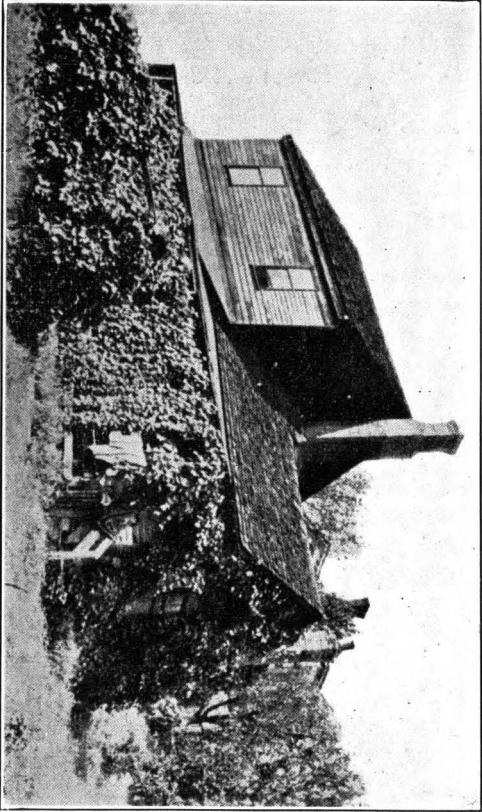


### **Earliest Settlements in the Fifteenth Ward of the City of Pittsburgh.**

The Indians were the first occupants and land owners in Western Pennsylvania. They left numerous signs of their presence in what is now the Fifteenth Ward of the city of Pittsburgh. They had a well-travelled trail along the right bank of the Monongahela at a very early day, and it was over this trail that the French and Indians passed, when they went out from Fort Duquesne, in 1755, and attacked and defeated General Braddock and his troops at the Battle of the Monongahela. After the English occupation, this trail became the Braddock's Field public road, and as such is plainly marked on the map of Pittsburgh, in 1795.

At the head of Mansion Street, Glenwood, was an ancient burying ground of that aboriginal tribe known as the Mound Builders. It included several mounds, the largest being about fifteen feet in height. Their tops were rounded, and the mounds, originally, were heaped with stones, it being the Indian custom to add more stones at each visit. In the seventies, when Second Avenue was paved through the Fifteenth Ward for the first time, James McKibben, who had the contract for grading this street, hauled stones for an entire winter from these old mounds, and used them for ballast. The enveloping cover of stones being removed, persons began exploring the mounds, searching for relics, and they were soon destroyed. No trace of them now remains. The cleared spots back in the woods near these mounds were known to the early white settlers as the "Old Fields." Fine forests originally covered this district. It was customary to hold Sunday School picnics and family gatherings in the beautiful woods at the head of Johnson avenue, near a famous old spring called the "Indian Spring," the waters of which gushed forth from the hill, and were clear and cold, on the hottest day. When Johnson avenue was graded and paved, the spring disappeared, its waters being carried off in sewers (1).

"Do you remember the spring, within Wylie's woods, just close to Glenwood ravine?  
Its waters were crystal, refreshingly cool, the purest and best ever seen.



**JOHN TURNER'S OLD LOG HOUSE**  
Loretto Street, near Hazelwood Avenue. Built about 1787



Ah! deep was the wood, in those long-ago days, and deep was the  
spring in its shade:  
Its murmur and splash was music to hear, as it laughingly flowed  
through the glade.  
On the brink of the spring, in those untrammelled days, Nature  
held court all her own,  
Her subjects were many, all loyal and true, who worshipped the  
queen on her throne" (2)

The Indians known to the first white explorers of Western Pennsylvania lived on the fine bottom lands in the present Fifteenth Ward. Many flint arrow heads have been found on the Blair farm, and near the foot of Elizabeth Street, in Glenwood (3); and on the Nixon place (originally a part of the John George Woods farm), in Hazelwood (4). On the Harry Woods farm, in Hazelwood, there were found tomahawks, stone cooking utensils, and numerous flint arrow heads. These were sent by Mrs. Woods to a museum in Washington, D. C. In a glass case on the third floor of the Carnegie Museum, Schenley Park, Pittsburgh, is a collection of flint arrow heads from the different states of the Union. Among them, and the only ones there representative of the state of Pennsylvania, are twenty-four arrow heads found in Hazelwood, and loaned to the Museum by James Dugan, Jr. (5)

The fertile bottom lands on the right bank of the Monongahela River, between Four Mile Run (near Greenfield Avenue) and the present Glenwood Bridge, proved especially attractive to home seekers, and many natives of Scotland, the "Land of the Thistle," located here at a very early day. They were simply squatters, having no legal title, but it was from these people that this fine tract of land came to be called "Scotch Bottoms," and in the court records of Allegheny County, Pa., the many different tracts into which this level bottom land was in later years divided, are designated as parts of Scotch Bottoms. In recent years, although the name is still used, it has come to be applied only to that locality which was the nucleus of the old Scotch settlement, the neighborhood of Rutherglen Street, and Marion Station on the B. & O. R. R. The settlements in Scotch Bottoms began at the close of the Pontiac War, there being then, for a period of several years, a cessation of Indian hostilities. Some of these people, after the Penns, proprietaries of

Pennsylvania, purchased the Indian rights to the lands in the present Western Pennsylvania, in 1768, and opened a land office, April 3, 1769, for the sale of these lands, acquired legal title to parts of the Scotch Bottoms. John Little, on Oct. 25, 1769, had a tract in Scotch Bottoms surveyed to him, which was patented on warrent to accept, dated Feb. 7, 1770, under the name of "Vineyard." John and Eleanor DeHass were living on Scotch Bottoms, after the Revolutionary War, on a tract of land surveyed Oct. 25, 1769, and afterward patented to them under the name of "Leisure's Retreat." James Ralph and John Mitchell also purchased large farms on Scotch Bottoms; and at a very early day, Charles Duke and Charles Clerk, the latter an English officer, located here. This Scotch settlement consisted in those early days of large farms, parts of which had been cleared, about the log cabin homes of their owners, while back of these rose the heavily wooded hills. Some of these farms had been owned by several different persons before being purchased by John Woods, one of Pittsburgh's first resident attorneys. In 1817, at the time of his death, John Woods was the owner of the five large farms which then included the Scotch Bottoms (6), as follows:

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| One surveyed in the name of Charles Duke, containing about -----   | 80 acres |
| One surveyed on location in the name of James Ralph, containing about -----  | 260 "    |
| One patented in the name of John Little, containing about  | 230 "    |
| One surveyed on location in the name of John Mitchell (a small part of this sold to John Turner,) containing about ----- | 330 "    |
| One in the name of John Woods, containing about -----  | 160 "    |
|  | -----    |
|  | 1,060 "  |

This magnificent tract of land extended from the Monongahela River for about a mile back on the hill, between Four Mile Run (near the present Greenfield Avenue) and a point opposite the mouth of Six Mile Run (at the location of the present Glenwood Bridge). A two story stone house stood on the John Woods farm, the home of the tenant on that farm. On the other farms were log dwellings.

Quite a number of the streams flowing into the Monongahela River at or near Pittsburgh were named from

their supposed distance from the Point, as follows: Three Mile Run, entering from the right side, at the present Brady Street; Three Mile Run, right bank, at the present Bates Street; Four Mile Run, right bank, near the present Greenfield Avenue. These three streams are now only sewers. Six Mile Run (sometimes called Street's Run) enters the Monongahela from the left bank, at the present Hays borough. The Hays family (for whom the borough was named) were very early settlers here, owning a large farm, and they established a ferry across the river from the mouth of the run to the upper end of the Scotch Bottoms, which was known as Six Mile Ferry. It was not discontinued until Glenwood Bridge was erected, in 1895. Nine Mile Run enters the Monongahela from the right bank, opposite Homestead, and forms one of the natural boundaries of the great Squirrel Hill district, a part of which, on the brow of the hill, is included in the Fifteenth Ward.

In the days of the pioneer settlers, they were greatly annoyed by the many little gray squirrels found in this district. They ate the grain stored in out-buildings for winter use, and even scratched up the seed planted in the fields, in scarce seasons. They built nests in the eaves of the log cabins, and by their noise and chatter kept the inhabitants awake at night. They proved perfect pests, and were so numerous that the settlers named the whole district, which is now one of the finest residential sections of the city of Pittsburgh, "Squirrel Hill." The people living here in early times were wont to speak of this district as having two sides, the one on which they lived, and the "Other Side," i. e., down on Scotch Bottoms, bordering on the Monongahela.

In that part of the Fifteenth Ward included in the Squirrel Hill district, the widow, Mrs. John Turner, and her five sons, were among the earliest settlers. She was better known as Mary Girty, being the mother, by her first marriage, of Thomas, Simon, James and George Girty, who were all grown when the family located on Squirrel Hill, in 1765. Little John Turner, her other son, was but ten years of age at this time, and had just been freed from captivity among the Indians. The Girty boys blazed trees, making, in the name of their mother, a claim to a large

tract of land here, on what was called a "tomahawk right," and erecting a log cabin, in which the family lived. In 1769 Thomas, Simon and George Girty each made application for large tracts of land, part of which included their mother's claim. Thomas Girty's farm bordered on what in later years became Bigelow Street. In 1865, when he first located on Squirrel Hill, he was 26 years of age. He married, and cleared and farmed his land. His wife's name was Ann and she is described as a foe to the Indians, and a "friend of America." (7). Thomas Girty had two children, John and Nancy (Gibson). While he lived on Squirrel Hill, he sometimes made expeditions as a scout, being loyal to the American cause. He rendered some very important services, during the Indian Wars in the Northwest, after the Revolution. At some time prior to 1792, he removed with his family to Girty's Run, on the Allegheny River. (This run is so named for Thomas Girty and family, and not for "the Girty family," meaning that of his mother and brothers.) Thomas Girty died at his home on Girty's Run, Nov. 3, 1820. There was a long account of his life published in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, at this time. (8). Simon, George and James Girty were respectively twenty-four, twenty-two and twenty years of age when they located on Squirrel Hill, in 1765. Having all been captives of the Indians for several years, they proved very useful as scouts and interpreters in the various military expeditions which went out from Fort Pitt. In 1778, they deserted to the British (9) and in succeeding years were the scourges of the border. All claims held by them, for land on Squirrel Hill, were forfeited. They never dared return here to live. John Turner grew up on Squirrel Hill into a tall, thin, active man. His complexion was sallow, and his eyes and hair black. He understood several Indian languages, and at the age of nineteen years, accompanied Lord Dunmore's army as a scout and interpreter. His education was scanty, but he was a man of great natural ability and shrewdness, and a hard worker. He farmed his land on Squirrel Hill, and sold great quantities of produce to the garrison at Fort Pitt, and the citizens of Pittsburgh. In those days all kinds of game abounded on Squirrel Hill, and Mr. Turner was a great hunter and trapper. He saved his money and invested it in real estate.

He is said to have owned at different times, no less than nineteen tracts of land. The former claim of Simon Girty was granted to John Turner, who obtained a Virginia title for 154 acres on Squirrel Hill, including this claim, Jan. 27, 1786. He was granted a warrant for the same tract by the State of Pennsylvania, Nov. 12, 1787. It was surveyed for him, March 13, 1788, and a patent granted, under the name of "Federal Hill," July 7, 1788.

John Turner married Susanna, daughter of Charles and Mary Clark, of Scotch Bottoms. Their home was a log cabin which stood on the upper part of Mr. Turner's farm. To this dwelling he added four rooms, two up and two down. Here the Turners lived. The site of the house is on Loretta Street, a few hundred yards from the Beehner home, on the Beehner farm. As the Turners were childless, they raised the children of Mrs. Turner's three sisters, John McCaslin, Turner Blashford and Susie Halstead (Mrs. David Irwin, 2d. and mother of David Irwin, 3d). Turner Blashford, a prosperous farmer of Squirrel Hill, drowned himself at the age of 56, at the mouth of the Four Mile Run. (10). John McCaslin was the favorite of the Turners, and is referred to as their "adopted son." Upon his marriage, the Turners gave him the use of their old home, and removed to a small log house on the lower part of their farm, to which they added two rooms. Here Mrs. Turner died, April 1, 1833, and was buried in the old Turner Graveyard, on the part of the farm (adjoining the present Mary S. Brown Memorial M. E. Church) for which Mr. Turner made the people of Squirrel Hill a deed, in trust to David Irwin (2d) and John McCaslin, on July 31, 1838. Mr. Turner died May 20, 1840, and was laid to rest beside his wife. Their graves were marked by two flat stones, level with the ground. The inscriptions are nearly obliterated, but the names, Turner, may still be deciphered. Mr. Turner was a man held in the highest esteem by the people of Squirrel Hill. He gave to the Peebles Township the lot on which the first free school in that part of Squirrel Hill was located, and also the ground on which the first church stood. His will bears date of April 10, 1840 (11). He bequeathed 113 acres, the upper part of his farm, to John and Priscilla McCaslin, in trust for their children. The heirs of Thomas Girty, Mr.



Turner's half brother, were dissatisfied with the will, and stood John McCaslin a suit in the courts trying to obtain John Turner's property from his adopted son, but were unsuccessful. (12) The McCaslins lived in this old log house for a long time. Then the farm was sold off. Joseph Bails was the owner, when in 1868, the farm was purchased from him by Martin Beehner. The heirs of Mr. Beehner are still the owners and live in a comfortable frame dwelling near the site of the historic Turner house. They rented the old house for years. Clarence Combs and family were its last occupants. The Beehner family were notified by the city to have it torn down, as it was deemed unsafe. This was done, about 1920. The logs were in a good state of preservation, and were used for firewood. Every year, as long as the old house stood, some of the McCaslin family used to come back to visit it. Nothing now remains of it but a few stones of the foundation. In their living room, the Beehner family have a splendid painting of it. In this picture, the old dwelling is surrounded by green fields, with cattle peacefully browsing therein. It gives some idea of the district, when it was a farming community.

Among the earlier land owners in the part of Squirrel Hill included in the Fifteenth Ward (besides the Girty and Turner families, who owned the larger portion of this tract, on the level above the brow of the hill) may be mentioned James Milligan, Adam Burchfield, Wm. Redding, and a few others. James Milligan was the original owner of the ground included in the present Calvary Cemetery, acquiring title to a tract of 300 acres here, soon after the land office was opened in 1769. (13) Later, title to 150 acres of this land was obtained by John Turner. By deed dated Nov. 4 1824, John Turner and wife conveyed 75 acres of this land to Robert Peebles, and by deed dated Nov. 29, 1824, 75 acres were conveyed (14) to William Peebles. The Peebles family were very prominent in this district, especially out at East Liberty and Peebles Township is named for them.

The Greenfield district was the home of men prominent in Pittsburgh's public and business life in early days. Judge Walter Forward, one of the most eminent men and brilliant scholars Pittsburgh ever produced, lived here, and Forward

Avenue was named for him. He was a member of Congress, Secretary of the Treasury (15) during the administration of President Tyler, and was appointed charge-d' -affairs to Denmark, by President Taylor. He resigned this post, in 1851, when elected President Judge of the District Court of Allegheny County, Pa. His death occurred Nov. 24, 1852. Maj. John Williamson Butler, Abraham Garrison (of the foundry firm of Bollman & Garrison, later A. Garrison & Co.), Wm. H. Williams, and other prominent men were living here in the fifties. In the sixties, B. F. Jones (of the firm of Jones & Laughlin) and George F. McClean (of the Soho Rolling Mills, operated by Morehead, McClean & Co.,) were living in this district. There were also some large farm-houses in the district, which in 1868, became a part of the city, as the old Twenty-third Ward. James Blackmore became Mayor of Pittsburgh in 1872, and served until 1875. During his administration, Wm. Barker, Jr., who then lived in this district, and was a member of city Councils, was one of a committee appointed to consider the opening of streets and other matters pertaining to the district. While the committee was making a tour of inspection, Mr. Barker was asked what he thought a suitable name for the district. He looked out over the green fields, dotted here and there with many comfortable farm houses and the handsome residences of wealthy business men, and suggested the name "Greenfield." It met with instant favor, and was adopted. The name is still given to this section of the city, although the beautiful green fields of this one-time rural community have long since disappeared.

On the highest elevation on the hills of the Greenfield district are the remains of "Fort" as it is generally called, although some of the people in the vicinity call it "Fort Black." This fort was part of the intrenchments thrown up, in June, 1863, when the invasion of Pittsburgh by the Confederates was threatened. (16).

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Mrs. S. Kussart

## APPENDIX

Will of John Turner (copy given p. 412 Butterfield's *History of the Girtys*, as taken from the original records), bearing date of April 10, 1840:

"In the name of God, Amen. I, John Turner, of the Township of Peebles, County of Allegheny, and State of Pennsylvania, yoeman, being weak of body, but sound in memory, mind, and understanding, blessed be the Almighty for the same, but considering the uncertainty of this life and the certainty of death, do make and publish this, my last will and testament, in manner and form following:

First of all, I commend my soul into the hands of my God, who gave it, and my body to the earth, to be buried in the burying ground on my farm in a decent, Christian-like manner, at the discretion of my Executors, hereinafter mentioned.

1st. As to my worldly affairs it is my will and I do order that all my just debts and funeral expenses be duly paid and satisfied, as soon as it can be conveniently done, after my decease.

2nd. I give and bequeath the upper part of my tract of land where I now reside, and adjoining the land I sold to John Patterson, containing 113 acres, be the same more or less, to the children of John McCaslin and Priscilla, his wife; only that they, the said John McCaslin and Priscilla, his wife, are to have and to hold the said tract of land with all the improvements thereon, during their natural lives, unless death should occur to either the said John McCaslin or Priscilla, his wife, and the survivor should marry again; then, in such case, their right, title, claim and interest shall expire and the said land so described become vested and divided, equal share and share, to each of said children, as aforesaid, the same as if their parents were dead or deceased.

I give my nephew Breden (Prideaux) Girty, son of Simon Girty, \$1,000; unto my niece, Sarah Girty (sister of Prideaux, and wife of Joseph Munger), alias Sarah Munger, \$1,000, unto John Girty \$500, being the son of Thomas Girty (Turner's half-brother), deceased. I give to Nancy Gibson, sister of John Girty, \$100; and one dollar to Cather-

ine Bealer; and for the attention and friendship I have received from Joseph Munger, I will and bequeath him \$500. I do reserve, free of all incumbrance, the (Turner) burying ground for the use of the public forever; and when all my debts and funeral expenses are paid, and all legatees are settled with, all my effects, whether personal, mixed, or real estate, shall be placed in the hands of Arthur F. Gore, to be distributed as he shall think proper, without any reserve.

Lastly, I nominate, constitute and appoint my much esteemed friends, James Sutch and John Patterson, to be my executors of this, my last will and testament, hereby revoking all other wills, legacies, and bequests by me heretofore made, and declaring this my last will and testament. In witness whereof, I have set my hand and seal, the 10th day of April, 1840.

JOHN TURNER, (Seal)

Signed in the presence of us,  
Abe. Hosmer,  
Thomas Sutch."

#### REFERENCES

1. Information furnished by the late James Wiley, who spent nearly his whole lifetime in the present Fifteenth Ward.
2. Extract from poem read on the occasion of Hazelwood's Old Home Night, Jan. 29, 1915.
3. Information by Mrs. Harvey Childs (nee Anna Blair), East End, Pittsburgh.
4. Information by Miss Jos. I. Nixon, of Hazelwood.
5. Statement on card in the case.
6. Will of John Woods, *Will Book* Vol. 2, p. 109, Recorder's Office of Allegheny County, Pa.
7. Loudon's, *Indian Wars*, I, 90.
8. C. W. Butterfield, *History of the Girtys*, (Cincinnati, 1890,) pp. 330, 331.
9. Edgar W. Hassler, *Old Westmoreland*, p. 48.
10. *Pittsburgh Commercial Journal*, of Sept. 14, 1855.
11. See Appendix. ?
12. Letter of Isaac Craig, of Pittsburgh, given p. 412, Butterfield's *History of the Girtys*.
13. Original Deeds, in possession of Jas. Devlin, custodian at Calvary Cemetery, Fifteenth Ward, City of Pittsburgh.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Warner's *History of Allegheny County, Pa.* (2 vols. Chicago, 189.) II, 93.
16. Geo. H. Thurston, *Allegheny County's Hundred Years*, pp. 77, 78.