Up Front

Library & Archives
Treasures
By David R. Grinnell, Chief Archivist

The Schlereth Family and Reymer’s Tea Rooms

Visitors to the Heinz History Center are met with historical imagery as they wander through our building. This should be expected in our exhibit galleries, after all we are a history museum, but it’s even true when walking into our café for a quick cup of coffee or a tasty sandwich. Reymer’s is the name stenciled on the café’s doors and awning—beckoning visitors back to a time when Reymer’s Tea Rooms were located all around Pittsburgh. Early this year, two sisters, Paula Trzcianke of Baden and Dawn Heilman of Sarver, visited the History Center and were struck by the Reymer’s name. It reminded them of the treasure trove of pictures they had from their mother and grandfather, who both worked for the Reymer Brothers in the early 20th century. Not long after their visit, the sisters gave us a call and offered their collection of historic images to the Heinz History Center archives.

Peter J. Schlereth and his family lived on Ley Street in Troy Hill. Schlereth worked for Reymer Brothers as a manager in their shipping department and later became a sales person for the company. Paula and Dawn recalled how their mother, Anna Schlereth Berckmiller, told stories of holiday seasons at Reymer’s when everyone busily boxed-up the Christmas and Easter candies, making them ready for delivery to countless families waiting for their chocolaty treats. One of Reymer’s specialties was fruit-and-nut-filled Easter eggs. As a special treat for some customers, Schlereth promised personalized eggs. What a surprise it must have been to have an Easter candy egg arrive decorated with your own name in scripted icing!

When Anna and her sister Catherine were old enough to work, their father secured them jobs at Reymer Brothers. One of the family photographs shows Anna posing with...
a Reymer Brothers new mini-coupe in 1930. Upon close examination the car turns out to be one of the early products of the Austin [later Austin-Bantam] Company of Butler, Pennsylvania, which would later produce the first Jeep for the United States Army.

With newfound interest in documenting their family history, Paula and Dawn made periodic research trips to the Library & Archives. They began to wonder about many of their family members, whom they had not seen in years. By spring 2009 they set out to organize a family reunion at Dawn’s home in Sarver. The reunion was a great success with 56 family members in attendance—swapping stories, sharing photographs, and even fishing in the pond on the Heilman’s property.

Ann Schlereth stands next to Reymer’s 1930 Austin Coupe manufactured by the Butler carmaker.