

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

# HISTORY

SPRING 2014

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY  
SPRING 2014



The Steamboat Arabia • Saving the Fort Pitt Block House • The 1890s Pirates





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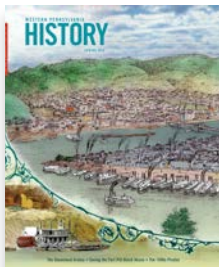
Editorial questions: [babutko@heinzhistorycenter.org](mailto:babutko@heinzhistorycenter.org) or (412) 454-6331.

Membership questions: [membership@heinzhistorycenter.org](mailto:membership@heinzhistorycenter.org) or (412) 454-6436.

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**Smithsonian Institution  
Affiliations Program**


**Detail of letterhead from  
Iron City Commercial  
College, c. 1850. This  
letterhead depicts the  
booming river trade  
surrounding Pittsburgh,  
including steamboats  
reminiscent of the *Arabia*.**

HHC, Detre L&amp;A, MFF 1020



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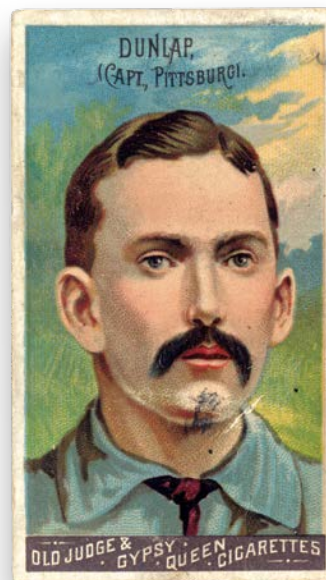
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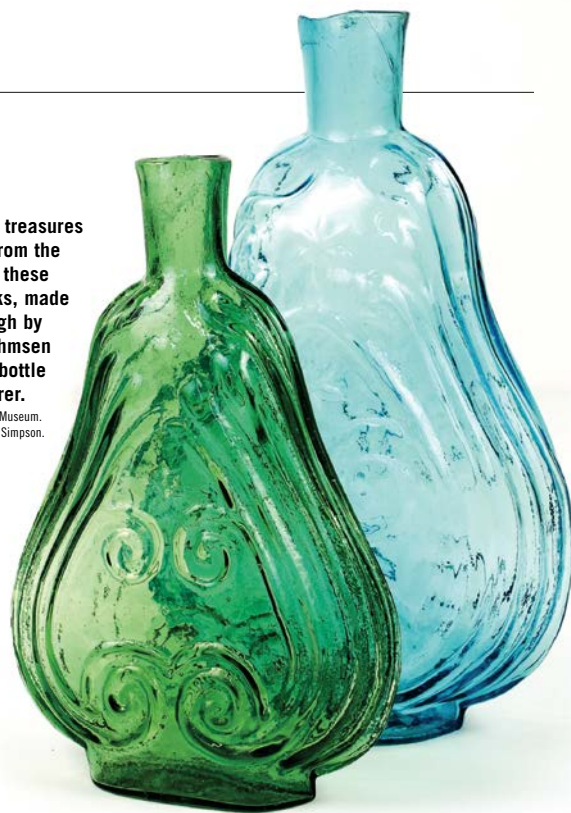
## *Pittsburgh's Lost Steamboat: Treasures of the Arabia*

Opens April 26, 2014

Late one afternoon in 1856, the *Arabia* left Kansas City to steam up the Missouri River towards Parkville, Missouri. As darkness fell, the boat slammed into a walnut tree hidden underwater. The snag tore open the hull and the boat sank in less than 10 minutes. Quickly covered over, the *Arabia's* cargo became the target sought by treasure hunters through the years. In 1988, more than 130 years after she sank, the Hawley family unearthed the *Arabia*, by then buried more than 40 feet below a Kansas cornfield. Battling the cold and endless water, they raised the cargo and began a new quest—to preserve their treasure and share the stories that it told. This exhibit brings the story back home to Western Pennsylvania, where the *Arabia* was built and the journey began.

Amidst the treasures salvaged from the *Arabia* are these scroll flasks, made in Pittsburgh by Christian Ihmsen & Sons, a bottle manufacturer.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.  
Photo by Elizabeth Simpson.



## Spring 2014 — Ongoing Exhibits



Emerald and diamond earrings given to Paulette Goddard by her one-time husband, Charlie Chaplin, c. 1940. See these beautiful jewels and other Hollywood memorabilia, as well as artifacts from Pittsburgh's colonial past, on display in *Unconquered: History Meets Hollywood at Fort Pitt Museum*. This exhibition, highlighting the Siege of Pittsburgh and its recreation in Cecil B. DeMille's 1947 epic film, runs through August 3, 2014, at the Fort Pitt Museum.

Elsie Hillman. Photo by Paula Andras.

***Poptastic! The Art of Burton Morris***  
Through April 27, 2014

***From Slavery to Freedom***  
Explore 250 years of African American history in Pennsylvania

***Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum***

***Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation***

***Heinz 57***  
Closes mid-June 2014 to relocate

***Special Collections Gallery***  
Treasures that celebrate our ethnicity, industry, innovation, and lifestyle.

***Glass: Shattering Notions***

***Rediscovering Lewis & Clark:***  
A Journey with the Rooney Family

***Prine Collection***  
of Woodworking Planes

***Wrought Metal Treasures***  
from the Blum Collection

***Clash of Empires:***  
The British, French & Indian War, 1754-1763

**At Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village:**  
Reopens to the public on Saturday, May 3, 2014

**At Fort Pitt Museum:**  
***Unconquered: History Meets Hollywood at Fort Pitt***  
Through August 3, 2014



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Andrew E. Masich  
President & CEO

## 135 Years Strong



Andy Masich joins Andy Carnegie and some enthusiastic visitors in the History Center's *Innovators* exhibit.

HHC. Photo by Rachel Lynn Schoen.

This year marks the 135th anniversary of the History Center, the oldest cultural organization in Western Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh's first historical society burned in the Great Fire of 1845, but its founders did not give up. Today's History Center traces its roots back to 1879 with the formation of a group called the "Old Residents of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania," which later became the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. At first, the organization preserved archival materials and objects related to the French & Indian War and later brought the region's history to the public by organizing major events such as Pittsburgh's 150th anniversary in 1908 and the region's bicentennial celebration in 1958.

In 1996, the History Center moved from Bigelow Boulevard in Oakland to its current home in the Strip District in the former Chautauqua Ice Company building. Four years later, the Smithsonian Institution named the History Center an affiliate museum, which allowed unprecedented access to millions of Smithsonian collections and award-winning exhibitions. With the opening of our Smithsonian wing in 2004, the History Center became the largest


history museum in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The five-story wing includes the 20,000-square-foot Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum; the Mueller Education Center for large-scale educational events and rentals; the Falk Collections Center, which features our region's ethnic and corporate history; and the first-floor McGuinn Gallery for travelling exhibitions.

In the decade since the opening of the Smithsonian wing, the History Center has nearly doubled its annual attendance, reaching as many as 300,000 visitors a year. Along the way, museum exhibitions (including *First Ladies*, *Vatican Splendors*, *1968: The Year That Rocked America*, *Pennsylvania's Civil War*, and our upcoming exhibition, *Pittsburgh's Lost Steamboat: Treasures of the Arabia*) and a variety of educational programs, publications, and outreach activities have earned accolades across the nation.

The History Center's museum system includes the Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum, a museum-within-a-museum inside the History Center; the Fort Pitt Museum, located in historic Point State Park; and

Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village, the oldest site of human habitation in North America and a National Historic Landmark located in Avella, Washington County, Pa.

Later this spring, the History Center will continue its growth with the opening of the new Museum Conservation Center, located just behind the museum in the Dietrich Building at 1221 Penn Avenue. The nine-story, 55,000-square-foot LEED Certified Green Building will allow the museum's artifacts to be stored under one roof with Smithsonian-quality security, temperature, and humidity controls throughout. On the first floor, the Museum Conservation Center will provide the public with expert services and advice on how to preserve family collections of artwork, textiles, archival materials, furniture, and much more.

Looking toward the next 135 years, the History Center will continue to engage and inspire a large and diverse audience with links to the past, understanding in the present, and guidance for the future. We thank our members and loyal donors for your continued support of the History Center – past, present, and future. 



Laying the cornerstone to the original home of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on Bigelow Boulevard, 1912.

HHC Detre L&A.



# UP FRONT



## MEADOWCROFT

By Andrew Donovan, Program Coordinator,  
Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village

### My Gun and My Axe Broken

Trade goods brought many changes to Native American culture and these changes, in turn, produced a cycle of dependence on these incoming goods: the more a kettle was used to boil water, the less likely a return to ceramics became. By the middle of the 18th century, these cultural shifts created a demand for new skillsets to locally produce and service those goods. As Indian reliance on these new trades grew, European empires began to use them to win political favor with indigenous American nations. For no other craftsman is this more evident than for the blacksmith.

There was a great demand for the skills of the smith as Indians' reliance on metal goods increased in the post-contact world. Not only was the fur trade putting iron tools into the hands of Native Americans, but so was the practice of gifting, done by both the British and the French in their effort to wrest control of the upper Ohio valley for their empires. Tools such as tobacco tongs, kettles, scissors, guns, hoes, hatchets, and knives were all a regular part of the packages given by provincial Pennsylvania as a part of the peace process in the early 18th century, each bringing some new semblance of luxury to Indian life.

Along with the presentations of these gifts and the obligatory wampum exchanges, the mending of iron tools became a part of the



An 18th-century reproduction of a five-foot anvil and the uniquely American pattern felling axe.  
Meadowcroft Collections. Photo by Mark Kelly.

political process as well. American Indians' reliance on hunting as their primary means of production in the evolving American economy meant that their livelihood depended on the tools of their trade being in good working condition. There was only a small segment of society that could restore those tools, and that segment had to be sought out. Early on, the usual way for Indians to find a smith was to visit an area already settled by whites.

With this in mind, Native American representatives often brought iron goods with them when coming to hold council with Pennsylvania officials. On August 1, 1740, a Delaware named Sesounan, who lived in the Allegheny region, came to council in Philadelphia, saying at the outset, "I have brought down my gun and my axe Broken, as we have no Smith living amongst us, and I hope you will get them mended

for me."<sup>1</sup> The mending stipulation, therefore, was a crucial act of diplomacy in a period that saw the French and British crowns in heavy competition for the headwaters of the Ohio. Indians had already proven quite adept at pitting the European nations against one another, and if mending was not offered, an opportunity for tribal support in the region could be lost. In order to earn the cooperation of native inhabitants, mending requests had to be honored by European nations.


The requests for mending during councils continued to be practiced for years to come. As Indian Agents brought councils closer to the frontier, hunters sought to avoid covering great distances in search of a smith. By 1751, George Croghan records the request for mending as a routine way to conduct



The Goosewing design of a broad axe spread throughout Pennsylvania during the 18th-century Scandinavian western migration.  
Meadowcroft Collections. Photo by Andrew Donovan.



business on the frontier. According to the transcript of an assembly gathered at Logstown, the point was raised at the conclusion of the ceremony that, "it was a custom with their Brothers whenever they went to council to have their Guns, Kettles, and Hatchets mended, and desired I might order that done, for they could not go home till they had that done."<sup>2</sup> Assurances that their tools would be fixed remained an important part of the political process, but now the smiths were making it to their own neighborhoods. By ordering the mending, Croghan preserved the tradition of fixing the trade goods Indians relied upon. And, with it, settlers maintained the goodwill of Native Americans living around the river's forks. So important was the maintenance of Indian tools for their own economic well-being, and therefore their political affiliations, that the work of the smith continued to be an important part of Indian Affairs departments into the 19th century.

Although no longer in use as a political tool, the blacksmithing trade is alive and well in Western Pennsylvania. Professionals, re-enactors, and hobbyists alike continue to strike their forges, keeping the tradition alive in our region. Come experience the sights, smells, and sounds of blacksmithing when Meadowcroft opens to the public May 3, 2014, by visiting our recreated 19th-century smithy. 

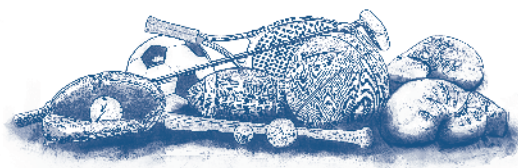
<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Colonial Records* (Harrisburg: Theo. Fenn & Co., 1851), 4:434.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:536.





# UP FRONT



## WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SPORTS MUSEUM

By Anne Madarasz

### The Final Four

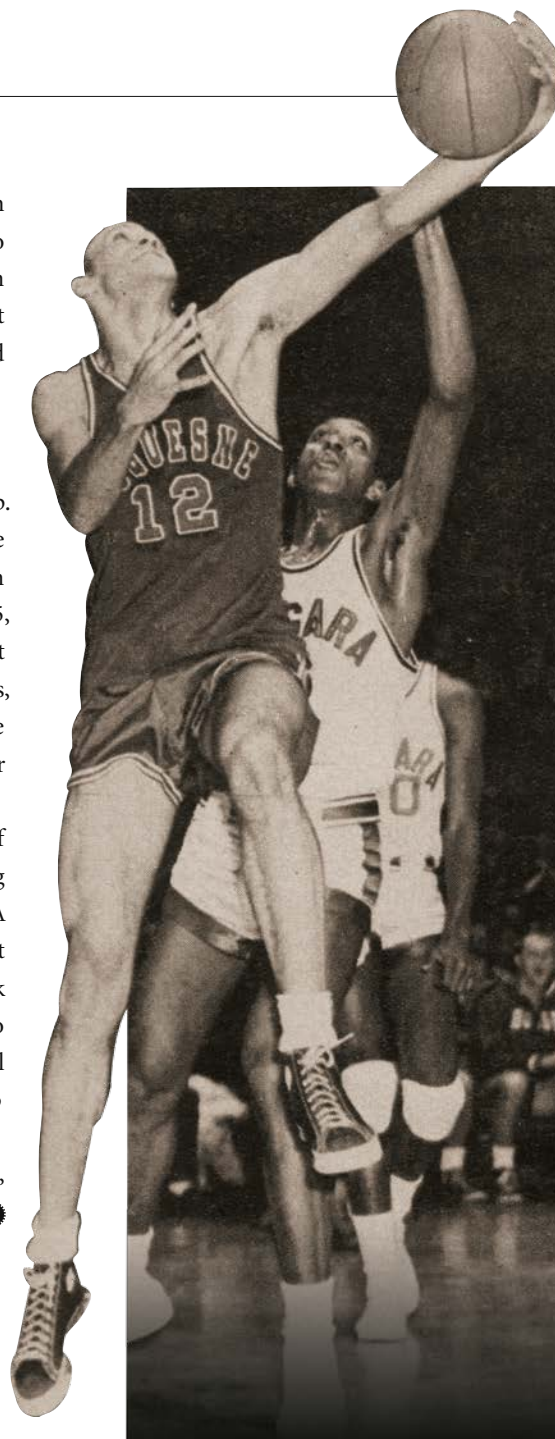
As the regular college basketball season winds down, fans focus on the playoff competition known as “March Madness,” which crowns the NCAA national champion in basketball. With a long tradition of college hoops in the city, a number of storied teams have graced the final brackets come tournament time.

Post-season play kicked off in 1938 with the founding of the National Invitation Tournament. Temple captured the first championship, beating a Colorado team that featured future Steelers player Whizzer White. Originally played at Madison Square Garden, the tournament invited just six teams in the early years. West Virginia became the first local school to find success, capturing the national championship in 1942 with a win over Western Kentucky.

Another local team, however, dominated the tournament in the 1940s and '50s: Duquesne University. Chick Davies took over as coach of the Iron Dukes in 1925 and built a powerhouse in his 23 years at the helm. His team made numerous appearances in both national post-season tourneys, the NCAA tournament having started in 1939. In 1940, Duquesne played in both tournaments (this was allowed until 1952) and made it to the Final Four of the NCAA's, as well as finishing in second place in the NIT, losing to Colorado.

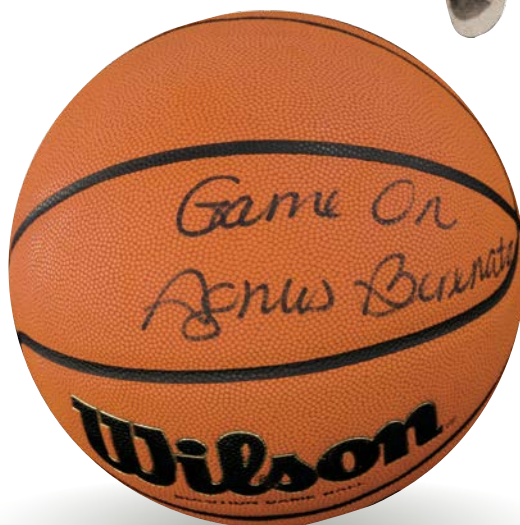
In 1948, Duddy Moore took over as coach at Duquesne. With All-Americans Sihugo Green and Dick Ricketts anchoring the team in the early 1950s, Duquesne achieved great success, finishing third in the NIT in 1953 and second in 1954. In 1955, Duquesne won it all, beating Dayton 70-58 in the NIT. Sihugo Green scored 33 points to lead the Iron Dukes to the school's only national championship. Green went on to play for nine years in the NBA and won a World Championship with the Celtics. Ricketts, his co-captain in '55, played three years in the NBA. He also spent some time playing for the St. Louis Cardinals, pitching nine games in 1959. Duquesne recognized these champions, retiring their jerseys in 2001.

More recently, the University of Pittsburgh has flirted with fame, appearing in the Sweet Sixteen round of the NCAA tournament seven times and making it to the Elite Eight in 2009. Pitt did crack the Final Four once, in 1941, losing to Wisconsin, who went on to win the national title. Thus far, the NCAA championship has eluded teams from our region, but each March when the brackets are announced, hope springs anew.



Dick Ricketts, Duquesne, c. 1955.

HHC Collections, gift of Donald Lancaster and Faye Bradwick.



Basketball from Women's NCAA Sweet Sixteen, signed by University of Pittsburgh Coach Agnus Berenato, 2009. The Pitt women qualified for their first NCAA tournament following the 2006-07 season. The next two years they made it all the way to the Sweet Sixteen, their highest finish to date. In 2009 Pitt lost to Oklahoma, 70-59.

HHC Collections, gift of University of Pittsburgh.





Duquesne University basketball program featuring Coach Dukey Moore, 1953-54. The team was a runner-up in the NIT Tournament that season, but Moore led his team to a NIT championship the following year.

HHC Collections, gift of Donald Lancaster and Faye Bradwick.



LeVance Fields jersey, 2008-09 season, and *Sports Illustrated* cover featuring LeVance Fields, March 30, 2009. That season proved to be a historic one for the Pitt Panthers—the team was ranked number one in the *Associated Press* poll and *ESPN/USA Today* coaches' poll for the first time in school history, and claimed that spot for a total of three weeks. Pitt twice defeated the first-ranked team, the University of Connecticut Huskies, during the season and received its first number one seed in the NCAA tournament. The team made it to the Elite Eight round, losing in the final seconds to Big East rival Villanova. LeVance Fields, a senior point guard for the Panthers, made his mark with his excellent ball handling skills, his high assist to turnover ratio, and his clutch shooting.

HHC Collections, gift of University of Pittsburgh.







## THOMAS & KATHERINE DETRE LIBRARY & ARCHIVES TREASURES

By Sierra Green, Archivist

### Renaissance Man: Virgil Cantini

Throughout his prolific career, Virgil Cantini was and continues to be celebrated as a modern Renaissance Man in Pittsburgh art history. Known for his work in mobiles, enamels, mosaics, ceramics, and sculptures, Cantini's artistic malleability continues to enliven and adorn city structures throughout Pittsburgh.

From his studio on South Craig Street, Cantini produced artistic works that both affirmed and reflected his Italian heritage. To many, Cantini's studio was seen an homage to the Renaissance bottega, where the artist moved with ease from one art form to another. In addition to the art crafted inside its walls, the documents, sketches, photographs, and color slides from this studio (now preserved in the History Center's Detre Library & Archives) reveal not only Cantini's artistic vocation, but also his business acumen, his administrative vision, and his role as a father.

Born to Maria and Giacinto Cantini on February 28, 1919, in Roccaroso, Italy, Virgil David Cantini was one of 10 children. In 1930, Cantini and his family immigrated to Weirton, West Virginia. Although the grandson of a sculptor, Cantini was discouraged to practice art. Having borne financial hardship in

Italy as a result of her father's profession, Cantini's mother dreamed of a more stable career path for her son. Defying his mother's wishes, Cantini pursued an artistic education at Carnegie Technical Institute (now Carnegie Mellon University). When not experimenting with form and media in the classroom, Cantini took to the gridiron as a member of the Carnegie Tech football team to subsidize his education.

Before Cantini could complete his undergraduate education, the Second World War dictated that he enlist. Serving as a technical sergeant in the Engineer Corps, Cantini exploited his artistic abilities to generate topographical maps and models of North Africa. Following his discharge, Cantini graduated with a bachelor's degree in painting and design and married fellow artist Lucille Kleber in 1946.

Two years later, Cantini received his master's degree in fine arts from the University of Pittsburgh. Cantini had his first public art exhibition through the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. In addition, Cantini also received his first commissions from Pittsburgh's Bellefield Presbyterian Church and St. Michael's Catholic Church, and he was instrumental in the formation of the Department of Studio Arts at the University of Pittsburgh.<sup>1</sup> As an instructor, Cantini lobbied for the interdisciplinary value of the creative process in art, remarking that, "Creativity is essential not only in art but in other fields as well, in business and in professional or scientific areas."<sup>2</sup>

Referred to as "Pittsburgh's all-round man of art," Cantini created many pieces that complemented Pittsburgh's industrial, athletic,



**Cantini in his studio on  
South Craig Street.**

Both HHC Detre L&A, Virgil Cantini Papers and  
Photographs, c1935-2009, MSS 0722.




Sketchbook of  
Virgil Cantini, 1975.

spiritual, recreational, and academic life.<sup>3</sup> His works, which include *The Man*, *Skyscape*, *Ode to Space*, and *Joy of Life*, employed a variety of mediums to re-imagine art just as Pittsburgh was embarking on a renaissance of its own. Cantini's daughter, Maria, affirmed the link between her father and the city's urban renewal: "The very idea of public art acquired a new and sometimes frightening meaning to artists like Cantini, especially during Pittsburgh's Renaissance.... Artwork should be and would be included in places where people shopped and played, where they prayed and where they worked."<sup>4</sup>

A myriad of correspondence, invoices, blueprints, and design layouts speak to the relationship between Cantini's meticulous artistic vision and his business acumen. In managing his own sales and commissions, Cantini could ensure a harmonious marriage of client expectations with his own abilities. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Cantini's work could be seen in conjunction with the Gulf Oil Building, the Gateway Towers, Westinghouse, the Pittsburgh Plate and Glass Company, the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Playhouse, and many local churches in addition to memorialization efforts for Roberto Clemente and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

In an address, Cantini acknowledged the link between an artist and his surroundings: "The artist of today is unconsciously reflecting the spirit of the time in which he lives and is ever searching for a deeper idea in which to bring out his interpretation of symbols and pictures in form and color tones."<sup>5</sup>

Together with his wife, Virgil raised two daughters, Maria and Lisa, to share his love and passion for art. Personal letters and photographs serve as exclusive windows into Cantini family life. Cantini is quoted as saying, "This is our credo, to help our children see the sense of wonder and creation, to give body to their observation; to develop their dreams; to battle ignorance; to question authority; and finally, to grow into wholesome and contributing individuals."<sup>6</sup>

Virgil Cantini's identity as a Renaissance Man was as far-reaching as the mediums he employed to create his art. For those interested in learning more, the Virgil Cantini Papers and Photographs are open for research at the Detre Library & Archives. 

<sup>1</sup> During Cantini's tenure, the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Studio Arts was established as the Henry Clay Frick Fine Arts Department.

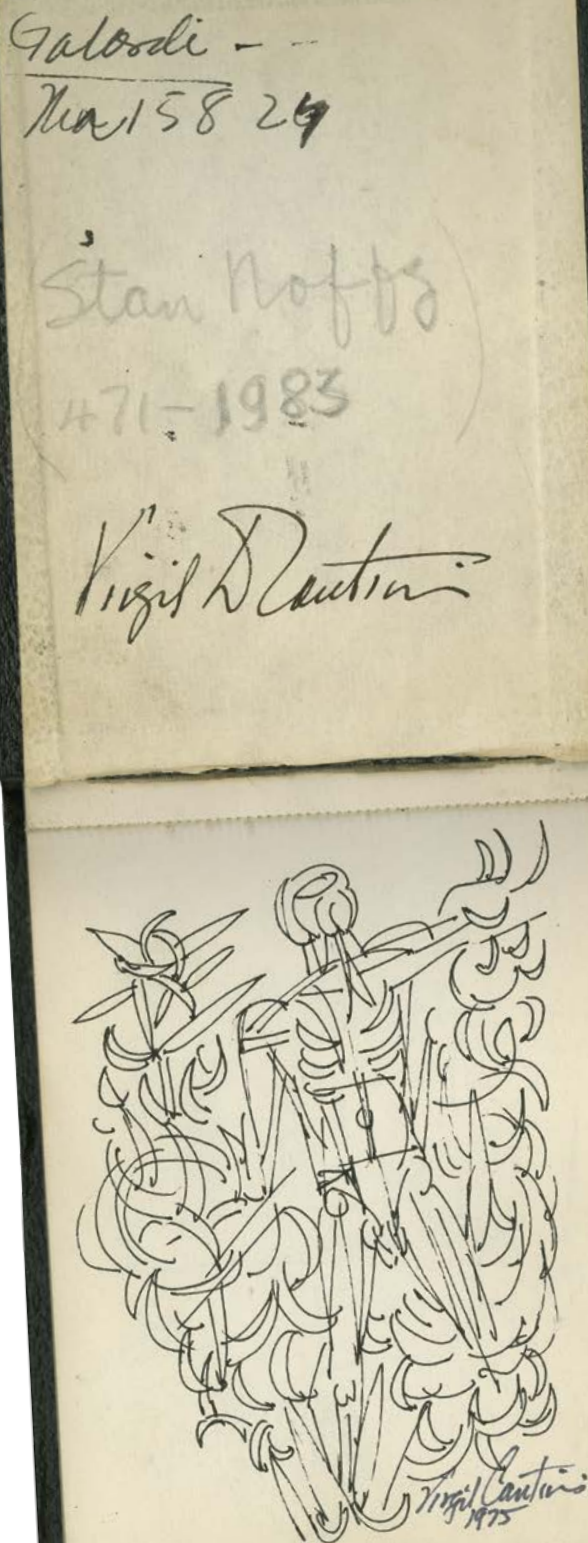
<sup>2</sup> "Exhibit Features Painting Sculpture," *The Pitt News*, May 18, 1959.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Miller, "Artist Cantini Going Through Op Period," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 20, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> Maria L. Cantini, "Virgil Cantini: A Daughter's Impressions of the Artist and Father" (master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1984), 111.

<sup>5</sup> "Mrs. Carl Lauer Heads Service Club," *The Valley Daily News*, April 6, 1956.

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Heimbuecher, "Dads Talk Out On Discipline," *Pittsburgh Press*, January 22, 1960.





# UP FRONT



## ARCHITECTURE AROUND US

By Lu Donnelly

### “Missing” Cousins

Architectural tour guides are counseled not to dwell on buildings that have been demolished, as people are annoyed by looking for something and seeing nothing. But Pittsburghers are notorious for giving directions using long-gone buildings, such as “turn at the old Jenkin’s Arcade.” In that tradition I’m going to illustrate two buildings that I wish I had seen in person, but have only seen in photographs. Each was a fitting companion to its neighboring building, complementary rather than identical, “cousins” not twins.

The first pair is the East End Savings and Trust Company built c. 1911 in East Liberty at the corner of South Highland and Penn Avenues, and its “cousin,” the Highland Building (1909-1910). The latter survives at 121 South Highland Avenue as apartments.<sup>1</sup> The Highland Building is one of 11 documented commissions in Pittsburgh by the D.H. Burnham & Company architectural firm.<sup>2</sup> Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912) is best known as the coordinating architect for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago and for organizing his architectural practice as a corporation. Henry Clay Frick was attracted to this firm for both reasons and he commissioned several buildings, including the Highland, which housed offices and retail establishments in its 13 terra cotta-clad stories. The missing cousin building was designed by Frederick J. Osterling sometime after the Highland Building’s 1910 completion.

The East End Savings and Trust Company building matched Burnham’s building in height although it was a bit shallower. The two buildings together lent East Liberty the aspect of a thriving downtown commercial center. The East End Savings and Trust Building was demolished sometime after 1965 for a modern one-story Pittsburgh National Bank.

The second missing cousin is the Bessemer Building (1904-1905), adjacent to the former Fulton Building (1905-1906), now the Renaissance Hotel. Both buildings were commissioned by Henry Phipps and designed by Grosvenor Atterbury (1869-1956) of New York. The pair created a gracious entry portal to downtown Pittsburgh from the Roberto

Clemente Bridge (formerly the Sixth Street Bridge). Between 1904 and 1908, Atterbury designed four buildings in this location for the Phipps family.<sup>3</sup> Only the Fulton Building remains, but its companions were equally fascinating. The demolished Bessemer Building matched the Fulton Building in height (13 stories) and massing, but was a solid mass instead of having a seven-story open arch at its core as did the Fulton Building. Its corner bays had Chicago style windows, and were delineated by stone quoins topped with deeply projecting eaves.<sup>4</sup> The central portion of the building contained three slightly recessed bays lit by double sash windows. The corner pavilions were echoed on the Fulton Building.



**Sales office, East Liberty Chamber of Commerce, Pittsburgh.**

*From Stringtown on the Pike by John Fulton Stuart Collins, 1966.*



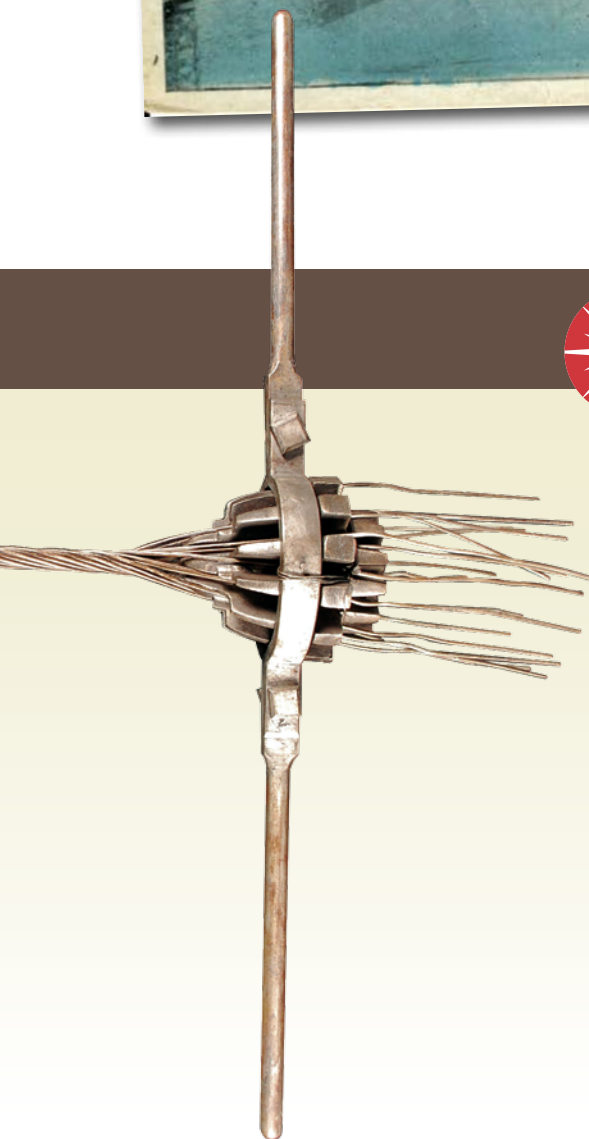


A postcard of "Federal St. Bridge, looking East" shows, from left, Fulton Building, Bessemer Building, and the Manufacturer's Building (1906-1907), all designed by Grosvenor Atterbury.

Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation.



Smithsonian Connection



## Patent model for patent #6082, to improve top for making wire ropes, by John Roebling, 1849

On April 10, 1845, a massive fire destroyed much of Pittsburgh along the Monongahela River. The covered wooden Monongahela Bridge—the city's first and oldest span—burned in less than 10 minutes. John Roebling proposed a wire rope cable suspension bridge to replace it. He had perfected his rope while working for the Pennsylvania Canal and used it for a canal aqueduct he built across the Allegheny River. His wire rope was untested on heavy, load-bearing bridges, but his design successfully proved its strength. The bridge established Roebling's reputation and launched a career that became legendary for the design and building of the Brooklyn Bridge. This patent demonstrates that Roebling continued to improve on his process for producing the cable after its successful application in Pittsburgh.

Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center.  
Photo by Paula Andras.



# UP FRONT

Each was named for a famous inventor whose contributions to Pittsburgh were vital: Sir Henry Bessemer, inventor of a revolutionary steel-making process, and Robert Fulton, steamboat designer whose boats brought prosperity to Pittsburgh's rivers.

Since we rarely have the luxury of bringing mothballed buildings back to life, it is amazing that both the Fulton and Highland Buildings have found successful new uses after years of disuse, but wouldn't it have been delightful if their "cousins" had survived as well? ☀

**Lu Donnelly** is one of the authors of *Buildings of Pennsylvania: Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania* (University of Virginia Press, 2010), a book in the 60-volume series on American architecture sponsored by the Society of Architectural Historians titled *Buildings of the United States*. She has authored several books and National Register nominations on Allegheny County topics and organized an exhibition on the barns of Western Pennsylvania for the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum of Art.

<sup>1</sup> With the Wallace Building on the corner of South Highland and Centre Avenues, the two buildings will be called Walnut on Highland and contain 110 one and two bedroom apartments and commercial spaces on the ground floor. TKA, Tasso Katselas Associates, Inc., is the architectural firm of record for the rejuvenation.

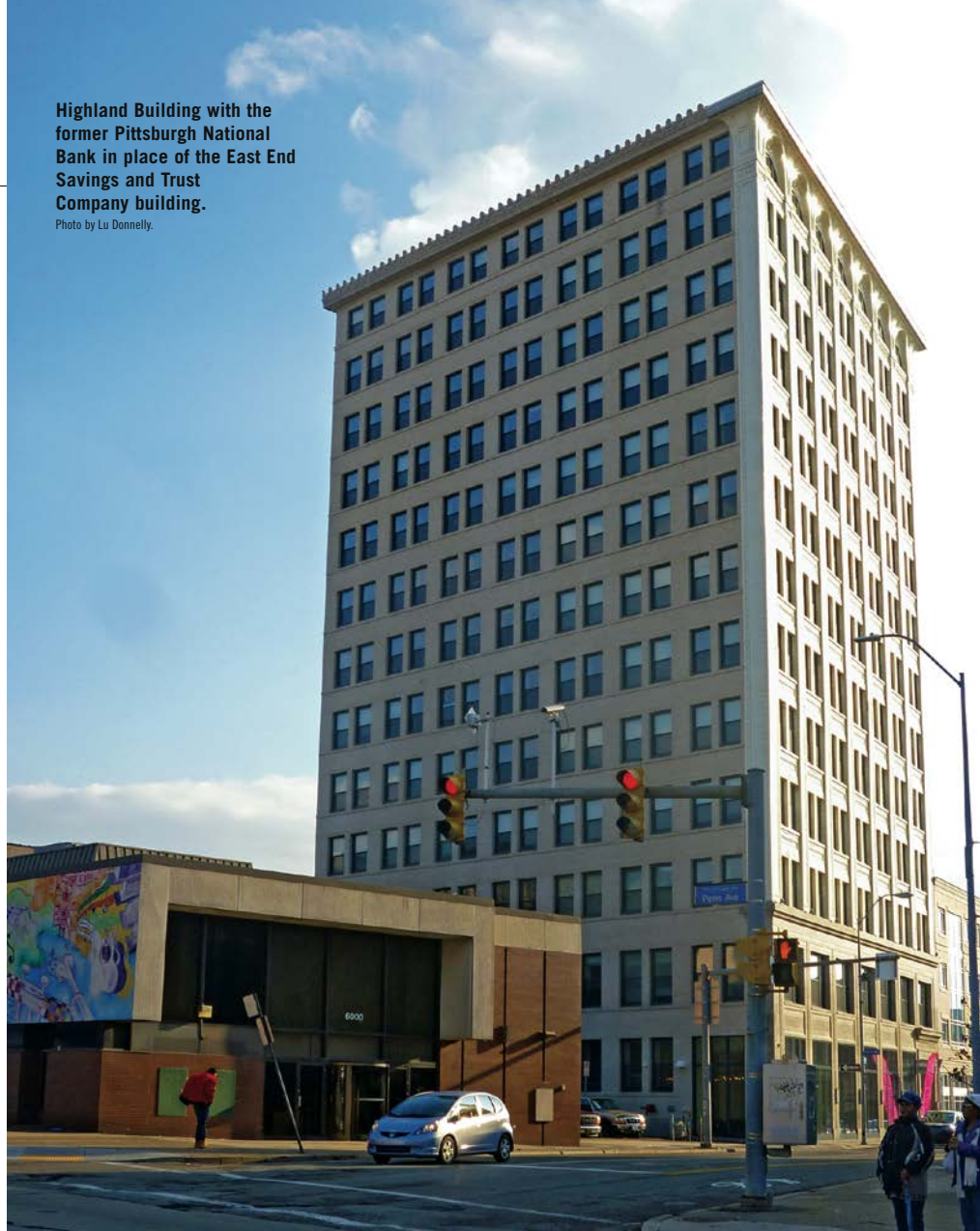
<sup>2</sup> Al Tannler carefully documented this number in the *PHLF News*, April 2009. Although the number of commissions published over the years has ranged from 16 to 20, there were duplicates included due to address and building name changes. Burnham's firm also designed a monument in Homewood Cemetery (1900-1903) for the two Frick children who pre-deceased their father, Martha (age 6) and Henry Clay Frick, Jr. (less than one month).

<sup>3</sup> Henry Phipps consolidated his Pittsburgh real estate holdings as the Phipps Pennsylvania Land Trust and left them in the hands of his three sons. For more on these buildings, see: *The Architecture of Grosvenor Atterbury* by Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 119-124. The Renaissance Hotel was repurposed by J.G. Johnson Architects with Celli Flynn Brennan Architects as project managers.

<sup>4</sup> Normally Chicago style windows consist of one fixed sash central window flanked by two narrower double sash windows. The Bessemer building had three double sash windows in a shallow bay configuration to increase air circulation and light to the offices within.

Highland Building with the former Pittsburgh National Bank in place of the East End Savings and Trust Company building.

Photo by Lu Donnelly.



Fulton Building (left) and parking lot in place of the Bessemer Building (right).

Photo by Lu Donnelly.





## Readers Reply

The article on the Big Band Era in the fall issue of *Western Pennsylvania History* was fascinating to me! I am the niece of Charles Craft (Baron Elliott), whom you mentioned frequently. He was my mother's brother.

I have been working on my own article about my Uncle Charles, describing his military service during World War II, which I learned about almost by accident. He was reticent about this, and I only persuaded him to discuss what he did in the war not long before he died in February 2003.

Having been drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943, Uncle Charles became part of the 35th Special Services Company, taking some of his band members from Pittsburgh with him. The 35th was an entertainment company, staffed specifically to present live "Big Band" variety shows and movies.

Following basic infantry training at Fort Meade, Maryland, the 35th was sent overseas to the British Isles to entertain the troops during the build-up for D-Day. They toured with James Cagney. The 35th landed on the Coast of Normandy (at Omaha Beach, in fact) in July 1944 and thereafter followed the U.S. Army through France, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and finally into Germany. They were caught in the Battle of the Bulge, where they briefly had to resort to rifles instead of musical instruments. Uncle Charles was awarded a Bronze Star for bravery due to his leadership within the 35th.

*Best regards,*  
**Lynn Morris Mendelsohn**



- The Depreciation Lands Museum (DLM) is a living history village in the North Hills of Pittsburgh. It is in the heart of the Depreciation Lands, designated by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1783, with 720,000 acres purchased from the Iroquois nation in 1784, to compensate soldiers who had fought in the Revolutionary War. The name is because troops had been receiving seriously depreciated currency as their pay. The state issued Depreciation Certificates, which had a value in gold currency, and could be used to purchase the newly surveyed land north of the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers.
- The all-volunteer DLM has carried out its mission for 40 years to preserve and interpret the lives of early settlers. Every Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., May through October, visitors walk into another world teeming with fully costumed interpreters of all ages going about their daily lives circa 1792. These interpreters cook and sew, blacksmith and teach, run the mercantile, tend the garden, play colonial games, and spin and weave both linen and wool.
- The DLM hosts special activities for the public throughout the year, including a Tavern Night dinner, Children's Heritage Day, a Fleece-to-Shawl demonstration, Hydref fall festival, Pioneer Living day camp, and Colonial Teas for both children and adults. For schools and groups, interactive programs such as Living in History and Cabin Days can be scheduled at any time. For adults, the weekly Gunn Klass, sponsored by the DLM and supported by Hampton Township and the Hampton Township School District, offers classes in building the Pennsylvania longrifle and other early firearms, along with other types of colonial arts and crafts. The Klass also participates in and conducts historical events in conjunction with the museum.

**Weeding flax.**  
Depreciation Lands Museum.



**A volunteer fires a musket.**  
Jeff Semke.



**Spinning flax.**  
Depreciation Lands Museum.

- This spring, the site will jump into the Civil War era to celebrate Hampton Township's 1861 founding. To assist with this celebration, the DLM will host the Heinz History Center's traveling Civil War exhibit, *The Civil War in Pennsylvania*, from April 12 to May 6, 2014. Many special activities and programs are scheduled during the run of this exhibit, including a Civil War concert presented by the Pittsburgh Historical Music Society.
- For information, visit [www.DepreciationLandsMuseum.org](http://www.DepreciationLandsMuseum.org) or contact the museum at [DepreciationLands@gmail.com](mailto:DepreciationLands@gmail.com) or (412) 486-0563. The museum is off William Flinn Highway/PA 8 at 4743 South Pioneer Road, Allison Park, Pa., 15101.

*The History Center Affiliates Program, HCAP, is a membership-based network that allows local and regional historical societies and museums access to museum professionals and best practice standards through the Senator John Heinz History Center.*

*To learn more about HCAP or to apply for membership for your organization, please contact Robert O. Stakeley, Educator, at [rostakeley@heinzhistorycenter.org](mailto:rostakeley@heinzhistorycenter.org) or (412) 454-6359.*



# UP FRONT



## NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES

By Bette McDevitt

### The Jazz Workshop

When Nancy Taylor decided at age 35 that she wanted to learn piano, specifically jazz piano, Sonny Stitt, a famed saxophone player told her, “Don’t get into jazz because you never stop hearing it in your ears.” “And it’s true,” she said. Stitt also told her it would be hard for a woman to make her mark. Nancy Taylor has put that bias to rest, performing with local jazz musicians, visiting celebrities, and with the Homewood Jazz Workshop Band at the Homewood Carnegie Library for many years. Now, her passion is teaching others. Before the Workshop rehearsals and during the week, Nancy teaches piano (classical and jazz) to adults and children.

When she took on the piano, Nancy was raising a son and working as a secretary at Westinghouse Electric Corporation, but she practiced four hours a day. “Of course, you have to learn your scales, your chords, inversions. [My teacher] had me doing all that, studying out of three or four books. He took me through the cycle of fourths, through the major scales, the natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor scales.

“My son told me, ‘Mom, I’ll be so glad when you can play a song.’ It was a year before I played a melody. When he came home on leave from the service, I had an electric piano in layaway. He gave me a check and said, ‘Mom, go down and get that piano.’ It was my first keyboard.

“It was really hard, learning to play jazz,” said Nancy. She had played the flute throughout public school, but the piano was a new challenge. “I had great teachers, Dr. James Johnson and Frank Conimundo.” Dr. Johnson and his wife, Pam, are the founders of the Afro American Music Institute, a music school in Homewood. Frank Conimundo still teaches



Laura Kamienski on sax  
and Raynard Ford.  
Bette McDevitt.

and plays piano at many venues.

When Nancy had an opportunity to take her career to the big-time, she chose to keep it local. That moment came after 10 years of playing, when she opened for vocalist Dakota Staton at the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild. “My name spread all over. I even got a call from Vegas. The publicity came too soon, and it frightened me. I quit playing for three months.”

But not forever. She resumed playing locally and enjoys the generous spirit that sets the tone among local musicians. “They always, the local guys, including Roger Humphries, always ask me to sit in.”

It’s serious jazz time on Saturday afternoons at the Jazz Workshop, when Nancy joins local musicians in the auditorium of the library to play music for the sheer joy of it, and to pass on the jazz tradition. To Dr. E. Ron Horton, who leads the band, it’s all about the learning. He pointed out that even the leadership is settled on someone who can benefit from the experience of directing the band. “The ensemble provides an opportunity to learn jazz in a hands-on manner. If you are an amateur musician, you can’t always get to perform with other musicians.” In the workshop, a young person might be playing alongside Al Dowe, one of Pittsburgh’s legends. Horton, whose doctorate is in ethnomusicology (the study of music in its social context), said



Saxophonists Gordon  
Jenkins and Kevin King.  
Bette McDevitt.




the group is learning, yes, but always working toward a good performance. "And the only way to get there is to practice."

Dr. Kenan Foley, who plays drums for the band, explained what makes a jazz band unique: "The band leader should be able to call on anyone in the band to do a solo improvisation." The improvisation is within a structured chord progression, or it might not be, and that's called "going outside," according to Nancy Taylor. "That's when you get the 'spacey' music," she said.

The Workshop was formed in 1973 by Harold Young, a local musician. It was a response to the loss of the Local Musicians Unions #471, located in the Hill District, a place where professional musicians gathered to develop the potential of young African American students. Forced to integrate with Local #60 located in downtown Pittsburgh, the group lost its space.

Missing the collegiality of the group, Young established the Musicians Club, located

on Center Avenue in Wilkinsburg. Meetings and seminars are held at this location, but as its mission of passing along the jazz tradition grew, Young contacted the Homewood Library with the idea of using its space, with rooms suitable for classes and an auditorium with fine acoustics.

"When I began to play," said Nancy, "I wanted to be the baddest piano player in the world. I told Dr. Johnson that I was going to be better than him. That was before I realized that jazz music is infinite. It goes deep within my soul and spirit and brings out the music. It's the feeling that comes out." Humility, acquired through those hours of practice, has served Nancy Taylor well. "What I like about Nancy," said Horton, "is that she is an excellent adult learner. Most adults are motivated by some great player, maybe Oscar Peterson, and want to sound like that in six months. Nancy knows that learning jazz is a long-term commitment. There will always be a place for Nancy in the workshop." 

**Bette McDevitt** is a freelance writer and longtime contributor to *Western Pennsylvania History*.

Nancy plays with trombonists Al Dave and Sonny Bayko, and trumpet players Dr. E. Ron Horton and Ron Jones.  
Bette McDevitt.



Nancy Taylor.  
Joeann Biggs.

## Jazz Workshop Rehearsal

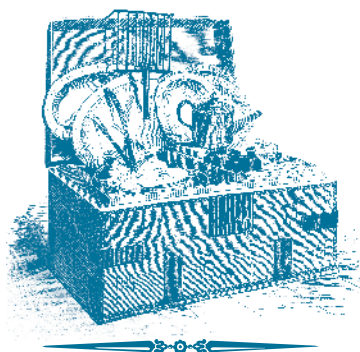
Rehearsals, held in the auditorium on the lower level of the grand Homewood Carnegie Library, are open to the public, every Saturday at 3 p.m. The Workshop offers affordable music lessons to members of the community, especially the young. Contact the library at (412) 731-3080 or the Jazz Workshop at (412) 244-0480. For a more immediate response, e-mail Felicia Anthony, program assistant for the Workshop, at [flea116@live.com](mailto:flea116@live.com). The Jazz Workshop has free concerts outside of the library every summer during the months of June and July called "Jazz on the Steps Series." There will be a concert in the auditorium on Saturday, June 28, at 1:30 p.m.



The Jazz Workshop.  
Bette McDevitt.



# UP FRONT



## CURATOR'S CORNER

By Emily Ruby, Curator

### Novelty Acts

Many people who grew up in the region might remember attending a birthday party and being enthralled by magician Harry Albacker in his turban and harem pants, or catching Bobby Jule's signature juggling act at the theater. Both of these locals gained an international reputation with their respective acts and recently both of their collections have been gifted to the History Center's artifact and archival collections. Together they tell the story of the golden age of variety and novelty acts in the mid-20th century.

Albacker, who worked from the 1960s through the 1990s, called his act the "longest running magic presentation in show business." Born in 1925, he began performing in vaudeville acts while attending Aspinwall High School, at times earning more from his acts than his teachers made. Albacker's parents were not pleased with his career choice, preferring that their son enter the mill like other local boys.

In contrast, Joe Pegnato's parents—he took the stage name Bobby Jule—were very supportive of his interest in juggling while growing up in Homewood. Joe watched his older brothers attempt it and was impressed with the juggling acts he saw at theaters.

Determined to become an accomplished juggler, he sent away for his own clubs and began to practice in his house and attend as many shows as he could. He booked his first show in 1942 and had a successful career for 40 years.

Although Jule's first performance was at the Enright Theater in East Liberty for its *Kiddies Saturday Morning Show*, it was Albacker who became an exclusive children's performer.

Albacker's children's show did not develop until many years after he returned from serving in World War II, when he reluctantly agreed to a request by the Three Rivers Arts Festival for a children's act. He enjoyed it so much, he never looked back. Driving his van up and down the East Coast and into Canada, he performed in a variety of venues including fairs, carnivals, malls, parties, and television—including a stint on WTAE's *Adventure Time* in



Pegnato donated his traveling case complete with his props, as well as an extensive collection of photographs documenting hundreds of fellow variety act performers he met in his many years on the road.

HHC Collections, gift of Joseph Pegnato, 2013.31.

Joseph Pegnato picked the stage name Bobby Jule because many jugglers of the era had the stage name Bobby, and Jule was the nickname of his brother Angelo. This professional photograph is from 1961.

HHC Detre L&A, Joseph Pegnato Collection, MSS 0956.



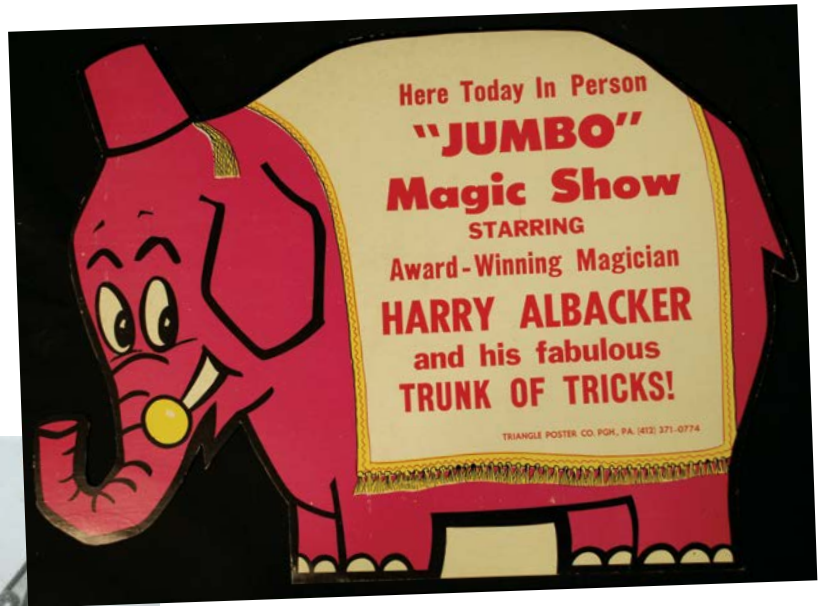


A sign advertising Harry Albacker's magic show that alludes to his interest in animals and an Arabian theme.

HHC Collections, gift of Barry Mitnick, 2010.69.

Albacker, in his signature look, often billed his show, "Harry Albacker and His Original 'Funny-Bunny' Show," but also performed as "the Magic Man," "The Only Dead Magician Alive," and "Harry Albacker and his Educated Animals."

HHC Detre L&A, Harry Albacker papers and photographs, MSS627.



the 1960s and '70s. Performing with animals was another signature of his, and the animals included rabbits, doves, snakes, chickens, and guinea pigs

Bobby Jule's act remained primarily in adult venues, with his mainstay being dinner theaters and stage performances. He did some television, but always preferred to perform live as his musical accompaniment and comedy came through more clearly. In the end it was television that forced him to become an international juggler as more Americans watched television in the 1950s and fewer attended live shows. In Europe and Asia, live entertainment remained the norm and he had a successful career into the 1980s.

Both collections document the exciting, exhausting, and somewhat lonely life of a traveling variety act. They also demonstrate the extreme competition and closely guarded secrets in both the magician and juggler fields. To see more of these rich collections, visit the History Center's Detre Library & Archives and stay tuned for the opening of the Visible Storage display later this year.





# UP FRONT



## ITALIAN AMERICAN COLLECTION

By Melissa E. Marinaro, Curator,  
Italian American Program

### The Enterprising Antonucci Brothers

If you grew up in Pittsburgh during the first half of the 20th century, you may remember when hucksters and peddlers visited your neighborhood, carting their goods and offering inexpensive services. Many may recall *l'arrotino*, or the blade-sharpener, who would ring his bell to announce that he had arrived with his grinding machine, ready to sharpen scissors and knives with his stone wheel. When the Italian American Program began building a collection in the early 1990s, one of the first donations received was a hand-made grinding machine (called an *ammolaforbice* in Italian) and hand bell from the Antonucci family. These items belonged to the patriarch of their family, Francesco Antonucci, an Italian immigrant from the village of Ginestra degli Schiavoni in the province of Benevento in Campania.

Francesco emigrated from Italy in 1912 to meet his younger brother, Antonio, who had immigrated to St. Louis, Missouri, the year prior. They lived in a boarding house with other immigrants and labored in a candy factory. It was in this boarding house that the Antonucci brothers got the idea from a fellow tenant named Mike Taranova to construct portable grinding machines and start their



**Antonio and Francesco Antonucci's grinding machines, built c. 1917.**

HHC Collections, gift of Anthony, Jr., and Elizabeth Antonucci in honor of Antonio Antonucci, 2013.44.1. HHC Collections, gift of the Antonucci family, 1994.170.1.

own business. Carried like a backpack, the lightweight design allowed the brothers to have a mobile trade with an expansive client base. The brothers took this newly acquired knowledge with them to Pittsburgh, first to the Hill District where they settled in 1917, and later to the Italian section of East Liberty near Larimer Avenue. They peddled their grinding machines around Pittsburgh's neighborhoods and boroughs, sometimes travelling as far as New Kensington, McKeesport, and Braddock. Roaming the region by foot and by street car, the Antonucci brothers covered a radius of 50 miles with their grinding machines strapped to their backs.

This past spring, the Italian American Collection received a donation of a second grinding machine and hand bell from Antonio's son and daughter-in-law, Anthony and Elizabeth Antonucci. The History Center is fortunate to reunite the machines after

decades of separation. Additional images and genealogical information provided by the donors add to what we already knew about the enterprising Antonucci brothers, creating a more complete picture of their lives. Previously unknown to the History Center was that Antonio served in United States Armed Forces from 1917 to 1919, joining the military just six years after his immigration to the United States. It was not uncommon for Italian immigrants to aid their adopted nation in this manner during wartime. Antonio served in France and Germany during World






War I and suffered shrapnel wounds from two separate attacks. He was honorably discharged from the army in September 1919 and returned to America, where he went back to peddling his *ammolatorbice* until 1950, when he retired from sharpening scissors and began working for the United States Postal Service.

The Antonucci brothers' grinding machines are nearly identical. They stand upright at a little over two and a half feet tall and are fabricated with a wooden A-frame construction. A circular grinding stone sits on the top plane of each machine and is operated by pumping a foot pedal. Both machines have a storage compartment for small hand tools; it is in the placement of this detail where we see a major difference between Francesco and Antonio's machines. When we opened the storage door on Antonio's machine, we were surprised to find a small hammer and flathead screwdriver, presumably used to mend umbrellas. Another visible difference is that Antonio's machine, unlike Francesco's, still has the well-worn leather straps attached.

For the Antonucci brothers, the profits generated by their grinding machines allowed them to support large families. Francesco's grandson, John Antonucci, recalls how hard his grandfather worked to provide for his family: "This machine was his livelihood... He'd hand you a quarter, you didn't know what he had to do for that quarter. To us, it was just a quarter, but I wish I would have kept some of the quarters he gave me. To me, it represents someone coming from another country and creating a life here with ten children, raising those ten children, and having made a place in history for the rest of my generation."<sup>1</sup>

The industry and ingenuity of Francesco and Antonio Antonucci is representative of the ethos possessed by many of the Italian immigrants that settled in Western Pennsylvania. The Italian American Collection is truly pleased to help preserve their grinding machines and their story. 

<sup>1</sup>Quote from *Echoes of the Past*.  
Dir. Peter Argentine. Argentine Productions, 1994. Film.



**LEFT:** Antonio Antonucci and his grinding machine in *The Bulletin Index*, c. 1930.

HHC Detre L&A, 2013.0073.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** John Antonucci with his grandfather Francesco's grinding machine from the History Center's 1994 film *Echoes of the Past*.

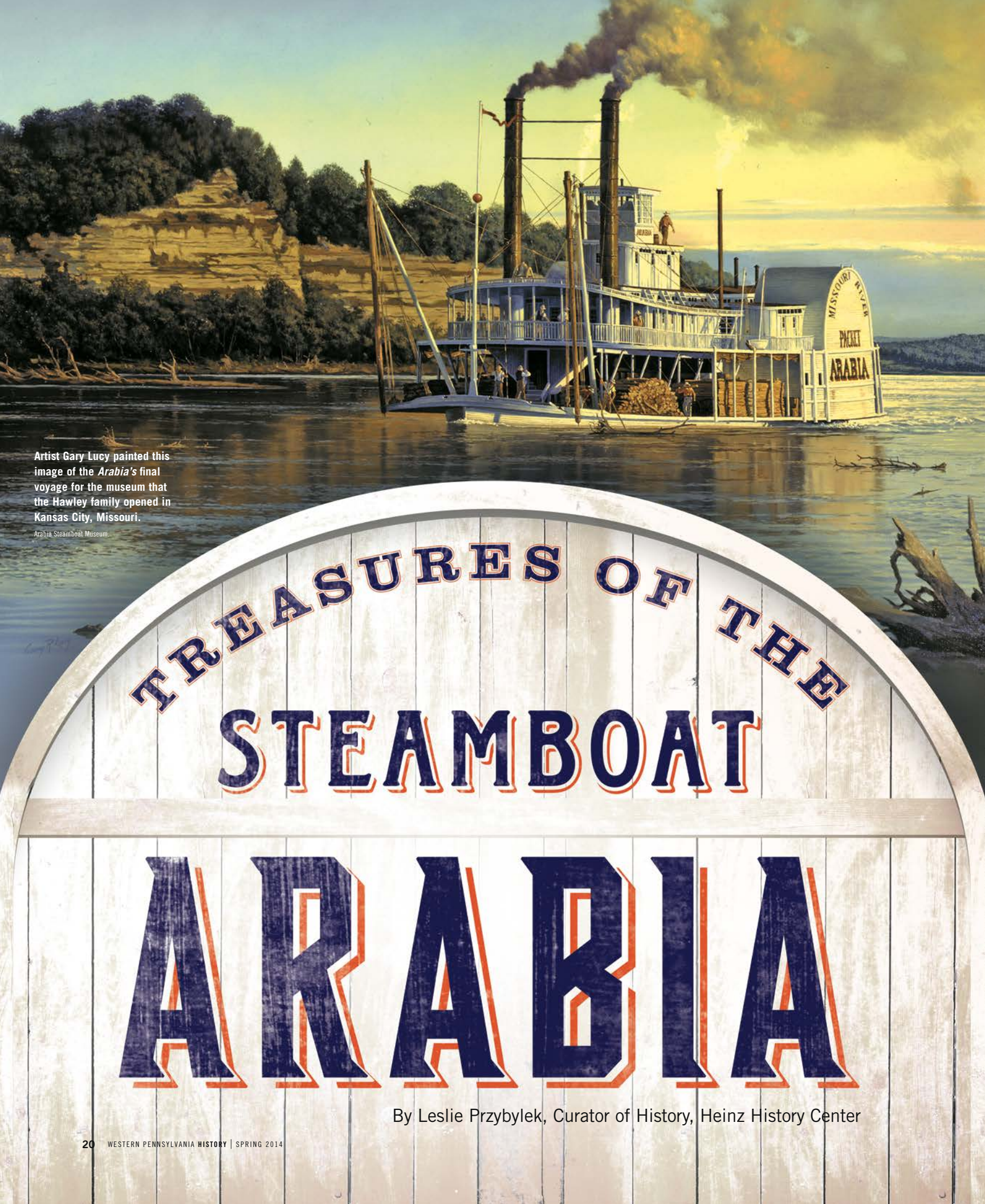
HHC Detre L&A, 1996.1158.

**BELOW:** Francesco Antonucci with his grinding machine, c. 1920.

HHC Detre L&A, 1994.0272.







Artist Gary Lucy painted this image of the *Arabia's* final voyage for the museum that the Hawley family opened in Kansas City, Missouri.

*Arabia Steamboat Museum.*

# TREASURES OF THE STEAMBOAT ARABIA

By Leslie Przybylek, Curator of History, Heinz History Center



**Time is a sort of  
river of passing  
events, and strong  
is its current; no  
sooner is a thing  
brought to sight  
than it is swept by  
and another takes  
its place.**

***Meditations,*  
Marcus Aurelius**

The oak timbers of the *Arabia's* paddlewheel (right) and the iron boilers (center back) are visible in this photo of the 1988 excavation.

David Hawley and the Arabia Steamboat Museum.





**E**arly on the evening of September 5, 1856, a side-wheel steamboat made its way up the Missouri River past present-day Kansas City, Missouri. Of average size for its era, the boat carried more than 200 tons of cargo and 130 passengers bound for the growing settlements of Iowa and the Nebraska territory. The *Arabia* had been built in the boatyards of Western Pennsylvania in 1853, one of hundreds of vessels launched by Monongahela River valley communities from Brownsville to Pittsburgh, a region that had dominated boatbuilding on the “western rivers” since the 1820s.<sup>1</sup> The *Arabia* plied the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers for two years before new owners acquired her and turned their attention to the Missouri River. The boat survived numerous trips on this treacherous waterway, traveling from St. Louis as far west as Pierre, South Dakota, to deliver hundreds of tons of eagerly awaited dry goods, clothing, hardware, and building supplies to frontier merchants and settlers.<sup>2</sup> During 1856 alone, the *Arabia* made multiple trips from St. Louis to the communities between St. Joseph and Sioux City, Iowa.<sup>3</sup>

But the *Arabia*’s luck ran out that September evening when the boat hit a submerged walnut tree—a “snag”—that impaled the three-inch-thick hull. Water rushed into the gash and the boat keeled over in the gathering dusk. Though the crew attempted to guide the stricken vessel ashore, their efforts were to no avail. Within minutes, the *Arabia* sank up to the main deck. Fortunately the boat’s passengers ferried themselves safely to land, but the cargo was a total loss. The boat settled into the mud of the Missouri River bottom. By the next morning, only the stacks and the top of the pilot house were visible. Within days, they too were gone, washed away by the Missouri’s powerful current.

The *Arabia* had vanished, but she would not be forgotten. The boat’s entombed cargo tempted treasure-seekers for a century, and its eventual recovery is one the most successful and important archeological finds of 19th-century American material culture. Part of that treasure is featured in a new

exhibition at the Senator John Heinz History Center, where the tale of what was uncovered illuminates the role Western Pennsylvania played in 1850s frontier commerce.

### A Treasure Revealed

The story of the *Arabia* and her lost cargo floated through the folklore of the Missouri River valley for generations, one of nearly 300 documented shipwrecks that enticed adventurers and treasure hunters.<sup>4</sup> The *Arabia*, rumored to have gone down with 400 barrels of the finest Kentucky bourbon, drew special attention. The ship’s general location was never a mystery. After the boat’s sinking, the Missouri River permanently shifted northeast, leaving the *Arabia* under more than 40 feet of dirt in a cornfield in Wyandotte County, Kansas. The greatest challenge to recovering the boat lay not in locating it but in finding a way around a situation that would turn out to be a blessing-in-disguise: the *Arabia* rested underground,

but never above the water table. The boat and its cargo remained preserved under water, in an anaerobic, or oxygen-free, environment.<sup>5</sup>

In 1877, 1897, and again in 1974-1975, salvage crews attempted to reach the buried vessel.<sup>6</sup> Using coffer dams, pressurized air, or pumps to hold back the water, each crew breached the *Arabia*’s watery grave. But having expended their money, their interest, or both—usually when they found no whiskey—all abandoned the project with little tangible reward to show for their work. After the third failure in 1975, the Kansas farmer whose family had watched people “digging holes and messing up the farm” for three generations vowed that he would “never let anyone try for the *Arabia* again.”<sup>7</sup> But he hadn’t met the Hawley family.

Led by patriarch Bob and his wife Florence, this “run-of-the-mill blue-collar family” operated a refrigeration business in Independence, Missouri, but also pursued other passions. Fueled by the same regional folklore that inspired





ABOVE: Karl Bodmer's engraving, *Snags (Sunken Trees on the Missouri River)*, 1841, illustrates the threat that fallen trees presented for boats navigating on the western rivers.


Museum of Nebraska Art Collection, Kearney, Nebraska.

**STEAMBOATS.**

**FOR CINCINNATI.**

 The steamer **HURON**, Mc-Millan, master, will leave for the above and intermediate ports on this day the 14th inst., at 4 P.M. jyl3 JOHN FLACK, Agt.

**FOR ST LOUIS.**

 The steamer **A R A B I A**, Woodburn, master, for above and intermediate ports, on the first rise of water. jyl4 JOHN FLACK, Agt.

LEFT: Advertisement for the Steamer **ARABIA**, *Pittsburgh Post Commercial*, July 14, 1853.

HHC, Detre L&A.





Among the artifacts recovered from the *Arabia* were more than 300 hats, like this one Bob holds, still stacked inside their original shipping crates.

David Hawley and the  
Arabia Steamboat Museum.



previous adventurers, Bob and his sons David and Greg searched for lost steamboats and sunken treasure along the historic channels of the Missouri River. They considered themselves treasure hunters, although, as of yet, they had found little of real value.<sup>8</sup>

After needing a year to convince the skeptical farmer to allow one more attempt at that steamboat buried below his corn, the Hawleys broke ground on November 13, 1988.<sup>9</sup> The epitome of a Midwestern entrepreneurial venture, they funded the project themselves with the assistance of local backers (they had formed a partnership with a local restaurateur and a Kansas contractor). Support was needed for such a huge undertaking: before starting, they had to ship a 100-ton crane up the Missouri River, and meanwhile devised pumps that each removed 1,000 gallons of water per minute to fight the ever-present surge of water in the sandy Kansas soil. At the height of the effort, they had 20 wells pumping out 20,000 gallons of water per minute. They worked seven days a week, 12 to 14 hours a day.<sup>10</sup>

For nearly three months the work continued, until February 9, 1989, when the last piece of the *Arabia*, the ship's stern, was removed from the excavation. Two days later, the pumps were turned off, and ground water slowly reclaimed the site. Watching the remaining portions of the ship become submerged again, Greg Hawley later wrote, was "like saying farewell to a good friend."<sup>11</sup> All told, the family recovered more than 200 tons of goods from the *Arabia*, including thousands of everyday items like shoes, cutlery, sewing equipment, hardware, ironstone and ceramic dishes, glassware, tinware, hundreds of rare textiles, jars of preserved food, and even two small frame houses.<sup>12</sup> They also found the only iron boiler and engine made by John Snowdon and Son's Vulcan Iron Works of Brownsville, Pa., known to survive.<sup>13</sup> Through the process of excavating these materials, the former treasure hunters developed an emotional bond with the story of the *Arabia*. Rather than sell the collection, they made a remarkable decision to keep it intact. "We realized we had a national treasure on our hands," recalled Greg in 2006.<sup>14</sup>

Recovering portions of the boat and its cargo was only part of the story. In 1989, the Hawley family's independent archeological efforts were not without controversy. When word of the excavation leaked to the media, voices of dissent arose in the museum and archeological community.<sup>15</sup> The family themselves, realizing the conservation challenge of unearthing materials that had been unexposed to oxygen for so many years, sought help from the Canadian Conservation Institute. In

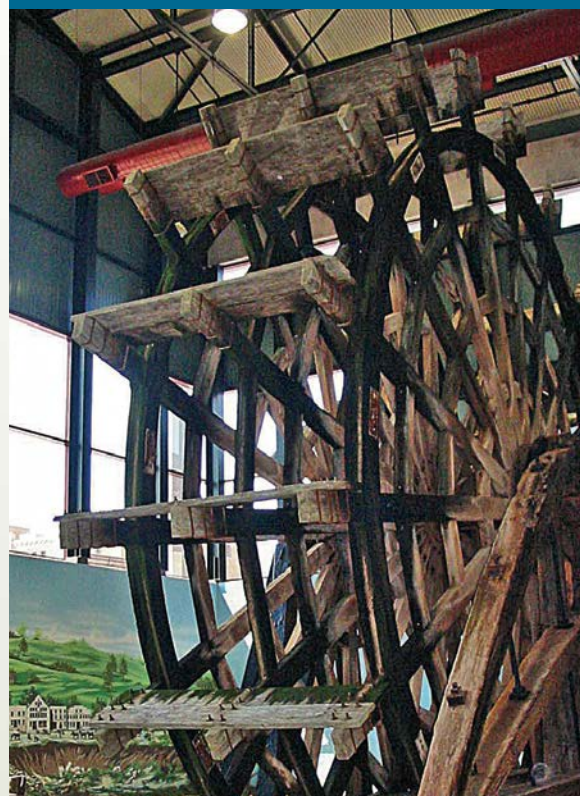
Among the finds on the *Arabia* were bolts of cloth that survived underwater for more than a century. This fragment shows the paper label on cotton cloth made in New York. The tight weave of the Sea Island cotton and the compression of the bolt may have contributed to its survival, since most cotton materials did not survive.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.



**ABOVE:** The *Arabia*'s cargo contained multiple firearms, including 15 single-shot, walnut-gripped boot pistols. **BELOW:** The partially reconstructed paddlewheel from the steamboat *Arabia* on view at the museum in Kansas City. **BOTTOM:** This Yellow-ware bowl was made by Bennett & Brothers of Pittsburgh.

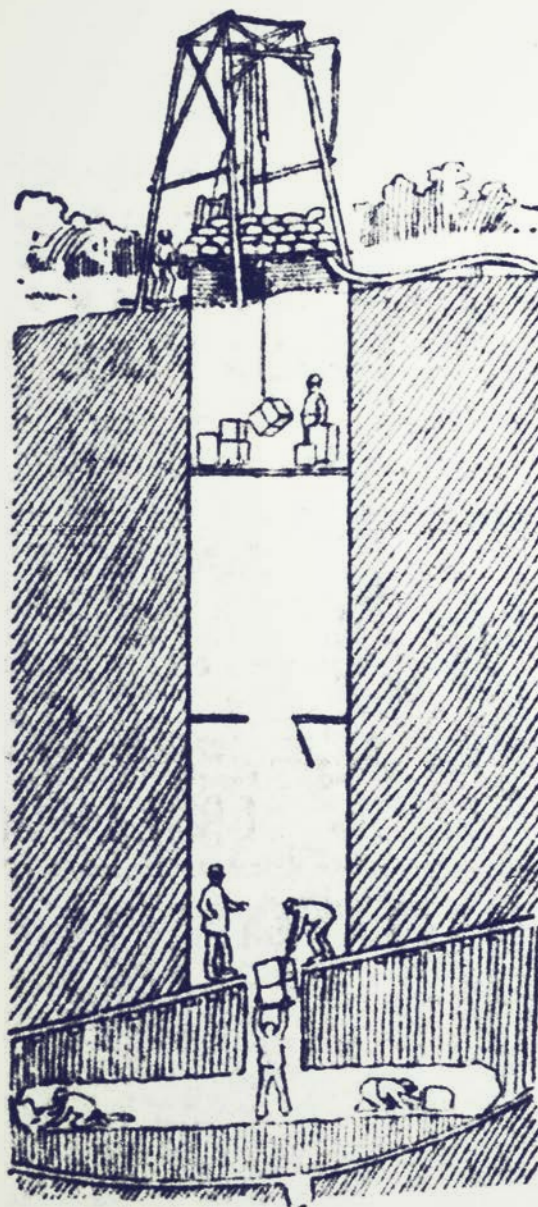
Arabia Steamboat Museum.





1991, maintaining their vow to keep the collection intact, they opened the Arabia Steamboat Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. Within a decade, the museum community started to come around. In December 2006, *Smithsonian Magazine* ran a story featuring the Hawleys and the *Arabia's* recovery. In the article, Bob Keckeisen, then director of the Kansas State Historical Society's museum, wrote, "It would have been easy for the Hawleys to break up that collection, but they didn't.... They must be commended for seeing the greater significance."<sup>16</sup> Honoring that commitment hasn't been easy; 25 years after the initial groundbreaking, large portions of the collection are still being processed. Running the museum long ago became a full-time family occupation, and then in 2009, the Hawleys lost brother Greg in a tragic auto accident.<sup>17</sup> How did they manage to keep going? "Well," Florence offered, "we just didn't all get discouraged at the same time."<sup>18</sup> And now, Bob Hawley notes, "the boat has touched so many lives" that the family is "more determined than ever" to stay true to the commitment they made a quarter of a century ago.<sup>19</sup>

Over the intervening years, the Hawleys have been reluctant to loan treasured artifacts retrieved and cared for with such devotion. Material from the *Arabia* has gone on loan just twice. A small display was placed at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka ("it's their heritage too," notes Dave), and a more extensive set of items was featured in a temporary exhibit at the Visitor Center in Hannibal, Missouri, the boyhood home of Mark Twain.<sup>20</sup> The loan to the Heinz History Center will be the largest selection of artifacts they have ever shared with another institution. "It was the History Center's persistence that won us over," admitted Bob. "And our belief that this is a treasure worth sharing with Western Pennsylvania."<sup>21</sup>



This illustration shows men working within the type of steel caisson that was used to salvage cargo from the *Arabia* in 1897. When the crew found shoes and boots but no whiskey, they abandoned their efforts.

State Historical Society of Missouri and the Arabia Steamboat Museum.

**In 1877, 1897, and again in 1974-1975, salvage crews attempted to reach the buried vessel.**

## By Pennsylvania Hands

Much of what the Hawley family recovered has special relevance for Western Pennsylvanians. "They should be proud of what they accomplished," noted Bob. "Their relatives in Brownsville outfitted the boat, put the boilers on, they helped make the country what it is today."<sup>22</sup> Built in the boatyard of John Snyder Pringle in West Brownsville in 1853, the *Arabia's* story parallels the history of hundreds of other boats whose hulls, decks, boilers, and engines were constructed by Pennsylvania hands along the banks of the Monongahela River, and to a lesser extent, the Allegheny, during the first half of the 19th century.<sup>23</sup> Merging Western Pennsylvania's long history as a center for the construction of keelboats and flatboats with Pittsburgh's prominence in the iron industry, the region's skilled shipwrights, mechanics, finish carpenters, and ironworkers transformed it into one of the nation's leading steamboat manufacturing centers by the 1820s.<sup>24</sup>

River steamboats such as the *Arabia*—shallow, flat-bottomed craft that glided over low water—emerged from decades of trial and error following the first successful voyage of a steamboat in 1811-1812 on what were then called the "western rivers." This was the great inland network of waterways that ran west of the Allegheny Mountains, including the Ohio, the Mississippi, the Red, the Arkansas, and most fearsome of all, the Missouri.

These were not the deep smooth-flowing rivers of the east. The western rivers ran fast, with strong, sometimes unpredictable currents and maddeningly varying water levels. Travel was often a seasonal affair, with more journeys undertaken in early spring or later summer and early fall, water levels permitting. Navigational hazards were common: shifting banks and sandbars in the summer; ice jams in the winter; and the menace of floating obstacles and sunken trees (known as "snags") waiting to ensnare boats





“We realized we  
had a national  
treasure on our  
hands.”

*Greg Hawley*



**ABOVE LEFT:** This tool chest found on the *Arabia* was probably the personal cargo of one of the boat's passengers. **ABOVE RIGHT:** After test drilling, the excavation team marked the *Arabia*'s 171-foot-long outline with white chalk to highlight its exact location and placement underneath the cornfield. **BELOW:** One of the largest pieces of the boat excavated by the Hawley family was the *Arabia*'s boiler, made up of three large iron boiler tanks, each 24 feet long and three feet in diameter.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.





**Pittsburgh's foundries, rolling mills, engine factories, machine shops, and skilled ironworkers played a vital role in the region's emergence as the center of steamboat manufacturing.**

in any season. The Missouri was considered particularly treacherous. Mark Twain called it a "villainous" river, one whose "alluvial banks cave and change constantly, whose snags are always hunting up new quarters."<sup>25</sup>

That first western steamboat, the *New Orleans*—funded by Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston, and built in Pittsburgh by inventor Nicholas Roosevelt—placed the Iron City at the head of a brave new world when the small craft set off from the shipyard near Beelen's iron foundry on the north bank of the Monongahela River in 1811. Journeying down the Ohio to the Mississippi River, it withstood even the catastrophe of the New Madrid earthquake to reach its namesake city by early 1812.<sup>26</sup> The *New Orleans* remained in trade on the lower Mississippi through 1814, but its hull

depth was too great to allow it to run on the upper Ohio.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, most of the roughly 60 other early steamboats that followed the *New Orleans* on western waters between 1811 and 1820 played their part in the annals of maritime history without contributing directly to a two-way system of regional commerce. There were exceptions, but most were too small and too heavy, and their hulls too deep, to allow them to make the return journey and serve as the cargo-laden workhorses that later steamboats became.<sup>28</sup>

A set of key innovations transformed these fledgling craft into the working boats exemplified by the *Arabia*. From the very

**This pressed brass deck ornament from the *Arabia* may have been installed by a finish carpenter or craftsman in Pittsburgh.**

Arabia Steamboat Museum. Photo by Courtney Keel.

**BELOW:** As this letterhead from Iron City Commercial College illustrates, Pittsburgh of the mid-19th century was clearly a leader in steamboat manufacture and commerce.

HHC, Detre L&A, MFF 1020.



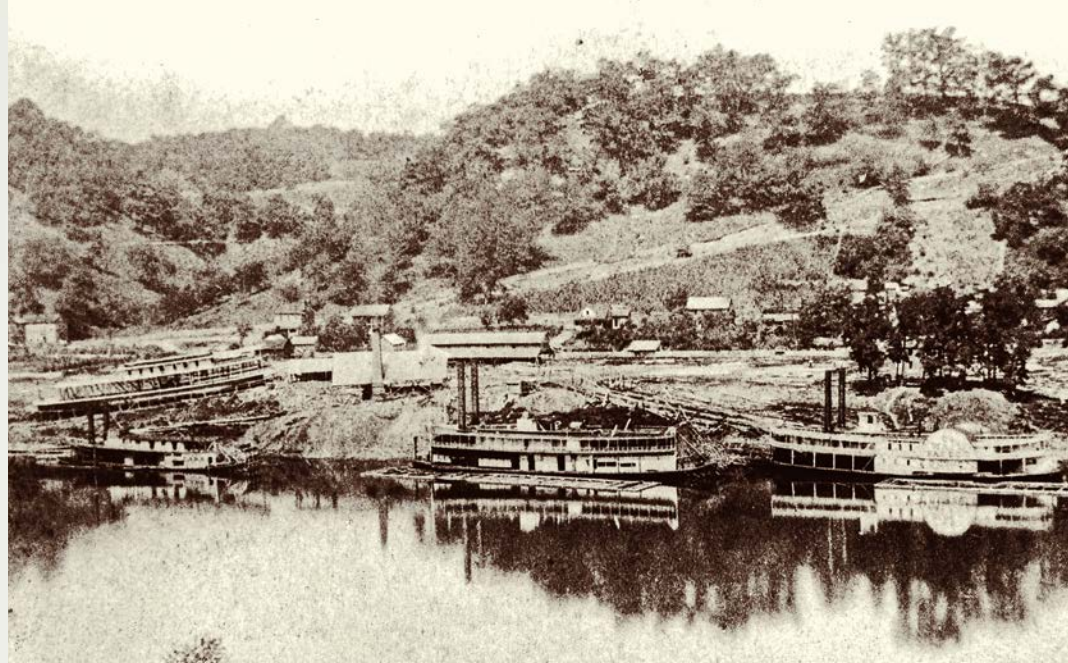


Although it postdates the years of the *Arabia's* construction, this view of the J.D.S. Pringle boat yard and sawmill in West Brownsville, Pennsylvania, c. 1870, illustrates the kind of activity that filled communities throughout the Monongahela River valley in the mid-1800s.

HHC Detre L&A, Steamboat Photographic Collection, MSS 890.

start, most vessels were built and operated by independent shipwrights and businessmen, or small partnerships. Owning and offering shares in multiple boats helped mitigate the risk should a single craft be lost, which happened with distressing frequency. The *Arabia*, for example, had three partners, including a majority owner from Brownsville and two additional owners from Pittsburgh and Sampeace.<sup>29</sup> With few hard and fast rules about either boat mechanics or form, early entrepreneurs sought to get the most out of their investment by testing new forms of hulls, decks, engines, boilers, and construction methods to find models that responded best to the unique needs of western rivers. Eventually, they came up with three crucial adaptations: the use of high-pressure steam engines; the creation of a new form of boat that featured a light-draft (or shallow) hull and multiple decks; and the use of hog chains.

The use of high-pressure steam engines was spearheaded by the second official boat on western waters, the *Comet*, a small 52-foot sternwheeler built in Brownsville in 1813, one of whose makers, Daniel French, patented an early form of an oscillating high-pressure engine.<sup>30</sup> Though this boat proved unsuccessful, it was followed by two more Brownsville craft that also featured high-pressure engines: the *Despatch* (1814) and the *Enterprize* (1814).<sup>31</sup> These pointed the way for what became the power source of choice and one of the most celebrated and controversial aspects of western river boats. High-pressure engines provided the force needed to propel boats on a faster, more efficient two-way trip. If mishandled, they could also be extremely volatile. Dramatic images and gruesome newspaper accounts of catastrophic boiler explosions became common, until the federal



## Why Brownsville?

Many Western Pennsylvania communities along the Monongahela River built steamboats in the 1800s, including Belle Vernon, California, and Elizabeth. The busiest of these towns was Brownsville, 40 miles south of Pittsburgh.

How did a town so far from Pittsburgh become a major center for steamboat construction? Brownsville's role as a transportation hub dates back to the 1750s, when the small community was called "Redstone Old Fort." The town sat at the western end of Nemacolin's Trail, a key pathway for settlers making their way westward over the Allegheny Mountains. By the late 1700s, Brownsville had become a major point for crossing the Monongahela River, spawning a profitable flatboat industry.

The presence of skilled boat builders extended into the construction of steamboats. A number of steamboat pioneers, including inventor Henry Miller Shreve and steam engineer Daniel French, began their operations in Brownsville. In 1812, French and two partners founded the Monongahela and Ohio Steamboat Company in Brownsville, the second company in the United States formed expressly to build and operate steamboats on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, challenging Robert Fulton for supremacy of America's western waterways.

Through the late 1800s, Brownsville rivaled Pittsburgh and Wheeling as one of the region's main steamboat builders. Although the town's fortune fell on hard times later in the 20th century, boat building remains part of its heritage: Brownsville Marine Products, LLC, launched its first barge in November 2006, using a facility that had been used by the Hillman Barge Company since 1939. In November 2012, the company celebrated its 600th barge launch.

For more information about Brownsville's early role as a transportation and steamboat hub, check out:

- Ellis Franklin, *History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania, with Biographical Sketches of Many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: L.H. Leverts & Co., 1882): section on "Brownsville Borough and Township," accessible on-line through the portal at [www.historicpa.net/history/fayette.html](http://www.historicpa.net/history/fayette.html)
- The Brownsville Historical Society: [www.nemacolinncastle.org/history.html](http://www.nemacolinncastle.org/history.html)



government intervened in 1838 and 1852 to establish safety standards. In truth, far more boats were felled by snags, but boiler explosions entered the public imagination as a vivid symbol of both the promise and peril of new technology.<sup>32</sup>

The form and construction of boats also changed to meet physical and economic needs. The earliest steamboats resembled sailing ships, with heavy-timbered construction and

deep hulls. But what guaranteed stability on the ocean was less reliable or unworkable on western rivers. Taking a cue from the area's connection with flatboats and keelboats, steamboat builders along the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers experimented with flatter, wider, and longer hulls, increasing the ability of boats to carry more weight in less water.<sup>33</sup> As the deep hulls of earlier vessels gave way to shallow hulls that could navigate western

rivers, boats lost hold space for both passengers and cargo. Shipwrights and boatmasters like Brownsville's Captain Henry Shreve, who had gotten his own start in keelboat yards, added upper decks above the hold to open up more space to accommodate people and freight.<sup>34</sup> What we now envision as the "typical" shape of a steamboat emerged through trial and error related directly to the creation of a watercraft designed for the western trade: a low-water boat that could carry as many people and as much cargo as far and as fast as possible.

One more innovation extended this capacity. "Hog chains" connected the ends and intermediate posts, much like a suspension bridge, to give the boats stability and strength; they allowed builders to use lighter wood for hull construction while making those hulls longer and shallower.<sup>35</sup> One of the first documented uses was in the Pittsburgh and Cincinnati Packet Line boat *Brilliant* (1848), a Western Pennsylvania-built craft, though hog chains could have been used much earlier.<sup>36</sup> From boilers and engines to key internal structures like hog chains, iron became crucial in constructing these boats. Pittsburgh's foundries, rolling mills, engine factories, machine shops, and skilled ironworkers played a vital role in the region's emergence as the center of steamboat manufacturing.

Marrying the traditional realm of the shipwright with the world of iron and machines, the new boats were constructed in a process that involved multiple specialized facilities. The wooden hull and body were typically built by an experienced boatyard such as J.S. Pringle's yard in West Brownsville. The partially completed craft was then floated to an engine factory such as John Snowdon's Vulcan Iron Works which installed the boilers and other machinery. The vessel then continued its journey to the commercial center of Pittsburgh, where finish carpenters, glaziers, joiners, painters, and furniture makers completed the process, fully outfitting the boat for its life in the trade, making everything from passenger cabin chairs and

## Steamboats in Strange Places? The *Bertrand*

Two decades before the discovery of the *Arabia*, the excavation of another steamboat provided a glimpse of the historical treasure such wrecks could reveal to those who persevered in retrieving them.

In early 1968, two salvors notified the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, a Missouri River flood plain 25 miles north of Omaha, Nebraska, that they had found the steamer *Bertrand* within the refuge's boundaries. The *Bertrand*, whose hull was built by Dunlevy and Company of Wheeling, West Virginia, with cabin fittings completed by Gullett of Pittsburgh (probably of the firm Gullett & Applegate), was launched in March 1865, headed for the Montana Territory. Alas, the *Bertrand* proved less fortunate than the *Arabia*, striking a snag and sinking during its maiden voyage on April 1. While the boat's steam fittings and paddlewheel were salvaged after the wreck, much of its cargo was lost.

Rumors of the *Bertrand's* location prompted repeated searches over the next century before the 1968 discovery. Because the boat was found on federal land, the excavation was supervised by the National Park Service. More than 250,000 artifacts—including more than 1,000 boots and shoes, household furnishings, clothing, cookware, and hundreds of bottles of food and condiments—were turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The *Bertrand* Collection is maintained by the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. In 2011, the entire collection was evacuated in nine days when extensive Missouri River flooding forced the closure of the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and the Steamboat Bertrand Museum. After years of clean up and stabilization, artifacts from the collection finally went back on display in September 2013.

More information and images from the *Bertrand* Collection can be found at: [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Desoto/wildlife\\_and\\_habitat/steamboat\\_bertrand.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Desoto/wildlife_and_habitat/steamboat_bertrand.html) and <https://www.facebook.com/SteamboatBertrandMuseum>



*Bertrand* artifacts on display.

Steamboat Bertrand Museum.



# A New Boat for Western Waters

After the partnership of Pennsylvania inventor Robert Fulton and wealthy diplomat Robert Livingston resulted in the triumph of Fulton's *Clermont* on the Hudson River in 1807, the men who had created America's first commercially successful steamboat turned their eyes toward a larger prize.

Fulton and Livingston looked westward to the boat-building center of Pittsburgh and its ready access to the Ohio River and the entire western river network. Soliciting the assistance of inventor Nicholas Roosevelt—great-granduncle of Theodore Roosevelt and advocate of side-wheels rather than stern-wheels—the men set out to achieve something that many thought impossible:

build and navigate a steamboat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

With funding from Fulton and Livingston, Roosevelt headed to Pittsburgh. In 1809, he undertook a trip to test whether western river steam navigation was feasible. After Roosevelt returned with a favorable assessment, the construction of a new side-wheel steamboat began in 1810. Named the *New Orleans*, the wooden craft took shape at a wharf along the Monongahela River in Pittsburgh. Its engine works were carted overland from New York and assembled here. The new boat was completed in October 1811, and its main expedition launched on October 20. Large by the standards of the day, the *New Orleans* could accommodate as many as 60 passengers, and Nicholas Roosevelt was joined on the trip by his wife Lydia, a cook, a small crew, and a Newfoundland dog named Tiger. After an eventful voyage that witnessed the birth of Roosevelt's son and the impact of the New Madrid earthquake on the river's course, the *New Orleans* reached its namesake destination on January 10, 1812.

The boat never again saw Pittsburgh but the point had been made: navigation of the western rivers by steamboat was possible, and Pittsburgh would play an integral role in the growth of that industry.

In this folk painting on a metal barrel lid, an artist depicted the *New Orleans'* historic first voyage on the western rivers, c. 1811.

HHC, Detre L&A, 86.1.216.



**The New Orleans:  
Steaming Upstream by  
Moonlight, 1811,  
by Gary R. Lucy.**

Gary R. Lucy Gallery, Inc. Washington, Mo., [www.garylucy.com](http://www.garylucy.com).





decorative woodwork to painted nameplates.<sup>37</sup> Towns throughout the valley buzzed with activity. One traveler, reporting on the boatbuilding community of Monongahela for the *Cleveland Herald* in 1840, complained, “It is strange that the people here are not all deaf, for really this is a noisy city.... These workers in Iron and Brass can no more be quiet, than the Whigs can.”<sup>38</sup> For the boats themselves, life following this birth could be brief. Beyond snags and boiler explosions, boats suffered from collisions with other vessels or submerged wrecks, leaks, ice jams, fires, groundings, and the general wear of life on the river.<sup>39</sup> The average boat lasted about five years; many, like the *Arabia*, sank or were “used up” in three or four. Sometimes they gained an extended form of life when pieces or parts from one craft were salvaged and placed in another.<sup>40</sup>

### Connecting People, Cargo, and Communities

By the mid-1830s, these lightweight, short-lived craft with their high-pressure boilers and multiple decks had revolutionized the transportation infrastructure of the nation’s interior. Journeys that once took weeks now required just days, even if posted steamboat departure and arrival times tended to be notoriously unreliable.<sup>41</sup> European observers also

recognized the transformation. Commenting during his trip down the Mississippi River in 1838, Alexis de Tocqueville admitted “that the discovery of steam has added unbelievably to the strength and prosperity of the Union, and has done so by facilitating rapid communication between the diverse parts of this vast body.” He continued, “Of all countries in the world America is the one where movement of human thought and industry is the most continuous and swift.”<sup>42</sup> A newspaper writer from Frankfort, Kentucky, whose comment was republished in the *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, mused in more poetic fashion about the accomplishment: “verily, the ingenuity of Fulton is destined to bring back the days of enchantment, when space was conquered by magical influence.”<sup>43</sup> By this time, the creation of the boats themselves was no longer a novelty. “Gradually steamboat business has been brought to a greater perfection, and almost ceases to be a matter of interest to the mass,” noted the *Pittsburgh Gazette* in March 1837.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the impact was still a marvel to behold. “The introduction of steam boats on western waters,”



This brass and steel spring balance scale was one of at least a dozen found on the *Arabia*.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.

pronounced the author of *Notes on the Western States* in 1838, “has contributed more than any other single cause, perhaps more than all other causes which have grown out of human skill, combined, to advance the prosperity of the west.”<sup>45</sup>

Despite competition from other river communities such as Cincinnati, Wheeling, and Louisville, Pittsburgh was recognized as one of the preeminent sources of western river steamboats from the late 1830s through the 1850s. One survey of all recorded steamboats operating on western waters between 1829 and 1836 found that nearly 40 percent of the craft originated in Pittsburgh or Western Pennsylvania.<sup>46</sup> Nearly a decade later, this percentage remained remarkably consistent.<sup>47</sup> Cities further west were envious of the trade. “Why is that we annually send away half a million dollars to give employment to the boat builders of Cincinnati and Pittsburgh?” asked St. Louis in the *Daily Missouri Republic* in March 1837.<sup>48</sup>



Some of the most remarkable artifacts recovered from the *Arabia* were textiles, including more than 300 hats, and hundreds of shirts, coats, and socks. This photograph shows the collection on display in the museum in Kansas City.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.



**Miller's Landing: Westward  
Travelers at Miller's Landing,  
1843, by Gary R. Lucy.**

Gary R. Lucy Gallery, Inc. Washington, Mo.,  
www.garylucy.com.



These delicate calico buttons represent just two of the 109 patterns found aboard the *Arabia*. They were probably a product of France.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.

Would-be operators outside the Pittsburgh region exchanged instructions by mail to facilitate the construction and purchase of vessels. With such a high demand, these long-distance transactions could be challenging. Writing from Pittsburgh to St. Louis in May 1839, Theodore Dunnica reported to his employers regarding their awaited boat, the *Meteor*: “We are driving ahead finely since she has been at the wharf, and I think she will be ready to leave this by 1st to 5 June.... The best judges have examined her and pronounced her a very superior boat throughout,” he continued, admitting, “this is some compensation for the delay which has been unavoidable.”<sup>49</sup> J.I. Dales sent a note from Louisville, Kentucky, to his agent J.T. Hogg of Brownsville in January 1847, concerning a boat under construction in the Pringle (misspelled Prinkle) yard: “Say to Mr. Prinkle to make the rudder 13 ft apart from

out to out and [we’ll] be in the safe side,” he requested. “I should like to be with Prinkle when he is modeling and setting it up. However you will write me in time if it is necessary I should be with him.” He added, “I have no further alterations to make in regard to the hull (until I see Capt Sparrowhawk in St. Louis).” Dales’ correspondence also reflected the transitory nature of commerce conducted along the river. “The boat is about to leave in a few minutes,” he explained, “and I haven’t time to write much.”<sup>50</sup>

Advertisements seeking available boats ran in local Pittsburgh newspapers, which also

**Steamboats brought a surprising variety of material goods to far-flung new settlements that had yet to establish their own factories and commercial networks.**

followed the fates of Pittsburgh-built boats that ended up far from Pennsylvania shores.<sup>51</sup> One former Pittsburgh resident, writing to the *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette* from La Platte City, Nebraska Territory, in May 1855, reported on the only boat to have made it as far north as Council Bluffs, Iowa, that spring: “The *Clara* is a Pittsburgh built steamboat,” wrote William Larimer, Jr., “I felt like meeting an old acquaintance when I went on board.”<sup>52</sup> Larimer was referring to the *Clara* in 1855, but other





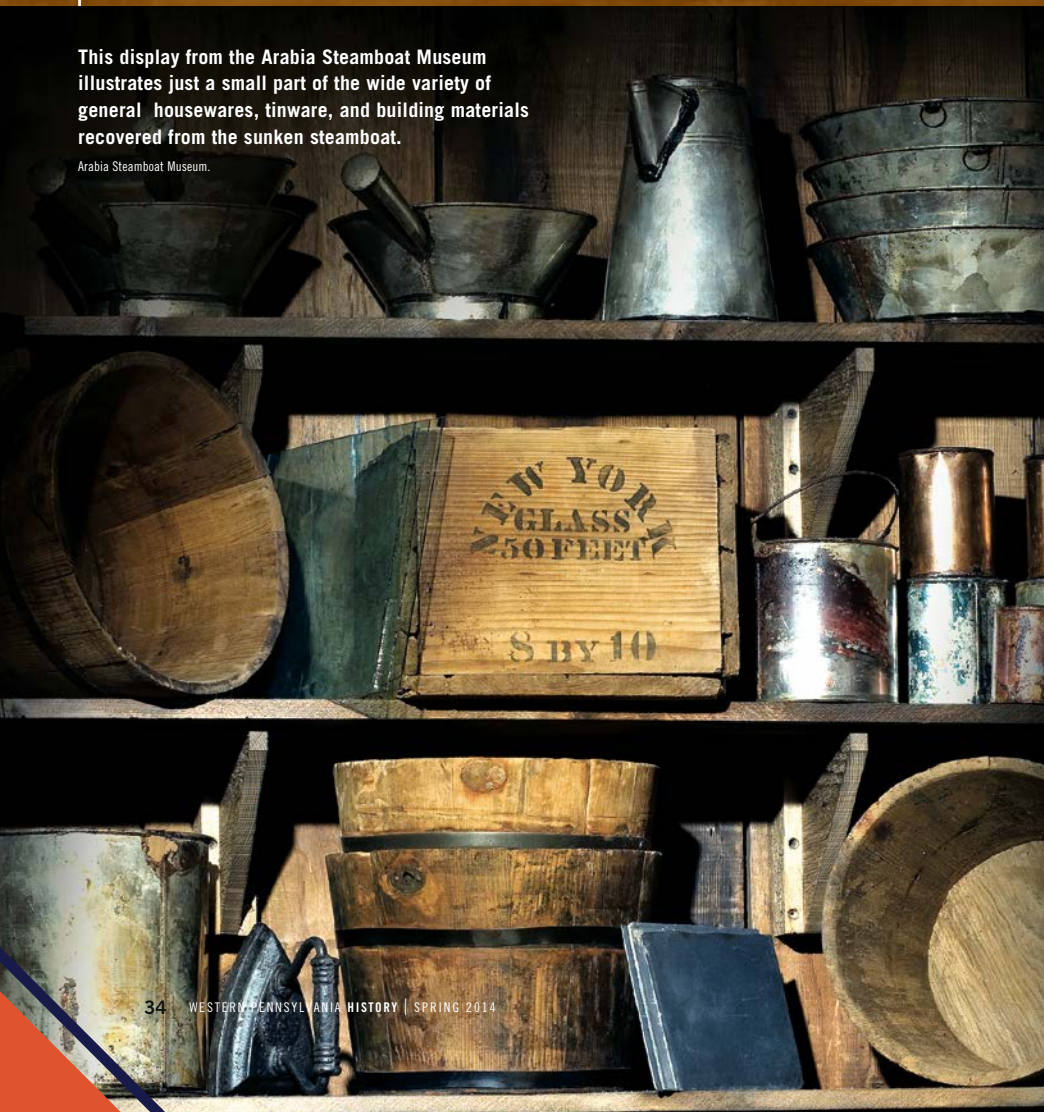
At least six kinds of preserved pie fruit were recovered on the *Arabia*, including cherries, currants, and gooseberries.

*Arabia Steamboat Museum.*

**Western river steamboats carried diverse products from across the nation to people and markets that wanted them, regardless of distance or unpredictable waterways.**

This display from the *Arabia Steamboat Museum* illustrates just a small part of the wide variety of general housewares, tinware, and building materials recovered from the sunken steamboat.

*Arabia Steamboat Museum.*



passages in his letter could have just as easily been written about the *Arabia* one year later. “The merchants there are out of everything,” he informed Pittsburgh readers regarding the situation in Council Bluffs, “or were before the Clara came up. Building is kept back for want of lumber, nails, and all kinds of hardware.” Adding further enticement, he continued, “I know of no article of Pittsburgh manufacture that is not wanted here.”<sup>53</sup>

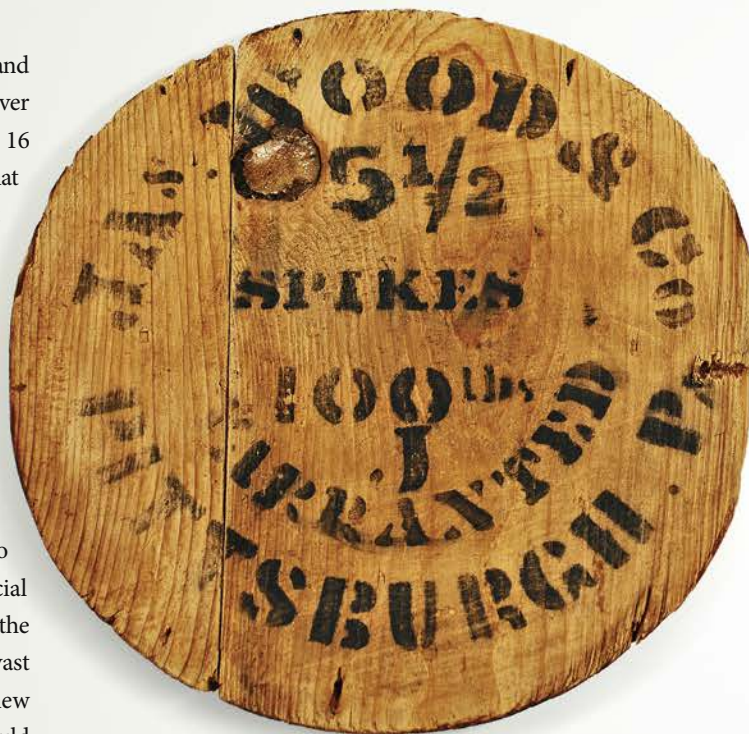
Larimer’s words reflected the human motivation behind the unique type of boat that Pennsylvanians helped to create. Western river steamboats carried diverse products from across the nation to people and markets that wanted them, regardless of distance or unpredictable waterways. Shoes and pickles from New York, saws from Philadelphia, oysters from Baltimore, coffee and molasses from New Orleans, nails, hardware, and glassware from Pittsburgh, even perfume from France—steamboats brought a surprising variety of material goods to far-flung new settlements that had yet to establish their own factories and commercial networks.<sup>54</sup> Products these vessels carried also helped to ensure that factories, stores, and homes could be built: among the *Arabia*’s cargo were thousands of nails and spikes, approximately 20,000 feet of lumber, and the equipment for a sawmill.<sup>55</sup> The same boats also allowed suppliers and factories in eastern urban centers to reach new communities or maintain relationships with customers that had enjoyed their products before heading west. Thus, the network enabled by boats such as the *Arabia* allowed New Yorkers or Pennsylvanians to move to a settlement in Iowa and still expect to furnish their table with the blue-edged china plates, bottle of cognac, and jar of cherries or pickles that had graced their home back east.<sup>56</sup>

By the time of the *Arabia*’s sinking, the leading edge of frontier settlement in America was along the Kansas and Nebraska borders with Missouri and Iowa, centered on the Missouri River, a region opened up by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. In close focus, the goods carried by the *Arabia* and recovered by the Hawley family shine a rare light on an area of



advancing settlement, revealing the stories and meanings found in a boatload of cargo never received by people building new lives in 16 western communities in the fall of 1856. That story will unfold as part of the exhibition at the Senator John Heinz History Center.

The tale of the *Arabia* is also the story of hundreds of other boats shaped by Western Pennsylvania hands. The heyday of these boats as freight carriers was brief; western river steamboats enjoyed their greatest success in the years between 1830 and 1860, before the nation's railroads transformed America's cargo distribution network. Yet during that crucial period, steamboats shaped and accelerated the pace of commercial exchange across the vast heartland of the country. They created new expectations about what material goods would be available even in fledgling communities far beyond the nation's urban centers. "Those early men," observed Dave Hawley in admiration, "the Pringles, the Snowdons: their imagination, ingenuity, and hard work created a network that took products from all over the world to small towns in Missouri, South Dakota, Nebraska..."<sup>57</sup> The history of that time, added Bob, "is written in the little things, in how many different things" boats such as the *Arabia* made possible. "Capitals and towns in Missouri and South Dakota were the work of people like Western Pennsylvanians.



Settlers all along the frontier desired iron goods from Pittsburgh such as spikes from James Wood & Company.

Arabia Steamboat Museum. Photo by Elizabeth Simpson.

They helped build the network that created these places."<sup>58</sup> And that, the family agreed, was clearly a legacy worth sharing.

**The exhibition *Pittsburgh's Lost Steamboat: Treasures of the Arabia*, opens April 26, 2014, at the Senator John Heinz History Center. Those wishing to know more about the Arabia Steamboat Museum and its story can visit the museum's website at: [www.1856.com/](http://www.1856.com/).**



The Pittsburgh Novelty Works Company made this balance scale (left) and combination boot jack, nail pull, and buggy wrench, which were carried west before sinking.

Arabia Steamboat Museum. Photo by Elizabeth Simpson.

**Leslie A. Przybylek** is Curator of History at the Senator John Heinz History Center, where she recently curated *Pennsylvania's Civil War* and the new exhibition on the steamboat *Arabia*. A native of Western Pennsylvania with family roots in Pittsburgh, Leslie previously served as Curator of Humanities Exhibitions for *NEH on the Road* and Creative Director for Programs with the Mid-America Arts Alliance in Kansas City, Missouri, where she first learned of the *Arabia's* story. Leslie holds a B.A. from Gettysburg College and an M.A. from the University of Delaware.

<sup>1</sup> The standard source for the history of the western river steamboat industry remains Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economical and Technological History* (1949; reprinted New York: Dover Publications, 1994). Also useful is: Adam I. Kane, *The Western River Steamboat* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), and Leslie S. Henshaw, "Early Steamboat Travel on the Ohio River," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (October 1911): 378-402.

<sup>2</sup> The standard sources on the *Arabia* are: Greg Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield, The Discovery and Excavation of the Steamboat Arabia* (Kansas City, Mo.: Paddlewheel Publishing, 2005) and David Hawley, *Treasures of the Steamboat Arabia* (Kansas City, Mo.: Arabia Steamboat Museum, 1995). Also useful is: Fergus M. Bordewich, "Pay Dirt," *Smithsonian Magazine* (December 2006), available online at: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/arabia.html?c=y&page=2>. Information about the *Arabia's* ownership history is found in Annalies Corbin, *The Material Culture of Steamboat Passengers, Archeological Evidence from the Missouri River* (New York: Springer Publishers,





A fine set of crated china emerges from a watery grave. It is believed that the gold-rimmed pieces belonged to a wealthy passenger.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.

2000), 15. The *Arabia* was owned by a Pittsburgh group until March 1855, when ownership was transferred to a concern out of St. Charles, Missouri.

<sup>3</sup> D. Hawley, *Treasures*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 20; Capt. H.M. Chittenden, "Report on Steamboat Wrecks on Missouri River," *Nebraska History* 51 (1970): 16-23; see also articles such as "The Legend of the Lost Arabia and its Treasure Exploded," *Kansas City Star*, June 1910, and "Under the River's Sands," *Omaha Weekly Bee*, July 22, 1896. It is likely that more than a few of those other boats had Western Pennsylvanian origins. Periods of low water still reveal wrecks hidden under the Missouri's current. See for example, news coverage of the steamboat *Montana*, which re-emerged in August 2012, available online at: <http://fox2now.com/2012/08/10/the-steamboat-montana-resurfaces-in-the-missouri-river/>.

<sup>5</sup> The relationship of both the Missouri and Mississippi River basins to the surrounding geography makes the water table issue a consistent challenge for maritime archeologists, who must either find ways to remove the water from shipwreck excavations, or attempt dive recoveries in extremely limited visibility. See Kane, 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 39-40; D. Hawley, *Treasures*, 18-19; *The Columbus Telegram*, Columbus, Nebraska, April 19, 1974; unidentified newspaper, Atlanta, Georgia, December 5, 1897, from files of Arabia Steamboat Museum.

<sup>7</sup> G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 39-40.

<sup>8</sup> Bordewich, 1 (note: page numbers are based on the downloadable online version of this article).

<sup>9</sup> G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 42, 49.

<sup>10</sup> G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 47, 140; Bordewich, 2.

<sup>11</sup> G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 167.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-214. Due to the ongoing processing of the *Arabia* collection, slated for completion around the year 2022, counts for the number of some items in the collection are estimates rather than final figures.

<sup>13</sup> Today the location of the Snowdon factory in Brownsville, Pa., is the site of an ongoing archeological dig organized by the Mon/Yough Chapter of the Society for Pennsylvania Archeology in association with California University of Pennsylvania. See the blog: [www.archaeologydude.com/2013/06/john-snowdon-and-sons-vulcan-iron-and.html](http://www.archaeologydude.com/2013/06/john-snowdon-and-sons-vulcan-iron-and.html). The author is indebted to Marc Henshaw for this information.

<sup>14</sup> Bordewich, 4.

<sup>15</sup> G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 153, 177.

<sup>16</sup> Bordewich, 4.

<sup>17</sup> The loss was intensified by the nature of the accident. Hawley's vehicle was caught in the middle of a drag race on Interstate 70 that was witnessed by multiple individuals. Greg was well known as the public face of the Arabia Steamboat Museum, and his death was mourned as a loss to the entire Kansas City community.

<sup>18</sup> Personal interview by the author with Bob, Florence, and David Hawley, Arabia Steamboat Museum, Kansas City, Mo., November 14, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

**ANTHONY BEELEN,**  
**COMMISSION & FORWARDING MERCHANT, PITTSBURGH.**



Johnson & Stockton, print. Pittsburgh.

**SHIPPED,** IN GOOD ORDER, AND WELL CONDITIONED, BY **A. BEELEN,** for account and risk of whom it may concern, on board the good Steam Boat called the *Franklin*, whereof is Master for the present voyage, *Seaman*, now lying at the Port of Pittsburgh, and bound for *St. Louis*, the following packages or articles, marked or numbered as below, which are to be delivered, without delay, in like good order, at the Port of *St. Louis*. (The dangers of River Navigation, Fire and unavoidable accidents excepted,) unto *Mrs. S. Ziegler* or to *his* assigns; he or they to pay freight for the said goods at the rate of *thirty Cents* per 100 lbs.

In Witness Whereof, The Owner, Master or Clerk of said boat has affirmed to two bills of lading, of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished, the other to stand void.

Dated at Pittsburgh, this *14* day of *November* 184*5*

**MARKS.**

*H.C. Rozier & Co.*

*St. Louis*

*H.C. Rozier & Co.*

1 Box Books	86
5 " Shellsward 45.72.71.72.79.	348
6 half boxes 8 x 10 W. Glass	288
2 " 10 x 12 do	100
1 " 12 x 16 do	56
1 box Stone pipes	15
8 Grand Wrapping Paper	175
2 Bales Batting	50
1 Box Wire	80
6 Teakettle Hides	56
13 bags Nails & Brads	1300
1 " Spikes	100
1 " Wrought Nails	33
19 pieces A B. Steel	522
6 tin plate Wood Stoves	1236
6 pieces Sheet Iron	69
26 joints Stone pipe	73
6 Wash Kettles	294
179 pieces Iron assortd	5624
18 Bundles Iron "	1585
1 Franklin Stove and 1 big cast iron balls	415
3 joints & 1 Stone pipe	20
<i>Seaman</i>	12 1486

Boats from Western Pennsylvania carried people and commercial goods across the nation in the mid-1800s, opening up the interior of the United States to trade and settlement.

HHC, Detre L&A, Francis C. Rozier & Co records, MFF 0129.



<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> By far the majority of Western Pennsylvania-built steamboats, especially through the 1840s and including those that navigated on the Allegheny River, were constructed in the yards along the Monongahela. See Frederick Way, Jr., *The Allegheny* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942), 223-272. But there were boatyards on the Allegheny. See, for example, ads appearing for the "Allegheny Steam Boat Yard and Steam Saw Mill," *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 30, 1837.

<sup>24</sup> Kane, 20-21; Leland D. Baldwin, *The Keelboat Age on Western Waters* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1941), 52-53. For a review of Pittsburgh's earlier shipbuilding history, which included the construction of a few ocean-going ships, see William F. Trimble, "From Sail to Steam, Shipbuilding in the Pittsburgh Area, 1790-1865,"

*The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 58, no. 2 (April 1975): 147-167. The *Arabia's* builder, John Snyder Pringle, was among those who began his career working in a boatyard that built keel boats, see: Boyd Crumrine, Ellis Franklin, and Austin N. Hungerford, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania with biographical sketches of many of its pioneers and prominent men* (Philadelphia: H.L. Everts & Co, 1882), 635.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (Wordsworth edition of 1883 original, 2012), 88.

<sup>26</sup> The most specific details of the launch are mentioned in an anniversary account of the voyage in 1911: *Pittsburgh Post*, October 30, 1911. The standard account of the trip is: J.H.B. Latrobe, *The First Steamboat Voyage on the Western Waters* (Baltimore, 1871).

<sup>27</sup> Hunter, 70. The boat was sunk by a snag near Baton Rouge, see: James T. Lloyd, *Lloyd's Steamboat Directory and Disasters on the Western Waters* (Cincinnati: James T. Lloyd & Co., 1856), 41.

<sup>28</sup> Kane, 12; Hunter, 70-76; The most notable exception was the *Enterprize*, which achieved fame as the first boat to descend the Mississippi and make a successful return trip as far as Louisville, although this return trip was aided by high water. The *Enterprize* also played a key role in the Battle of New Orleans. See Alfred A. Maas, "Brownsville's Steamboat *Enterprize* and Pittsburgh's Supply of General Jackson's Army," *Pittsburgh History* (Spring 1994): 22-29.

<sup>29</sup> Kane, 44-46; Hunter, 310-311. A part-ownership could include anywhere from two to five or more listed partners, though two-thirds of all boats were owned by four or less men. For the *Arabia's*

## The *Arabia* and "Beecher's Bibles"

*We have thus far been successful, and the guns and ammunition are safe in the hold. The boat is crowded with Border-Ruffians, but they are of the better sort and treat us well, little knowing who we are.*

David Starr Hoyt, writing to his mother aboard the *Arabia*, March 1856

Most of the *Arabia's* voyages delivered basic consumer goods to the homes and tables of settlers. But no steamboat operating on the Missouri River could escape the escalating political tensions of the 1850s. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 spurred increasing immigration to the those two new territories, but the Act's clause requiring "popular sovereignty" (e.g. a democratic vote) to determine whether the territories would be slave state or free embroiled Kansas in a bloody conflict that haunted the region long after the Civil War.

In March 1856, the *Arabia* ran right into the middle of the debate. David Starr Hoyt, a covert agent for the New England Emigrant Aid Society, was discovered attempting to secretly ship five crates of Sharps Model 1853 carbines and rifles into Kansas aboard the *Arabia*. The rifles—sometimes called "Beecher's Bibles" due to abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher advocating that a Sharps rifle was a more persuasive moral agent than a Bible for convincing slaveholders of the error of their ways—were part of a larger effort to arm the Free-Soilers in Kansas.

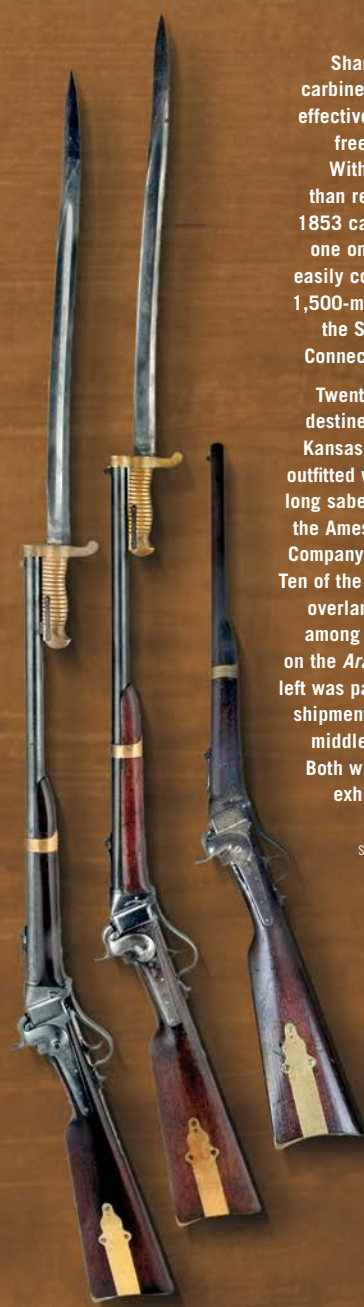
Hoyt's 90 carbines and 10 rifles, hidden in crates labeled "tools" and "machinery," were discovered when a personal note he penned was stolen from his cabin or his coat pocket. Angry passengers and crew uncovered the crates; some even threatened to lynch Hoyt and his agents. Cooler heads prevailed and the men were allowed to leave the boat, but the rifles were confiscated. Months later, Hoyt was murdered by Border-Ruffians and the *Arabia* ended up on the bottom of the Missouri River. Ironically, the rifles, after a lengthy legal battle, were eventually returned to the anti-slavery forces in Kansas.

The *Arabia's* brush with the history of "Bleeding Kansas" will be featured in the exhibit at the Heinz History Center. Two original Sharps rifles connected with the story, as well as six others, will once again demonstrate the many roles that Pittsburgh's western river steamboats played in the drama of westward expansion.

This feature is largely based on:

- Andrew Masich, "'Beecher's Bibles' aboard the Steamship *Arabia*," *The Sharps Collector Report* 19, no. 2: 16-17.
- Philip R. Rutherford, "The *Arabia* Incident," *Kansas History* 1 (Spring 1978): 39-47.

Special thanks to the Sharps Collector Association, <http://sharpscollector.com/>, Guy Ferro, and David Carter.



Sharps Model 1853 carbines were uniquely effective for the Kansas free soil campaign. With barrels shorter than regular rifles, the 1853 carbines (like the one on right) could be easily concealed for the 1,500-mile journey from the Sharps factory in Connecticut to Kansas.

Twenty such carbines destined for Lawrence, Kansas, were specially outfitted with 24 ¾-inch-long saber bayonets from the Ames Manufacturing Company (shown at left). Ten of the rifles were sent overland, and 10 were among those smuggled on the *Arabia*. The gun at left was part of the *Arabia* shipment; the one in the middle went overland. Both will appear in the exhibit at the Heinz History Center.

Sharps Collector Association,  
[www.sharpscollector.com/](http://www.sharpscollector.com/)



## IRON STEAMER—FOR NEW ORLEANS.



The Iron Steamer **VALLEY FORGE**, Baldwin, Master, will depart for the above and intermediate ports, on Thursday next, the 5th December, at 10 o'clock, A. M. For freight or passage, apply on board, or to

**ROBINSON & MINIS, AGENTS.**

The Valley Forge is rendered *Snag proof* by the subdivision of her hull into three separate apartments, each perfectly water tight; she is **FIRE PROOF**, in virtue of the material of which the entire hull is constructed, and of the presence of a complete and powerful fire engine; she is *proof against explosion*, because she is provided with Evans' Safety Guard, which makes **EXPLOSION IMPOSSIBLE**; she is provided with every improvement of cabin and state room that may secure the comfort and convenience of passengers. All the berths of both cabins are enclosed in commodious state rooms opening at once on to the guards and into the cabin; in short, neither expenditure nor pains have been spared to make the passenger comfortable and safe, and to make freight secure on board the Valley Forge. nov 28—td

FELT CLOTHS AND CARPETS

## The Valley Forge — Another Pittsburgh First

Most steamboats built in Western Pennsylvania in the 1800s followed the tradition of wood construction. But one enterprising foundry and engine-builder gave Pittsburgh a "first" in 1839 when it launched a steamboat with a hull built entirely of iron.

Robinson, Minis & Miller started construction on the *Valley Forge* in the summer of 1838. Using iron from Lyon, Shorb & Company's Sligo Mill, the team hoped to complete their experimental craft by July 4, 1839. But the boat's construction proved challenging, and the "iron wonder" was not ready until that fall. The *Valley Forge's* hull was launched on September 9, 1839, and her "upper works" (the wooden deck and furnishings) were finished in time for a public showing in December.

The *Valley Forge* was permanently pulled from service in 1845, and her upper works and engines were transferred to a more traditional steamboat. The novel iron hull was cut up for scrap.

An ad for the *Valley Forge* in the *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, November 29, 1836.

HHC Detre L&A

ownership, see: Corbin, *Material Culture*, 14-15.

<sup>30</sup> Kane, 47. French's boat made the first high-pressure run out of Brownsville, but his work was preceded by that of the celebrated steam inventor Oliver Evans, who pushed for the use of high-pressure engines by the early 1800s, and was directly responsible for introducing the manufacture and operation of such technology west of the Alleghenies. See: Hunter, 122-126; and Justin Herbert Daley, "The Pre-Twentieth Century Development of Watercraft Construction in Pittsburgh and Its Impact on Western Waters of North America," Master's Thesis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (August 2013), 13-14.

<sup>31</sup> Hunter, 17-18, 127. See also: Maas, 22-29.

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd's dramatic *Steamboat Directory and Disasters on the Western Waters* (1856) was one of the earliest volumes to catalog these events. See also: John G. Burke, "Bursting Boilers and the Federal Power, *Technology and Culture* 7, no. 1 (1966): 1-23; and Richard N. Langlois, David J. Denault, and Samson M. Kimenyi, "Bursting Boilers and the Federal Power Redux: Evolution of Safety on the Western Rivers," *Economics Working Papers* (University of Connecticut Digital Commons@UConn, May 1, 1994), 1-27.

<sup>33</sup> Hunter, 72-75.

<sup>34</sup> Although Shreve is often credited as the sole inventor of upper deck, there is evidence that other makers were also experimenting with it. See: Kane, 66; Hunter, 89-90.

<sup>35</sup> Kane, 63.

<sup>36</sup> Hunter, 97-99; Daley, 253.

<sup>37</sup> Hunter, 108-110. Specific examples of Pittsburgh firms that did such work include: Isaac Gullet & Wm Apple (joiners and builders), *Pittsburgh Daily Commercial*, July 7-9, 1853; J.L. Dawes and J.F. Clule (sign painters and glaziers), *Pittsburgh Daily Commercial*, July 9, 1853; and T.B. Young & Company (furniture makers), *Pittsburgh Daily Commercial*, July 20, 1853.

<sup>38</sup> "Correspondence of the Cleveland Herald," *Monongahela Republican*, October 26, 1840, as cited in: J.K. Folmar, *Gleanings from Pittsburgh & W. Pa. Newspaper &c. Views, 1786-1886* (California, Pa.: Yohogania Press, 2006), 79-80.

<sup>39</sup> One insight into the maintenance required to keep western river boats operational can be seen in the documentation of the St. Louis Court of Common Pleas cases regarding the *Avalanche* and the *Shenandoah* (1853). In both, the itemized claims submitted by St. Louis workers, who charged that they were not paid for maintenance done on the craft by their Pennsylvania-based operators, span pages recounting the replacement or refitting of valves, rivets, gaskets, wood items, and other parts. See: Clark et al v. *Avalanche*, No. 29, St. Louis Court of Common Pleas, Civil Case Files, February Term, 1853; and Clark et al v. *Shenandoah*, No. 69, St. Louis Court of Common Pleas, Civil Case Files, February Term, 1853. Missouri State Archives – St. Louis.

<sup>40</sup> Hunter, 100-102; W.G. Lyford, *Western Address Directory* (Baltimore: Jos. Robinson, 1837), 43.

<sup>41</sup> Henshaw, 388-390. Stories of boat departures delayed by hours or even days were common. Some riverboat captains were notorious for urging passengers to sign on in haste, preparing for an "immediate" departure, only to stall for an extended

period until they had rounded up enough passengers or cargo to ensure profitability. One good account of such practices can be found in: Hiram Mills, "The Romantic Past? Steamboat Experiences, From the Journal of Dr. Hiram Mills," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* (July 1957): 385-392. Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>42</sup> As cited in Hunter, 28-29.

<sup>43</sup> The *Frankfort Commonwealth*, as recounted in the *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, April 5, 1837.

<sup>44</sup> As cited in Folmar, 73-74.

<sup>45</sup> James Hall, *Notes on the Western States, containing descriptive sketches of their soil climate, resources and scenery* (Philadelphia, 1838), 216, from the Collection of the Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library, Mercantile Library, St. Louis. The "western states" as defined in this volume included Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, the territory of Michigan, and parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee, plus "a region of about five hundred miles in width lying west of these organised boundaries" (see page 13).

<sup>46</sup> Lyford, 461-468. Of 368 listed boats, 142 were identified as being of Pittsburgh or Western Pennsylvania in origin, with the communities of Brownsville, Elizabeth, Shousetown, and Beaver being among those identified as communities of origin. The exact percentage totals 38.5 percent.

<sup>47</sup> "The Memphis Convention and Western Improvements," *The American Review: A Whig Journal* (June 1847): 549. Of the roughly 128 boats built in 1845, 50 were from Pittsburgh (39 percent) and 36 were from Cincinnati. Louisville, Kentucky, ranked third, with 26 boats.



Ticket for Ohio River passage from Portsmouth to Cincinnati, Ohio, May 2, 1841. Steamboats such as the *Valley Forge* regularly shuttled passengers and cargo to growing towns along the Ohio River.

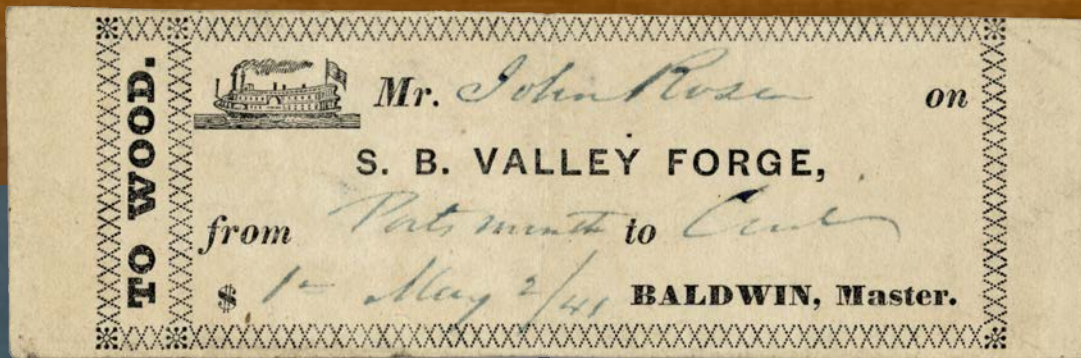
HHC Collections.

## “Launch of the Iron Boat” ~ *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, September 10, 1839

The present freshet affording water enough, somewhat unexpectedly, the proprietors of the Iron Steam Boat determined yesterday morning to launch her at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

As the hour approached, notwithstanding the short notice given, thousands were assembled to witness the launch. We were amongst those who were invited aboard to enjoy the scene. About five minutes before 5, every thing being in readiness, the word was given to “cut away,” and the boat started in beautiful style, gliding into the water without jar or surge. The first rush was to see how much water she would draw; in an instant a score of joking banters passed touching her draught.

Some stood for fourteen inches, some thirteen, twelve, eleven, ten, were severally cried out, and when she settled all were astonished. *Nine inches astern. Nine and a half forward, proves to be her draught.*



The instance is without parallel: a *timber* boat of her capacity, similarly constructed, would draw *twenty one inches*, while the Iron steamboat draws but *nine and a half*...

Here, then, is a boat, the product of Pittsburgh enterprise and mechanical skill, the first of any considerable size built in the country, which, when finished, will afford the safest vehicle for the conveyance of persons and property which can be produced, in the shape of a steamboat.

Her length in deck is 160 feet, length of keel 140 feet, breadth of beam 25 feet 4 inches, depth of hold 6 feet.

This feature is based on the article, “The Iron-Hulled Steamboat *Valley Forge*,” by well-known steamboat captain and historian Frederick Way, Jr., for *Western Pennsylvania Historical Society Magazine* 44, no. 2 (June 1961): 137-149. Access it online at <http://ojs.libraries.psu.edu/index.php/wph/article/view/1882/1730>

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Missouri Republican*, March 29, 1837, as cited in William E. Lass, *Navigating the Missouri, Steamboating on Nature's Highway, 1819-1935* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 108-110.

<sup>49</sup> Correspondence, Theodore W. Dunnica, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Messrs. Chouteau and Mackenzie, St. Louis, Missouri, May 14, 1839, McKenzie Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>50</sup> Correspondence, J.I. Dales, Louisville, Kentucky, to J.T. Hogg, Brownsville, Pennsylvania, January 26, 1847, Steamboats and River History Collection, Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>51</sup> *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 24, 1855.

<sup>52</sup> William Larimer, Jr., to the *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, May 23, 1855 (publishing correspondence dated May 9, 1855).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> These examples are drawn from items recovered on the *Arabia*; G. Hawley, *Treasure in a Cornfield*, 197-219; information on product origins comes from an on-site review with Greta Erhardt and staff at the Arabia Steamboat Museum, November 12-13, 2013. The commercial network that steamboats helped to expand was based on a complex system of merchants and commission houses that is beyond the scope of this article. For more information, see: Lewis E. Atherton, *The Frontier Merchant in Mid-America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971), 82-86.

<sup>55</sup> The urgent need for lumber on the Nebraska frontier was mentioned by William Larimer in his letter, *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, May 23, 1855. At least one St. Louis lumber dealer also specifically advertised “seasoned Allegheny white pine” from Pittsburgh to would-be customers in the Missouri River communities near St. Joseph. See: advertisement from J.H. White, *Weekly Commercial* (St. Joseph, Mo.), April 7, 1854, microfilm from Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library.

<sup>56</sup> Again, examples drawn specifically from cargo recovered on the *Arabia*.

<sup>57</sup> Personal Interview by the author with Bob, Florence, and David Hawley, Arabia Steamboat Museum, Kansas City, Mo., November 14, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Along with building supplies and dry goods, the *Arabia's* cargo included canned and bottled foods such as these pickles, still preserved after more than 160 years.

Arabia Steamboat Museum. Photo by Dave Hawley.

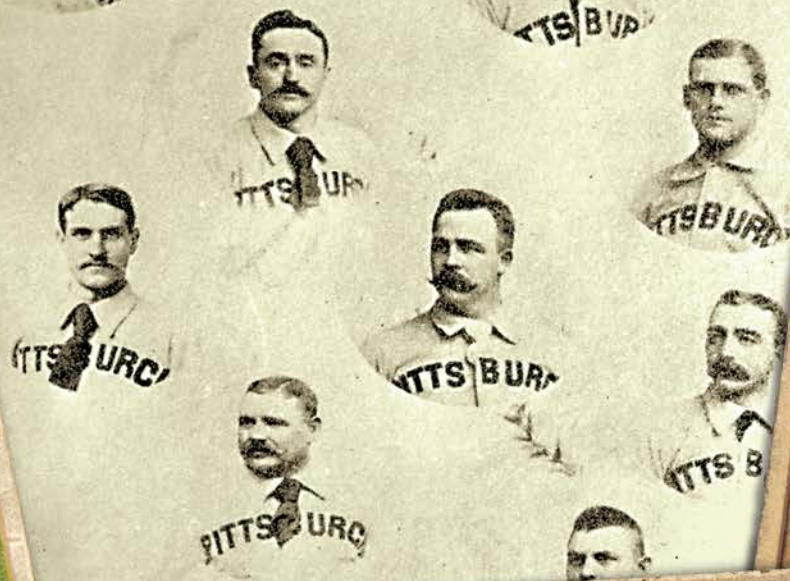


## Arabia Steamboat Museum

Once you've seen the History Center's *Arabia* exhibit, you'll want to visit the museum devoted to the doomed steamer and its recovery. A full-sized reproduction of the main deck shows the grand scale of a steamboat, with the *Arabia's* huge boilers and steam engine in place. A 28-foot paddlewheel turns in a pool of water alongside the final resting place of a mule skeleton — the only life lost in the *Arabia's* sinking. Thousands of recovered items bring the frontier to life.

400 Grand Blvd,  
Kansas City, Missouri  
<http://1856.com/>





BAKER,

THE ALLEGHENY CLUB OF 1885.

COLUMBIA



GEORGE  
CAT



BIERBAUM 2d B., Athlet  
COPYRIGHT BY GOODWIN & Co., 1888.  
OLD JUDGE  
CIGARETTE







# WE ARE NOW PIRATES

THE 1890  
BURGHES AND ALLEGHENYS

By Craig Britcher

“We are now pirates and have hoisted the black flag against the National League for the good of baseball.” ~Washington baseball bureaucrat Thomas Kalbfus reacting to the ruling that allowed Pittsburgh to sign disputed players.<sup>1</sup>



**D**uring the 2014 preseason, the Pittsburgh Pirates designated the bold capital “P” as its primary logo. In differing fonts, the “P” has appeared on the uniform breast, sleeve, and hat of Pirates players throughout most of the franchise’s history. By 1948, the Pirates proudly sported black and gold lettering, after the team changed from red and blue trim and lettering on white and gray uniforms. However, the use of “Pirates” as the official team moniker has a more complicated history. “Pirates” first appeared on the 1912 jersey in small white print, featured vertically on the blue button lapel.<sup>2</sup> Road jerseys did not feature the name, stitched on horizontally, until 1933. In fact, the franchise did not begin as the Pirates at all—the team was once known as the Alleghenys. This is the story of the fascinating and chaotic events leading up to the tumultuous season of 1890, which set the stage for Pittsburgh’s baseball team to be called what fans know it as today—the Pirates.

The earliest mention of “base ball” in the Pittsburgh area seemingly is found in a diary entry of “Uncle” Al Pratt, who recalled playing on “the Commons of Allegheny” in 1858.<sup>3</sup> After the Civil War, organized teams such as Pittsburgh’s Enterprise, Olympic, and Xantha clubs were said to be among the best amateur teams.<sup>4</sup> Amateur cricket clubs also existed. Allegheny City (now Pittsburgh’s North Side) seems to have been a popular place for the rising sport: in 1876, the Allegheny team formed and began play within the minor league International Association in 1877, but dissolved the following season. A new Pittsburgh Alleghenys team (also spelled “Alleghenies” by some), led by owner Denny McKnight and manager Al Pratt, began its first major league season in 1882, playing at Exposition Park, situated between modern-day PNC Park and Heinz Field.<sup>5</sup> Formally, the legal name of the charter club was the “Allegheny Base Ball Co., of Pittsburgh.”<sup>6</sup>

Mediocre years and heavy drinking in the American Association led many to call it the

“Beer and Whiskey League.” The association competed against its rival, the National League, by charging cheap admission prices, providing fans with liquor and beer (often made by the team owners themselves), and scheduling Sunday games.<sup>7</sup> The Alleghenys failed to post a winning record until the arrival of eventual Hall of Famer James “Pud” Galvin in 1885.

In 1887, Alleghenys’ manager Horace Phillips and new owner William Nimick took advantage of an opportunity to replace the defunct Kansas City Cowboys in the more established National League. The Alleghenys’

Phillips was committed to a mental institution, where he passed away seven years later.

## **Ward leads the Brotherhood**

Though not an Allegheny, a player born in the Allegheny Mountains of central Pennsylvania influenced the course of baseball more than any other in the late 1880s. John Montgomery “Monte” Ward was born 120 miles northeast of Pittsburgh in Bellefonte, Pa., in 1860, and attended Pennsylvania State University.<sup>10</sup> Hall

**Teams of this era often were simply referred to by their league affiliation, such as “Nationals” or by adding an “s” to the end of the city’s name. Team names were often informal and changed sporadically.**

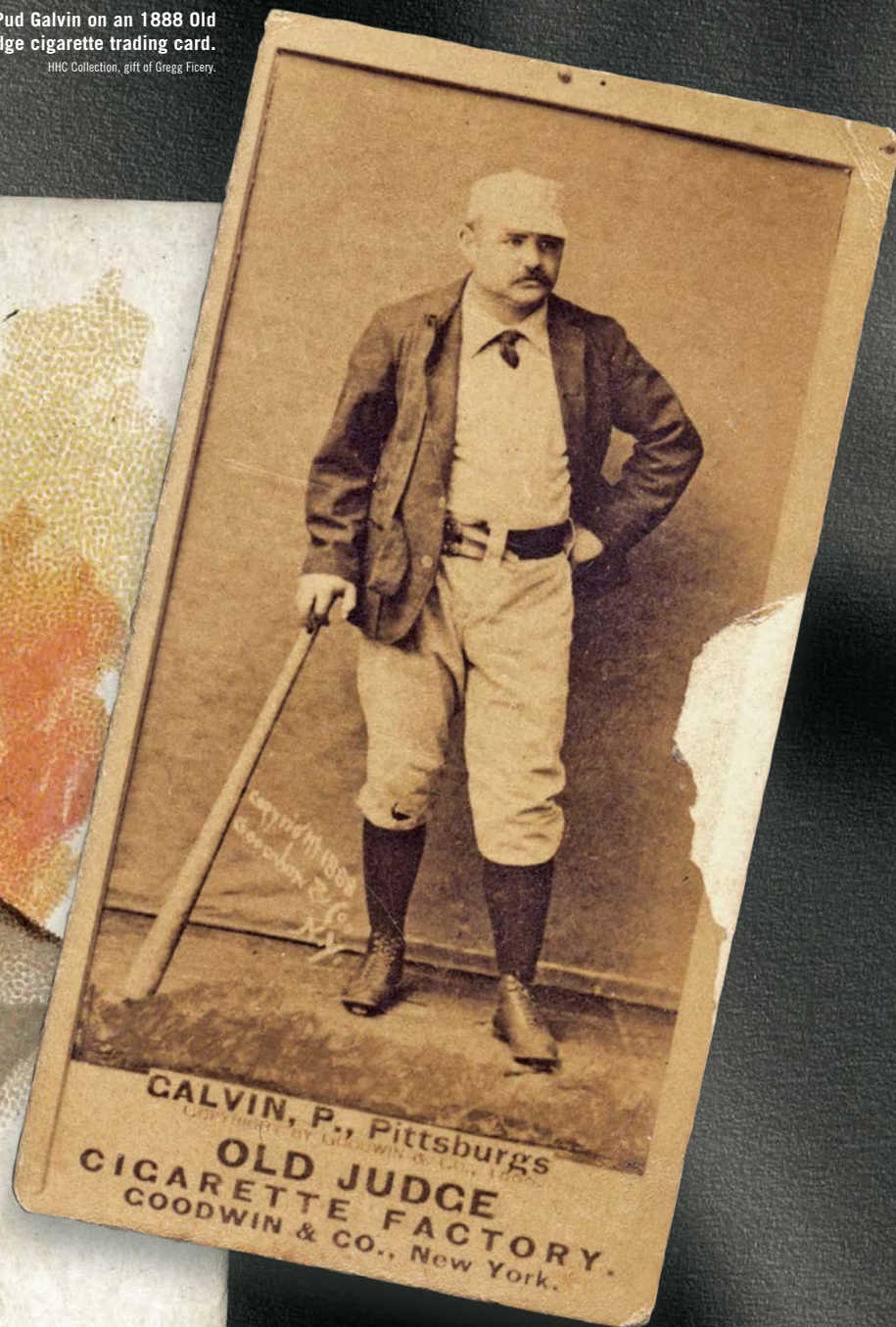
season began on a discordant note; legend has it that catcher Fred Carroll buried his dead pet monkey (it was also the team’s mascot) behind home plate before the season’s opener on April 30.<sup>8</sup> Oddities continued in 1889, when Pud Galvin participated in a Pittsburgh college’s medical study on the effects of an elixir containing animal testosterone that was touted to boost endurance.<sup>9</sup> A more tragic situation soon became evident as Allegheny players noticed manager Phillips’ frequent memory lapses and erratic behavior. During the season,

of Famer Monte Ward is revered by many baseball historians as one of the most fascinating men in the game’s history. A naturally combative player, Ward took extreme issue with ownership’s control of players in his early years. He studied in the off-season, became multilingual, and earned political science and law degrees from Columbia University.<sup>11</sup> In 1885, Ward led four of his fellow New York Giants to secretly form the “Brotherhood of Professional Base Ball Players.”<sup>12</sup> The Brotherhood grew as a type of union and soon profoundly impacted



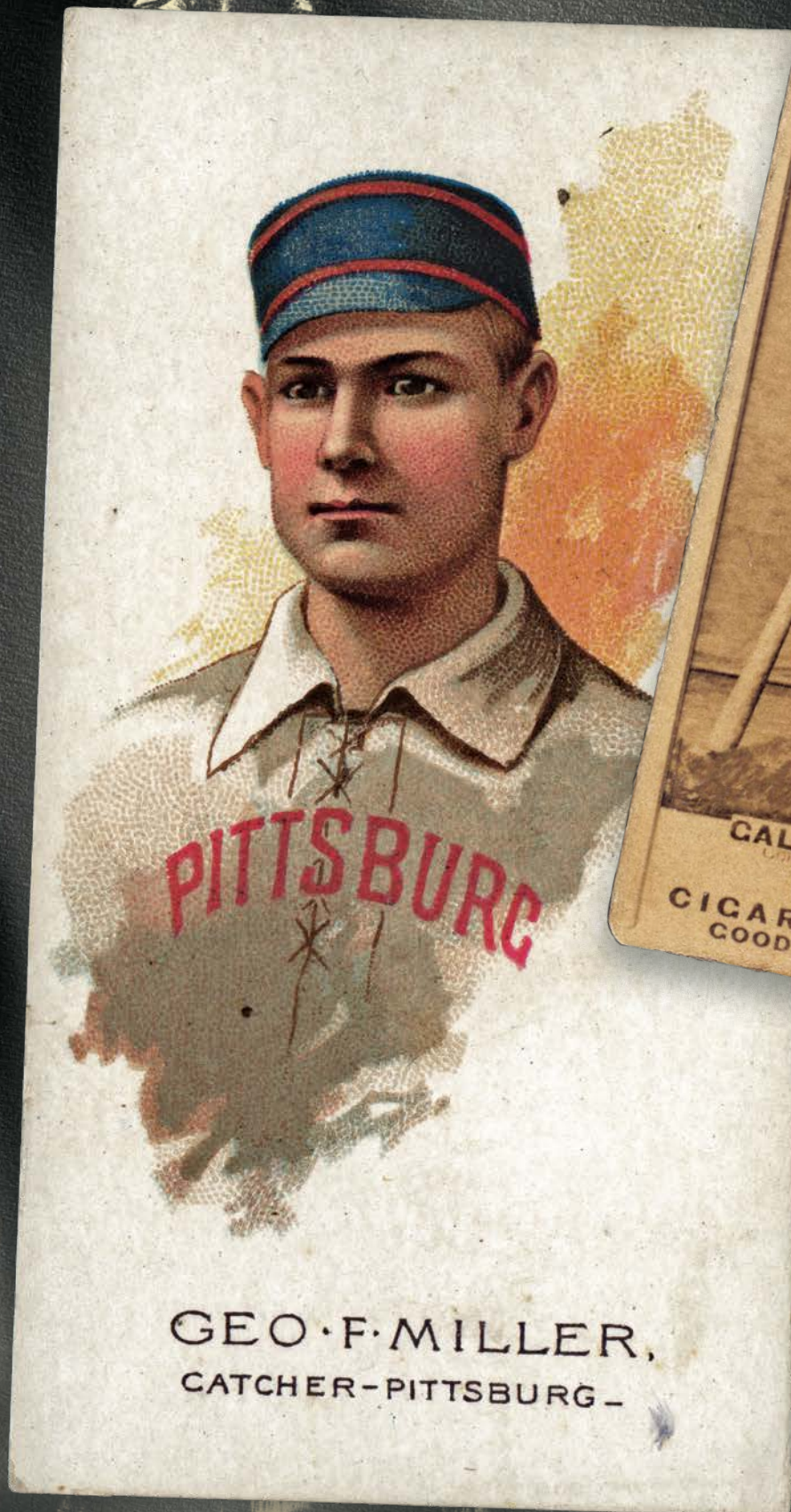
Pittsburgh Allegheny pitcher Pud Galvin on an 1888 Old Judge cigarette trading card.

HHC Collection, gift of Gregg Ficery.



Pittsburgh Allegheny player "Doggie" Miller on an 1888 Allen & Ginter tobacco company's trading card. During 1890 and '91, Miller unbelievably played five positions each year — 6 different total — catcher, first, second, shortstop, third, and outfield.

HHC Collection, gift of Gregg Ficery.





Pittsburgh baseball. Poised to advance the interests of his Brotherhood members, the ably equipped Ward traveled extensively to gather support. The National League owners countered his arguments, and increasingly reasoned to newspapermen that contractual control of players from year to year and team allegiance allowed financial security for all players and provided necessary structure for baseball's survival.

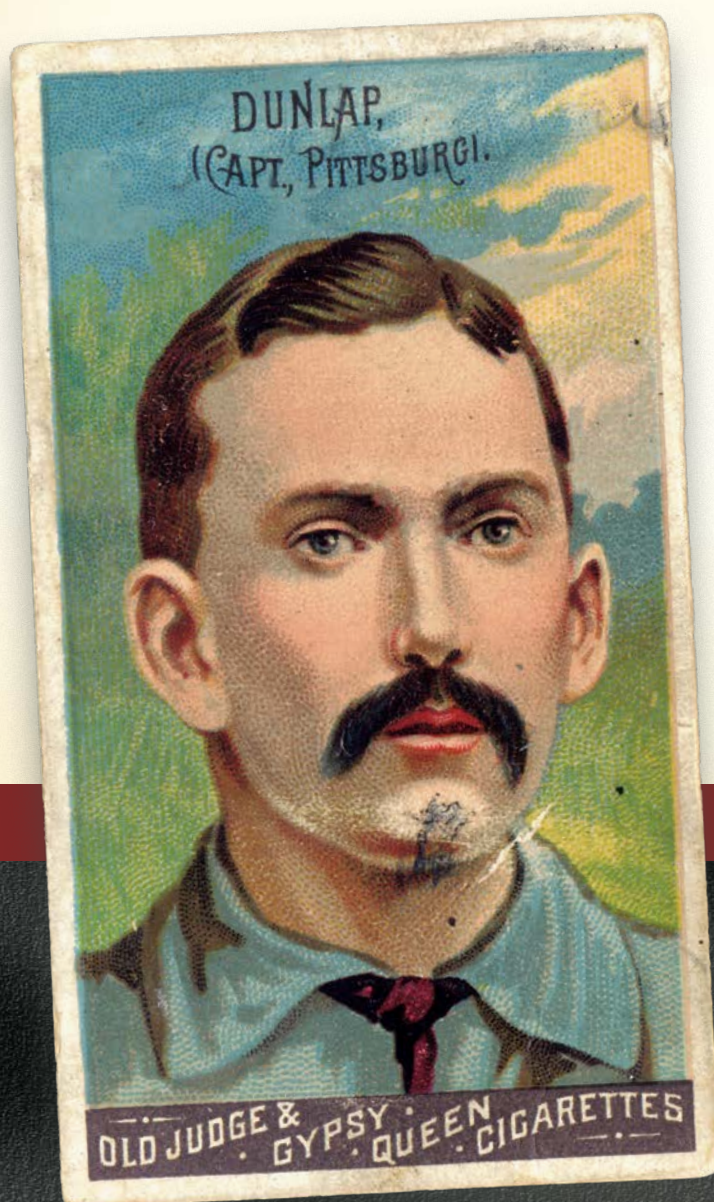
In 1888, Ward and John Tener, an Irish immigrant to Pittsburgh, played alongside some of the era's best players on the World Tour team

sponsored by Chicago White Stockings owner and sporting goods magnate Albert Goodwill Spalding.<sup>13</sup> Spalding saw Tener's abilities and appointed him treasurer of the tour. Ward also identified with his atypically intellectual teammate and later appointed him secretary of the Brotherhood. After outfielder Ned Hanlon returned from the World Tour, he was sold to the Alleghenys as a player/manager. Spalding remained a powerful National League figure headed into turbulent times.

By 1889, Monte Ward's Brotherhood of Professional Base Ball Players numbered 170

members and was no longer so secret. Together they constituted the nation's first sports union, though they did not adopt that label. The reserve clause remained the core problem—owners held strict control over the players' contracts and reserved their rights from season to season. Players wanted the Brush Classification System (a grading scale used to determine a player's salary partially based on character) struck down. They also demanded that salaries could not decrease while players remained reserved. The Brotherhood threatened to strike in the summer of 1889, but instead formed its own league that winter, the "Players' National League of Professional Base Ball Clubs" or more simply, the Players' League.<sup>14</sup> Competition from this new league kicked off a battle between baseball kingdoms, known as "The Brotherhood War."

Subscribers to the *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette* in the fall and winter of 1889 read daily rumors of which players would sign with each league, learned of threatened and real lawsuits, and perhaps for the first time actively considered how much a player should earn.<sup>15</sup> Players were "loyalists" or "traitors" depending on the speaker's allegiance during the Brotherhood War. Daily baseball discussion deep into the winter served as a testament to the game's popularity in the region. On Christmas Day, the *Gazette* polled and reported, "Out of 2,257 signatures on the base-ball question in this city, only 421 are in favor of the old League [Allegheny] club."<sup>16</sup> The reporters largely sided with the Pittsburgh Players' League team as well. The few players nationally rumored to



Pittsburgh Allegheny second baseman Fred Dunlap on an 1888 Goodwin Champions trading card.

HHC Collection, gift of Gregg Ficory





Exposition Park and neighboring field, c. 1914. The Pittsburgh Rebels of the Federal League played here in the park's final years.

Detail of photograph by Detroit Publishing Company, Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division. Identification help from Bob Williams.

## Exposition Park

Exposition Park (today referred to as Exposition Park III) was the home for the Pirates through June 1909, when owner Barney Dreyfuss moved the team to his newly built Forbes Field in Oakland. The renegade park housed one last team, the Federal League Rebels, in 1914 and 1915. The Federal League was the last Major League rival, named after the team's manager Rebel Oaks. Former Brotherhood Secretary John Tener by this time truly achieved his potential as a Renaissance man: he concurrently served as both Pennsylvania's governor and National League president for almost two years. In a role-reversal, the ex-Brotherhood pitcher exerted his influence to help alleviate the threat of the upstart Federal League.

Read more about Tener at <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/c90d4ea9>





This rare cabinet card with manager Horace Phillips sitting with his Alleghenys in 1885 is believed to be the earliest Pittsburgh baseball card in existence. Top row: Art Whitney, "Jones" (never played), Fred Carroll, Phillips, Rudolph Kemmler, Tom Brown, Milt Scott. Middle row: Charlie Eden, Billy Kuehne, George "Doggie" Miller, Charles "Pop" Smith, Fred Mann. Bottom row: Pete Meegan and Ed Morris.

HHC Collection, courtesy of the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club.

be leaving their Brotherhood contracts were fiercely labeled "deserters."<sup>17</sup> Most of the 1889 National League Alleghenys roster joined their manager Ned Hanlon in jumping to the new Players' League franchise and so too brought their fans' allegiance.

That winter seemingly brought as many battles to the courtroom as were scheduled on the field in the coming year. Even Pittsburgh lost its "h" in a United States Board on Geographic Names ruling (reinstated in 1911).<sup>18</sup> Three major leagues—the National League, the Players' League, and a weakened American Association—all vied for fan interest and gate profits, largely in the same cities. An ominous question emerged: would fans turn away from the national pastime altogether as a result of the constant fighting?

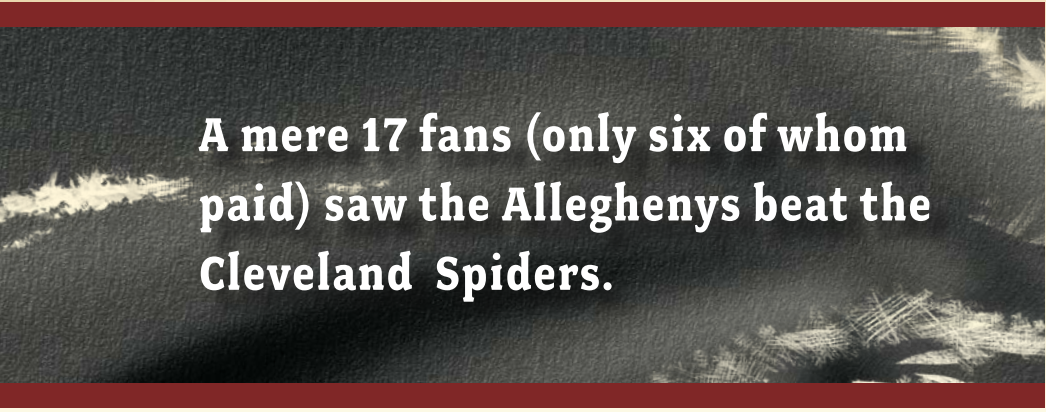
## The 1890 National League Alleghenys

The 1890 preseason proved challenging for National League Alleghenys owner William Nimick and its new manager, Guy Hecker. Rumors abounded as uncertainty over the coming season reigned. Still, a confident front needed to be maintained in the press. New talent was scouted in the minor leagues, in the American Association, and throughout the rest of the National League. Only four Alleghenys from the 1889 roster returned to play in Recreation Park: pitcher Bill Sowders, catcher-turned-third baseman Doggie Miller, second baseman Fred Dunlap, and outfielder Billy Sunday.<sup>19</sup> The Sowders' family itself divided on the Brotherhood issue, as Bill's brother John

signed with the Players' League's Brooklyn club. Doggie Miller, a Brotherhood deserter, turned out to be the Alleghenys' best player. "Sure Shot" Dunlap signed with the Players' League also, but over the winter argued with and parted from the Brotherhood after long, drawn-out contract talks. Billy Sunday solidly patrolled the outfield and later was known as the nation's foremost evangelical preacher of the first two decades of the 20th century.

Scouting and attempts to sign other teams' players proved unfruitful. All told 46 players would fill out the season's roster. With an average age of 24, the team was mockingly dubbed the "Innocents." The National League announced its schedule after the Players' League, choosing most often to schedule games on the same days and in the same cities





## A mere 17 fans (only six of whom paid) saw the Alleghenys beat the Cleveland Spiders.

as the Brotherhood. Attendance served as a crucial measure in deciding which league would survive.

A grim season loomed as the franchise was in financial straits. On April 23, 1890, a mere 17 fans (only six of whom paid) saw the Alleghenys beat the Cleveland Spiders 20-12. However, winning ways would not endure, and early mediocrity quickly changed to futility. In May, the team dropped to last place, where it would remain for the rest of the year. Team president J. Palmer O'Neill had no choice but to release Dunlap, one of his highest paid players. In August, outfielder Billy Sunday was traded to Philadelphia for two poorly regarded players and \$1,100.<sup>20</sup> Unable to fill the stands, the Alleghenys would "host" approximately 29 of its late season home games on the road, mostly in other National League parks, though the team also played in Canton, Ohio, and Wheeling, West Virginia.

Three late season losses against the Brooklyn Bridegrooms capped the tough luck in the first ever triple-header in major league history. Fittingly, the games were scheduled on Labor Day, September 1, though the day would not officially become a nationally recognized holiday until 1894. In the first game, down 10-0 with two outs in the ninth inning, the Alleghenys miraculously rallied. Doggie Miller tripled, yet was thrown out at the plate trying to score the tying run. Sportswriters could not have scripted a more unbelievable ending.<sup>21</sup> The

Alleghenys lost their 23rd consecutive game the following day.<sup>22</sup>

Once the season mercifully ended, the team's future was in doubt. In 1889, approximately 117,338 fans paid admission to Recreation Park (capacity estimated at 9,000). In 1890, season attendance dropped over 90 percent, down to approximately 16,064. Even though the league minimum admission was 50 cents, an exception was made to charge 25 cents in Pittsburgh and in some other cities. Pittsburgh's National League Allegheny home date attendance averaged only 411 spectators.<sup>23</sup> Its 23 wins against 113 losses remains the second worst season in major league history, trailing only the 1899 Cleveland Spiders (20-134).

### The 1890 Players' League Burghers

At its inception, the Pittsburgh Players' League club faced the challenge of creating a suitable home field. The financial backing of four prominent Pittsburgh businessmen helped renovate and relocate the grandstand of Exposition Park.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the league, crucial supporters funded new grandstands and improvements to existing facilities as vested shareholders alongside the players. Ground was broken in January 1890 for a revised Exposition Park (distinguished in current times as Exposition Park III) between present-day Heinz Field and PNC Park.<sup>25</sup> Pud Galvin's

appointment to supervise the relocation and construction of the grandstands is evidence of just how invested some players were in the new league's success.<sup>26</sup> Early season rains stalled construction, however, and occasional flooding threatened the park. During construction the team stayed in shape by playing handball in the old park's summer theater. Soon 6,500 seats flanked a gigantic field that is estimated to have measured 400 feet to left, 515 feet to center, and 380 feet to right.<sup>27</sup>

The blue-collared people of Pittsburgh saw their favorite players fight ownership and the reserve clause. Memories of coal mine and railroad strikes in the region over the previous decades remained as Pittsburghers fought for better working conditions. The labor movement had spread to baseball and the Players' League club, soon known as the Burghers, became the fans' team.

The era's biggest star, Cap Anson of the Chicago White Stockings, remained in the National League, but most of the best players such as Roger Connor, Buck Ewing, Charles Comiskey, Old Hoss Radbourne, and Mike "King" Kelly played for the Brotherhood in the Players' League.<sup>28</sup> Their level of play eclipsed the established National League's ball players'. All told, 10 former Alleghenys joined returning hometown pitcher John Tener, Brotherhood secretary. Their seven newly formed opponents awaited: the Boston Reds (the eventual champions), Brooklyn Ward's Wonders, Buffalo Bisons, Chicago Pirates, Cleveland Infants, New York Giants, and Philadelphia Quakers.

Player/manager Ned Hanlon (a Brotherhood member since 1886) led the Burghers to a 60-68 record. Old-timer "Uncle" Al Pratt joined as a stockholder and director. On July 14, 1890, the team dropped into sixth place, where it would remain for the rest of the season. A former Allegheny first baseman, 22-year-old Jake Beckley proved to be far and away the Burghers' best player, hitting nine home runs while driving in 120 runs and co-leading the

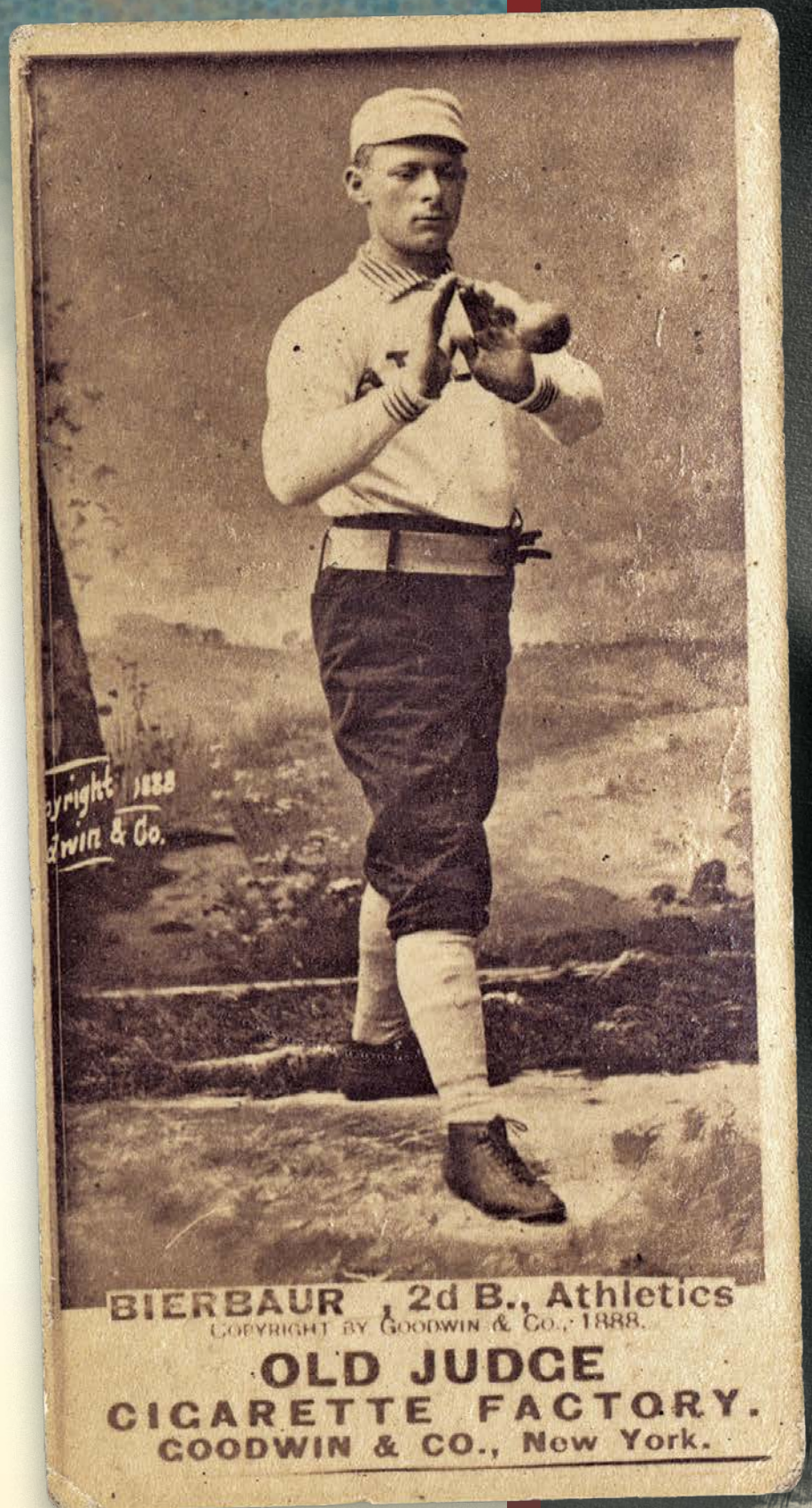


league with teammate Joe Visner in triples with 22.<sup>29</sup> Outfielders struggled to limit extra-base hits in the expansive Exposition Park outfield. Though the team finished in sixth place amongst eight teams, it was clear that the Burghers were talented. Hanlon, Beckley, and Galvin are now all enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame (Hanlon as a manager).

While both leagues lost money in 1890, Players' League investors seemed to focus on their own interest rather than league survival.<sup>30</sup> Newly constructed ballparks had to be paid for, yet these also provided attractive venues for consolidated teams in several cities. In Pittsburgh, a new sport gained popularity that winter; the first meaningful football games between club teams began in Allegheny City.<sup>31</sup> Gradually over the winter months, the Players' League disbanded as a result of a complexity of circumstances. Baseball's national structure seemingly could not support the three competing and bickering major leagues. Compromising talks and attitudes over league independence parlayed into consolidation talks between National and Players' League clubs who shared cities. Investors and players focused on survival. By January 1891, the Players' League was dead.<sup>32</sup> John Thorn, the current Official Baseball Historian for Major League Baseball, characterized the Players' League as a "failed utopian experiment."<sup>33</sup> Some National League owners spun the folding of the Players' League, claiming that the Brotherhood was incapable of managing a league and also citing the reserve clause as an imposed necessity. Unfortunately (or "fortunately" in some minds) the reserve system ruled the game until the efforts of Marvin Miller and Curt Flood challenged it in 1970 to set the stage for free agency.

## Reconciliation Amidst Chaos

Pittsburgh became the second city after New York to consolidate its National League and Players' League teams following the 1890 season.<sup>34</sup> Once again, management changed the



**LEFT AND RIGHT**  
Philadelphia Athletic second baseman Louis Bierbauer on 1888 Old Judge cigarettes trading cards.

HHC Collection, gift of Gregg Ficery.





**“Hanlon had to cross the ice on the harbor in a bitter storm, but he finally reached Bierbauer’s shack and before leaving had secured his signature to a contract to play with Pittsburg.”**

club’s legal identity, this time to the “Pittsburg Athletic Co.”<sup>35</sup> This new Alleghenys club prepared for the 1891 season in Exposition Park with several former Burghers financial backers on its board of directors. Players’ League players, even leader Monte Ward, were allowed to return to their original clubs without fear of reprisal or being blacklisted as sometimes occurred in past disagreements. Many of the Burghers returned to the Alleghenys, but pitcher John Tener retired and entered the banking field, set to embark on a successful second career.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the American Association weakened and disbanded within a year. Perhaps as a result of its horrible season, seemingly no club proved as tenacious as the Alleghenys in bolstering its roster by acquiring newly available talent. As in the previous winter, chaos and rumor filled the sports gossip page.

At the center of much of the chaos, the Philadelphia Athletics fell victim to a costly clerical oversight and lost one of the best second basemen in the game, Louis Bierbauer. *Sporting News* founder Alfred Spink recalled,

Ned Hanlon, then managing Pittsburg, went to Erie in the depth of the Winter to secure a contract from Bierbauer. He found him on Presque Isle Peninsula, his favorite “hang-out.” Hanlon had to cross the ice on the harbor in a bitter storm, but he finally reached Bierbauer’s shack and before leaving had secured his signature to a contract to play with Pittsburg.<sup>37</sup>

On January 19, 1891, Ned Hanlon signed Erie-native Louis Bierbauer and presented him with a \$1,000 advance on his \$4,500 salary.<sup>38</sup> Bierbauer and Monte Ward had proven a formidable double-play combination for the 1890 Brooklyn Ward Wonders. Pittsburg wanted the pair. Ward even telegraphed Bierbauer in Erie to not sign with anyone, so that they could play together.<sup>39</sup> In the end, however, the Pittsburg Baseball Club happily settled for Louis Bierbauer alone. Hanlon, J. Palmer O’Neill, and Guy Hecker continued to travel the tri-state area and beyond to bolster the roster.



Understandably, the Bierbauer controversy remains a confusing issue, similar to the entirety of the Brotherhood War, with modern references oversimplifying its end effect. From 1889 to 1890, the National League club in Philadelphia changed its name from the “Quakers” to the “Phillies.” The 1890 Players’ League franchise adopted the name “Quakers.” Then, after the 1890 season, American Association officials expelled the Philadelphia Athletics and subsequently awarded the franchise’s spot to the Philadelphia Quakers of the defunct Players’ League, so that an entirely new Philadelphia Athletics team started the 1891 American Association season. The former Quakers’ owners, brothers Earl and George Wagner, hired longtime Athletics owner and recent manager Bill Sharsig to continue managing the team. This occurred after the deadline to reserve players had passed. The Wagners clearly trusted Sharsig. With everyone’s heads spinning from the changes, it is easy to see how a clerical error was made. And really, that error may have arisen as a result of American Association President Zach Phelps’ mismanagement.<sup>40</sup> On February 2, the

*Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette* quoted Sharsig explaining Bierbauer’s omission from the club’s reserve list:

Last fall ... I had a long interview with President Phelps in regard to the status of the Athletics Players who had joined the Brotherhood.... I saw Phelps at Frankfort and he assured me that the players would revert to the Association and it was not necessary to send in their names in the list for 1891. I followed his instructions.... If we don’t get Bierbauer the Athletic club will be boycotted in Philadelphia.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, the club received more than 100 boycott letters from fans.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Ned Hanlon claimed, “I wired Mr. Phelps, of the American Association, asking whether or not Bierbauer was reserved. Mr. Phelps replied that neither the association or a club in it had reserved him.”<sup>43</sup> On February 14, a newly created national board of league officials settled the confusing claims and the fates of five disputed players—including those of Hanlon signees and ex-Brotherhood players Bierbauer and catcher Cornelius McGillicuddy (better known as the future Hall of Fame manager

Connie Mack). Fredrick Lieb, in his 1948 history of the Pittsburgh franchise, quoted an unnamed American Association official’s argument, “The action of the Pittsburgh club in signing Bierbauer was piratical.”<sup>44</sup> The identity of the official may be lost and the “piratical” or “act of piracy” storyline has often been repeated in simplified form without primary documentation. In consideration of contractual rights stipulated in an accord known as the National Agreement, the National Board ruled in Pittsburgh’s favor regarding both Bierbauer and Mack.<sup>45</sup> The Board’s summary explained, “Undoubtedly the Pittsburg Club has the legal right to the man, but morally it has not. It ought to withdraw its claim; but as it does not we must reluctantly decide in favor of Pittsburg.”<sup>46</sup>

On March 1, the *Pittsburg Dispatch* printed Thomas Kalbfus’ earlier reaction to the Board’s ruling. The Secretary of the Washington Statesmen team of the American Association sounded off in a vengeful tone: “We are now pirates and have hoisted the black flag against the National League for the good of baseball.”<sup>47</sup> He and many other members of the American Association were furious, viewing the undermining of each league’s player contracts as a threat to the entire order of the game. Soon the accusatory term was directed to the Alleghenys, and slowly a new team name was born.

The “piratical” signing of Bierbauer has long since been credited as the source of the Pirates’ name, though the team’s cumulative efforts of the 1890-91 winter further solidified the moniker. The warring American Association withdrew from the National Agreement and incidences of contract jumping and enticement occurred. Guy Hecker signed “Louisville Slugger” Pete Browning and J. Palmer O’Neill signed Columbus’s Charles Reilly and Mark Baldwin.<sup>48</sup> A native of Pittsburgh’s South Side and former Penn State student, Baldwin proved to be a true Pirate (he played for the Brotherhood’s Chicago Pirates) and an agent of mayhem. He signed with two teams and

**The “piratical” signing of Bierbauer has long since been credited as the source of the Pirates’ name, though the team’s cumulative efforts of the 1890-91 winter further solidified the moniker.**

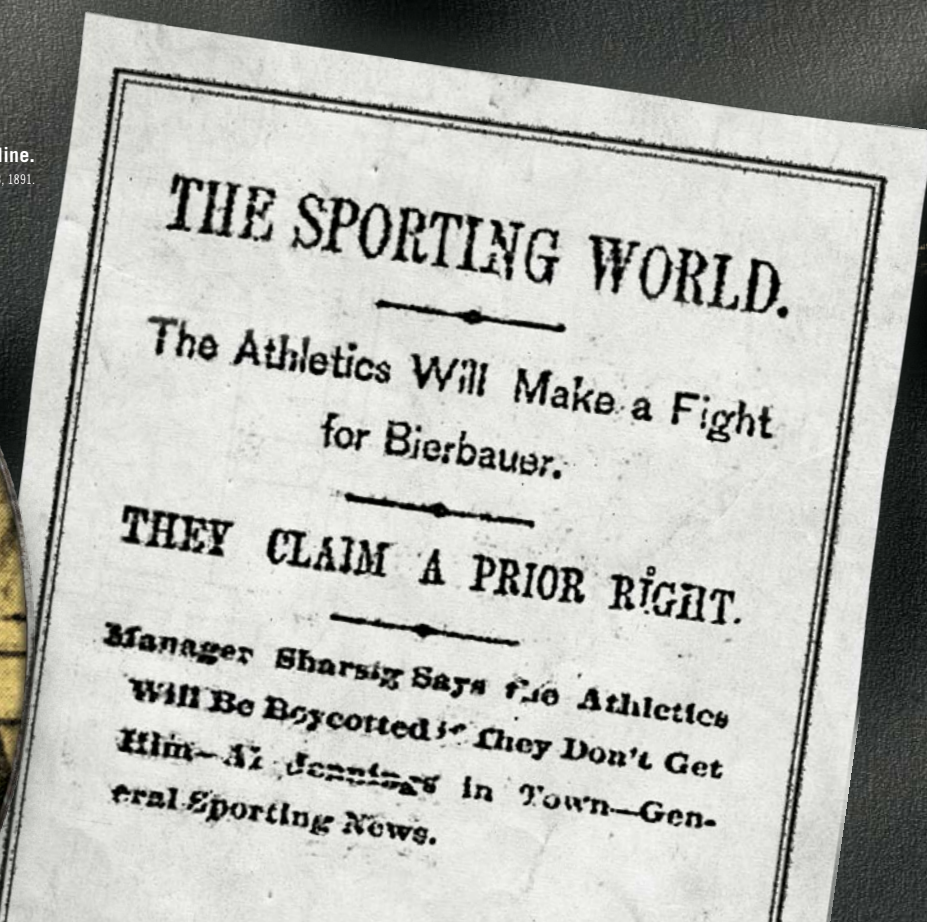


**Bierbauer headline.**

*Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette, February 3, 1891.*

The first use of the word "Pirates" may have been said or telegraphed by Washington Statesmen team secretary Thomas Kalbfus in February 1891. Eventually Pittsburgh, not Washington, became known as the "Pirates."

*The Washington Times, August 20, 1908. Library of Congress Chronicling America.*




nearly a third during the winter, the last and final being the Alleghenys on March 1. Two days later, the Pittsburgh pitcher (while under contract) traveled to St. Louis in an attempt to lure away Jack Connor and Silver King, one of the association's best pitchers. St. Louis Browns' owner Chris von der Ahe claimed to hold King under contract and ordered Baldwin arrested. Charges were dropped, but the ensuing storyline runs much deeper, with court hearings over the next seven years. Pittsburgh, however, retained King's rights thanks to Baldwin's efforts.<sup>49</sup>

By at least the second week of the season and throughout 1891, sportswriters in other cities were referring to "the Pirates" of Pittsburgh. From Chicago, May 3, "Rain prevented today's game between the local team and the band of pirates from Pittsburg."<sup>50</sup> The headline in Cincinnati on May 6 read, "Baseballists who disgrace the diamond

represented in J. Palmer O'Neil's [sic] Pittsburg pirates. Can they play honest ball? The public asks," and "To-day O'Neil's pirates, Pittsburg's all star aggregation, or as best named the contract jumper team...."<sup>51</sup> Some simply called J. Palmer O'Neill "the Pirate" or "J. Pirate O'Neill."<sup>52</sup> Pittsburgh papers seemingly only reported others using the moniker until sporadically calling the team "the Pirates" very late in the season. Oddly, the *Pittsburg Press* for a spell in August and September of 1891 took to calling the team the "Pets."<sup>53</sup> Clearly the informality of team names has changed drastically over the last century. While known exclusively as "the Pirates," the team legally remained the "Pittsburg Baseball Club" and did not officially or more actively adopt the name "Pirates" for more than a decade.<sup>54</sup>

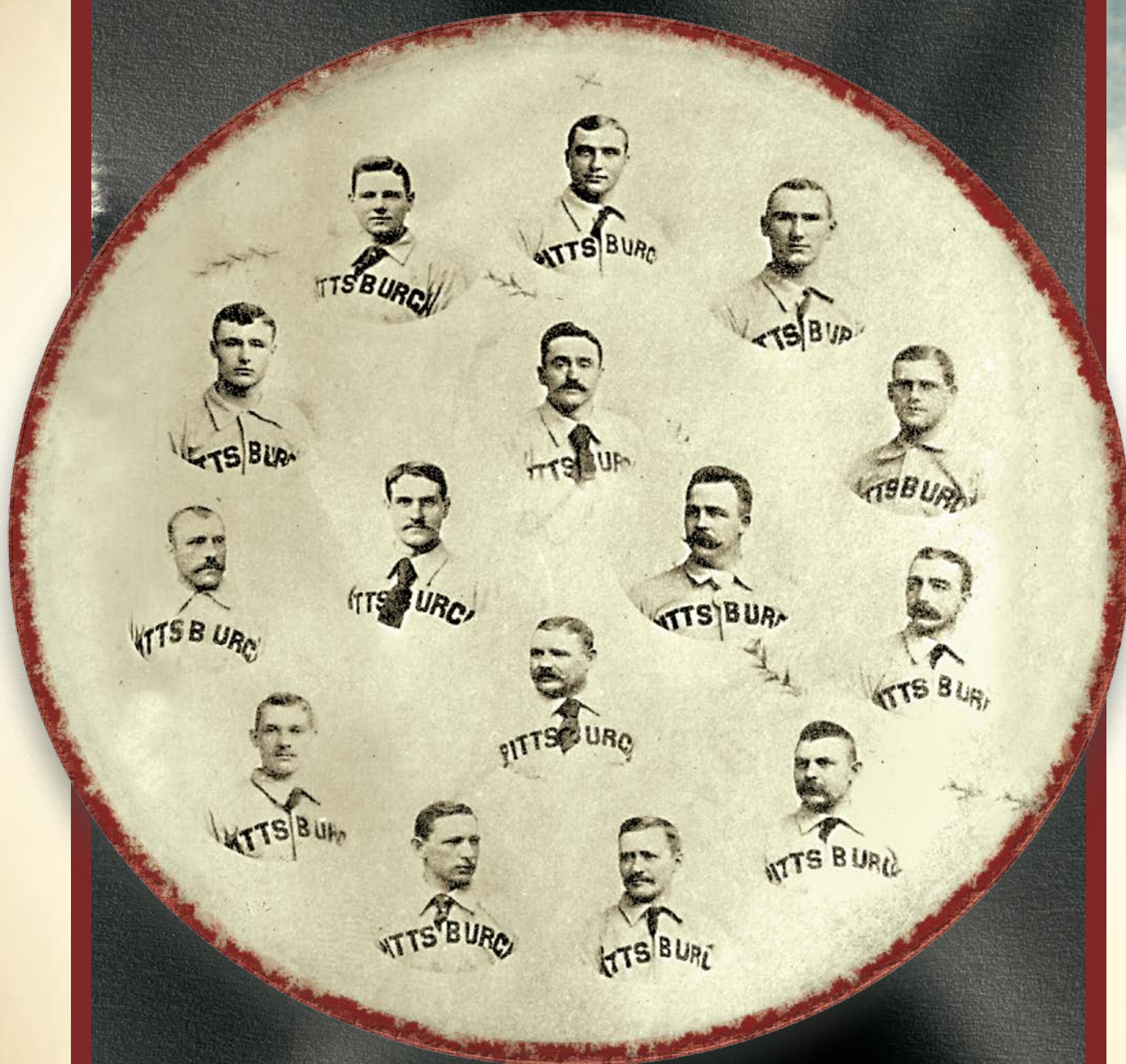
During that spring of 1891, the revamped team headed south with high aspirations for the

coming season. The Pirates played the Cleveland Spiders in the first spring training game ever held in the state of Florida.<sup>55</sup> That 1891 season is now regarded as the first season the team was known as the Pirates. In 1892, Pittsburgh papers and the city embraced the name "Pirates."<sup>56</sup> Lou Bierbauer played for the Pirates through 1896. He no doubt cheered his former team while listening to radio broadcasts in his Erie home, as the Pirates beat the Washington Senators in the 1925 World Series. As first noted by author Richard Peterson in *The Pirates Reader*, friend and newspaper writer John Carney remembered, "Louie loved the Pirates and rooted for them until the day of his death in 1926."<sup>57</sup> He was a true Pirate until the end. 

**Craig Britcher** is Curatorial Assistant to the Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum and a Society for American Baseball Research, Forbes Field Chapter member.



**In 1891, the Pirates played the Cleveland Spiders in the first spring training game ever held in the state of Florida.**



1890 Dabs Studio Pittsburgh Burghers team cabinet card. Outer circle, clockwise from the top: Harry Staley, Jake Beckley, Jocko Fields, Jerry Hurley, Bill Kuehne, Ed "Cannonball" Morris, Yank Robinson, Al Maul, Joe Visner, Tommy Corcoran, and Tom Quinn. Inner circle, clockwise from the top: Ned Hanlon, Fred Carroll, Pud Galvin, and John Tener.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Identifications by David Nemecek from his *The Great Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Major League Baseball*.



- <sup>1</sup> *Pittsburg Dispatch*, March 1, 1891, 6. Library of Congress Chronicling America Newspaper database. Cited as “secretary Kalbfuss [sic] of Washington.” Kalbfuss’s identity is confirmed in *The Sunday Herald*, March 8, 1891, 7, and *The Evening Star*, February 14, 1891, 12.
- <sup>2</sup> [http://exhibits.baseballhalloffame.org/dressed\\_to\\_the\\_nines/database.htm](http://exhibits.baseballhalloffame.org/dressed_to_the_nines/database.htm).
- <sup>3</sup> Heritage Auctions’ description of Al Pratt’s 1920 diary, sold in 2012, <http://sports.ha.com/c/item.zx?saleNo=7051&lotNo=81013>.
- <sup>4</sup> William E. Benswanger, “Professional Baseball in Pittsburgh,” *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, nos. 1 and 2 (March-June 1947): 9-14.
- <sup>5</sup> [www.baseballreference.com](http://www.baseballreference.com). This website is invaluable as a source for most player records, attendance, statistics, game dates.
- <sup>6</sup> J.M. Kelly, *Handbook of Greater Pittsburg* (J.M. Kelly Co. Publishers, 1895), 31. Thanks to Bob Williams of Portland, Oregon, and Dan Bonk of Pittsburgh, for the source. The article quotes the name “Pittsburg,” believed to be an 1895 correction.
- <sup>7</sup> David Nemec, *The Beer and Whiskey League: The Illustrated History of the American Association—Baseball’s Renegade Major League* (New York: Lyons and Burford Publishers, 1994), 16, 19-39.
- <sup>8</sup> Primary citation of this legend has not yet been documented.
- <sup>9</sup> Roger Abrams, *The Dark Side of the Diamond: Gambling, Violence, Drugs and Alcoholism in the National Pastime* (Burlington, Mass.: Rounder Books, 2007), 105-109.
- <sup>10</sup> Monte Ward (1860-1925), playing career 1878-1894.
- <sup>11</sup> Frederick Ivor-Campbell, Robert L. Tiemann, and Mark Rucker, eds., *Baseball’s First Stars* (Cleveland: Society for American Baseball Research, 1996), 5, 167. See also, Charles Alexander, *Turbulent Seasons: Baseball in 1890-1891* (University Park, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2011), 10-15.
- <sup>12</sup> Frank H. Brunnell, *The Players’ National League Official Guide for 1890* (Chicago: Chicago Opera House, 1889), 7.
- <sup>13</sup> Tener Family Papers with detailed correspondence regarding the 1888 Spalding World Tour, 1844-1946, HHC Detre Library & Archives, Pittsburgh, Pa. See also Daniel Ginsburg, “John Tener,” in the Society for American Baseball Research Biography Project, <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/c90d4ea9>.
- <sup>14</sup> Brunnell, 7. See also Ethan Lewis, “A Structure to Last Forever: The Players’ League and the Brotherhood War of 1890,” [www.ethanlewis.org/pl/](http://www.ethanlewis.org/pl/).
- <sup>15</sup> *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, December 1889. HSWP and Hillman Library Microfilm.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, December 25, 1889. HSWP and Hillman Library Microfilm.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1889. HSWP and Hillman Library Microfilm.
- <sup>18</sup> [www.popularpittsburgh.com/pittsburgh-info/pittsburgh-history/whatsinanh.aspx](http://www.popularpittsburgh.com/pittsburgh-info/pittsburgh-history/whatsinanh.aspx).
- <sup>19</sup> [www.baseballreference.com](http://www.baseballreference.com).
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Ronald G. Shafer, “Brooklyn Played in First Triple-Header,” *When the Dodgers Were Bridegrooms* (blog), August 18, 2011, <http://www.brooklyndodgershistory.com/brooklyn-played-in-baseballs-first-triple-header>.
- <sup>22</sup> [www.baseballreference.com](http://www.baseballreference.com).
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* See also [www.baseballalmanac.com](http://www.baseballalmanac.com).
- <sup>24</sup> Alexander, 47.
- <sup>25</sup> Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of Major League and Negro League Ballparks* (New York: Walker Publishing Co., 2007), 184-185.
- <sup>26</sup> *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, October 1889-March 1891, HSWP and Hillman Library Microfilm.
- <sup>27</sup> Lowry, 184-185. These dimensions are approximate.
- <sup>28</sup> David Nemec, *The Great Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Major League Baseball*, 2nd ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006) for biographical background.
- <sup>29</sup> [www.baseballreference.com](http://www.baseballreference.com).
- <sup>30</sup> Alexander, 74-75, 101. In referring to the Burghers’ ledger and citing an 1890 *Sporting Life* article, “Ella Black [journalist] called the claim of local investors that the club made money or at least broke even ‘absurd.’”
- <sup>31</sup> PFRA Research, *Three A’s for Football. The A.A.A. Introduces Football to Pittsburgh: 1890*, [http://www.profootballresearchers.org/Articles/Three\\_As.pdf/](http://www.profootballresearchers.org/Articles/Three_As.pdf/).
- <sup>32</sup> Alexander, 112-114.
- <sup>33</sup> John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden: The Secret History of the Early Game* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 206, 234-242.
- <sup>34</sup> Alexander, 108.
- <sup>35</sup> Kelly, 31. In this instance, “Pittsburg” without the “h” is correct and unchanged.
- <sup>36</sup> Ginsburg.
- <sup>37</sup> Alfred H. Spink, *The National Game*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: The National Game Publishing Company, 1911; reprint, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 191-192. First found cited in Richard Peterson, ed., “Becoming the Pirates” in *The Pirates Reader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 34-36.
- <sup>38</sup> *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, October 1889-March 1891, HSWP and Hillman Library Microfilm.
- <sup>39</sup> *Pittsburg Dispatch*, February 4, 1891, 6. Hillman Library Microfilm.
- <sup>40</sup> Alexander, 120-123.
- <sup>41</sup> *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, February 2, 1891, 6. Hillman Library Microfilm.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Pittsburg Dispatch*, February 4, 1891, 6. Library of Congress Chronicling America newspaper database.
- <sup>44</sup> Frederick G. Lieb, *The Pittsburgh Pirates* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1948), 21.
- <sup>45</sup> Alexander. See also Norman L. Macht, *Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 72-89.
- <sup>46</sup> *The Sunday Herald and Weekly National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., February 15, 1891, 8. Library of Congress Chronicling America newspaper database.
- <sup>47</sup> *Pittsburg Dispatch*, March 1, 1891, 6. Library of Congress Chronicling America Newspaper database. Cited as “secretary Kalbfuss [sic] of Washington.”
- <sup>48</sup> Browning first asked a young woodworker, Bud Hillerich to fashion him a bat, which he swore by. Hillerich went on to form Hillerich and Bradsby and in 1894 trademarked the name “Louisville Slugger.”
- <sup>49</sup> Brian McKenna, “Mark Baldwin,” in the Society for American Baseball Research Biography Project, <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/41f65388>.
- <sup>50</sup> *Pittsburg Dispatch*, May 3, 1891, 6. Printed from a Chicago correspondent’s account. Library of Congress Chronicling America newspaper database.
- <sup>51</sup> *Pittsburg Dispatch*, May 7, 1891. Reprinting of *The Post* (Cincinnati) May 6, 1891, 6. Library of Congress Chronicling America newspaper database.
- <sup>52</sup> Harold Seymour (with uncredited research and writing by wife Dorothy Seymour), *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 251, and survey of the *Pittsburg Dispatch*, 1891.
- <sup>53</sup> Research of John Dreker, with permission, *Pirates Prospects* blog writer.
- <sup>54</sup> Dan Bonk and Len Martin, “The First World Series & Its Pittsburgh Connections,” *Western Pennsylvania History* (Fall 2003): 17.
- <sup>55</sup> Macht, 87. Pittsburgh lost 6-3.
- <sup>56</sup> Survey of the *Pittsburg Dispatch*, 1892. Library of Congress Chronicling America newspaper database.
- <sup>57</sup> Harry Keck, *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, March 9, 1955. First found cited in Richard Peterson, ed., “‘Godfather of Pirates’ Lies in Unmarked Grave” in *The Pirates Reader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 36.





# RAILROADED

## HOW THE DAR SAVED THE FORT PITT BLOCK HOUSE

By Emily M. Weaver

Most Pittsburghers know that the Fort Pitt Block House, located within Point State Park, is the city's oldest building, but few know how precarious its survival has been. A century ago, the struggle to save the Block House involved some of the wealthiest women in Pittsburgh fighting some of the most powerful men of their time.

The Block House was built in 1764 as a “redoubt”: the first line of defense just outside the walls of Fort Pitt. The fort was demolished soon after, but the Block House survived since being built of stone and brick made it a desirable dwelling. However, by 1850, the Point District had become the city's most-populated and run-down neighborhood, with the Block House just another worn tenement. In his *Pittsburgh Directory for 1850*, Samuel Fahnestock made special mention that “the only remaining monument of British skill and labor ... should be preserved and kept in repair.”<sup>1</sup>





## THE POINT

became an industrial rail yard by the early 20th century, engulfing the tiny Block House.

**INSET:** The Fort Pitt Block House, in Point State Park, is the oldest architectural landmark in Pittsburgh.

Fort Pitt Society Collections. Photo by Kelly Linn.

Looking west at the Point, c. 1930, with the Exposition Buildings prominent to the right along the Allegheny River.

HHC D&A L&A.

UNION ELECTRIC

COMPANY





The portrait that Mary Elizabeth Croghan Schenley sent to the DAR in 1892.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



An 1889 map of the Point shows a mix of housing and industry. The Block House has been surrounded by Fort Street, Point Alley, and Penn Avenue, plus is mistakenly listed as "Old Fort Duquesne."

University of Pittsburgh, Archives Service Center, G.M. Hopkins Maps Collections.

It took more than 40 years, but a group of wealthy Pittsburgh women finally acted upon those words. The Pittsburgh Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was formed in June 1891 to educate the public on the importance of American history through commemoration and preservation of historic landmarks and events. The ladies especially wanted to preserve and protect the Block House; the building was tiny but it had witnessed the entire history of Pittsburgh from its early days as a frontier town through its transformation into an industrial center. The Block House still stood in its original location but years of being used as a home in the midst of a large slum district had taken a toll. The Pittsburgh Chapter wanted to restore the structure back to its 1764 appearance and open it to visitors as a way to both preserve and teach its history.

The Point District was almost entirely owned by Mary Elizabeth Croghan Schenley, granddaughter of Pittsburgh settler James O'Hara. O'Hara purchased the Point (including the Block House) in 1805 and turned the district into leased housing. The property and other holdings came into Mary Schenley's hands with the passing of her mother, Mary O'Hara Croghan, in 1827, when Mary was but one year old. At 15, the heiress famously eloped with British Captain Edward Schenley, who was three times her age. Spending most of her life in London with her husband and children, Schenley became an absentee owner of a vast amount of property in the Pittsburgh area.<sup>2</sup>

Many individuals and organizations tried to save the Block House by asking Schenley for its ownership. Every request was denied, including one by the city of Pittsburgh (which had already received the land in Oakland that

became Schenley Park). Despite this record of rejection, Schenley gave her consent in 1892 when the newly organized Pittsburgh Chapter DAR asked for possession of the structure. Perhaps it was because most members of the chapter were first and second cousins to Mary Schenley—although the extent of any connection is up for debate since she rarely visited Pittsburgh. She responded graciously to the DAR's request in a letter dated May 23, 1892, in which she bestowed the Block House and a small amount of surrounding property. Schenley also accepted the chapter's offer of a lifetime DAR membership and promised to send along her portrait so that it could be displayed inside the Block House. It was at the Pittsburgh Chapter's one-year anniversary meeting on June 10, 1892, that the gifting of



the Block House from Mary Schenley was formally announced.<sup>3</sup>

The next letter from Schenley in August 1892 provided more exact terms for the Block House and surrounding property: "I have now written to Mr. Herron requesting him to prepare the deed giving to the association the old Fort with 80 feet on the new street, running back 80 or 90 feet—I hope this will be satisfactory." The proposed street, O'Hara Avenue, would run between the two east-west streets, Penn Avenue and Duquesne Way, as a way to clear some of the slums. It also meant the closing of the short north-south streets, including those on either side of the Block House that provided access, Fort Street and

Point Alley. This was fine with the DAR, as new access could be made to Penn or the new O'Hara Avenue.<sup>4</sup>

Before a deed could be drawn, the Pittsburgh Chapter had to incorporate.<sup>5</sup> The official incorporation (renamed the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania) was recorded November 12, 1892, for "maintaining private parks in which to preserve the Block House." This name remained in use until June 1917, when it was changed to the Fort Pitt Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania—the name

still used today.<sup>6</sup> In 1894, the city councils passed an ordinance allowing for the location of the proposed O'Hara Avenue; the Block House deed was drawn up and sent overseas to Mary Schenley for her signature and approval. By April 1894, the deed was recorded, providing the Fort Pitt Society with the Block House free of charge from Mary Schenley.<sup>7</sup> The agreement also included a strip of property 20 feet by 90 feet to give access to Penn Avenue.<sup>8</sup>

Although the deed seemed fine, the technical language stripped the society of its rights in regards to the opening and closing of adjacent streets:



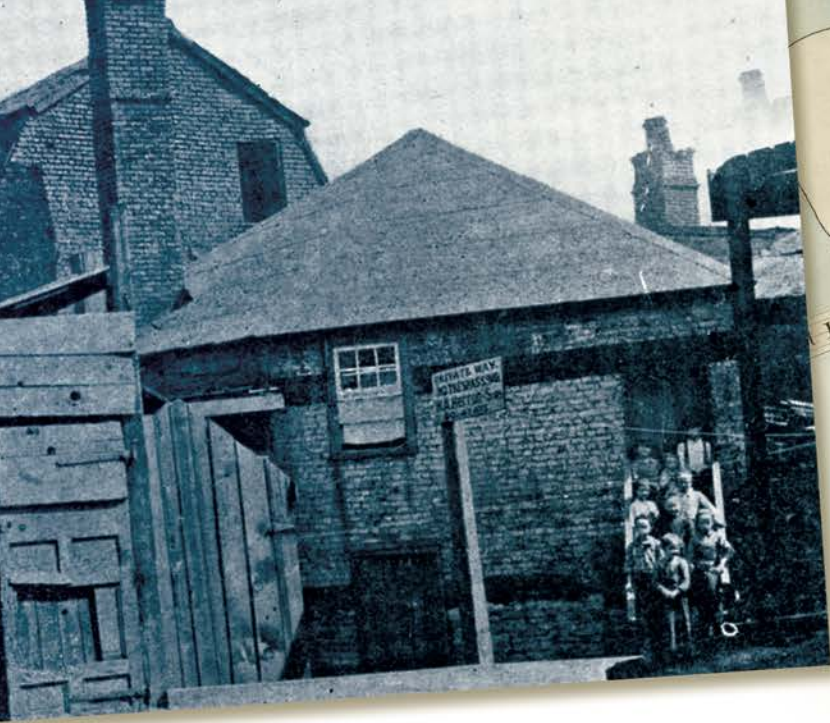
Original letter from Mary Schenley to Amelia Neville Shields Oliver allowing the Daughters of the American Revolution to have the Block House.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



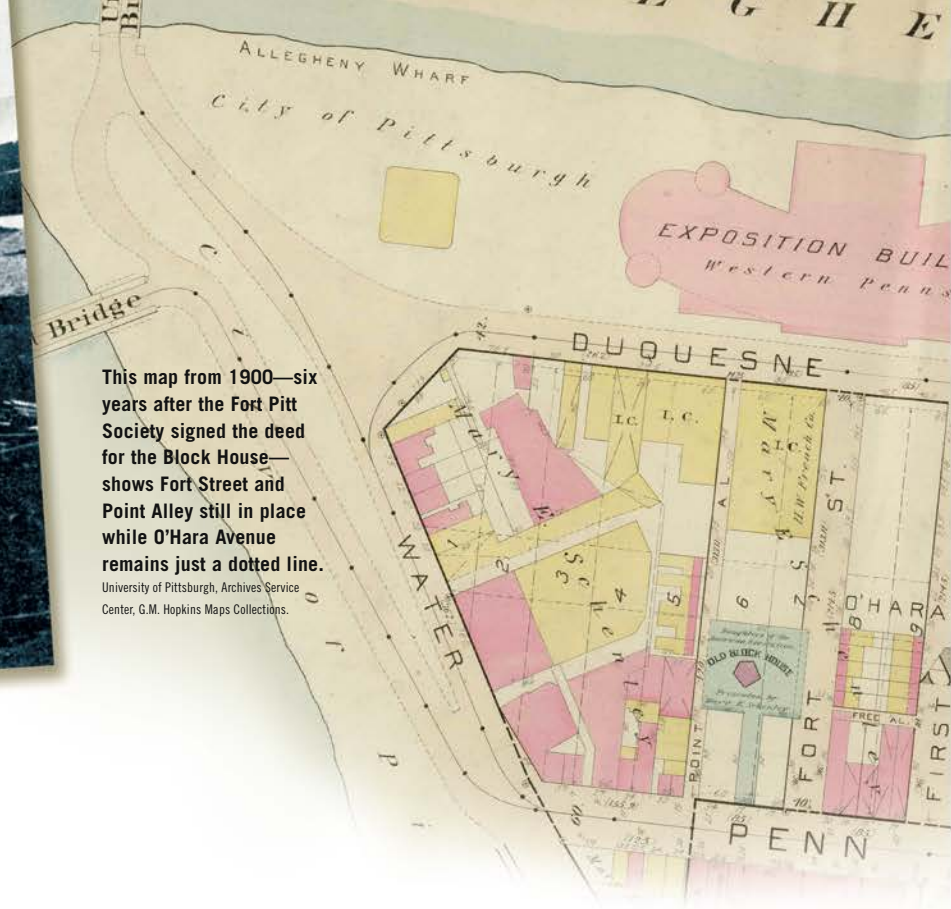
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**A family at the Block House, 1893, pictured in *Fleming's Views of Old Pittsburgh*.**

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[The] right of the party of the first part [Schenley] to represent said above described real estate in all proceedings looking to the opening of O'Hara Avenue and the vacation of Fort Street and Point Alley, the purpose of the party of the first part being to retain, reserve and not part with the right to petition the City of Pittsburgh, in behalf of said real estate, to open said O'Hara Avenue and to vacate said Fort Street and Point Alley; and she hereby reserves said right to herself, her heirs, executors and administrators, without liability however, for any assessment of benefits on said real estate by reason of said opening or vacations.<sup>9</sup>

The ladies made no protest over this wording. In their eyes, why would they need to? The section of the deed that the women feared most was the reversionary clause. The society's mission with the Block House, as defined in the deed, was in "maintaining, preserving and keeping in good condition said 'Block House,' perpetuating the historical associations surrounding the same, improving

and suitably maintaining the above described ground enclosing and about said 'Block House,' preserving archaeological remains and promoting historical research."<sup>10</sup> The reversion clause of the deed declared that if at any point the Fort Pitt Society and its successors should prove unable to fulfill its mission of preserving and maintaining the Block House for historical purposes, the property would immediately revert back to Mary Schenley and her heirs. This clause made the Society more determined than ever to save the Block House and make Schenley and the city of Pittsburgh proud of its preservation efforts.

The Fort Pitt Society moved forward with restoration by first evicting the tenants of the Block House. Tenants of the other structures within the property were also removed so the buildings could be dismantled. The only one left standing was a small rental fronting the Penn Avenue strip that the ladies decided to continue leasing and use the income to help support the Block House. Since Fort Street was still open, the women felt no pressure to use

the Penn Avenue strip as an entrance to the site. The restoration of the Block House and the renovation of its grounds were completed by the summer of 1895.<sup>11</sup>

Years passed with no sign of Fort Street and Point Alley closing—or of O'Hara Avenue being built. The Fort Pitt Society kept the Block House free and open for visitors, selling souvenirs to help support its operation, and maintaining the rental property facing Penn Avenue. At the end of 1898, it was announced that a history of the forts at the Point would be published by the society.<sup>12</sup> *Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt* included a brief account of the Block House and its plan that as soon as the ordinance was carried out, "passageway to Penn Avenue will be opened, and a substantial fence take the place of the temporary one at present on the ground."<sup>13</sup>

In December 1901, nearly nine years after the ordinance had been passed for the opening of O'Hara Avenue, city councils announced that the street would not open. In fact, the ordinance had only approved the street's



location, not for its opening; nonetheless, it was entirely thrown out by the councils. Imagine the ladies' surprise when it was also announced that Fort Street and Point Alley would still close; the only remaining streets at the Point would be Duquesne Way and Penn Avenue.<sup>14</sup>

It was discovered that a “warehouse syndicate” had purchased an option on the Schenley property to redevelop the Point District into storage facilities. Would the Block House be surrounded by towering warehouses? How would people access the site? The women figured they might have to give up some property, or worse, demolish the rental sitting within their strip of property leading to Penn Avenue, but that would mean losing revenue for operations. After consulting with their lawyer, the ladies arranged to meet with the representative of the syndicate, Franklin E. Nicola.<sup>15</sup>

Nicola was well known as a real estate developer and land agent. He had worked with the property holdings of the Schenley estate, Henry Clay Frick, and other wealthy Pittsburghers. His development of Schenley property in modern-day Oakland led to the creation of the Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall, the Hotel Schenley (now the University of Pittsburgh Student Union), and the Syria Mosque (now demolished). Eyeing the valuable Point District, Nicola saw an opportunity to develop it into industrial space for the railroad. The Pennsylvania Railroad, in particular, was interested in using the Point as a terminus for its rail lines.<sup>16</sup>

Nicola met with the Fort Pitt Society on December 13, 1901, where he proposed that the ladies give up part of their property to the syndicate in exchange for \$10,000 in damages. He also suggested that their Penn Avenue rental be removed so the Block House entrance could be moved from Fort Street to Penn Avenue. The Fort Pitt Society resisted, since forfeiting property would only bring the Block House closer to the encroaching industries.



Postcard image of the Block House site c. 1900, following its restoration.  
Fort Pitt Society Collections.

Nicola responded by increasing his offer:

I hereby agree to pay to the Daughters of the American Revolution ... \$25,000 in cash on condition that they relinquish all right, title and interest in the property now occupied by the Old Block House.... I agree to remove from its present location—the Old Block House—to such location in Schenley Park as the D.A.R. elect. When removed the Block House will be put upon a satisfactory foundation; an iron fence with stone posts will be placed about the Block House, all of which work shall be under the supervision and subject to the approval of the D.A.R. and without expense to them. Further, I will agree that a tablet shall be erected on Penn Avenue on the present property of the D.A.R., without expense to them, which tablet shall be a memorial of the Fort and shall be arranged according to their instructions.<sup>17</sup>

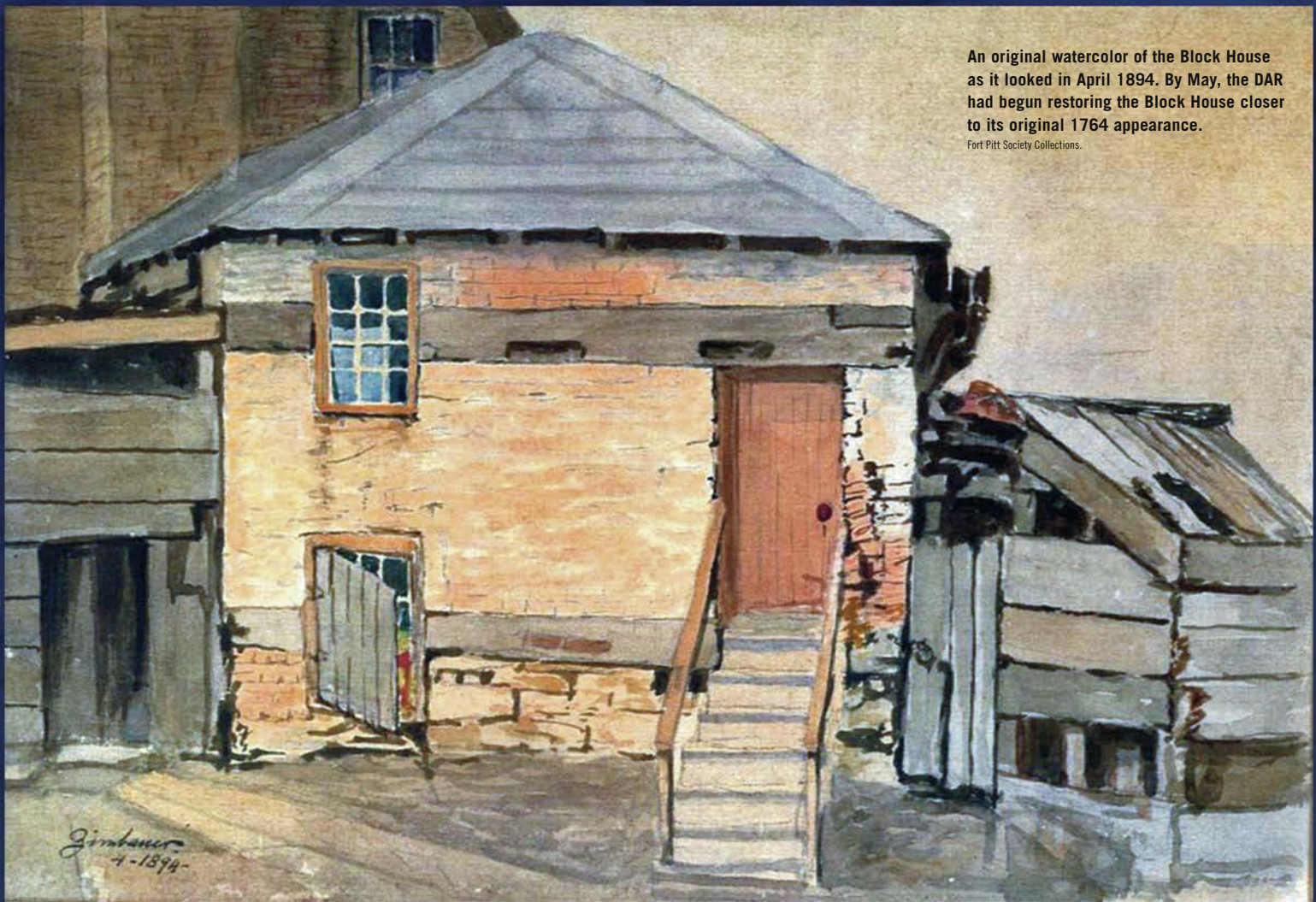
It would have been understandable for the Pittsburgh DAR to take the cash and move the Block House to Schenley Park. What sort of future could the Block House have at the Point, surrounded by industry? A park seemed much better suited to host a historical structure, with a marker at the original site.

But to Nicola's astonishment, the Fort Pitt



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An original watercolor of the Block House as it looked in April 1894. By May, the DAR had begun restoring the Block House closer to its original 1764 appearance.  
Fort Pitt Society Collections.



**“WE HAVE BEEN TOLD that when the syndicate begins to drive piles all around the Block House that historic little structure will undoubtedly be wrecked.”**

Society refused “Schenley’s offer” to move the Block House. Fearing perhaps the wrath of their benefactress, the women stated publicly that it was not Mrs. Schenley’s offer but the offer of Nicola and the warehouse syndicate. The president of the Fort Pitt Society, Matilda Wilkins Denny, added that the women refused to be stymied by Nicola’s actions, stating, “We have been told that when the syndicate begins to drive piles all around the Block House that historic little structure will undoubtedly be

wrecked. That is scarcely possible, and it does not frighten us to be told such things.”<sup>18</sup>

Nicola made a last-ditch attempt to get the Society on his side. Rumors were spreading—many started by Nicola himself—that not all of the women were on board with keeping the Block House at the Point. It was said that some women felt that the Block House would be better protected in Schenley Park. Wouldn’t they be going against their mission of preserving and protecting the Block House

if they left it in the middle of an industrial district? Nicola asked for a private meeting with five Fort Pitt Society women that were most likely to change their stance: Matilda Wilkins Denny, Josephine Alden McConway, Mary Elliott McCandless, Anne McDowell Price Childs, and Rachel Larimer Mellon.

Denny was chosen in particular because of remarks she made in a letter to Schenley’s land agent, Colonel William A. Herron, voicing support for the closing of Fort Street since Penn Avenue would remain open, contrary



to the Fort Pitt Society. Matilda's father had been the first mayor of Pittsburgh and an early president of the Pennsylvania Railroad.<sup>19</sup>

Josephine McConway was married to William McConway, the owner of the McConway & Torley Company, which produced Janney couplers for locomotive trains. He publicly voiced his opinion for Block House removal, and Nicola may have assumed that Josephine would support her husband.

McCandless was the daughter of the locally renowned Judge Wilson McCandless and the sister of Stephen C. McCandless, a former clerk of the U.S. District Court and a trustee of the Dollar Savings Bank in Pittsburgh. Childs was the wife of industrialist Albert H. Childs, who also served on the

boards of various financial institutions and hospitals in the city.<sup>20</sup>

The most interesting of the five was Rachel Larimer Mellon, a member of the prestigious Mellon family of Pittsburgh. Rachel was vice-president general for the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her husband, James Ross Mellon, was the son of Judge Thomas Mellon, founder of T. Mellon & Sons bank. One of Rachel's brothers-in-law was Andrew Mellon, the longest-serving U.S. treasurer in history and one of the wealthiest men in the world. Her son, William Larimer Mellon, Sr., was also prominent, soon to play a key role in forming Gulf Oil. Rachel's father, William Larimer, was himself a railroad baron and landowner, being the former president of

the Pittsburgh & Connellsville Railroad. With so many important connections, it was no wonder that Nicola would choose Mellon for the meeting.<sup>21</sup>

All five women, however, refused to meet with Nicola. Despite their social standing and the opinions of their menfolk, the women of the Fort Pitt Society remained steadfast in their belief that the Block House should stay in its original location. By 1902, the DAR took a united front led by the regent of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Edith Darlington Ammon. If one were to select a single woman as the leading advocate for the Block House, Edith Ammon would be above and beyond the first choice. Born just outside of Pittsburgh on her family's estate, Guyasuta, Ammon had a passion for

Members of the Pittsburgh Chapter DAR stand in front of the Block House on the 15th anniversary of the founding of the chapter, 1906. Fifth from left is Rachel Larimer Mellon, who also served as the vice president-general for the National Society DAR.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.





history and preservation. This was instilled by her parents, William and Mary Carson O'Hara Darlington, who collected artifacts and manuscripts on early Pennsylvania history, most of which are now held in the Darlington Memorial Library at the University of Pittsburgh. Ammon joined the Pittsburgh Chapter DAR in 1891; by 1899 she was elected a regent of the chapter, a post she would hold for 10 years.<sup>22</sup>

Ammon immediately set out to defeat the warehouse syndicate by publishing news articles denouncing the syndicate's plans and garnering support for the Fort Pitt Society's cause. She also discovered that a petition had been presented to councils asking to close Fort Street and Point Alley—these were signed by Schenley's land

agent John W. Herron and warehouse syndicate representative Franklin F. Nicola.

Ammon was outraged, feeling that neither man could legally sign such a petition since they were not property owners of the Point District. Mary Schenley was the primary owner of the district, and she had reserved all petitioning rights on the Block House property for herself. This meant that only she could legally sign a petition for the closing and opening of streets. Nicola had an option on the Point property but not actual ownership. John Herron's signature was a bit more legitimate since he was Mrs. Schenley's power-of-attorney. The Fort Pitt Society decided to file

suit in February 1902 against Franklin Nicola, John W. Herron, the city of Pittsburgh, and, surprisingly, Mary E. Schenley.<sup>23</sup>

The Fort Pitt Society also petitioned city council's Finance Committee for the creation of a park at the Point, simply called "Point Park." With 150 signatures of prominent men and women throughout Pittsburgh, the ladies presented their petition to the committee a day before filing their lawsuit against the city and Nicola. According to one of the directors of the Fort Pitt Society, Mary Kingsley Clarke, other cities

are erecting monuments to commemorate the brave deeds done there. We have a monument in that scarred, weath-

The Fort Pitt Society won a court battle against the warehouse syndicate in June 1902, but the victory was short-lived: the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania overturned the lower court decision that October.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



Edith Darlington Ammon served as the regent of the Pittsburgh Chapter DAR from 1899 to 1909; she also served as the president of the board of directors for the Fort Pitt Society from 1907 to 1919.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.





er-beaten old “Block House,” more inspiring than the most significant pile of granite could be, and which commemorates deeds as brave as ever stood recorded. If anything is to be done to save the “Block House” and to beautify that part of the city, it must be done now. We are working for the past, the present, and time to come.<sup>24</sup>

The Finance Committee sent the petition on to city councils where it sat for months due to disagreements between council members over whether or not the Point was the proper place for a park. There was also concern about the cost of building and maintaining such a park. Nicola and the syndicate especially focused on that when criticizing the idea. Were citizens expected to pay for the park with

tax dollars? Who would even visit a park in downtown where the smoke and noise were almost unbearable? Realizing that the councils would most likely not pass the petition, the Fort Pitt Society asked the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce for support. By June 1902, the decision was made: the Block House should remain in its original location, but a park at the Point was out of the question. Defeated and deserted by both city councils and the chamber, Edith Ammon and the other ladies focused on saving the Block House through legal action.<sup>25</sup>

The lawsuit filed in February 1902 was heard by the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County in June. Despite arguments that the Fort Pitt Society was not the official

owner of the Block House due to its rescinding of property rights to Mary Schenley in 1894, the court ruled in favor of the DAR by declaring the ordinances to close Fort Street and Point Alley null and void. It seemed as though the Society had won its battle but within months, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania overturned the ruling. The higher court felt that as power-of-attorney, John W. Herron did have the right to sign the petition as the majority owner of the Point District. It also stated that since the DAR had willingly signed away its property rights in the 1894 deed, there was little sympathy for the women’s cause.<sup>26</sup>

Then in October 1902 it was announced that Henry Clay Frick, infamous coal and coke baron and former right-hand man of

The Daughters of the American Revolution felt deserted when the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce rejected plans for a park at the Point that would help preserve the Block House.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.





Andrew Carnegie, had purchased the entire Schenley property at the Point for \$2 million! His intention was to sell or lease the area to the Pennsylvania Railroad.<sup>27</sup> He also secured the reversion clause from the Block House deed for only \$10. If the ladies were to fail in their mission to protect and preserve the historic building, it would revert to Frick whereupon it would be demolished.

Edith Ammon and the ladies realized that to go up against Frick and the Pennsylvania Railroad would be far more difficult than their battles with Nicola and the city. Ammon went to her next plan: passing a state law to save the

**Also revealed in October 1902 was that Henry Clay Frick had purchased the Point from Mary Schenley for \$2 million. Frick then sold the property to the Pennsylvania Railroad.**

Library of Congress, ggbain-07131.



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Block House from demolition. Luckily for Edith, Pennsylvania had just elected a new governor with a passion for historic preservation. Samuel W. Pennypacker was also against giving more power to railroads. Working with her husband, lawyer Samuel A. Ammon, Edith drafted a bill to protect the Block House and other historical structures in Pennsylvania from eminent domain by the railroads. This bill easily passed through the state House of Representatives, but it bogged down in the state Senate due to its anti-railroad position.<sup>28</sup>

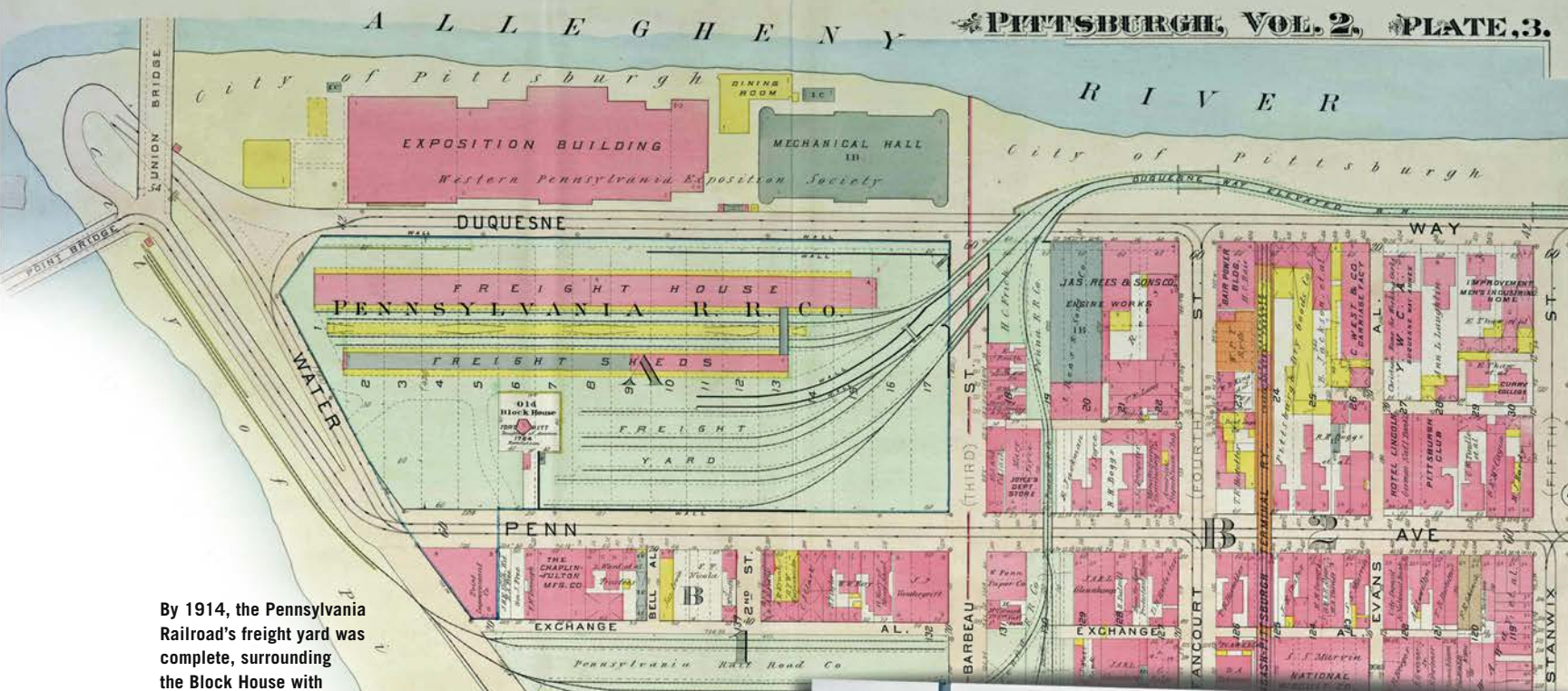
Ammon spent a half year in the state capital lobbying for the bill. It was incredible to have a woman lobbying state legislature and attending meetings and conferences with congressmen. Because of her active involvement, Edith's bill became known throughout the state as the "Mrs. Ammon bill."<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately her bill was merged into another bill as a compromise with senators who supported the right of eminent domain for the railroad. Despite its support of eminent domain, Ammon supported the new bill since it ultimately protected the Block House. By spring 1903, both the House of Representatives and the Senate approved the bill; it needed only approval from Governor Pennypacker to be passed into law. Although he supported historic preservation, Pennypacker felt the bill gave too much power to the railroads. He also disliked how the bill only favored certain historic sites owned by private corporations. The bill was vetoed and dropped from any further legislation.<sup>30</sup>

While the Ammon bill sat in Harrisburg, a small committee from the Fort Pitt Society approached Frick, asking him to sell a portion of his property to the society so that more space could be provided around the Block House. Frick informed the ladies that he could not give them any of the Point property because it was no longer his to sell, having sold it to the railroad.<sup>31</sup> With the passing of an ordinance in March 1904 providing a right-of-way for the railroad at the Point, demolition of the tenements and other structures was scheduled to begin that October. The Fort Pitt Society immediately filed a lawsuit against the railroad in July 1904 for the potential damages to the Block House property due to the demolition and construction. Although the court battles with the DAR and the railroad would continue over the next several years, the women could not stop the transformation of the Point District into a rail yard filled with warehouses.<sup>32</sup>

The Fort Pitt Society gave in and allowed the demolition of its rental property within the strip of land leading to Penn Avenue. It had no choice but to use this strip as the main entrance to the Block House, but a new house was built within the strip to be used by a caretaker. The Fort Pitt Society filed for compensation from the city of Pittsburgh for the various damages to its property. After two years in the courts, this effort was somewhat successful in that it garnered the society \$12,000 in damages. While this amount was not nearly enough to cover the expenses of losing their rental and improving their property, the women considered it a small yet proud victory for the Block House.<sup>33</sup>

In February 1905, Edith Ammon drafted a new bill and traveled to Harrisburg to once again to find a representative who could introduce it into the legislature. Michael H. Kennedy, a young state representative from Pittsburgh who had a passion for history, agreed to sponsor the bill on behalf of the Fort Pitt Society. They worked for two years to get the bill passed into law, but were always thwarted by those supporting the railroads.<sup>34</sup>





By 1914, the Pennsylvania Railroad's freight yard was complete, surrounding the Block House with warehouses and train sheds.  
University of Pittsburgh, Archives Service Center,  
G.M. Hopkins Maps Collections.

By 1907, the bill had passed through both the state House of Representatives and the state Senate but still needed the approval of new governor Edwin S. Stuart. Like his predecessor, Stuart was a supporter of historic preservation, and he signed the bill into law in May 1907.

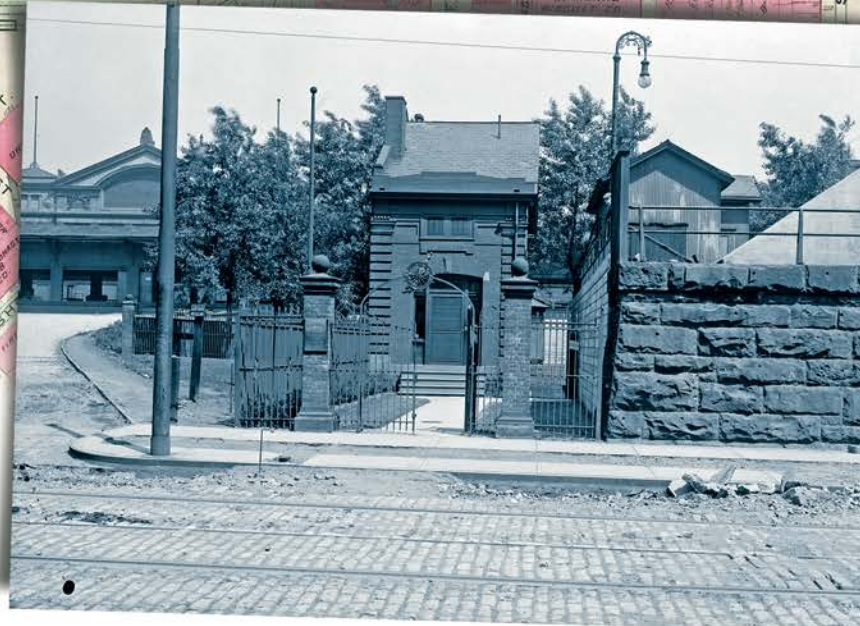
The law was mainly written by Edith Ammon herself to:

protect buildings used during the Colonial or Revolutionary period as a place of assembly by the Council of the Colony of Pennsylvania, or by the Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or by the Congress of the United States; or as against the land now occupied by any fort, redoubt, or blockhouse erected during said Colonial or Revolutionary period; or as against any building used as headquarters by the Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.<sup>35</sup>

Four years later, Ammon reported to the members of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Fort Pitt Society, of the Daughters of the American Revolution, of all they had accomplished since first learning of the closing of Fort Street in 1901. Although the women had failed in their efforts to save the Point from becoming an industrial

rail yard, Edith reminded everyone that they had succeeded in saving the building they treasured, the Fort Pitt Block House.<sup>36</sup>

For the first half of the 20th century, the Point remained largely under the ownership of the Pennsylvania Railroad, but as rail business declined, so did the properties. By the 1940s, the Point had become a major eyesore when Point State Park was suggested and planned.



The Fort Pitt Society allowed the demolition of its rental property within the strip of land leading to Penn Avenue so that it could access the street, but it squeezed in this new caretaker's house, shown May 1915.

University of Pittsburgh, Archives Service Center, 715.152254.CP.

The railroad's property was acquired, ironically, through eminent domain, and the warehouses and other structures were demolished in the 1950s. The park itself was finally dedicated in 1974 with the completion of the Point State Park Fountain. The caretaker's house was demolished in 1966 to make way for the new Fort Pitt Museum, but the Fort Pitt Society remained the owner and operator of



the Block House with free office space inside the museum.<sup>37</sup>

The Block House remains where it's always been, its original 1764 construction largely intact. It is part of the National Historic Landmark of the Forks of the Ohio and is included within the Pittsburgh Renaissance Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Once mired in slums, the Block House is now part of one of the most beautiful urban parks in the United States, receiving over 25,000 visitors every year. The year 2014 marks the structure's 250th anniversary as well as the 120th anniversary of its ownership by the Fort Pitt Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR).

Perhaps Edith Ammon had an idea of what the future held for the Block House and

the Point when she fought so hard for their preservation and survival:

Men—with but the thought of gain and gold were dreaming of tracks and trains, of massive walls and wreathing smoke from towering chimneys, while we dreamed of fame and power, of peaceful paths where once was strife, of space and breeze, of floating flags and trees, not smoke and noise. They planned for vandalism—we for patriotism. Patriotism wins.<sup>38</sup>



**Emily M. Weaver** is the curator of the Fort Pitt Block House. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Clarion University of Pennsylvania ('09) and a Master of Arts degree in public history from Duquesne University ('11). She recently published *The Fort Pitt Block House* (The History Press, 2013).

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Fahnestock, "Note to Map," *Fahnestock's Pittsburgh Directory for 1850* (Pittsburgh: George Parkin & Co., 1850). Republished by University of Pittsburgh Digital Research Library, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Salisbury, "Pittsburgh's Great Romance," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 47, no. 4 (October 1964): 343–54; Marie McSwigan, "Stanton Heights Golf Links Is Shrine of City's History," *Pittsburgh Press*, November 2, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from March 25, 1892, 9, Fort Pitt Society Collections; Mary Elizabeth Schenley to Amelia Neville Shields Oliver, May 23, 1892, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from June 10, 1892, 14–15, Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR Collections.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Elizabeth Schenley to Amelia Neville Shields Oliver, August 23, 1892, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from September 23, 1892, 18, Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR Collections.

<sup>5</sup> *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from September 23, 1892, 16–19, Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR Collections. The first directors for the board of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County were Julia K. Hogg, Anne McDowell Price Childs, Matilda

This image of Edith Ammon was most likely taken when the bill saving the Block House from eminent domain was signed into law in 1907. The language of the bill was mainly written by Ammon.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



A major supporter of the saving the Block House from destruction, Representative Michael H. Kennedy helped the Fort Pitt Society by introducing the Ammon bill into the state Senate in 1907.

The Kennedy Family.



Wilkins Denny, Henrietta Logan Scott, Emily Black Moorhead, Margaret Irwin Hays, Amelia Neville Shields Oliver, Mary Lothrop Painter, and Carrie Morehead Holland.

<sup>6</sup> Allegheny County Court Book, 18:259–64; Allegheny County Court Book, 52:56–57. Allegheny County Department of Real Estate.

<sup>7</sup> Deed to Block House Property, Mary E. Schenley to Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, recorded April 28, 1894, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from October 11, 1895, and June 8, 1896, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., minutes from December 1, 1898; May 15, 1900; and June 9, 1900, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>13</sup> Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, *Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt* (Pittsburgh: Privately printed, 1899), 37–38.

<sup>14</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from December 6, 1901, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., minutes from December 6, 1901, and December 13, 1901, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>16</sup> Kelly Linn, “Patriotism Wins: The Story of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the DAR and Its Fight to Save the Fort Pitt Block House,” lecture given to the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR, September 8, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Franklin F. Nicola to J. Harvey White, December 13, 1901, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>18</sup> *Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR/Fort Pitt Society Scrapbook, 1901–1902*, 5, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>19</sup> George T. Fleming, *History of Pittsburgh and Environs* (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1922) 4:96–97.

<sup>20</sup> John Jordan, *Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania*, 3:1,544–46; George Reed, *Century Cyclopedia of History & Biography* (Chicago: The Century Publishing and Engraving Co., 1904), 2:99–101; Fleming, 4:189–90.

<sup>21</sup> Herman Davis, *Reminiscences of General William Larimer* (Pittsburgh: privately printed, 1918), 20, 21, 99; Fleming, 4:313.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Hemphill Herbert, *Personal Memories of the Darlington Family*, 17–24; Darlington Digital Library, University of Pittsburgh, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/d/darlington/index.html>; Edith Darlington

Ammon, *Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.: A Review of Ten Years, 1899–1909* (privately printed, 1909).

<sup>23</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from February 6 and February 13, 1902; *Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania v. Mary E. Schenley, Frank F. Nicola, John W. Herron, and the City of Pittsburgh*, Court of Common Pleas No. 2 of Allegheny County, No. 513, April Term, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>24</sup> “Report to the Members of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Given by the Board of Directors of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, PA, and the Advisory Committee of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” February 1, 1905, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>25</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from February 14, 1902, and March 29, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR/Fort Pitt Society Scrapbook, 1901–1902*, 84, 93, 96, 100, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>26</sup> *Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania v. Mary E. Schenley, Frank F. Nicola, John W. Herron, and the City of Pittsburgh*, Court of Common Pleas No. 2 of Allegheny County,



By 1945, the Point District had become an eyesore that city leaders wanted to improve. It was difficult to encourage people to visit the Block House due to its surroundings, plus it was barely visible beneath warehouses and retaining walls.

THHC Detre L&A



No. 513, April Term, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania v. Mary E. Schenley, Frank F. Nicola, John W. Herron, and the City of Pittsburgh*, appealed to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, November 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>27</sup> *Scrapbook, 1901–1902*, 116–117; John Boucher, *Century and a Half of Pittsburgh and Her People* (Lewis Publishing Co., 1908), 2:451.

<sup>28</sup> *Scrapbook, 1903–1906*, 9, 11, 13; *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from April 3, 1903.

<sup>29</sup> *Scrapbook, 1903–1906*, 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23, 35, 45; *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from April 25, 1903.

<sup>31</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from April 25, 1903, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>32</sup> “Report to the Members of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Given by the Board of Directors of the DAR of Allegheny County, PA, and the Advisory Committee of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” February 1, 1905; *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from October 4, 1904; November 4, 1904; December 2, 1904; December 15, 1904, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>33</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from October 4, 1904; November 4, 1904; December 2, 1904; December 15, 1904; May 8, 1905; September 26, 1905; and October 6, 1905, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>34</sup> “Annual Report 1907,” *Minutes of from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1906–1911*, Fort Pitt Society Collections; Gilbert Love, “Holding the Fort,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 25, 1958.

<sup>35</sup> “Edith Ammon’s Law,” Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>36</sup> Edith Ammon, “Statement of the Regent, Annual Meeting of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” report given to the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR, June 6, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>37</sup> Robert C. Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point: Pittsburgh’s Renaissance Park* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 1–9, 99, 108, 110, 164; *Minutes of the Fort Pitt Society DAR of Allegheny County, PA, May 5, 1959 to April 17, 1965*, September 26, 1962, and January 23, 1963.

<sup>38</sup> Edith Ammon, “Statement of the Regent, Annual Meeting of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” report given to the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR, June 6, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

**The Fort Pitt Block House still stands today, the jewel of Point State Park. It continues to be owned and operated by the Daughters of the American Revolution.**

Photo by Roy Engelbrecht.



By Natalie Taylor and Shirley Gaudette

## Bob Butella and Sue Weingold



Bob Butella and Sue Weingold.

The Heinz History Center's membership program is one of the cornerstones of its success. Members provide vital support to the History Center's exciting exhibition and programs schedule, its award-winning publications, and field trips for more than 35,000 school children each year.

Bob Butella and Sue Weingold joined the History Center as members in 2010 and are now members at the Benefactor level. Bob says, "We became members when we learned how many significant historical presentations had already been done and the other presentations, exhibits, and events that occur at the History Center and we didn't want to miss any more of them."

Sue says that the special events are their favorite aspect: "We love receiving the

invitations to the members-only events to see the new exhibits, and we respond immediately and change our schedules so we attend almost every one of them." Some of the events they have attended included a beer tasting for a Benjamin Franklin exhibition and a barbeque for the opening of *The Story of Negro League Baseball: We Are the Ship*.

Bob adds, "*The Story of the Negro League Baseball* was magnificent. We learned how important the Negro league was to this area and the many outstanding players that were in the league. This presentation coincided with a members' field trip to PNC Park, where we saw the special area and theater dedicated to the Negro teams and players. We were in awe and developed a respect for the life and sport of baseball that existed in the African American community at that time in history. Every time we

drive across the Homestead Gray's Bridge and see the names of the players on the banners, we think of this member event."

Bob and Sue—both lifelong Pittsburghers—also enjoy visiting the other sites in the History Center's museum system. Sue says, "The Fort Pitt Museum was something we never experienced until we had our History Center membership. It's a community treasure and we still recall the members-only event where we learned about and saw the skills of the craftsman who make the clothes and the historical figures for the displays. It was great to see, to learn, and to begin to appreciate all of the wonderful people across the History Center who make history come alive for the members."

Because membership includes unlimited admission to the History Center, the Fort Pitt Museum, and Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village, Bob and Sue are able to visit often, especially Meadowcroft, where they can experience their favorite part of history. Bob says, "We really appreciate seeing how diligent and careful the very early settlers and native inhabitants were in having communities and organization to make sure they had food, shelter, and protection from the hazards of living in the wild. We have it so easy compared to their way of life and it helps us appreciate everything we have today."

The History Center is very fortunate to have members like Bob, Sue, and people like you. Membership makes a great gift, as well. To give the gift of history or upgrade your membership, visit [www.heinzhistorycenter.org](http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org) or contact Shirley Gaudette, Membership Manager, at [sagaudette@heinzhistorycenter.org](mailto:sagaudette@heinzhistorycenter.org) or (412) 454- 6436.





# Book Reviews



## **Pittsburgh Pizzazz — A Life in Showbiz**

By Patti Faloon

Tarentum, Pa.: Word Association Publishers, 2013

376 pps., photographs

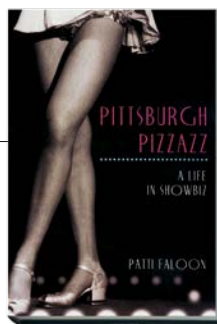
\$18.95 paperback

Reviewed by Paul Roth

I had a hard time putting this book down! Let me explain. This is a memoir (actually, each chapter is a mini-memoir) written by a local entertainer who is a contemporary of the reviewer. It is, essentially, the calendar of a life: family, friends, marriage, and especially show business. Therefore many of the references to local and national celebrities and locations were very familiar and nostalgia-provoking. Harold V. Cohen! Baron Elliott! Bill Bickel! Ted Weems! Vogue Terrace! Syria Mosque! Gordon MacRae! Morey Amsterdam! WCAE! Charlie Byrd! Slim Bryant! Lenny Litman! Rummy Bishop! The list goes on and on.

In its entirety, the book constitutes a biography of the life and career of a Pittsburgh singer-dancer-entertainer, which is enhanced contextually by the plethora of acquaintances and colleagues with whom she and her musician-husband, guitarist Marty Faloon, were associated. The reader will happily discover that the author appeared in various personas: it depended upon the booking whether she was featured as a balloon-twister, a clown, member of a girl's singing duo, vocalist with her husband (as a duo or with his band), or featured vocal soloist. All of these talents provided for a lifelong, productive career.

Easy reading is accommodated by the book's



organization: a chronologic sequence of short chapters, each devoted to a specific narrative or topic. Many photographs enhance the text.

I recommend it both to contemporaries who want to be treated to memories of the popular showbiz and club entertainers of the greater Pittsburgh region and to younger folk who desire to be oriented in what show business was like during the period covered by the author's career.

Another appealing facet is the author's memory (or diary), such as when she reflects upon the details of her Niagara Falls honeymoon stay in 1950: "The prices at the hotel seem archaic compared to today. Hotel Statler was a 'big deal' hotel at the time. A three-night stay: \$9.50 per night including a meal and valet. Total with taxes: \$31.75. Wow!" Wow indeed.

What is most compelling is the author's optimistic and sometimes humorous takes on the events in her life. She even conveys these traits in her narrative of confronting some of the more tragic occurrences like death and illness. The reader just has to ignore some loose editing, especially in the spelling of proper names and song titles.

An excerpt from the book's last paragraph pretty well covers the author's (and for that matter, the reviewer's) outlook: "Here I am, an octogenarian and still doing what I love! Call me spunky or spry, I'm fine with that. I say to those still able to do something well that they love, DON'T EVER STOP!"



**Paul Roth** is retired from the Computer Science faculty of Virginia Tech. He is a noted musicologist, specializing in popular and show music from 1900 through 1960, and has produced and hosted musical radio and TV programs. He wrote "Pittsburgh's Dance Band Era" in the Fall 2013 issue of this magazine.

## **Over the Alleghenies: Early Canals and Railroads of Pennsylvania**

By Robert J. Kapsch

Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2013

376 pps., maps, photographs, bibliography

\$39.99 paperback

Reviewed by Andrew Stroud

In 1825 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was faced with a dilemma: whether to build a canal or a railroad to compete with New York's newly completed Erie Canal. The controversy involved the use of conventional stillwater canals to cross the Allegheny Mountains and connect Philadelphia with Pittsburgh, or to use the neophyte technology of railroads. In the new book *Over the Alleghenies: Early Canals and Railroads of Pennsylvania*, veteran canal historian and engineer Robert Kapsch tells the story of the engineering, economic, and political history of this early system of transportation.

After the War of 1812, politicians in East Coast states began to see the need for lines of transportation to connect with the growing Ohio Valley and Great Lakes regions. New York was fortunate in that receding glaciers had left a high shoreline around Lake Ontario, which was perfect for a contour canal from Albany over to Lake Erie. With no mountains to cross, the Erie Canal was built across relatively flat areas of land and required few technological innovations. Pennsylvania was different: the same glaciers had left a topography of twisting ridges, narrow river valleys, and the problematic Susquehanna River. With no easy route through the veil of mountains, the engineers were forced to build riverside canals through the steep valleys. This direct connection to the temperamental rivers made the canals extremely sensitive to floods and droughts. Between the east-west river systems was the Allegheny Ridge—a 35-mile wall of heavily forested mountain that rose



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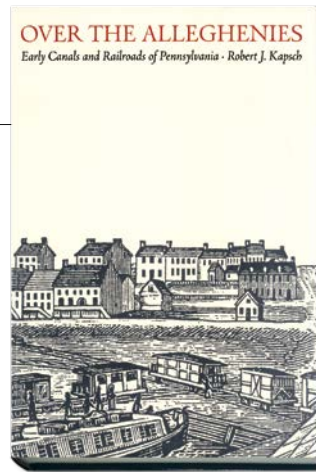
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1,200 feet above the headwaters. After looking at canal, tunnel, and turnpike options, the engineers settled on a complicated railroad arrangement. The resulting Allegheny Portage Railroad was a marvel of its time.

Political maneuvering complicated the grand scheme of the Pennsylvania Public Works. To sell the concept of the canal, promoters rationalized financial and technological miscalculations that wildly underestimated the scope of the project. The project was then fast-tracked without a clear plan to vault the mountains. Expensive lateral canal projects were initiated to entice politicians from the fringe counties to support the Mainline. Bonds to finance the project were then shunned as it became apparent that the construction costs far exceeded estimates, and that maintenance costs alone outstripped income from tolls. The heavy debt from the Public Works placed Pennsylvania in a precarious position when the Panic of 1837 arrived.

Despite its many shortcomings and expense, the Public Works succeeded in creating an expanded transportation link between the Eastern seaboard and the Ohio/Mississippi River systems. The increased volume, lower costs, and greater speed over the turnpikes for transporting raw materials allowed fledgling industries such as iron and glass production to develop. Passenger service by packet boats made the trip west faster and more comfortably than by stagecoach. And, like the modern NASA space shuttle program, the Public Works pioneered many technological innovations.

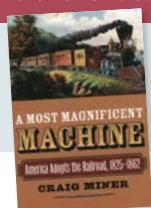


*Over the Alleghenies* is a large book and is copiously illustrated with period artwork, technical drawings, and antique map reproductions. The format is uncluttered and the writing style flows easily. The focus of the book is from the mid-1820s (when construction of the system was begun) to 1857, when the Public Works was sold to the Pennsylvania Railroad. All 15 divisions of the system are reviewed and documented. Observations are often reinforced with quotations from the reports of the Pennsylvania Canal Commission, both from the commissioners and also technical reports submitted by the individual canal engineers. A substantial section of endnotes and a bibliography make the book a valuable reference. With *Over the Alleghenies*, Robert Kapsch has created a definitive textbook on the Pennsylvania Public Works that is both educational and entertaining.

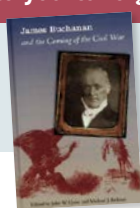
**Andrew Stroud** is a native of Pennsylvania, attended the Montana School of Mines for Geological Engineering, and is currently working on a guidebook series for the Pennsylvania Canal.

Look for more reviews at <http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/secondary.aspx?id=340>

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**A Most Magnificent Machine: America Adopts the Railroad, 1825-1862**

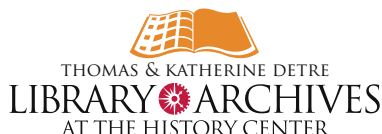


**James Buchanan and the Coming of the Civil War**



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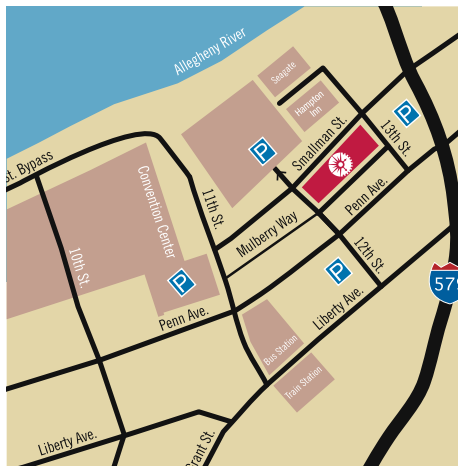
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