Correspondence

STEAMBOAT ENTERPRIZE ARTICLE GOOD, BUT WHAT ABOUT GAUL’S BIOGRAPHY

DEAR EDITOR,

Congratulations to you and Alfred A. Maass for an excellent article, "Brownsville’s Steamboat Enterprize and Pittsburgh’s Supply of General Jackson’s Army" (Spring 1994). I have been pressed numerous times by researchers for details about this incident, and could only point to the contradictory histories that Dr. Maass cites. He has finally sorted out the truths from the half-truths, basing his work on scrupulous archival searches for documentation of the steamboat’s journeys before and immediately after the War of 1812.

From my vantage point at the Stephen Foster Memorial, only one small point about the article puzzles me. Why does Dr. Maass rely on Harvey Gaul’s biography of Stephen Foster, Minstrel of the Alleghenies, for two critical pieces of information: a quotation from Morrison Foster, son of William B. Foster, who “himself purchased the munitions [and] loaded them on the steamboat Enterprize,” and the date that the Enterprize returned to Pittsburgh to be loaded (“by December 15, 1814”)? Instead, he could have referred to Morrison Foster’s biography, which is readily available in its original edition as Biography, Songs and Musical Compositions of Stephen Collins Foster (Pittsburgh: Percy F. Smith Printing, 1896), and in a reprint as My Brother Stephen (Indianapolis: Josiah K. Lilly, 1932). Gaul, in his book, was unable to provide any new information to the story, although he did offer a substantially new and sympathetic account of William Barclay Foster’s son, Stephen.

More revealing still are the court papers recording the elder Foster’s attempts to retrieve his costs from the federal government. The Foster Hall Collection contains copies of some of those papers.

Deane L. Root, Ph.D.
Curator, Foster Hall Collection
Stephen Foster Memorial, Pittsburgh

In Memoriam

A DEAR friend and important influence on publishing efforts at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania passed away on November 4, 1994. Fannia Weingartner, a consulting editor for numerous regional and national history museums, and a longtime editor at the Chicago Historical Society, had played a prominent role in affairs at Pittsburgh History since she moved to the city in the late 1980s. Shortly after she arrived, it became apparent that she would be a tremendous help with the changes the Society had planned for its publishing programs. Fannia served as an original architect of the transformation of the former journal into Pittsburgh History in 1989. Ever since, she freely offered excellent advice.

Most recently, she had served as editor of Keeping House: Women’s Lives in Western Pennsylvania, 1790-1850, a book in the works for five years and released by the Historical Society and the University of Pittsburgh Press just days after her death. Boston author Virginia Bartlett and Fannia, 65, became close friends during the editing process of the last 18 months.

This was often the case with people who met and worked with Fannia. Born in Danzig at the start of Nazism, reared on a farm in Australia, Fannia came to America in the mid-1950s. She was truly an internationalist, yet she avoided the pretensions and prejudices that lesser souls cannot. She possessed an extraordinary spirit and intellect, and she was not shy about using them, especially in the service of others. She will be missed and remembered for a long, long time. — Editor