIDE HISTORY

St. John's Hospital and Nursing School
by John Canning

The Civil War, a major catalyst for an economic boom period in Western Pennsylvania, was only the beginning of an industrial surge. This expansion had a profound effect on both the geographic and population growth of Allegheny City. Areas on the outer edges of the city's antebellum boundaries became new wards of the municipality. By the last decade of the nineteenth century Allegheny was the third most populous city in Pennsylvania. The areas along the north bank of the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers became filled with diverse industries and warehouses, all served by river and rail transportation systems. New neighborhoods of immigrant working class laborers and middle class shopkeepers, as well as schools and churches, were built in areas that had been primarily rural prior to the 1860s.

Among the concerns associated with these new communities was that of addressing the social needs of the orphaned, the elderly, the sick and the disabled. In these years, the social safety net was more often than not supplied by religious institutions. One such institution was the St. John's Lutheran Church



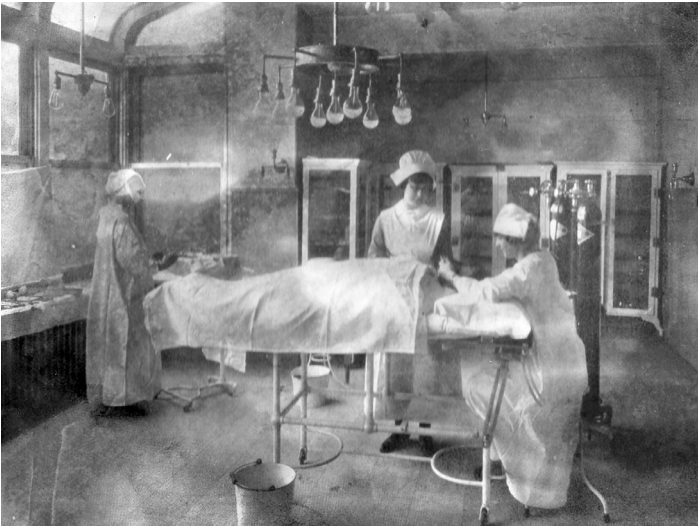
that was located on Lockhart Street in Allegheny's Fourth Ward (Allegheny's oldest Lutheran congregation – 1837).

By the mid-1890s there were about 15 Lutheran churches in Allegheny City. Some of these congregations worshiped and conducted their business in the German language while others had moved toward the use of English. Regardless of differences in language, theology, or church polity, church leaders sensed a common need to address the social ills of the community. It was from this commitment that Pastor Henry Schuh of St. John's Lutheran Church and G. D. Simen, a very committed Lutheran layman (from St. Paul's Lutheran church, Manchester) worked together in the establishment of a St. John's Hospital, Orphanage, and *Altenheim* (home for the aged) at a site along McClure Avenue in Allegheny's 11th ward.

The location of the hospital, orphanage, and *altenheim* was not far from the Woods Run community, home to many families who took their livelihood from employment in the industries along the Ohio River.

In the earliest years, support of these three institutions came from leaders of the Lutheran and German speaking organiza-





tions of Allegheny. Following the lead of the Lutheran pastor William Passavant, who had spearheaded the creation of a Lutheran-supported hospital in Pittsburgh, Schuh and Simen worked with the Lankenau Lutheran Sisters, a German order of deaconesses, to oversee the operation of the hospital. These deaconess organized the St. John's School of Nursing whose first class of trained nurses was graduated in 1902.

The original hospital building was designed by Alleghenian, Frederick Osterling. As the hospital grew in size and service to the community, a major expansion of the hospital along McClure Avenue was designed by another Alleghenian, R. Maurice Trimble.

In 1915, the hospital leadership passed to the Roman Catholic Sisters of Divine Providence. In the following years a nursing school residence and training facility was built on the Fleming Avenue side of the hospital. A convent for the sisters who

worked in the hospital was built as well. As this turnover in leadership occurred, and as the hospital expanded, the St. John's orphanage and alenheim relocated to Mars, Butler County.

In the ensuing years, the hospital passed from a religious leadership to a more secular board of directors. During the years from the late nineteenth century until the hospital closed in the late twentieth, over 1200 nurses were trained at St. John's nursing school and went on to serve in hospitals and other institutions throughout Western Pennsylvania.

Recently a collection of archives of the St. John's Nurses Alumni Association was donated to the Allegheny City Society. In keeping with the Society's commitment to preserve the history of North Side neighborhoods and institution, this donation will be taken under our care so that the story of St. John's Hospital will not be lost.



THE LUTHERANS UP THE HILL

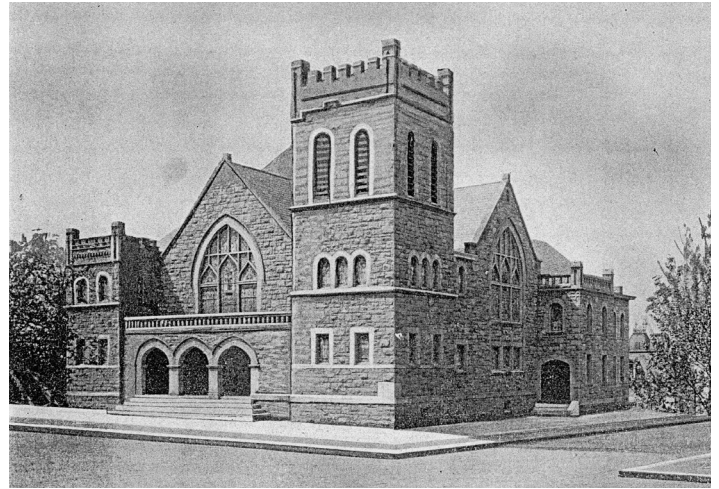
The story of St. Luke's Memorial Lutheran Church
by David Grinnell and Janet Gunter

The title of an article in the March 9, 2017 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* jumped off the page with great alarm for many of the folks on the North Side, it read, "Stained-glass thefts mar hopes for church renovation in Perry South." The article reported that thieves removed several stained-glass window units from the former St. Luke's Memorial Lutheran Church on Federal Street Extension. These individual units were part of a larger array that included the mural windows depicting the life of Jesus: one showing a youthful Jesus in the temple and the other showing him as the Good Shepherd. The theft left a noticeable incompleteness to the once artfully arranged colored glass composition. A few days later we learned to our relief that a few of the windows were recovered. But not all the window units were found, and their loss may leave the current owner's plan to restore the building in limbo.

This unfathomable episode left some of us wanting to know more about the people of the former St. Luke's congregation: those that built, worshipped, and sang in this great old building. So, here is some of what we have learned and wanted to share with ACS members.

FOUNDING AND RAPID GROWTH

In the years leading up to the establishment of St. Luke's congregation, the leadership of the Pittsburgh Lutheran Synod was interested in expanding their faith community beyond the original wards of Allegheny City up into the northern hill side neighborhoods beyond Federal Street and North Avenue. The opportunity for expansion became reality in the summer of 1900 when the original building and lot of the Eighth United Presbyterian Church became available at the top of Perry Hilltop. The Lutheran Synod purchased the facility for \$5,000 and began work to establish an English-speaking Lutheran congregation. Sunday evening services were held with the Rev. C.B. King, the Missionary President of the Pittsburgh Synod leading in the pulpit. Soon, the Lutheran families living in the vicinity began to take keen interest in formalizing a congregation. Thirty-six charter members formed the new St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Allegheny on August 12, 1900. The surnames of the charter members include: Adams, Autrieth, Crissman, Elbourne, Haugle, Johnston, Kalmyer, Kifer, Klein, Merker, Mitchell, Monath, Ruthel, Schmitt, Skiles, Stanford, Taylor, Unger, and Vance. Many of these early founding families had been members of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church on Stockton Avenue and St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Rev. J. W. Romich was installed as their



first pastor on February 15, 1901. Within two years under Rev. Romich's leadership, the membership grew to ninety-four and the enrollment of the Sunday school had risen to 246 scholars. Romich's pastorate would end in the fall of 1905 and at the time the membership had grown to 176.

Rev. Henry Hanson would arrive in the fall of 1906 to find a strong and growing congregation. It would not be long before they would outgrow their facility and by 1910 the congregation began purchasing adjacent lots so that they could create a new church building to accommodate their needs. On January 18, 1911, a congregational meeting was held and a committee presented plans for a new church building featuring "modified Gothic architecture, with interior octagonal design, with auditorium and Sunday School on the same floor." The total cost for the new structure was to be \$50,000. (*Dedicatory*, 1912) Beaver County Sand stone was chosen as the main construction material. Chauncey W. Hodgdon, a Pittsburgh architect, was selected to design the new building. Construction began in June 1911, with the cornerstone being laid on August 27th. The building was completed and dedicated with a week-long series of events from May 12–19, 1912. By the time of the congregation's twelfth anniversary, they were worshipping in a new building and could boast of a membership numbering over 450 congregants. The new sanctuary could seat 450 on the main floor and 200 in the balcony. To fill their services with music, an organ by the M.P. Moller Pipe Organ Company (Hagerstown, Maryland) was installed at a cost of \$4,000. The Carnegie organ fund contributed \$1,500 towards the new instrument.

Not wanting to demolish the building that they began in, the congregation had their original building moved to the back of their property for use as a gymnasium. Perhaps the growth in the neighborhood helped to encourage the congregation to provide suitable recreation facilities for the youth of the community.

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MERGER WITH MEMORIAL LUTHERAN

The North Side saw rapid changes to the urban landscape during the late '60s and early '70s. With the construction of State Route 65 and the Parkway North, vast residential parts of Manchester and East Allegheny disappeared under asphalt. With the coming of the highways, the loss of neighborhood churches was also felt. In 1969, the Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church at East and Hazlett Street was scheduled to be demolished for the new highway. This congregation's history extended back to the 1880s with the beginnings of a Sunday school in Reserve Township. Later they would formally organize a congregation along Butchers Run at 2224 East Street (in 1883). By 1950 they had outgrown their facilities and constructed a new church at East and Hazlett, which was dedicated in 1951. With the coming of the new highway, Memorial's congregation began exploring a merger with St. Luke's. Indeed, a suitable arrangement was made and formal agreements were signed on February 28, 1967 to create the new St. Luke's Memorial Lutheran Church, with the combined congregation worshipping in the Federal Street building. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania paid \$245,000 for the property on East Street.

It is interesting to note that Mr. John Q. Adams, one of the Charter members of St. Luke's, was still an active member of the congregation at the time of the merger.

The merged congregation would continue to survive for more than three decades at their Federal Street church. However, with the decline of the urban population in the vicinity and cultural shifts that account for a decline in church attendance, the congregation disbanded in 2007. Since that time, a series of private individuals have owned the massive structure, but the building shows the signs of degradation following a decade of being unoccupied. Over the last year, Mr. Glen Jackson of McKeesport has attempted to restore the building by repairing falling plaster and removing debris left by former owners. Jackson clearly adores the building and its history and we hope that the windows that were stolen just a few weeks ago will find their way back home where they belong and are cared for – by a person who has great passion for restoring this grand church on the North Side.

THE MEMBERS

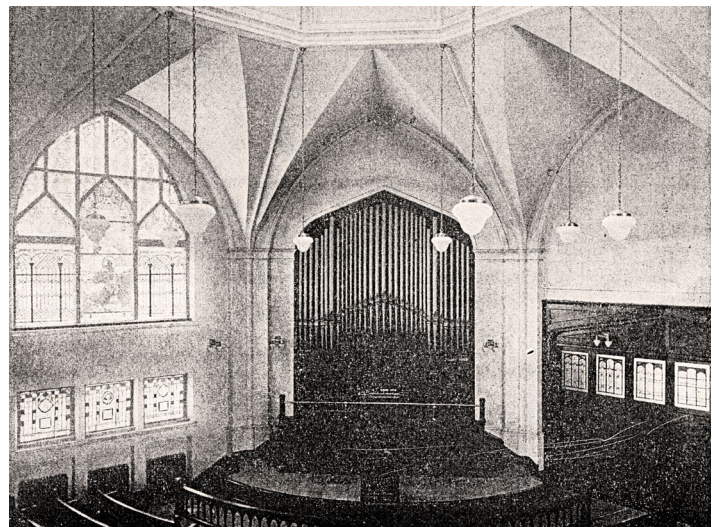
While a congregation's history is almost always dominated by the names of their pastors and lay leadership, little is often presented in congregational histories about the lives of their members. With the availability of digitized historic resources, it was nice to discover a little bit about a few members of St. Luke's.

W. Scott (1860–1936) & Ada K. (1864–1935) Newcomer were prominent members of the mortician profession in

Pennsylvania. The Newcomers were originally from the Lancaster area, but arrived in Allegheny in 1907 and ran a funeral home at 2106–2108 Perrysville Avenue for several decades. Mr. Newcomer was an officer of both the Allegheny County Funeral Directors Association and the Pennsylvania Funeral Directors Association.

William R. Haggerty (1868–1920), was a well-known Pittsburgh area business man, who built a trucking and transferring firm shortly after his arrival here as a young man from his native Ireland. Haggerty and his family lived at 1922 Federal Street.

Dr. Fred Lee Norton (1910–1987), a graduate of Perry High School, he would later attend Susquehanna University and then Medical School at the University of Pittsburgh. During World War II, he would serve as a physician in the army. He grew up at 214 McIntyre, but later moved to the Connellsville area where he continued to practice medicine.



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SAVE THE DATE – MAY 20

Tour of the Kerr House Museum and lunch in Oakmont
Join the Society for our first event of 2017, which includes a tour of the Kerr Memorial Museum followed by a buffet lunch in Oakmont. We will have a docent-lead tour of the 1897 Queen Ann-style house of Dr. Thomas Kerr, his wife Jessie and their daughter Virginia. The house brings to life the middle-class experience at the dawn of the twentieth century. The buffet lunch will be at the cozy Michael A's Restaurant & Lounge.

The cost is \$30 per person which includes the tour and lunch. The Kerr House has steps, so this event is not easily accessible for folks with physical disabilities. The tour may also include another site with an Allegheny City connection. Call Amelia at 412 766-5670 for more information and reservations.



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