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## One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Mrs. Mary E. Schenley. \*

By Mrs. S. Kussart

On April 27, 1826, there was born to Wm. Croghan, Jr., and his wife, Mary (O'Hara) Croghan, at their home, Locust Grove, near Louisville, Kentucky, a little daughter, whom they named Mary Elizabeth. This child was the late Mrs. Mary E. Schenley, the one hundredth anniversary of whose birth we commemorate this evening, a woman whose magnificent gifts to Pittsburgh are appreciated more and more as time passes. What she has done for Pittsburgh will never be forgotten, and it is most appropriate that we do honor to her memory.

Her maternal grandfather, Gen. James O'Hara, from whom Mrs. Schenley mainly inherited her vast estates in Pittsburgh and vicinity, was Pittsburgh's first captain of industry, a man who, in conception, execution and daring in this line has never been surpassed. The O'Hara family were of proud and ancient stock, and lived in the western part of Ireland. Born about 1753, James O'Hara is said to have been educated in France, and before emigrating to America in 1772, he had been an ensign in the famous Coldstream Guards of the British army. He landed at Philadelphia, and in 1773, was at Fort Pitt, engaged in the Indian trade. On the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he entered the Virginia service as a private, and soon was captain of the Ninth Virginia Regiment. He raised and equipped, at his own expense, a company of volunteers for Virginia. He served as an officer under Gen. George Rogers Clarke at Vincennes, and with Gen. Greene at Guilford Court House. It was soon seen that he was a man of great business acumen, and he was transferred, becoming assistant quartermaster; and after the close of the war he filled

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large contracts for the Government, acting as purchasing agent for supplies for the armies engaged in the several Indian campaigns in the Northwest Territory. In 1788, James O'Hara was a presidential elector, and at the first election held to elect a President of the United States, cast his vote for Gen. George Washington, whom he greatly admired. In 1792, James O'Hara was appointed the first Quartermaster General of the United States. It was through this office that he received his title of General. Through the Whiskey Insurrection and the Indian campaigns in the Northwest Territory he continued to hold the office, marching with Gen. Anthony Wayne in the memorable campaign which ended the Indian hostilities at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the treaty of Greenville. He married Mary Carson, daughter of Wm. Carson, of Philadelphia, and at their home in Pittsburgh, as the years passed, there were entertained many distinguished guests, among them Louis Philippe, heir to the French throne, but then an exile, on account of the French Revolution; Gen. Moreau, and other French officers.

Gen. O'Hara seems to have been the first man to foresee the future greatness of Pittsburgh. He was the pioneer in the establishment of many of the industries which have enabled his chosen town to become the industrial metropolis of the Western country. By the various business enterprises in which he engaged, and the money which he poured out without stint in these lines, he turned the attention of the Eastern merchants and financiers to the vast commercial opportunities of Pittsburgh and the country west of the Allegheny Mountains. In 1797, in partnership with Major Isaac Craig, he erected the first glassworks in this vicinity, a stone building on the south side of the Monongahela River, about opposite the Point. He built his own ships, and loaded them with the glass he manufactured, with furs and peltries, and with flour from the Monongahela Valley, and sent them to Liverpool, England, and to South America and the West Indies. Gen. O'Hara and Major Craig operated a sawmill on the Allegheny River, near Pittsburgh. Gen. O'Hara greatly reduced the price of salt at Pittsburgh. In his contracts with the Government, he reserved the barrels in which supplies were shipped up the

Allegheny to the Lake regions, and arranged a line of communication on the Great Lakes, by portage from Lake Erie to the head of French Creek, and thence down that creek and the Allegheny to Pittsburgh, bringing salt in this way from the Onondaga salt works, in New York, to Pittsburgh for \$4 per bushel, and later \$2.40 per bushel. Previously, all the salt used here had to be brought on packhorses or in wagons from the East, and sold for \$8 or more per bushel. Gen. O'Hara was associated with a young Irishman, John Henry Hopkins (later Bishop of Vermont), in an iron Works at Ligonier, Pennsylvania. In 1804, Gen. O'Hara was appointed a director of the branch of the Bank of Pennsylvania established in Pittsburgh. He succeeded Gen. John Wilkins as president of this bank, which was the first bank established west of the Allegheny Mountains. He was one of the founders of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, and presented the handsome crystal chandelier which hung in that old edifice.

Gen. O'Hara had such great faith in the future prosperity of Pittsburgh and the Western country that he invested all the money he could spare from his business ventures in land, which in those days could be bought very cheaply. When Pittsburgh was laid out in 1784, three acres at the Point were purchased by Major Isaac Craig and Colonel Stephen Bayard. After this had passed through several hands, Gen. O'Hara bought the tract, on Sept. 4, 1805. He acquired, by purchase from the Penns, lots in several parts of the town, including some blocks on Market Street; and also a large tract of land extending from Two Mile Run, on the Allegheny River, clear across the neck of land back of the town of Pittsburgh to the Monongahela River. From the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, he purchased a considerable portion of the Reserve tract opposite Pittsburgh, now the North Side, when it was laid out in 1788. He also owned the major part of the extensive tract on the Allegheny River, near Sharpsburg, called "Guyasuta Plain." He purchased extensive tracts of land in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

The death of Gen. James O'Hara took place at his home on Water Street, Pittsburgh, on Dec. 21, 1819. His wife survived until April 8, 1834. Their family consisted of four

sons and two daughters. William Carson O'Hara married his cousin, Mary Carson, and James O'Hara married Elizabeth, daughter of Gen. Pressley Neville. Charles O'Hara died young. These three sons were all deceased before the death of Gen. O'Hara, and left no heirs, so the vast O'Hara estate was divided among the three surviving children. Richard Butler O'Hara married Mary Fitzsimmons. (Their daughter Mary became the wife of William M. Darlington, and the Darlingtons lived for many years at Guyasuta, on the Allegheny River. At the time of Mrs. Schenley's death in 1903, the only surviving descendants of Gen. Jas. O'Hara, bearing the family name, were James O'Hara and his son, Richard W., son and grandson of Richard Butler O'Hara). Elizabeth Febiger O'Hara, eldest daughter of Gen. O'Hara, married Harmar Denny, son of Ebenezer Denny, first mayor of Pittsburgh. Mary Carson O'Hara became the wife, in 1821, of Wm. Croghan, Jr., of Louisville, Kentucky, and they were the parents of Mrs. Mary E. Schenley. We thus see that Gen. James O'Hara was the founder of the vast Schenley and Denny estates of Pittsburgh and vicinity. He willed to each of his three surviving children one-third of his holdings, being very careful to weigh duly the value of each piece of property, so as to make the division equal. (1)

Mrs. Schenley's paternal grandfather was Major William Croghan, who was born in Ireland in 1750, and came to Virginia at an early age. In 1776, he was captain of the Fourth Virginia Regiment, under Colonel John Neville, but was soon promoted to major of this regiment. He served under Gen. Washington at Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth, Brandywine, Germantown and Valley Forge. The Fourth Virginia Regiment, in 1780, joined the Southern army, under Gen. Lincoln, and most of their services were in the Carolinas. Sir Henry Clinton, with a large British fleet, having arrived at Charleston, besieged Gen. Lincoln's forces for a month, and forced their surrender. Major Croghan was paroled, and as a non-combatant, witnessed the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. He came soon afterward to Fort Pitt, and was stationed here for a time. In 1784, he visited Kentucky, and being pleased with the country, purchased a large plantation near Louisville. He married a daughter of Gen. George Rogers Clarke, and made

his home at Locust Grove, near Louisville, until his death in 1822. (2)

While on a visit to Pittsburgh, Wm. Croghan, Jr., son of Major Wm. Croghan, met Mary Carson O'Hara, daughter of Gen. O'Hara, then deceased. She was a great beauty and a belle. The couple were married in 1821, and lived at Locust Grove, Mr. Croghan's ancestral home, near Louisville, Kentucky. Here their two children were born. Mrs. Croghan died Oct. 25, 1827, and her son William on April 25, 1828. Mr. Croghan and his little daughter, Mary Elizabeth, born April 27, 1826, continued to reside at Locust Grove for several years. An attorney by profession, upon his admittance, on May 20, 1835, to the bar of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Mr. Croghan located permanently at Pittsburgh, living for a time in the city, at the old O'Hara home. He then built Picnic House, a stone dwelling still standing amidst its extensive grounds near Stanton Avenue. The grounds adjoin those of Allegheny Cemetery. At her suburban home, the little Mary Elizabeth held her childish court beneath the magnificent trees which adorned the place, but she was a lonely child. It was probably with the idea of providing her with suitable companions of her own age and sex, as well as with educational facilities, that Mr. Croghan placed her, when she was about fifteen years of age, in the select boarding school on Staten Island, New York, kept by Mrs. McLeod. Several young ladies from some of the best families in Pittsburgh attended this school, and it was patronized by the wealthiest and most exclusive people of New York, parents who were most careful of their daughters. Mr. Croghan thought that his motherless little girl would be entirely safe here, and have the best of educational and social advantages. When, about a year later, he received the news of his daughter's elopement with Capt. Edward W. H. Schenley, a British officer, he was heart broken. (3)

The father of Capt. Schenley was a Belgian by birth, but an officer in (4) the British army, and his mother was an accomplished Irish woman. They placed their son in school, but he ran away while very young, to join the army. In the Peninsular campaign, young Schenley served under Wellington. He then crossed the ocean, and fought under

Gen. Packenham, in 1815, at the battle of New Orleans. He was then about twenty years of age. He came out of this battle unscathed, and returned to his regiment, the Royal Rifles, reaching the continent in time to win a captaincy and a medal at Waterloo, where he was wounded in the hand by a Polish lancer. In 1822, he was with Byron and Shelley in Italy, and after his return to England, was twice married. One of his wives was Miss Inglis, a Scotch lady; and the other a daughter of Sir Wm. Poole. After the death of his second wife, he sold his commission in the army, and was appointed a commissioner for the suppression of the slave trade. In the performance of this duty, he was stationed at Surinam, Port Au Prince, and finally at Para, Brazil, at the mouth of the Amazon River, in South America. Being in ill-health, he obtained leave of absence, and made a visit to the United States. While in New York, he went out to visit his sister-in-law, Mrs. McLeod (nee Inglis), at her Staten Island school for young ladies. She welcomed him with pleasure, never dreaming of any harm in the presence of this man of mature years at her school; but the dashing soldier, in his fine uniform, with its bright buttons and gold lace, captivated the susceptible hearts of the young ladies of the entire school. It was admitted afterwards by one of the maidens that the British officer might have had any one of them for the asking. His choice, however, was the Pittsburgh heiress, Mary Elizabeth Croghan, sixteen years of age. They were secretly married, and a short time later both disappeared and took passage for England. Her father fainted when he received news of the elopement (which was the third for Captain Schenley). The people of Pittsburgh sympathized with Mr. Croghan, who was held in the highest esteem in this city. After a short residence in England, the Captain and his wife went to Para. Upon their return, they located permanently in London. It is said that Queen Victoria would not allow the presentation at court of Mrs. Schenley for several years, because she had been "a disobedient daughter." Her father, after a time, forgave her, and the Schenleys came to Picnic House to visit him. With the hope that his daughter would make her permanent home with him, Mr. Croghan built the large brick addition to the

front of his stone dwelling. It is said that he patterned the new part of the house after Mrs. Schenley's home in England. Before it was quite completed, however, the floors not yet being all laid, he died, on Sept. 22, 1850. He was loved and lamented by many friends in Pittsburgh. Picnic House after his death came to be known as the Schenley Mansion, and is still so called. It is a large and roomy two-story dwelling, with a high attic, and a basement almost a story in height. The longest period in which the Schenleys inhabited the mansion was from 1858 to 1863. Then the house was closed, but members of the family at times came back for brief visits. Mrs. Eliza Koehler and her husband lived in a cottage on the grounds, and acted as caretakers of the place. They kept a dairy, and used the basement of the mansion for this business. The rest of the house was kept always in such order, that on a ten day's notice, it would be ready for occupancy by the Schenley family. Mrs. Koehler (formerly Eliza Elson), had entered Mrs. Schenley's service at the age of seventeen years, as a maid, and had made five trans-Atlantic voyages with her. Since the death of Mr. and Mrs. Koehler, their two daughters, Miss Charlotte Koehler and Mrs. M. E. Davison, have been the caretakers on the place, and now live in the basement of the mansion, which otherwise is vacant, the last of the Schenley furniture having been removed about two weeks ago, to a storage house. The property is still owned by the Schenley heirs, but the grounds were leased in 1908, and are still used, by the Stanton Heights Golf Club. Located on an eminence, in the midst of extensive grounds, a splendid view of the Allegheny River and the East Liberty district of the city is obtained from the old Schenley Mansion, which in its day was one of the finest homes in this district.

The death of Captain Edward W. H. Schenley took place Thursday night, January 31, 1878, at his home (4). The Pittsburgh newspapers, in commenting on the event, call particular attention to the remarkable fact that the demise of two persons so long connected with the enormous landed estates left by Gen. Jas. O'Hara as Mrs. Harmar Denny, who had died January 17, 1878, and Capt. Schenley, should have occurred so near together. Mrs. Schenley had

long been a sufferer from asthma, and for that reason, the smoke and heavy atmosphere of Pittsburgh affected her greatly. Although she fully intended to again visit Pittsburgh, she never returned, after her departure in 1863, but it was always home to her. She could not endure the English winters either, but spent them at her villa, Mont Fleury, near Cannes, in southern France. In the fall of the year 1903, she had delayed her departure beyond the usual time, took a heavy cold, and died at her home 14 Princes Gate Hyde Park West, London, England, from acute congestion of the lungs, on November 4, 1903. The funeral took place November 7, 1903, at All Saint's Church, Ennismore Gardens, London, where she had attended for many years. Upon receiving the news of her death, Mayor Wm. B. Hays, of Pittsburgh, sent the following message to her son, George Alfred Courtney Schenley, from Pittsburgh, on November 5, 1903:

"It is with sorrow we have learned of Mrs. Schenley's death. She was a queen among women, tender and true. Her benefactions to Pittsburgh have endeared her to all our citizens, and will make her memory as lasting as the city itself."

Mayor Hays sent out a call for a joint session of Pittsburgh councils, for November 6, 1903, at 3 o'clock, P. M. John S. Lambie, president of select council, and Chas. A. Crawford, president of common council, received the notice, and communicated the same to their respective bodies. At the appointed time, each branch of councils met separately and then went into joint session. Never before in the history of Pittsburgh had such an honor been accorded a woman.

It had been suggested, soon after Mrs. Schenley donated the ground for Schenley Park to the city, that a memorial monument be erected in her honor, but she disapproved of the idea, during her lifetime. At the special session of councils called to take action upon the death of Mrs. Schenley on November 6, 1903 when the two branches of councils met, in the common council chamber, the project was revived in a fitting manner and at an opportune time by councilman William H. Stevenson, of the (old) Fourteenth Ward, in which the park is located. Mr. Stevenson moved that a

joint committee of councils, consisting of three members from common council and two members from select, take charge of the matter. Councils unanimously voted for the appointment of the committee. This was the first definite action taken for the erection of a permanent memorial to Mrs. Mary E. Schenley, in Schenley Park.

At this special session of councils, on motion of William H. Stevenson, a joint committee of twelve members, seven from the common branch and five from the select, were appointed to prepare suitable resolutions on the death of Mrs. Schenley. The committee appointed consisted of select councilmen R. H. Douglas (chairman), W. J. Zahnisser, W. E. Lang, J. H. Ruhlandt and Chas. Stewart, and common councilmen William H. Stevenson, John P. Sterrett, G. W. McNeil, W. B. Wolfe, C. Wesley Cross, John P. Baldauf, and John Lewis. City clerk E. W. Hassler was appointed clerk of the committee. Mr. Hassler drew up the resolutions, which were approved by the committee, and presented to the joint session of councils by R. H. Douglas, their chairman. Councils voted unanimously to adopt the resolutions, which reviewed the life of Mrs. Schenley, and her benefactors to the city of Pittsburgh, closing with the following paragraph:

“Select and common councils of the city of Pittsburgh, in joint session assembled, hereby renew their sentiments of gratitude to this kindly and noble woman, with sympathy and condolence to her kindred and friends here and abroad.”

It was ordered that this minute be entered of record in the proceedings, and councils voted to send an engrossed copy of the minutes of the memorial exercises to the family of Mrs. Schenley, in London. While the resolutions of the committee were being prepared, an address on the life of Mrs. Schenley was delivered by the president of common council, Chas. S. Crawford.

The opening paragraph of Mrs. Schenley's will shows that, although she had been absent from the city for forty years, she still regarded herself as a citizen of Pittsburgh, where her material interests were almost entirely centered. It begins as follows (5):

“I, Mary E. Schenley, nee Croghan, a citizen of the United States of America, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but

residing at the time of the execution of these presents in the county of Middlesex, England, the widow of Edward Wyndham Harrington Schenley, late of 14 Princes Gate, London, in the county of Middlesex aforesaid, do make and declare this to be my last will and testament, as to such property, real, personal and mixed, in the United States of America, &c." (5). Her American executors were Andrew Carnegie, and John W. Herron, of Pittsburgh; and Denny Brereton, of Yonkers, New York. They were enjoined to sell and convert into cash her estate in America, and the proceeds were to be remitted to her English executors, the first named of whom was her only surviving son, George Alfred Courtenay Schenley.

The decision for the sale of the Schenley holdings in Pittsburgh and vicinity was a most welcome one, for the family policy, of "having and holding," had greatly retarded the development of the city in many sections. The Pittsburgh newspapers, at the time of her death, estimated the value of her estate at about \$50,000,000. Among the agents of the Schenley estate, in the years in which it had been held practically intact, may be named Francis Torrance and Wm. A. Herron, the last named being succeeded by his son, John W. Herron, who was also appointed as one of the executors of Mrs. Schenley's will. Robert B. Carnahan, the attorney for the Schenley estate, was succeeded in the same office by his son, Thos. D. Carnahan. All of the prominent Pittsburgh men who came in contact with Mrs. Schenley, from time to time, in matters relating to her vast estate, were agreed that she was a remarkably shrewd woman, one of the best business women they had ever met. The pressure of his own great interests caused the resignation of Andrew Carnegie as one of the executors of Mrs. Schenley's estate, after some years; and the Commonwealth Real Estate and Trust Company, of which John W. Herron was president, was appointed by the courts as his successor. Since the death of Mrs. Schenley, the most of her holdings in Pittsburgh have been sold. In no part of the city has the resultant improvement been more noticeable than in the Schenley Park and Schenley Farms district, which have been changed from farming lands to one of the most beautiful sections of the city. The building on the Schenley Farms tract, since it was sold in 1903, has been and is still being carried on at an unprecedented rate. (6)

Although Mrs. Schenley, at sixteen years of age, married a man exactly three times her age, there is every reason to believe that the union was a most happy one. She was a devoted wife, and the mother of nine children. Her eldest daughter, Elizabeth P. Schenley, a great beauty, married the Hon. Ralph Harbord. Jane Inglis Schenley married the Rev. H. W. Crofton. The sons, William Croghan and Edward Clarence Schenley both died young. Henrietta Agnes Schenley became the wife of Charles Ridley. Richmond Emmeline Mary Schenley married Capt. Chas. J. Randolph; and Mellicina Isabel Schenley married Col. Frederic Gore. At the time of Mrs. Schenley's death, her youngest daughter, Octavia Hermoine Courtney Schenley was still single. She had been her mother's companion, and felt her loss keenly. She visited Pittsburgh in the fall of the year 1905, this being her first visit since she was nine years of age. Her marriage to the late commander of the British Navy, Edward Downes Law, Baron of Ellenborough, took place in 1906. She arrives in Pittsburgh on another visit April 28, 1926, accompanied by her two nieces, Mrs. Finch and Mrs. Forster, and will be present on the day reserved for the observance of the founding of the great Carnegie buildings which grace the entrance of Schenley Park; and will witness the amazing growth of the city, especially in that part associated with the family name, where it would seem that the wand of a conjurer has been busy. The only surviving son of Mrs. Schenley, at the time of her death, was George Alfred Courtenay Schenley. He married Grace Aikinson Hughes, and was appointed the chief executor of his mother's will. (7)

The numerous benefactions of Mrs. Schenley to the city of Pittsburgh have endeared her to its citizens. Of all her magnificent gifts, Schenley Park alone bears her name. That great stretch of country will keep her name and memory green in the heart of every loyal Pittsburgher. By deed dated October 30, 1889, she gave to Pittsburgh, for public park purposes forever, 300 acres of land, of the tract known as Mount Airy, and at the same time gave the city an option on 100  $\frac{2}{3}$  acres adjoining for \$125,000. The deed and option were accepted by the city in joint session of councils, November 15, 1889. Her sale to the city, for \$75,000, of 19 acres, now forming the park entrance, was accepted by councils on November 26, 1890. It was esti-

mated, at the time of her death, that the value of this park land, alone, was \$4,000,000, and the city had acquired it for \$200,000 in all. In 1846, Mrs. Schenley donated the property in the (old) Twelfth Ward of this city to the West Penn Hospital. In 1890, she gave a large lot in Old Avenue to the Newsboys' Home. In 1895, she gave the oldest relic in Pittsburgh, the old block house at the Point, built in 1764, together with adjoining property, worth about \$30,000, to the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1894, by large donations and subscriptions, Mrs. Schenley gave such an impetus to the movement of the citizens of Allegheny (the present North Side, Pittsburgh) as to make possible the purchase of the ground for their present beautiful Riverview Park. She was most liberal to charitable institutions, schools, and churches, beside her many private benefactions. She sold the sites for various schools and churches at merely nominal prices, or gave the land outright. Among the churches thus benefitted may be named the First United Presbyterian Church on Fifth Avenue, the Oakland Episcopal Church on Forbes Street, and others. In 1897, she donated a plot of ground, worth \$70,000, upon which the magnificent Third Ward School, North Side, was erected, at a cost of \$350,000. Throughout her life, she revealed a constant love and solicitude for the welfare of the community of Pittsburgh. (8)

In 1918, on the 92d anniversary of the birth of Mrs. Schenley, the statue called "The Mary E. Schenley Memorial," was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. It represents "A Song to Nature," and stands in the center of the former Bellefield Bridge, in the entrance of Schenley Park.

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#### REFERENCES

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- 4 *The Pittsburgh Telegraph*, Feb. 2, 1878, and other Pittsburgh newspapers of the same date.
- 5 *Will Book No. 77*, p. 359, records of Allegheny County, Pa.
- 6 *The Pittsburgh Gazette*, Nov. 7, 1903, and other Pittsburgh newspapers of the same date.
- 7 *History of Pittsburgh and Environs*, published by the American Historical Society, in New York and Chicago, 1822, Vol.4, p.101.
- 8 *The Pittsburgh Gazette* of Nov. 6th and 7th 1903, and other Pittsburgh newspapers of the same date.