HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
JOINS IN FOSTER CELEBRATION.

More and more the people of America are coming to honor the memory of individuals other than military heroes. We are at last beginning to realize that it is our duty to perpetuate the names of soldiers of peace just as much as soldiers of war. Great inventors, scientists, explorers, authors, musicians, and writers of verse are today contributing more to the happiness and success of mankind than in any other period of history.

It was therefore a happy thought on the part of Mr. William H. Stevenson, President of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, and the Board of Directors when they decided to invite the City Council of Pittsburgh, and the Chamber of Commerce to participate in a program on July 4, 1923, honoring the memory of Stephen Collins Foster, America's greatest writer of Folk songs. It is not generally known outside of Western Pennsylvania that Foster was a native of Pittsburgh, that he spent the greater part of his life here, and that his remains are buried in old Allegheny cemetery.

Stephen Collins Foster was born July 4, 1826, on the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and it was on the anniversary of his birth, July 4, 1923, that the state of Kentucky, whose fame Foster had immortalized by the song "My Old Kentucky Home," paid him due recognition. The Old Kentucky Home Commission, created by an act of the Kentucky legislature in 1922, successfully conducted a state-wide program for raising funds to purchase the old Rowan Home, Federal Hill, near Bardstown, Kentucky.

It was in this beautiful old southern home that young Foster, while visiting his kinsmen, Colonel John Rowan in 1852, wrote the words of that immortal song "My Old Kentucky Home." And when Governor Edwin P. Morrow of Kentucky, speaking for the members of the Old Kentucky Home Commission, invited the citizens of Pittsburgh to
join with the people of the old Bluegrass state in publically honoring the memory of Stephen Collins Foster on the ninety-seventh anniversary of his birth, the invitations were gladly accepted.

The Pittsburgh representatives, consisting of the President and officers of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, the city council and the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, chartered a special Pullman car, and left for Bardstown, Kentucky, on the afternoon of July 3rd. The Historical Society was represented by its president, William H. Stevenson, John E. Potter and General A. J. Logan. The city council was represented by Daniel Winters, president, and Robert Garland. While A. L. Humphrey, president of the Chamber of Commerce, Thomas A. Dunn, and F. D. Marshall represented the latter organization. Dr. John W. Oliver represented the University of Pittsburgh. Mr. and Mrs. A. D. Rose (Mrs. Rose is a granddaughter of Foster's) and their two children, Dorothy and Dallas Clayland, and William Barclay Foster, a nephew, accompanied the party as special guests of honor and were presented to the audience by Councilman Robert Garland. Ex-congressman James Francis Burke of Pittsburgh delivered the chief address for the visiting delegation.

Upon arriving at Louisville at seven thirty o'clock on the morning of July 4th, the Pittsburgh delegation was met by a reception committee, headed by Mayor Houston Quinn, and tendered a breakfast at the Seelback Hotel. The party was then taken for a short drive about the city. Returning to the station, the private car, bearing the Pittsburgh party was attached to the special train carrying the Kentucky delegation from Louisville to Bardstown. Governor Morrow and his party, including the members of the Old Kentucky Home Commission, and Mayor Quinn and his friends, joined the Pittsburgh party and acted as hosts for the visitors.

Upon reaching the historic city of Bardstown, their local Chamber of Commerce met the visitors and extended them an enthusiastic welcome. After an automobile trip about the city, the visitors were conducted through the historic old St. Joseph's Cathedral, the first cathedral built west of the Allegheny mountains, and the second oldest in
THE FOSTER HOMESTEAD

THE OLD KENTUCKY HOME
Bardstown, Ky.
the United States. Following the dinner served by the Bardstown Chamber of Commerce, the visitors were then driven to Federal Hill, where stands the historic old Rowan home, immortalized for all time by the genius of Stephen Collins Foster, as “My Old Kentucky Home.” There, assembled beneath the trees on that sloping hillside were some 20,000 people, gathered from all parts of Kentucky, many from distant states, eager to participate in the memorial exercises on the patriotic day.

Old Federal Hill and its historic surroundings breathes the spirit of Kentucky hospitality. John Rowan, the builder of that old home was himself a native Pennsylvanian. He was born in York County, this state. Following the close of the Revolutionary War, he went west, settled near Bardstown, in Nelson County, Kentucky. And in building his home in the “wilderness of the west,” little did he think that in years to come, another Pennsylvanian, gifted with the genius of a great composer, would immortalize that home for all time to come. But such was the destiny of fate!

Here the social and cultural life of Kentucky centered for more than half a century. Soldiers, statesmen, artists and writers gathered there, and enjoyed the famed hospitality of the Rowan Home at Federal Hill. Among the great throngs that gathered therein during the course of years were three young men who were destined in later life to make themselves famous in the field of art and letters,—Theodore O’Hara, William Haines Lytle, and Stephen Collins Foster. O’Hara, author, soldier and poet, wrote the “Bivouac of the Dead,” and “A Dirge for the Brave Old Pioneer.” Lytle was likewise soldier, poet and orator, whose ode of Anthony to Cleopatra entitled “I am Dying, Egypt, Dying,” has become a literary classic.

But it was the third member of this triumvirate, Stephen Collins Foster, a native Pittsburger, who was destined to achieve greatest fame by composing the immortal song, “My Old Kentucky Home,” while visiting at Federal Hill in the year 1852. In later years it became the state song for Kentucky, and is said to be the most widely translated song in all the world. One authority says it has been translated into all the languages of Europe, into many
Asiatic languages, and sung by people in the "Isles of the Sea." (1)

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, the city of Pittsburgh, and the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce all brought deserving honor to themselves by participating in this historical program. Ex-congressman James Francis Burke, in delivering his masterful eulogy upon Foster well said that "Now after a lapse of sixty years, on this sacred spot of southern soil, the sons and daughters of Kentucky and Pennsylvania join in their tributes to the minstrel in whose heart that song was born, and dedicate to his memory the scene in which he found his inspiration."

President A. L. Humphrey for the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce presented to the Old Kentucky Home a beautiful painting of Stephen Collins Foster, which is to adorn one of the rooms in that historic shrine.

Daniel Winters, president of the City Council for the City of Pittsburgh presented a bronze tablet which has been placed upon the walls of the old home, bearing the following inscription:

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1826  1864
In memory of
STEPHEN COLLINS FOSTER
Born in Pittsburgh, Pa., July 4, 1826
Who on a visit to Kentucky in 1852,
wrote in this House the immortal song:
"My Old Kentucky Home"
Presented by
The City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
1923
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William H. Stevenson on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, presented de luxe copies of the souvenir program to the Governor of Kentucky and also to the Women's Committee who restored and have the care of the old Rowan homestead.

JOHN W. OLIVER.

(1) Current Literature, July 1901.
The City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Presented by
The Sun-Shines Bright in My Old Ken-Tuck-Y Home
My Old Kentucky Home
Who, Oh Virginia, To Kentucky In 1796
Born in Pittsburgh, Va, June 4th, 1826
Stephen C. Foster
In Memory Of
1826 1864