

Historical Society Notes

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The French military expedition down the Ohio in 1749 under M Celoron de Blainville consisted of 20 soldiers, 180 Canadians, 30 Iroquois and 25 Abnaki Indians. Entering the Allegheny River through Chautauqua Lake they returned to Canada via the Miami and Maumee Rivers. Their object was not altogether friendly for it was a show of force (during a time of peace) to impress English traders and their Indian allies. We have their own word that they were burying lead plates "as a monument of the renewal of the possession which they had taken of the River Ohio and of all the lands on both sides, up to the sources of said rivers . . ." They also left a distinct impression they would maintain their claims with arms. Furthermore they were not mealy-mouth in telling all English and Indians they met that they owned the land and it was to be used for trade with the French exclusively.

The plates to which they referred were of lead $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick and $7\frac{1}{2}$ " by 11", on the face of which their claims were impressed. We know that at least six plates were buried and of these, three were recovered. One was subsequently lost, one was partially destroyed but one now exists, practically intact. It was found at the confluence of the Great Kanawha and the Ohio near Point Pleasant, West Virginia. A few replicas have been made and one is owned by our Society. This particular plate is used in lecturing to school groups and when it is shown, someone, to maintain interest is asked to read aloud the name of the river which appears as it would sound to a Frenchman when spoken in Indian. Few attempt it and the class is always amused when the word is spelled out—CHINODAHICHETHA. We know it designates the Great Kanawha, but what does it mean?

We appealed to Dr. August C. Mahr of Ohio State University who, among many other activities has served as chairman of the Ohio Valley Historic Indian Conference and only recently published an article entitled "Indian River and Place Names in Ohio." Dr. Mahr replied in a gracious and scholarly letter to the effect that in his judgment the word is of Shawnee origin and when broken down it seems to mean "River of him who guards that which belongs to him." From

the Shawnee standpoint this fits the Great Kanawha perfectly for they occupied that area from 1749 to 1774.

This raises an interesting conjecture. Did Celoron know the meaning of the word? May not the Shawnees themselves have injected a dissenting item for record, unrecognized by Celoron. The French were claiming all the land, but the Indians by the use of a descriptive name, Chinodahichetha, are themselves warning the *French* that *this* is a river of the Shawnees who "will guard that which belongs to them."

Dr. Mahr writes "The fact that the name of the river does make such excellent sense in Shawnee confirms me in my belief that it is of Shawnee origin. I also agree with you in the Shawnee's intention of inserting a bitter joke in the meaning of the name, regardless of whether Celoron understood that meaning or not."

For those who desire a more detailed translation we publish the following extract from his letter:—

Chi/noota/hish/e/itha

Analysis:

chi- (*ch-* as in Eng. *church*; sound non-existing in French; Voegelin writes *c-*) is a personal prefix indicating an individual,' as in the quotations, *Voegelin*, 143.

-noota- (*OO-* as in Eng. *coal*) means 'guarding something (by ear)'; see *Voegelin*, 377.

-hish- (*-sh-* as in French *-ch-*), means 'belonging to self'; *Voegelin*, 457.

-e- formative vowel.

-tha formative final suffix, meaning something like 'person doing, or being, that very thing'; *Voegelin*, 335.

ROBERT D. CHRISTIE

REMEMBER THE MAINE?

The battleship *Maine* was sunk in Havana Harbor on Tuesday, February 15th 1898. Two relics from this ship, consisting of a torpedo tube and section of the side port through which it protrudes, are mounted in West Park, North Side, Pittsburgh as a memorial. Few people know of their existence and still fewer remember anything about their dedication 43 years ago. The following outline of the story was given by your director over television KDKA at the site on May

30th, 1957, as part of a program by Ed King entitled "On Location."

* * * * *

An American naval squadron under Rear Admiral Sicard lay off Key West on Sunday, January 23, 1898. Next day at dusk dispatches were delivered to the flagship *New York* and on response to summons Captain Sigsbee of the battleship *Maine* was given verbal orders to proceed to Havana, Cuba, to pay a friendly visit to the Spaniards. Some 12 hours later, on Tuesday, January 25th, the *Maine* entered Havana Harbor, fired a salute and took on a pilot who steered her to a government mooring buoy which was destined to be her last anchorage.

This arrival had been instigated some two weeks earlier by Consul General Fitzhugh Lee serving at Havana who had reason to fear that local rioting might get out of control; in which case the warship might well furnish asylum for Americans. He was under no illusions as to the nature of the visit. Oddly enough on receipt of a cable advising him of the *Maine's* coming he tried to delay the ship but his effort was too late.

Contrary to advice of newsmen the officers of the *Maine* attended a bull fight on the Sunday following their arrival. There, under protective Spanish guard, they saw evidence of hostility toward Americans. The shouted insults served to forewarn them of trouble and the captain alerted the guards to special watchfulness and this resulted in an order to keep up steam in two boilers rather than one.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, February 15th, the officers had entertained some residents of Havana on board, but by 9:30 P.M. Captain Sigsbee was in his cabin writing a letter when taps had sounded. At 9:40 P.M. a terrific explosion, followed by a second, shook the ship and she settled in the mud of the harbor with a loss of 266 men including two officers. Small boats from the Spanish navy were quick to assist in rescue work and Captain Sigsbee, the last to leave, was one of the survivors.

The great loss of life was due to the explosion of ammunition which was stored immediately under the quarters in which the men were sleeping.

The cause of the explosion has never been determined and doubtless never will be. There are three theories: (1) That the disaster was the result of the explosion of a mine at the instigation of the Spanish; (2) That the Cubans had been responsible as an act of provocation which would be charged to the Spaniards from whom they were

seeking independence; (3) From an internal explosion due to spontaneous combustion of soft coal fuel in the *Maine* bunkers.

Only one thing is certain and that was that, with the temper of the American people already of high pitch over other irritating incidents, the news of this disaster made war with Spain a foregone conclusion.

Spanish authorities in Havana immediately denied the existence of mines in the harbor and declared that materials for the construction of mines did not even exist in Havana—a statement later proven untrue.

President William McKinley promptly appointed a court of inquiry which took testimony throughout several months having as one of its chief objectives, determination as to whether the explosion was of external or internal origin. The evidence from examination of the hull was based upon testimony of divers who were not qualified as experts on naval construction but the findings of the board were to the effect that the primary explosion was external, probably from a mine under the bottom of the ship at Frame 18 or somewhere on the port side. The report cleared the officers and crew of any negligence.

A Spanish court of inquiry reported to Madrid that the explosion was not external but had occurred inside the *Maine*.

The hull of the *Maine* was raised in 1911 at a cost to the United States government of \$1,000,000.00 and another court of inquiry thus had an opportunity to examine the wreck on the surface. Their findings in general upheld the conclusion of the first court, with the exception that it located the explosion about 50 feet from the place originally described. The hull was then towed out to sea and sunk in deep water, where it is impossible to examine it again.

While on the surface, the government removed four parts to be used as memorials. The main mast and fighting top were allocated to Arlington Cemetery. The fore mast was given to the Naval Academy at Annapolis and the torpedo tube and the plate, in which its bulbular muzzle socketed, were given to Pittsburgh. The city was so favored because Lt. Friend W. Jenkins, one of the two flag officers killed, had been born in old Allegheny.

The nature of these relics required special mounting and appropriate masonry background before they could qualify as a fitting memorial. The necessary funds were not immediately available and the tube lay for two years in a warehouse. Perhaps a new war effort

stimulated belated interest but with substantial contributions from the City, the County and Spanish-American War veterans a memorial costing \$12,000.00 was unveiled at dedicatory ceremonies on Wednesday, September 16, 1914, at 4:00 P.M. Following a parade and appropriate remarks by officials and one survivor, the relics were unveiled by a sister of Lt. Jenkins.

It might be observed that sealed in behind the center panel of the masonry wall bearing inscriptions lies a copper box in which are the names of over 2,000 persons who subscribed to the memorial.

In retrospect it might be noted also that two presidents of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania figured in the promotion and dedication of this memorial, namely—William H. Stevenson and Robert Garland, then a Councilman.

ROBERT D. CHRISTIE

THE LECTURES

At the opening of the 1956-57 season, October 24, 1956, Dr. Walter Read Hovey, Director of the Fine Arts Department of the University of Pittsburgh, was the speaker. Dr. Hovey, who was introduced by Mr. Charles Stotz, discussed "Painters from Pittsburgh: The Frontier Settlement and the Industrial Development." Many of the paintings and sketches described by the speaker were shown on the screen, some were exhibited in the auditorium and west gallery of the building.

The Society meeting of November 14, 1956, was given over to a lecture by Lieutenant Colonel Edward W. Schussler, whose subject was "The United States Army Presents Its Uniforms." Colonel Schussler, who was introduced by Dr. James L. Swauger of the Carnegie Museum staff, showed colored slides of the uniforms from the provincial forms of 1775 to the more modern ones of the Spanish American War.

At the meeting of the Society on January 23, 1957, Dr. Ralph C. Wood, the executive director of the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation of Philadelphia, was the speaker. He was introduced by Mr. J. Fred Lissfelt. In discussing "The Pennsylvania Germans" Dr. Wood emphasized that the Pennsylvania German literature of the past 100 years deserves recognition, especially publication of its poetry and anecdotes.

The Society meeting of February 11, 1957, was given over to two speakers: Miss Ruth Stoehr who spoke on "Some Favorite American Foods and the Role They Played in History"; and Mrs. Elmer D. Harshbarger whose subject was "Jane Gray Swisshelm."

Miss Stoehr, who is Home Economics Editor for the H. J. Heinz Company, was introduced by Mrs. Agnes L. Starrett of the University of Pittsburgh Press. Miss Stoehr's research in foods has led her into the files of interesting people who have entertained distinguished guests with the finest offerings of American kitchens.

Mrs. Harshbarger, a Trustee of this Society, is widely known through her activity and generosity in many clubs within the fields of civics, religion and history. She presented a biographical sketch of a person whom many regard as one of Pittsburgh's foremost women. All agree that women generally throughout the state benefit through the reforms she championed.

On Monday, March 18, our own trustee and eminent architect, Mr. Charles M. Stotz, presented a timely address on "The Forest and The Fort." Mr. Stotz dealt with the frontier forts of early eastern America but specifically with Fort Duquesne and the three English forts at or near the Point. This address, in the form of a chalk-talk with slides, was peculiarly pertinent in preparation for the coming Bicentennial.

On April 15 the Society had as its guest speaker, Mr. Thomas S. Buechner, who is currently the director of the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York. Mr. Buechner was introduced by Lowell Innes, chairman of the Society's committee on glass. His subject "The German Tradition in Glassmaking" was illustrated with colored slides.

This was a meeting of more than ordinary importance as the Gorley collection of Amelung, Stiegel and Gallatin glass was unveiled by the donors, Mr. and Mrs. J. Harry Gorley of Uniontown.

Mr. Buechner, in commenting on the Gorley glass, praised it highly, as did Mr. Innes and President McClintock. Mr. Gorley, in response, explained how he had obtained some of his valuable pieces of glass. Specifically, this gift from Mr. and Mrs. Gorley included not only the 47 pieces of rare glass but also the handsome display case. (See Spring 1957 issue for an illustrated article on The Gorley Case.)

The May meeting of the Society is traditionally University of Pittsburgh night. Mr. William J. Martin, acting head of the History Department, introduced two graduate students, Mr. George H. Roadman and Mr. Robert D. Ilisevich, who presented papers.

Mr. Roadman's subject "Washington (Pa.) Newspaper Battles 1817-1825" was based on a bitter journalistic battle, involving state politics, between *The Reporter* and its rival the *Examiner*. In 1958 *The Reporter* will be celebrating its 150th anniversary. As one of the earliest successful newspapers west of the mountains, it is worthy of special attention.

The second paper of the evening was presented by Mr. Ilisevich. His subject was "Galusha Grow—Pennsylvania's Champion of the Homestead Act." The form the Homestead Act took, eventually, incorporated many of the ideas expressed by Pennsylvania's Galusha Grow, one of the most energetic supporters of this legislation between 1851 and 1862.

The Sixteenth Annual Tour of the Society on July 20 to Old Economy via The Point, Mt. Washington and Logstown was both enjoyable and profitable to those members and friends who participated. A full account may be found in the Fall 1957 issue of this Magazine.

The Society's Building was closed during the month of August. The opening on Tuesday, September 3, marked the beginning of the year 1957-58.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the course of the year the Society has been represented at historical meetings and several members have been active in the field of historical writing.

The auditorium of the Society has been in use for meetings of other organizations or groups of similar or at least equally commendable civic aims. For example the Woman's Historical Society has held regular meetings, in addition, the Early American Glass Club, the William Wallace Chapter of the D.A.R., and the Allegheny County Citizens for Public Schools met here, some of them more than once.

Several patriotic organizations store their records here. This is a proper use of our rooms so long as space is available.

The Society continues to lend objects from its collection for exhibit by responsible outside organizations, institutions, or business firms, usually in the downtown district.

Many of our museum pieces, objects, and books have been photographed during the past year for use in newspapers, advertising agencies, radio and television stations.

THE DIRECTOR'S CALENDAR

October 1956 — September 1957

1956

- Friday, October 12—Trip to Perryopolis to secure model of Washington Mill.
- Sunday, October 14—Council and staff meeting at the Fox Chapel home of Mrs. E. D. Harshbarger preceded by reception and supper.
- Monday, October 15—History talk in Auditorium and tour of the building for 42 students from Churchill School.
- Thursday, October 25—Attended luncheon and exercises at P.R.R. station as member of committee on selection of historic names for Pullman cars.
- Tuesday, October 30—Supper meeting of Trustees.
- Wednesday, November 7—Lecture in Auditorium to 35 adult members of Newcomers Group of Mt. Lebanon.
- Wednesday, November 14—History talk and tour for 98 students from St. Peter's High School, McKeesport.
- Thursday, November 15—Foster Memorial Marker placed in co-operation with the State.
- Saturday, November 17—History talk in Auditorium to 40 students from Dunbar Township High School.
- Friday, November 27—Lecture and tour for a group of 22 history students from Fifth Avenue High School.
- Thursday, December 20—Lecture to Carnegie Tech R O T C in Administration Hall.

1957

- Monday, January 7—Special talk to the D. A. R. in McKeesport at 8 P. M.
- Tuesday, January 8—History talk and tour of the building for a group of eighth graders from Frick Elementary School.
- Thursday, January 11—Basic local history talk at 11 A. M. to Carnegie Tech Reserve Officers on the Tech campus.
- Wednesday, January 16—History talk to the Perry Women's Club at 2:00 P.M. in the Watson Memorial Presbyterian Church.
- Monday, January 21—Bicentennial talk to the Home and Garden Club of Crafton at 2:00 P.M. in Crafton.

- Tuesday, February 5—Bicentennial talk to the Feree Chapter of the D. A. R. at 8:00 P. M. in the U. P. Church of Coraopolis.
- Saturday, February 9—Children's Play under the auspices of the William Wallace Chapter of the D. A. R. held in the Society's Auditorium.
- Tuesday, February 19—Talk and tour for a group of Girl Scouts.
- Friday, February 22—Speaker at Annual Banquet of Pittsburgh chapters of the D. A. R. and S. A. R. in the Duquesne Club.
- Monday, February 25—Bicentennial Talk to the Parent-Teachers Association at Donaldson Crossroads at 8:00 P. M.
- Tuesday, March 5—Talk and tour for a group of 58 students from Whitehall Junior High.
- Wednesday, March 6—Talk and tour for a second group of students from Whitehall Junior High, 60 in number.
- Thursday, March 14—Bicentennial talk at the Edgewood Historical Society at 8:15, Edgewood Town Club.
- Friday, March 15—Talk and tour for a group of 12 boys from the Wightman School.
- Saturday, March 23—Talk and tour for 54 Bethel Scouts and adults in the Auditorium.
- Wednesday, March 27—History talk to combined service clubs of Morgantown, W. Va., consisting of Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions and D. A. R.—at 12 noon in Morgantown.
- Thursday, April 4—Talk and tour for a group of 80 students from Montour Joint Schools.
- Tuesday, April 9—History Talk for the Washington chapter of the D. A. R. at 8:15 P. M. at Quail House, Washington, Pa.
- Thursday, April 11—Talk and tour for a group of 30 pupils from McKnight School.
- Friday, April 12—Talk and tour for the South High Junior Historians, 20 in number.
- Saturday, April 13—Talk and tour for the History Club from the Lincoln High School, Ellwood City, 45 in number.
- Tuesday, April 16—Talk and tour for a group of ten Girl Scouts and adult leaders.
- Tuesday, April 30—Special River talk for a group of 40 from the Newcomers Club of Mt. Lebanon.
- Friday, May 10—Talk to the Mifflintown Historical Society at Lewistown, Pa.

Saturday, May 11—Attended the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies at Harrisburg.

Wednesday, May 22—Bicentennial talk to a group of 24 adults from Bower Hill in the Society's Auditorium.

Friday, May 31—Talk and tour for a group of 52 from Penn Township Schools.

Saturday, June 8—Talk and tour for a Verona Girl Scout Troop numbering 35.

Friday, June 21—Talk and tour for the Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana, Pa. There were 30 in this group.

July—Preparing for Society's Annual Tour which was held Saturday, July 20, with an attendance of about 190.

August—The Society's building was closed.

MEMBERSHIP

The following new members were enrolled between November 1, 1956, and November 1, 1957, under the several classifications indicated:

Patron

Mrs. Clifford S. Heinz

Miss Mary McCune

Mr. Richard K. Mellon

Sustaining

Mr. Thomas D. Jolly

Mrs. Frank C. Lewis

Mr. C. W. Peden

Mr. Francis Earl Slater

Mr. James L. Wick, Jr.

Annual

Dr. J. Cutler Andrews

Miss Mary A. Campbell

Mrs. H. C. Coleman, Sr.

Mrs. Renwick G. Dean

Mr. J. E. DeSutter

Mrs. J. E. DeSutter

Mrs. Thomas M. Dunn

(Mrs. Louise M.)

Mrs. Ralph C. Fischer

Miss Lena Gallatin Galley

Mr. David R. Grafton

Mr. M. W. Marshall

Mrs. Clarence R. Neal

Rev. Henry A. Riddle

Mrs. Jane Barnard Sherrard

Mr. Harry A. Sipe

Mr. T. K. Stratton

Mrs. William S. Sutton

Miss Ellen M. Watson

Mr. James C. Watt

Mr. Ed Wisniewski

Mr. Charles Holmes Wolfe, Jr.

Dr. George J. Wright, Jr.

Mr. Robert H. Yoders

Dr. T. C. Zeller

Educational

Rev. Milton M. Allison

Mrs. Nell B. Anderson

Dr. Robert E. Carlson

Mr. Patrick J. Griffin, Jr.

Miss Ethel King

Miss Virginia Laughlin

Miss Rosita Mahend

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| Miss Virginia Grubbs | Mr. R. Paul Mathews |
| Mrs. W. F. Hart | Mr. Joseph Parton |
| (Mrs. Elizabeth P.) | Mrs. David Dixon Porter |
| Mrs. Walter J. G. Hays | Mr. Joseph Jay Rubin |
| Miss Judy L. Heavner | Mr. Richard H. Slavin |
| Mr. G. Homer Johnston | Mr. John G. Steele |
| Mrs. B. W. Leach | Mr. Watson R. van Steenburgh |
| (Mrs. Virginia Browne Leach) | Mr. Reid W. Stewart |
| Miss Elizabeth Macfarlane | Mr. Robert M. Watkins |
| Miss Sarah Collins McClelland | Mr. Edward G. Wolf |
| Miss Jean C. McKinney | Dr. Austin Wright |
| Mrs. Edwin R. McMillin II | |

IN MEMORIAM

In the same period word was received of the death of:

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| <i>Patron</i> | Miss Gertrude Smith |
| Dr. Thomas S. Arbuthnot | <i>Annual</i> |
| Miss Katherine May Edwards | Miss Mary Burgwin |
| Mrs. H. H. McClintic, Jr. | Mrs. T. Raymond Evans (Ida F.) |
| Mrs. H. C. McEldowney | Mr. Daniel J. Fackiner |
| Mr. Charles Oliver | Mr. J. Harry Gorley |
| Mrs. Chester Marsh Van Kleeck | Mr. Thomas O. Hasley |
| <i>Contributing</i> | Judge Harry M. Jones |
| Mr. George J. Willock | Mr. W. A. Seifert |
| <i>Sustaining</i> | Mrs. Jane Barnard Sherrard |
| Mr. John J. Grossman | (Mrs. Hallock C.) |
| Mr. Frank A. McCune | Mr. Charles S. Wardley |
| Mrs. E. W. Mudge | Mr. Dwight Winter |
| Mr. Alexander C. Robinson | Mr. Charles A. Woods |