A large part of what is known as "Sewickley Heights," and which lies East and North of Sewickley, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, was from the earliest historical times to within our present generation known as the McKean tract, or sometimes, "The Spanish Tract." On the land records of the County offices were definite boundaries—the neighbors knew where the lines ran, but only opposite their own marches—but few knew much of the tract, and no one apparently cared to know just who owned it, what it was worth, for what it could be used, and generally, anything definite about it. The land was rough, and seemed rougher from lack of use and improvement in comparison with the nearby used properties; it had no fences, no valuable buildings—nothing but great extent, comprising more than two thousand acres mostly on the watershed of the Little Sewickley Creek. Rumor was busy with it, traditions were fond of it, imagination turned towards it.

All students of local history have found from experience that it is hard to define these rumors, but the endeavor will usually afford some rewards, and will sometimes enlarge and adorn the very idleness of a dim story.

The story of the McKean tract touches the history of our land. Its chain of owners for nearly a century were very real people who clung to this estate, enlarged it with sentiment, and have become a part of it for all times.

At the close of the Revolutionary War, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to redeem promises made to the soldiers, laid out the various groups of land, called the Donation and Depreciation Lands, under the Act of Assembly which provided that certificates issued to the soldiers, and others, might be used in payment for land in these tracts as if the certificates were specie. Surveys were made in 1783 and continued for several years. The Westerly part of the Sewickley Valley lay in Leet's District of Depreciation Lands; the Northeasterly part in Brading's District; the line between running North through the Borough of Sewickley along what was once known as Graveyard Lane, later Division Street. The January, 1925, number of the

*Paper read before the Historical Society Oct. 27, 1925.
Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine contains a description of the laying out and sale of these lands, written by John E. Winner, Esq., a member of the Bar of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

During the Revolutionary period, and for a generation thereafter, these lands were unsettled, except along the rivers, the reasons being the roughness of the surface, the occasional serious troubles with Indians, and the scarcity of settlers, but by the first decade of the Nineteenth Century they were opened and well settled by farmers actually living on their properties. During the period from 1786 to 1800 many speculators—mostly in Philadelphia—bought and sold these lands, often in great tracts covering many square miles. It was a common and rather a reasonable speculation to buy 20,000 acres and sell the parcel again without ever seeing the land or really knowing much about its character or use.

Thomas McKean, who gave his name to the tract, was a Revolutionary soldier, a friend of General Washington, was born in 1734, and although a resident of Delaware, at that time very closely connected in policies with Pennsylvania, was claimed as a Pennsylvanian while still living outside the state. He served through the entire Continental Congress, being, I believe, the only member serving continuously, and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, an officer in the Army, and a very valiant sponsor of the new Constitution, adopted by Pennsylvania very largely through his efforts and those of Benjamin Franklin and James Wilson. His political career was unusually rich, for at one time or another he held nearly every office open to him, including the Governorship of Pennsylvania during two terms, the Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Court (which he left to become Governor) for a long period and to which he was appointed while a resident of Delaware. One of the counties of the state is named for him and his family was then and still is one of the famous first families of Pennsylvania. While he was Chief Justice, in conjunction with Francis Johnson, who was also an officer of the state, he purchased eight tracts of land lying then in Westmoreland County, now Allegheny County, in Brading’s District of Depreciation lands.

The lands are described as lying in Westmoreland County, Nos. 107, 108, 109, 119, 111, 112, and 114 and 115
in Brading's District, and are named Richland, Walnut Bottom, the Meadow Land, Belle View, Buck Hollow, Turkey Range, Sewickley Farm and Cascade, containing 2,266 acres, and six per cent allowance for roads. These names imply a rich country and truly the land is a wonderfully beautiful stretch of hill and valley, but in comparison with other lands available for agriculture, which could then have been purchased as cheaply, these lands were not good, being too rough in contours, too far from the Ohio River, and the usual markets, with very poor roads—in fact, with no roads at all for many years.

These eight tracts together covered the watershed of the Little Sewickley Creek for two miles, and stretched from the divide between the Big Sewickley and Little Sewickley Creeks southwardly to the edges of the hills just behind and northwardly from Sewickley and a little more than one mile from the Ohio River. The whole tract covered about four square miles. Each numbered lot or tract contains about one-half square mile and is shaped like a domino, nearly one mile North and South and more than one-mile East and West. The tracts were surveyed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in June, 1785, and were patented to Thomas McKean and Francis Johnston by Patents dated June 14th, 1786, now of record in Patent Book, Vol. 7, pages 89 to 97. Two—the most northwardly—lie in Leet Township, and the others in Sewickley Heights Township of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. The tract called Sewickley Farm is the one nearest Sewickley and is one of the early uses of the name “Sewickley.”

The Governor purchased for himself the half interest held by Francis Johnston in June, 1803, paying therefor one dollar per acre, or $2,266.00, a very large price for the times, and five years later gives and grants to one of his daughters, styled Sarah Maria Theresa, wife of Marquis de Casa Yrujo, the whole of these tracts, the deed of gift being signed by the Governor and his wife, who was Sarah Armitage, and is witnessed by Thomas McKean, Jr., and one of his sisters, and is recorded in our County in Deed Book, Vol. 15, page 240. This was before the War of 1812, and very shortly after the Marquis de Casa Yrujo had returned to Spain with his wife. This Marquis de Casa Yrujo was a famous Spanish nobleman, and while in this country as Minister of the Spanish Court to the United States made
a distinguished appearance. Afterwards he continued his diplomatic career in Europe, troubled by the Napoleonic Wars. We wonder how he and his Pennsylvania wife felt during the period of tension between the United States and Spain, in which this country acquired Florida, recognized the independence of the former Spanish colonies and proclaimed the Monroe Doctrine? About this time Governor McKean died—June 24, 1817— and in his will, registered at Philadelphia, he confirms the grant to his daughter in Spain.

The lands are here, the Spanish owners of the House of Yrujo are in Madrid, the taxes are rarely, if ever, paid, tenants commence to farm, become discouraged, leave without paying rent, the lands once cleared soon run back to wilderness, the little log houses put up are neglected and fall in, the tract is owned by the little animals; foxes, rabbits, raccoons, deer, wild cat and groundhog are easily found there.

In 1841 the Marchioness of the House Yrujo, daughter of the family McKean-Armitage, having survived her husband, died and her family must probate her Will, and these proceedings are so interesting that something more than a summary is given. The record runs:

"Attention of the sealed testament of Her Excellenza Sarah Maria Theresa McKean and Armitage, Marchioness, Relict of the House Yrujo, together with Judicial Formalities of its opening.

First: The Petition of Charles Fernando Martinez, Marquis de Casa Yrujo and Duke of Sotorayer, and of his sister, Donna Narcissa Maria Louisa Martinez de Yrujo, residents of the Capital, suggests,

That the Marchioness Sarah Maria Theresa, Relict of the House Yrujo, died January 4th, 1841, leaving an open Codicil appointing Executors, and on deposit with Honorable Notary, together with a sealed Testament, asking for the proofs usual and the formal opening and reading of this Will.

Writs issued January 9th 1841, by the Judge of the territories of Zaragorza and Court of Claims at Madrid, directed to the immediate family and to the seven attesting witnesses to the sealed Will. Directions to the Secretary of the Court as to the residences of family and witnesses are filed. Writs returned. Service accepted by all the family and witnesses, who duly appear on January 12th, 1841."
The witnesses are Augustio Rodrigues, Martin de Escanio, Francis Beccar, Jose Marinin, Francisco Ramet, Manual Martinez and Cirilo Alonza, who are duly sworn and testify. The Court January 12th, 1841, enters the Decree, duly signed and rubricated, which reads:

"After this the same Judge who had issued the process, in the presence of myself, the undersigned Notary, and the examining witnesses, who presented themselves in his audience chamber, in virtue of new summons, broke the wax seals, by virtue of which the above mentioned parcel of paper was closed and as His Honor on having opened it observed and showed, when he began to read it to himself, the testament which it contained, that the same was written in the English idiom, he resolved to suspend the inquiry under the circumstances, and that it should be communicated to writing by me in the terms expressed; in view of which His Honor Decreed the following writ—As the English Language is not known in the Spanish Court the Will just opened, with the befitting official communications and under sealed cover, be sent to the Secretary's Office of the College of the Interpretation of Languages in order to be with due reserve and the greatest possible dispatch translated into Spanish.

This done the Translation, with the Original, shall be immediately remitted to the Court of Justice in the same cautious way in order that judgement may be rendered."

Follows certain provisions for the special marking of the original and the translation with official signatures and seals.

Four days later the translation comes back, duly signed and sealed, and certified to the Court as required, and then new process issues to all the families and the witnesses who came into Court of their own will on January 20th, 1841. The Court gives judgment that the Will be read, and then the Court reads the Will, shows it to the family, who accept it, and then the Court orders it admitted as proved, and that it be proclaimed by the Notary. The Notary then certifies, "Duly proclaimed as the Will, as in fact I did, reading it entirely and in an intelligible voice, in the presence of the said seven witnesses and the persons interested." The Court's Order is recorded with the Notary and the papers are lodged with him as official custodian, who will issue copies to the executors and persons interested.
I, Sarah Maria Theresa McKean and Armitage, Marchioness Relict of the House Yrujo, being perfectly sound in mind on this day, the 28th of July, 1840, make and declare this to be my last Will and Testament.

I declare that I am the legitimate daughter of the legal matrimony of his Excellency, Thomas McKean, Commander in Chief and Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, in the United States of America, where I was born and married his Excellency Don Carlos Martinez de Yrujo, Marquis del Casa Yrujo, who at the time was Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Spanish Court in the United States of America.

I declare that out of my wedlock I leave two children, namely Don Carlos Fernando Martinez, Marquis de Casa Yrujo, and Donna Narcissa de Yrujo, his sister.

To my beloved son I leave and bequeath my large finger ring with the large diamond which cost $2,000. I leave also to him my exquisite mourning pin with the hair of my own which I beg him to keep in memory of his mother.

To my beloved daughter, Narcissa Maria Louisa Martinez de Yrujo, I give and bequeath all my lands in County of Allegheny in the State of Pennsylvania, which consists of 2266 acres 52 perches, and allowance of six per cent, and situated closely together. They lie in the northwest part of the Ohio River, until lately West Moreland, but now County of Allegheny, and herein particularly described. (Full description follows).

I leave to her all the money in gold and silver that I may possess at the time of my death, all my brilliants, jewels, clothes, etc., of every description.

I leave also all the plate which the two plate trunks contain divided into equal shares between my two beloved children and my share of the Cadiz steam mill divided into equal shares between them.

(The will then directs certain moneys to be divided between the two children and that one hundred Masses be read in the Parochial Church for the benefit of her soul, paying Ten Reals for each Mass.)

I leave my soul to God, my body to the earth. I declare that I have lived and died in the Holy Roman Catholic faith.
I pardon freely all my enemies and on my knees I humbly beg pardon of all them I have offended in any way.
I recommend my soul and my whole being to the Mercy of God.

Sarah Maria Theresa McKean y Armitage.
Marchioness Relict of the House Yrujo.
Marked with a special mark July 28th, 1840.

This will and the entire proceedings are recorded in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, about 1865, in Will Book, Vol. 24, Page 159, having been duly certified from the Judges and Court Officers of Spain and by the Officers of the Spanish Embassy of the United States of America, at Madrid, Spain.

The Marchioness was clearly of the great ones of her Country. She saw the Revolution in our country as few could—associated with the makers of history here and in Spain. She was an owner of the Cadiz Steam Mill, showing that the progress of invention made its appeal to her imagination, and this must have been a very far departure for a Spanish Grandee. The writing of her Will in her own language appeals to every one. Doubtless she often thought of the Pennsylvania country, and she describes and wills her great landed property on the Ohio River, as if she thought it a great investment, in her own land, where her own people governed, where her kin—cousins, sisters and brothers were. She must have made a great impression on the family of the House Yrujo. Years afterwards the children were noted as speaking clear, pure English.

Under her Will her daughter, Narcissa, becomes the owner of the tract and she in time marries a distinguished Spanish soldier with many titles, which he seems to have earned as well as inherited. He is named General Blas Santiago de Pierrard y Alcedar, Camp Marshall of the National Armies, Commander of the Spanish Order of Charles, the Third, Knight of St. John of Jerusalem, of the Military order of St. Ferdinand of the First Class, and decorated of many nations for martial deeds. She died November 5, 1874, without children, and also publishes a splendid Will, probated, like her Mother's, with form and stately ceremonies. And as she had no children of her own to take her great possessions she devised the family lands on the Ohio
River to her brother's children, great grandchildren of the family McKean Armitage. The famous soldier General Blas Santiago de Pierrard had died before his wife. The Will reads—

"To my nephew, Don Carlos Manuel Martinez de Yrujo del Alcazar, Marquis de Casa Yrujo, a gold box with the likeness of the King of Naples, and to his brother, Don Manuel Martinez de Yrujo del alcazar, Marquis de los Arcos, another gold box with the likeness of Louis 18th, King of France, together with all my urban and rural property in the United States of America," and names as her sole and universal heirs her brother's children, Don Carlos, Marquis de Casa Yrujo, Don Manuel Martinez, Marquis de los Arcos, and Donna Maria Pilar de Yrujo del alcazar, Donna Pietad de Yrujo del alcazar and Donna Virtude de Yrujo del alcazar."

The young Marquis, Manuel de los Arcos, died before his aunt, unmarried, without children, intestate.

The Donna Pietad, better styled, Her Excellenza Maria de la Pietad, Marchioness de Yrujo, married April 3, 1880, Pedro Cara y Szechenji, the Viscount de Benaesa, so that the sole and universal heirs who eventually signed the deed for the sale of the possessions on the River Ohio are the four great grandchildren of Thomas McKean, with the husband of Donna Maria de la Pietad. For some reasons, better known in Spain, perhaps, than here, these heirs of the House of Pierrard, are always called Pierrard in addition to the many names they already possessed.

About fifty years ago, the lands really became valuable; they could be used; but as they were, stood as a nuisance rather than a benefit to the community. Many plans were made for the purchase and improvement of the property, which in 1881, finally brought about a sale of the entire tract to Cochran Fleming, of Sewickley, Pennsylvania, for the sum of $50,000. The negotiations for this sale, was conducted with many trials and troubles, about which there are today many stories. Mr. Fleming organized a company usually known as the Sewickley Dairy Farm, which took over the properties and used part of them for the dairy business. Later this company became insolvent and the properties were taken over by a Company organized by Mr. D. T. Watson, Mr. D. E. Park and others and this group sold parts of the land to their friends who built homes
there, and created the district we style the Sewickley Heights. A large part of the property remains unsold for homes, mostly the wilder rougher hillsides, bordering on the Little Sewickley. The titles to this part are held for the future development of additions to the Heights.

The portions sold out of the McKean Tract are held by the Allegheny Country Club, and residents near the Club, and are lovely stretches of hillside and valley, beautifully landscaped and parklike. Here on the spacious land of the Club are the famous golf links and tennis courts where tournaments of national interest are held. Nearby are the homes of many Western Pennsylvania families of importance, first built as summer homes, but now with the increased use of automobiles, their permanent homes. And these estates afford everyone who passes through the district, many charming views of garden or lawn, of orchards, green-houses, of stately pergolas, occasionally a great house, but the very noticeable thing is the comfort of the homes and the great beauty of the grounds and of the country.

The wilder and unimproved parts are, as they always were, quiet, rough forested steeps, with here and there a little clearing or meadow, penetrated by the trails of the horseback riders, and the paths of the boy scouts, and here is found the sweetest arbutus, the earliest pussywillows, the bluest hepatica, and here, if you search with care, are still the homes of the little wild animals, fewer than they used to be and much more shy, but still here. The boys of Sewickley know this land and use it as of old, and to them—and to those who used to be the boys—it still is wonderful, the McKean Tract.