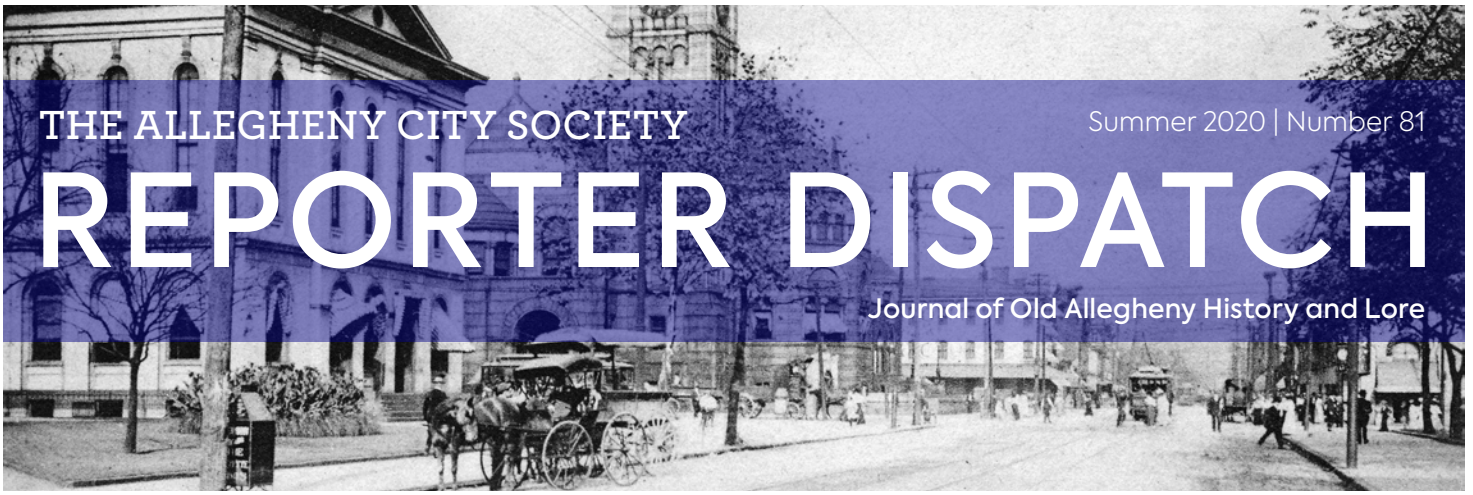


REPORTER DISPATCH

Journal of Old Allegheny History and Lore



Lest We Forget

An Allegheny Civil War hero
In Union Dale Cemetery

Ruth McCartan

“City Intelligence . . . One by One the bravest and the best of Union commanders are made to bite the dust by the unerring aim of the traitors of the South . . .” from *The Pittsburgh Daily Commercial Gazette*, May 24, 1864.

The Union commander referred to was Lt. Colonel James C. Hull of the 62nd Pennsylvania Volunteers, mortally wounded at the Battle of Laurel Hill, one of the early engagements of the bloodbath that was the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse.

Within a few days of the firing on Fort Sumter, James C. Hull had recruited a company of men calling them the “Federal Guards” and was prepared to muster them into military service. Considered an “unassigned company” with the Pennsylvania quota full, the men waited to be activated, and drilled in the Commons of Allegheny City. Service during the Mexican war gave Hull the experience needed to lead a company, having served in the 1st Pennsylvania, and also the leadership ability having advanced from private to sergeant at only 19 years old. On May 8, 1861 at a ceremony in Pittsburgh, the Federal Guards were presented with a flag from the Ladies of the Liberty Street Methodist Episcopal Church. This flag would become the banner of the 62nd Pennsylvania under the condition that the flag be returned to the Guards when no longer needed. Captain Hull then received a revolver from Allegheny’s First Ward School. The Liberty Street Church where Hull taught Sunday school added many a boy to the roster of the Federal Guards as did the First Ward School. Families of these young volunteers had faith

their leader: a Christian soldier would bring them home after their service to the Union.

Who was James C. Hull, now Captain of the Federal Guards? The Pennsylvania Civil War Veteran Cards describe him as 32 years old, height 5'11½", eyes gray, hair black, complexion fair, occupation carpenter. *The Pittsburgh Gazette*, May 26, 1864, gives a fuller portrayal: born in 1829 in Allegheny, he lost both of his parents by the age of seven. Samuel Hays, father of Alexander Hays the future Civil War general, rescued him from a life on the streets of Allegheny. A member of the Hays household when the Mexican War commenced, a young Hull joined the Jackson Independent Blues as a private with Alexander the unit’s captain. The Blues became Company A of the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment under the command of Colonel Samuel Black, serving in the capture of Vera Cruz, and the 28-day siege of Puebla. Returning home Hull moved to Wilkes Barre and worked as a carpenter, meeting Carolina Metzger who became his wife in 1852. Two years later he return to Allegheny City and joined the company of Mr. Parke, a master builder. Living on Sandusky Street with his wife and two children (Mary 4 and James only a few months old), he was working as a carpenter and builder when the Civil War erupted changing his family’s life forever.

In the summer of 1861, the Federal Guards waited, and when Colonel Samuel Black got the permission on July 4 to form the 33 rd Independent Pennsylvania Regiment, the Guards were ready, becoming the second company to muster in that very day for three years of active service. The men marched to the Liberty Street Station in civilian dress carrying their new flag with the band playing “The girl I left behind me.” They boarded the trains to Harrisburg with the residents of Pittsburgh and Allegheny lining the streets and cheering them on for many this was the first time they had ever left home.

continued



The Lt. Colonel James C. Hull headstone in Union Dale Cemetery, one of the notables discussed during the Society's tour of the cemetery in 2019

Later in the 1861, the designation of the regiment was changed to 62nd Pennsylvania Volunteers. Issuing of uniforms and muskets, along with days and days of drill, completed their military training around Washington City for the year. The hours of drill and ceremony given the men, under the leadership of their officers, was rewarded with them being selected as one of the ten best regiments in the Army of the Potomac. Months of waiting for action finally occurred in the skirmish at Hanover Court House on May 1862 in northern Virginia. Only a few days later on June 27 tragedy struck. Their beloved Colonel Samuel Black was shot from his horse while organizing their attack during the Battle of Gaines Mill an early engagement in the Seven Days part of the Peninsula Campaign. The second in command, Major Bowman Swietzer was captured and later sent to Libby Prison. In the confusion Captain James C. Hull of Company A took command of the regiment on that day and remind in command until his death two years later. Promoted from Captain to Lt. Colonel in one day, Hull led the 62nd on the assault of Mary's Heights in 1862 at Fredericksburg, and

in 1863 during the horrendous fighting at the Wheatfield during the Battle of Gettysburg. The human meat grinder action that was the Overland campaign in the spring of 1864 had the unit fighting in Virginia again pushing the Rebel forces back towards Richmond. Fighting at the Wilderness on May 5-7, the 62nd marched on to the Battle of Laurel Hill on May 8, the opening engagement of the savage fighting contained in the Spotsylvania Courthouse operations. The regiment was nearly at the end of their enlistment on July 4, which would make it three long years of hard fighting. Many true friends and comrades had died of disease or had been killed in the maelstrom of fighting - it was time to go home. But it was still May, not July, and General Grant was in command. There was still heavy fighting to be done.

That early May 8th, while leading his men back from a failed attack on Laurel Hill, Lt. Colonel Hull was beginning to rise up from the ground when a Confederate artillery shell exploded overhead sending projectiles through the men. Hull was hit in the right thigh, the soldier next to him killed instantly. Removed from the field by his soldiers he was transported first to a field hospital, then by ambulance to Fredericksburg and later on to Armory Square Hospital in Washington City.

Heartfelt letters were received by his family while he was in Washington advising them that he was improving. After a hellish surgery on May 22, the surgeons trying to remove a projectile from his hip Hull died, never leaving the operating table. His comrades in the 62nd collected money and had his body sent back to Allegheny for burial.

Lt. Col. James C. Hull was honored with a military funeral after a solemn service at his church on Liberty Street. Soldiers and civilians marched from the sanctuary in Pittsburgh, across St. Clair bridge to Allegheny, and up the rise to Hilldale cemetery where he was interred. With only a few months remaining on his enlistment Hull was back home forever.

The local members of the GAR honored Hull in 1880 by naming the GAR Post 157 after him. Caroline, his wife never remarried remaining on Sandusky street raising her two children and later receiving a military survivors pension. The remaining veterans of the 62nd Pennsylvania Regiment, on every Decoration Day, marched by their old commander's house on Sandusky Street, paying honor and respect to their commander who shepherded them through the war, cut down before his time at 36 years, until they could do it no more.

During the Civil War, the 62nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment lost 17 officers and 152 enlisted men killed or mortally wounded, and another 89 enlisted men to disease. The Gettysburg monument to the 62nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment was dedicated on September 11, 1889.



I.O.O.F. Benevolence

The Odd Fellows & Rebekah Homes

John Canning

On May 3, 2019, Pennsylvania Assemblyman, Adam Ravenstahl, announced a state grant of \$100,000 for the refurbishing of the Brighton Heights Active Living Center on McClure Avenue. This building was originally constructed by the International Order of Odd Fellows as a residence for the women of the order belonging to the Rebekah lodges. In fact, the site of “The Rebekah Home” was part of a much larger piece of property stretching from McClure to Fleming Avenues. On the Fleming Avenue site was a much larger facility, opened in 1923/24 as a residence for children of members of the Odd Fellows and Rebekah orders. The “Home for Orphans of Odd Fellows” was one of a number of similar facilities located throughout Allegheny City/North Side established in the 19th century by many religious bodies.

In many ways the I.O.O.F. was different than those that had ties to specific religious organizations. Founded in England in the early 19th century, the “order” came to the U.S. in 1819 and spread quickly throughout the country. Its symbol is three interlocking links representing Friendship, Love, & Truth. The function of the order was to visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead, and educate the orphan. Among its members were a number of national political leaders including Presidents Grant, Hays, McKinley, Harding, and F. D. Roosevelt, and well known citizens such as Charlie Chaplin and Charles A. Lindbergh.

Social historians often refer to the last decades of 19th century as the “Golden Age of Fraternalism.” Among the many fraternal groups that were part of the fabric of life in Allegheny City during those years were the Odd Fellow and Rebekah lodges. Found in many neighborhoods, these groups met several evenings each month. In 1907, the cornerstone was placed in the I.O.O.F. building at the corner of Jackson Street and Irwin Avenue (Now Jacksonia and Brighton Road). At that time there were 16 groups meeting throughout Allegheny, and a number of them were German-speaking.

For several decades the I.O.O.F. maintained a small “home” for orphans or children of single-parent I.O.O.F. members in Ben Avon. Shortly after the First World War, a significant tract of property was obtained by the order and it was on this tract, in present day Brighton Heights, that a new state-of-the-art facility for children was constructed near the John Morrow School. During the subsequent couple of decades, the “Odd Fellows Home” was a well-organized and well-managed residence for many children.

On March 6, 2011 an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, authored by Joann Cantrell, recounted the story of her grandmother’s time in “the Home” from 1920 to 1933. After speaking with Ms. Cantrell, I reconnected with Rebecca Kennedy McVickers, a classmate of mine in John Morrow and Oliver H.S., who now lives in Martinsburg, W.Va. Becky, along with her sisters and brother, lived in the Odd Fellows Home for well over a decade, until their graduation from high school. She recalled in many positive ways her life during those childhood years during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Over time, the need for group living facilities came under the jurisdiction of the courts. Many of these institutions either closed up or devised new programs to serve the needs of children in our communities. Becky Kennedy described to me that in her last years in the Odd Fellows Home “the county agencies for Children and Youth Services placed children in the Home for relatively short periods of time.”

Eventually the Odd Fellows Home became part of the St. John’s Hospital campus, and then, when that hospital was closed, the building was re-purposed as the Arthur Rooney Middle School for the upper grades of the John Morrow School. A similar transition occurred at the Rebekah Home on McClure Avenue. Some say that the property was sold to provide funding for more contemporary retirement facilities in the suburbs. There were several years when the building sat vacant. Eventually, wise leaders in the community realized that the size and design of the facility could be re-purposed into a community center. It presently is one of the City of Pittsburgh’s Healthy Living Centers. And, with the recent grant from the state, will be able to serve even more needs of North Side residents.

Perhaps, the Allegheny City Society will plan a future program at this site that will tell the story of the many organizations such as the I.O.O.F. that sought to meet the needs of children and widows during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



HOME FOR ORPHANS OF ODD FELLOWS. (Fleming Avenue at Davis Avenue, N. S.) PITTSBURGH, PA.



Riverview Park

David Grinnel

The American Civil War left its mark on the United States in many ways. For the Pittsburgh area, the Civil War was a catalyst for a great boon and the expansion of its industrial economy. The capitalists living in this region saw great profits from supplying goods such as rails for the growing railroad system, munitions, wagons, leather goods for harness, and even coffins, to the Federal government for use by the Union forces. As a result of the growing industry here, the central residential areas became more crowded as more human resources were needed to keep the factories in motion. The early residential communities were located in close proximity to the factories that were lining the river banks of the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers, so households often became choked with smoke and grime from industrial pollution.

The population of Allegheny City, now Pittsburgh's North Side, was concentrated in the lower four wards that surrounded the Allegheny Commons. But following the war, Allegheny City began expanding its borders to the north by annexing McClure Township and parts of Ross Township, these areas include today's Observatory Hill and Brighton Heights neighborhoods. Residents of Allegheny, with money in hand and the desire to live in larger open spaces, began to move north into these sparsely populated areas and create new neighborhoods. When today's Observatory Hill neighborhood was being developed, it was called the "North End" by the people of Allegheny. The Perrysville Plank Road (formerly called a *Turnpike*, aka, a toll road) was the main thoroughfare through the growing community and connected residents to the main commerce centers of in Allegheny and Pittsburgh. In the latter half of the 19th century, the creation of street car lines along Perrysville Avenue made travel from the "North End" of Allegheny much easier for both business and pleasure outings by families living in the area. It wasn't until after the relocation of the Allegheny Observatory to Riverview Park that the neighborhood became known as Observatory Hill.

A movement to create a city park in the North End began around the same time as the creation of Schenley Park in Pittsburgh's East End. Schenley Park opened in 1889 and at the time there existed a somewhat friendly competitiveness between the sister cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny. For many years, Pittsburgh residences had envied the Allegheny Commons as a gentle place to get outside and stroll along its

wide promenades where they would delight in social encounters with their neighbors. The people of Pittsburgh had nothing like it until Schenley Park was given to the city by Mary Schenley. Parks were important to the community as a way to escape from the grittiness of their industrial surroundings.

Riverview Park was officially opened to the Citizens of Allegheny City on Independence Day in 1894. The park was filled with a crowd estimated to be between 25,000 and 30,000 people. Thomas M. Marshall, a prominent Pennsylvania attorney who resided at what is now 222 Marshall Avenue presented the Property Deed for Riverview to Allegheny Mayor William M. Kennedy. Marshall was a leading advocate for the creation of the park. He along with many other Alleghenians, would raise more than \$110,000.00 to purchase about 115 acres of the Samuel Watson estate for the creation of the park. Both provided remarks, but perhaps the most notable address was given by former U. S. Representative William A. Stone. Stone gave a lengthy oration that included language condemning the wave of immigration from Eastern Europe and advocating for stronger immigration laws. He would soon be elected Governor of Pennsylvania and following his tenure in Harrisburg, would come to reside in Allegheny and have a lucrative law practice in Pittsburgh. The day of the dedication ceremonies ended with a grand fireworks display to the delight of the mass of attendees. For many years following the dedication of the new park, Allegheny City's Independence Day celebrations would include a fireworks show at Riverview.

Improvements to the new park began immediately. In the years following, more roads and trails were laid and structures were built, such as the many picnic shelters that once dotted the park, a merry-go-round, and even a zoo. During this time, bicycling was a very popular sport and bicycle clubs were formed throughout both cities. Riverview Park would have been one of many destinations for club members to train for their competitions throughout the Northeast and Midwest. The Keystone Bicycle Club and the Western Pennsylvania Wheelmen would host many meets with clubs from around Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, and Ohio for friendly races at Exposition Park where the Pittsburgh Pirates played. No doubt bicyclists would have been seen racing up and down the hills of Riverview Park, as is the case today.

Today we recognize Riverview Avenue as the main entrance to the park, but in earlier years the community leaders acquired additional property so that the park could be made accessible from other areas of the city. Before 1900, a dozen acres were added along Marshall Road to create an entrance on the eastern side of the park. Also, along the valley to the west at Grand Avenue, an entrance was created that leads to Kilbuck

Road, which gave so many of the families of immigrant workers that toiled in the mills and factories, and resided in Manchester and Woods Run, easy access to the resources in Riverview.

August Overbeck, a Spring Hill resident, had for many years kept many animals on his property and enjoyed sharing them with the neighborhood children. With his leadership, a zoo was created in Riverview within the first year. The old Watson homestead, which stood just inside the park entrance off from Riverview Avenue, was the site of some of the first facilities used as the zoo. In 1895 the zoo boasted that it included: wild cats, coons, elk, foxes, rabbits, owls, golden eagles, hawks, gulls and a rare crane. Soon additional facilities were built down the hillside along Overlook Trail and included two rows of display pens that would house the many animals. By 1911 the zoo included a cub lioness, black bear, a reindeer, herd of elk, Indian cows, burro, monkeys, wolves, foxes, rabbits, porcupines, groundhogs, cockatoos, pheasants, peacocks, storks, parrots, owls, raccoons, opossums, bald eagles, snakes, fish, water dogs, and squirrels. But soon, the end would come to the zoo. In 1907 with the forced merger of Allegheny City into Pittsburgh, all city property and operations were concentrated and managed from the new, bigger, Great Pittsburgh. By 1911, the Parks Department began making plans to remove the zoos at both Riverview Park and Schenley Park and bring them together at Highland Park. Thus, providing the citizens of Greater Pittsburgh only one zoo to

maintain and marking the end of a beloved feature in the former jewel of Allegheny City's Park system.

1895 was also the year that the Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh) proposed relocating the Allegheny Observatory from what is now Perry Hilltop to Riverview Park. It would take until 1901 for the University to begin construction on at the new Observatory site and another decade for it to be completed.

Throughout the early 20th century Riverview Park was the site of numerous gatherings. Church groups, social clubs and numerous political organizations would hold annual picnics in the various shelters throughout the park. These groups would come to include many of the congregations associated with immigrants from Bohemia, Slovakia, Lithuania, Croatia and Poland. Although the park was born during a time of great fear and mistrust of immigrants, it soon was available for all the residents of our great melting pot to enjoy.

The Centennial of Riverview Park was observed in 1994. The Observatory Hill community hosted the celebration with great fanfare. Evidence of community outreach efforts continues to this day with long running activities in Riverview Park like Heritage Days, Stars at Riverview Jazz Series, and Cinema at Riverview. For all these reasons and so many more, Riverview Park remains at the very center of our neighborhood and in the hearts of all who walk Riverview's trails.



Sources include: Historical Data, Pittsburgh Public Parks (1941), *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* archives on newspapers.com, and information from Allegheny City Society's Civil War Fortifications tour (2014).

Allegheny Observatory, Riverview Park, Detroit Publishing Company photograph collection (Library of Congress) Between 1900 and 1910



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The Society in the Time of Covid 19

Summer is here and the Society has not done any of the exciting new tours and events we had planned at our retreat in February. The world has changed a little in only a few months and it's not even correct to call where we are now the new normal. Thanks to all our members who renewed their membership, the money we receive helps keep the Society solvent and moving forward. A special Thank You to those members who donated directly to the Society above and beyond their dues.

The Board of Directors has decided to produce an added newsletter this year to keep our members informed and learning about Allegheny City during these times of uncertainty. The articles you read in the Society's newsletters are all original fact-finding on topics you will not discover anywhere else. They take time to research and write with enhancing historical images and all creatively laid out to give a glimpse into the people and

places of Allegheny and the North Side. I hope you enjoy this added newsletter and hope we can share history together soon.

Big News: Mark your calendar right now because on Saturday September 12 from 10:00 to 12:00 we are planning a special walking tour celebrating the life of Henry Phipps. I know that we have recently seen an uptick in Covid cases and social distancing and face masks will be required, and I don't know about you, but I need an Allegheny City history fix. You remember Henry Phipps, Andrew Carnegie's boyhood friend, bookkeeper and later partner in the steel making business who gave Allegheny the Phipps apartments and the Conservatory. I hope you can join us on September 12. To keep informed of the status of this walking tour please check our web site, Facebook and meet-up sites. Stay safe and stay tuned!