

YOUHADTOASK

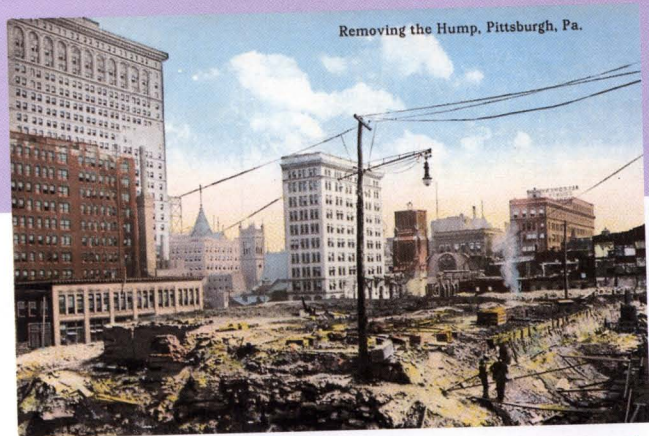
By Chris Potter, Managing Editor of *Pittsburgh City Paper*
and writer of the weekly "You Had to Ask" column

A friend showed me a map of the city that shows a large pond downtown named Hogg's Pond. How did it get its name, and where is it now? It's nice to know a pond was named after my ancestors. (Or were they named after it?) I could be a pond owner and not know it.

—Richard R. Hogg, Observatory Hill

Things were much different two centuries ago; our rivers had more islands, and downtown Pittsburgh had ponds. My guess is that the map you've seen dates back to 1795, when there were no less than four ponds downtown. Hogg's Pond, located just west of Grant Street between Fourth Avenue and Strawberry Way, was the largest.

In those days, Grant Street was a much steeper climb. The elevation increased some 20 feet in the space of a city block, a grade steep enough that many horse-drawn wagons couldn't climb it. By all accounts, the "pond" was a swampy pool about 4 feet deep; writer Leland Baldwin called it "that old eyesore at the foot of Grant's Hill."



Hogg's Pond was at the foot of Grant's Hill, which was removed over an 80-year period.

It emptied into the Monongahela River through a stream historian Neville Craig called a "low ugly drain."

Even the French didn't like it. During their occupation of the Point prior to the French and Indian War, they feared the stream draining Hogg's Pond would be used as a trench by attackers; archival material shows them fretting that the stream "protects those [within range of] the cannon of the fort; it is probably at this place that the enemy will open the trenches."

Somebody should have told the English that. Instead of laying siege, Major James Grant launched an ill-advised attack on the fort in 1758. The tactic didn't work; in fact, in his book *Shaping the Point*, Robert Alberts contends that Hogg's Pond was later known as "Massacre Pond" because of the outcome of Grant's attack. I couldn't find any other use of that name, though it's not hard to imagine why it wouldn't catch on.



A widely reproduced map of Pittsburgh in 1795. Hogg's Pond dominates the eastern end of the Golden Triangle.

The only strategic value Hogg's Pond had was its ability to store dirt – no small thing in a rapidly growing city where so much excavation was taking place. There were, for example, repeated attempts to smooth out Grant Street's steep incline, known as the "Hump," in 1832 and 1846 (and finished in 1913). Some of the earth removed in these projects was used to fill in the pond, as was dirt excavated from the construction of new canals in the city. By 1850, the pond had vanished from maps. Today, much of where Hogg's Pond used to be is occupied by Mellon Bank buildings and Kaufmann's. But don't start demanding that Kaufmann's clear off your property quite yet; there's little evidence to suggest which Hogg the pond is named after.

S. Trevor Hadley's *Only in Pittsburgh* asserts the pond was "named for old Granny Hogg, an early resident," but offers no evidence. And the 1790 Census, the nation's first, shows no Hoggs living in Pittsburgh at all. There was a prosperous Brownsville family named Hogg; George Hogg, the son of John and Mary Crisp Hogg, moved here in 1843. But the pond itself was disappearing by then.

My best guess is that Hogg's Pond was named after David Hogg, who Neville Craig, the city's earliest historian, remembered as one

of Pittsburgh's first residents. Craig places Hogg's residence on Fourth Street, east of Market Square. That puts Hogg fairly close to where the pond drained into the stream. But Craig says nothing else about Hogg, and he doesn't identify him as the pond's namesake – or vice-versa.

So if you can trace your lineage to David Hogg, you might be able to stake a claim on the ancestral land. But if you want to own a stagnant, scummed-over body of water in city limits, why not make an offer for Panther Hollow Lake first?