

THE ALLEGHENY STORY

WILLIAM M. RIMMEL

OLD Allegheny is rich in history. Yet her story has never been told, for the fragmentary records, legends, stories of bloody warfare, letters, essays and public records, all bearing more or less upon the history of the city, are scattered here and there over the country. Now and then bits of the Allegheny Story are gleaned from the discolored newspapers, antiquated directories and fading memories of those who called the city home. And when some of these old records are uncovered we discover that history often repeats itself.

A shining example can be found in the recent mutilation of Monument Hill, one of Allegheny's historic landmarks.

Back in 1786 when the hill was called Hog-Back-Hill, because of its shape, considerable agitation was raised by the citizens over the proposed mutilation of the hill for the construction of the proposed Western Theological Seminary.

Judge Brackenridge in an article in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* said,

There are whisperings looking to the demolition of this acropolis, and it may be that the grasping greed of traffic will eventually level it with the plain. It would be a shame to wreck this historic spot that could be converted into a most enchanting resort, overlooking as it does the cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny, with their busy streets and the noble rivers flowing at its feet. A far better way would be to beautify it and adorn it with shady drives and cozy walks and sparkling fountains, with a temple or two devoted to art and science and here and there a glistening shaft of some worthy memory.

The Seminary was eventually built atop the hill and it was renamed Seminary Hill. When the Seminary was destroyed by fire a new building was constructed at its base on Ridge Avenue.

Nothing was done with the hill until after the Civil War when a gigantic war memorial was constructed by the citizens in memory of the four thousand Allegheny County men who gave their lives in the War Between the States. Then the hill was renamed Monument Hill.

The war memorial that was neglected and subjected to vandalism remained on the hill until a few years ago when the city moved what

An address by William Rimmel, columnist of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, before the Society on the evening of April 8, 1970. Mr. Rimmel began his newspaper career as copy boy on the old *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, advanced to the police reporter's beat, worked on the *Pittsburgh Post* and retired in 1962 as the Assistant City Editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.—Editor

was left of it to West Park near the new Lake Elizabeth. A public-school football stadium took its place.

Two years ago bulldozers began eating into the old hill for earth to construct the Three Rivers Sports Stadium and to make way for the ramp leading off the Fort Duquesne Bridge. There were no protests over the mutilation of the old hill.

Future plans call for construction of the new Allegheny Community College campus on what remains of the historic hill.

And in spite of what planners would have you believe, the proposed million dollar park, shore line boulevard and beautification of the Allegheny River front from the sports stadium to the Sixth Street Bridge is not new. In fact it was first advocated over seventy years ago by a twelve-year-old Allegheny Public School girl.

In an essay written in November of 1897 on "How to Make Our City More Beautiful," Anna Thompson, a student in the First Ward Public School, wrote, "A public driveway or boulevard made along the entire river front would add much to the beauty and value of that section of the city."

Allegheny housewives were complaining about smoke and fly ash from the mills dirtying their homes and clothing, just as women are today. One year, records show the complaints became so numerous that the city fathers passed an ordinance making it compulsory that all residential chimneys be cleaned periodically under penalty of a three dollar fine.

This brought a storm of protests. The housewives wondered why they were being singled out and the blacksmith, nail shops, foundries and forges were ignored. Council answered the protests by passing legislation that required all shops and factories to elevate their chimneys to a height that sparks and smoke would not disfigure other property.

Again the housewives protested. Council answered the protests by saying, "High smoke stacks were the answer. Such stacks would carry the smoke high across the river to Pittsburgh."

The smoke fight was forgotten until late in 1896 when James Wyman began campaigning for mayor on a ticket that promised elimination of smoke. Wyman was elected but forgot his smoke pledge until the citizens began making daily visits to his office. These visits pressured the mayor into pushing a city ordinance prohibiting the emission of dense smoke from engine stacks and chimneys within the city. The ordinance also called for the plants to install smoke consumers.

The ordinance was attacked at every turn. And Council meeting on October 20, 1898, passed a substitute ordinance that prohibited the use of bituminous coal by manufacturers, corporations and stores within the city. Violators of the ordinance were subject to fines of not less than ten dollars or more than one hundred dollars, or imprisonment for not less than twenty-four hours or more than ten days.

Like all previous smoke laws no effort was ever made to enforce it or any other anti-smoke law that was still on the books when the city was annexed to Pittsburgh back in 1907.

The "blue noses" of today who try to regulate what we shall see, read and do are no different than they were years ago in old Allegheny.

Back in 1872 Mayor A. P. Callow ordered a crackdown on lotteries and all forms of gambling, including the sale of penny prize bags. The mayor when questioned about the prize bags said, "I know a boy who bought eleven prize bags in one day in the hope of getting something valuable in one of them. It is devil's bait and the boy who commences thus bids fair to fetch up at the state prison."

Reform groups convinced Mayor Richard Pearson back in 1888 to enforce the Sunday Blue Laws and close every retail store in the city. Even the Pittsburgh Sunday newspapers were banned. One of the newspapers questioning the mayor's actions asked what would happen if Christmas fell on the Sabbath. The mayor replied, "Under those circumstances the citizenry should observe Christmas on Saturday, December 24 or Monday, December 26."

At the Hannah homestead on East North Avenue, where no newspaper but the Pittsburgh *Gazette* was ever left at the door, the family wrote a letter of remonstrance to the editor when the first Sunday edition of the paper made its appearance.

The Allegheny Presbytery of the United Presbyterian Church passed a resolution at its quarterly meeting in December of 1898 condemning Allegheny librarians who were riding through the streets of the city en route to work clad in bloomers.

The Session also debated whether financial aid should be given to struggling theological students who were addicted to the use of tobacco.

One year W. M. Stevenson, librarian of the Allegheny Carnegie Library, created a furor when he excluded four novels from the shelves of the library. The Pittsburgh newspapers took the librarian to task for "laying his audacious hands" on books written by E. P. Roe, a local resident, along with the books of Mrs. Holmes, A. C. Gunter and Mrs. Southworth.

The city papers charged that the librarian had used the plea that the books were silly novels as his reason for banning the books. The librarian replied that the books in question were simply silly, slovenly, not strictly literature at all. He said similar works of fiction still on the shelves would meet a similar fate.

The librarian pointed out that a study of the reading habits of patrons revealed a free-for-all competition among school children to see who could read the most novels in a given time. One boy averaged a volume a day of Horatio Alger.

Librarian Stevenson said, "Nobody can stop the reading of fiction. But we can do something to prevent the nourishing of fiction fiends."

I dropped into the Carnegie Library not long ago to see if Horatio Alger's books were still on the library shelves. For like many of my schoolmates I had spent many happy hours sitting in front of the kitchen stove reading the adventures of *Phil the Fiddler*, *Poor but Proud* and *Ragged Dick*. I found *Struggling Upward* and four other Alger novels that Librarian Stevenson called "silly novels" over seventy years ago, still resting on the library shelves.

Today's spirited school board meetings are almost a replica of school board meetings years ago in old Allegheny.

From that day back in 1834 when Robert M. Park, a Manchester school board member, was threatened with a horse whip when he tried to collect school taxes, school officials in Allegheny were faced with countless problems.

Bitter fights between political factions often ended in the closing of one of the schools. And it wasn't one school system as today. It was sixty-three school systems with a total of 412 school directors. Two of the sixty-three school boards were called Central Boards. The others were sub-boards.

Many of the men who ran the sub-boards were uneducated, inexperienced and sometimes corrupt.

Records show that in one ten-year period, expenditures for school purposes had increased forty-two per cent with no improvements either in the schools or in the programs they offered.

Tax millage ranged from six mills in the better districts to twenty-four mills in the poorer sections.

Wages of teachers varied in Allegheny, and the schools were constantly seeking new teachers to replace those lured to Pittsburgh by higher salaries. Costs for maintaining schools also varied. Some

school boards spent more money for kalsomining the school rooms than they did for textbooks.

One year the school board of the Sixth Ward in setting aside funds for lemonade for the school children attending the Jubilee Day celebration bought 1200 tin cups for the occasion. School records show that only six hundred children were enrolled.

Fights between two factions in the Ninth Ward School back in 1898 were constantly disrupting classes. The Manual Training School was closed for months because board members could not agree on a teacher to fill a vacancy.

The same year night-school students had to study by candlelight when the president of the school board shut off the artificial gas following a quarrel with another member who headed the night-school committee.

Members of the sub-boards were always trying to find places for friends on the teaching staffs. Here's an excerpt from a letter to the school board of Allegheny City in 1906 that was found among some old school records:

If your honorable body should see fit to place a new teacher and have no personal choice, I'd like to call attention to a lady friend who has the making of an excellent teacher. She is a poor girl and walked over nine and a half miles for five years to attend a graded school and finally graduated with honors. She is a girl of excellent moral character and one that would affiliate with our girls here. She was so poor that her class mates who were much better off turned up their aristocratic noses at her. Friends bought her graduation clothes. I would like to have her show, if possible, a few of those who used to treat her so contemptible. A school board in the great City of Allegheny can appreciate true merit above wealth and society any time. Now this is only a suggestion. I'll be satisfied whatever you do.

Previous to the Civil War colored children in Allegheny had few rights. They were not permitted to attend the same schools with white children. The first colored school was housed in the basement of the Baptist Church on Robinson Street. Later it was moved to Sherman Avenue and later to Avery Street near where the East Park School now stands. Then it was moved to the Temperance Ark and finally into an abandoned sawmill on Sherman Avenue.

Congress decreed that the colored children in the United States should be admitted to the public schools to receive the same education as the white children.

Allegheny City did not heed the order. A court order forced her to close this "Jim Crow" school. As a result the Sherman Avenue planing mill was vacant until the school board rented it to be used as a cigar factory.

Agitation for a high school was started back in 1880. School officials said such a school was a luxury and pointed out that pupils were being taught high school subjects in the grade schools.

But the idea for a centralized high school was not stamped out by the opposition. It smoldered until 1882 when Dr. W. J. Langfitt of the eleventh ward suggested the appointment of a committee to study the advisability of establishing a central high school. The committee went to work immediately.

On March 6, 1883, they reported favorably on a high school and suggested the new school be opened in the old planing mill and cigar factory on Sherman Avenue that had been used as a school for Negro children for eight years.

A short time later carpenters began reconditioning the old planing mill. The job was finally completed at a cost of \$408.33.

On September 3, 1883, undismayed by the quarters afforded, 126 pupils presented themselves for admission to the new high school.

It wasn't long before the reconditioned mill was inadequate to house all the pupils. Two rooms were rented on the second floor of a building at Erie and Federal Streets.

Teachers and pupils soon tired of seeking an education in the planing mill. The obstacles were too difficult to conquer. People snickered and criticized the structure. Many parents sent their children across the river and paid tuition to Pittsburgh schools so that their children could have a suitable education.

Agitation for a new school became widespread. The school board finally became convinced of the need. But new problems arose. Allegheny City Council decided Allegheny didn't need a new high school. The board discovered they would need the consent of the state to carry out their plans.

On May 13, 1887, the legislature passed a bill giving the Allegheny School Board power to erect a high-school building costing \$100,000 and a one-mill tax increase.

On November 1, 1889, the new high school was completed. As Allegheny grew, the building was soon overcrowded and in 1904 the Arch Street addition was built.

Irate parents were constantly appearing before various school boards to complain about the punishment their children were receiving at the hands of the teachers. These complaints were so bad in the eighth ward back in 1897 that the board outlawed corporal punishment in the ward schools. Teachers were instructed to enforce discipline without the use of the paddle or rattan.

Before the year was over the school board announced the experiment a failure. And at a regular meeting of the board George W. Gerwig, secretary, announced that "The Board discovered that no plan of discipline invented was more emphatic than the old rod and rule."

That same year the Central Board of Education announced plans for the opening of a truant school in an effort to enforce the compulsory education law. The truant school, the first in the state, would be sort of a prison school for all disobedient pupils and truants picked up by the attendance officers. The board instructed the attendance officers to see that all truants were apprehended immediately. Pupils who refused to go to school were put in jail until the truant school opened.

Old Alleghenians still talk about the truant school which was held in the basement on the Erie Street side of the Allegheny High School. They remember "The Professor," a tall gaunt man, who ruled the school with a rattan. Corporal punishment is no longer permitted in the schools, and the truant school has long since been closed; but scores of Alleghenians still avoid walking along Erie Street when they're taking their grandchildren to the Aviary in West Park.

But somehow or other, in spite of all the bickering among school officials in those days, Alleghenians managed to receive a fine education. And the rolls of Allegheny's schools bear the names of many distinguished men and women. Some have made their mark as statesmen — others in the field of science, education and medicine — and still others in the field of business, and a few in the world of literature.

Mounting acts of vandalism and the wild antics of the younger generation today cause many old Alleghenians to shudder. To hear them talk one would believe that all was calm and serene in Allegheny when they were young. Well, let's just take a look at what was happening back in those so-called "good old days."

Back on May 16, 1843, a mob of screaming men and boys hurled stones and clubs through the doors and windows of "The Ark," home of the Washington Temperance Society, in back of the town square, in an effort to halt a concert being given by Frank Johnston and his celebrated Negro brass band. Unable to halt the concert the mob waited until the affair was ended and then they attacked the musicians as they left the building. Before the authorities could quell the mob, half-a-dozen musicians had been severely beaten.

The year of 1848 was a trying one for the churches, especially Catholic churches in Allegheny. For bigotry was prevalent and bands

of vandals swept through the town breaking windows and destroying church property.

Authorities blamed the vandalism on a band of bigots whom they called "The Know-Nothings" because they always said, "We Know Nothing" when questioned.

One of the favorite targets of these vandals was St. Mary's Catholic Church being constructed on what is now Lockhart Street. Hardly a night went by without one or more windows being broken. Tired of replacing windows, the parishioners decided to make the church windowless, except for small semi-circles near the roof which were intended for ventilation rather than light. "The Know-Nothings" couldn't break windows where none existed. The vandalism ended.

Stained glass windows were cut through the walls in later years. But the semi-circular "Know-Nothing" windows still remain.

During World War I the Humboldt Monument in West Park near Resaca Place, erected by Allegheny Fraternal Societies in memory of Baron Alexander Von Humboldt, who gained worldwide fame as a scientist and scholar, was the target of so-called patriots who vented their hatred of Germans by painting it yellow.

And it's not so many years ago that the tough kids from the first ward were pushing the butlers guarding the boys from the fine homes on Ridge Avenue, into the fountain in West Park and stealing the boats their charges were sailing.

And back in 1883 the Allegheny City Fathers had to go to the rescue of the women by passing an ordinance that set aside certain benches in the city parks for women. The benches were marked "For Ladies and Gentlemen Accompanying Them."

A woman today would have a hard time to find a bench to rest on in Allegheny's parks. For they're filled with men from early morning until dark.

Here's another interesting item found in the faded newspapers of the now defunct city.

Thousands of immigrants settled in Allegheny and surrounding boroughs and townships. Old Dutchtown sheltered most of the Germans. Manchester became the home of the Scotch and Irish. And Woods Run became the home of many of Slavic extraction.

Charles Antoine Gengembre was one of those who settled in Manchester back in 1849. The young French architect was drawn by the stories of the moral integrity of all Americans and built a home on Beaver Avenue and started his career.

Later the architect moved to Federal Street where he attracted the attention of city planners who asked him to submit architectural plans for a new City Hall for Allegheny City. Thrilled when his plans were accepted, the young architect refused to accept any fee for his work, saying it was his humble way of repaying the country and city that had given him shelter.

One day the Frenchman appeared before the City Fathers with a sketch of a window bearing the Ten Commandments. He wanted permission to install the window on the west side of the new City Hall facing the Commons. He would pay for both the window and its installation. It would be another token of his thanks to his adopted city. Council accepted the offer with thanks.

A short time later the architect was approached by a couple of political leaders. Without any preliminaries they offered to share the graft they were making if he would make certain changes in the plans for City Hall. The Frenchman listened and answered with an emphatic "No" and showed the politicians to the door.

When the building was near completion the City Fathers discovered the architect's proposed "Ten Commandments" window was missing. They questioned the Frenchman. He told them there would be no window. When they pressed him for the reason he told them of the graft proposal. They tried to laugh it off and urged him to complete his plans and install the window.

But the architect just shook his head and said he had come to America like so many others, thinking that the morals of all who were lucky enough to be here were unimpeachable. He was now thoroughly disillusioned. He vowed he would never enter the building he had designed. Whether he carried out his vow is not recorded. But the building he designed has long since passed from the scene.

Another shining example of history repeating itself is found in the gradual encroachment of Allegheny's parks that have been the pride and joy of her citizens for the last ninety-four years.

Laid out as common grazing ground when the town site was laid out back in 1788, the parks have been the center of many fights over encroachment.

The first fight over seizure of the Commons came back in 1827 when the state granted eighteen acres of the Commons for the construction of the Western Theological Seminary.

A group of citizens meeting in the parlor of the Reverend Joseph Stockton relinquished their rights of the pasture land granted when

they had purchased town lots. But a townsman questioned their right to give not only a title to the common ground but also the right of the Seminary to build on the ground.

Construction of the Seminary was started. But a suit followed. The suit revealed that one townsman had not surrendered his rights to the common ground. But the court ruled that the lot owner had barred his rights of action by his long silence.

A minor was also discovered some years afterward who had not released his right, and his claim was satisfied in 1846 by the payment of \$1500 "for the sake of peace."

Trouble over encroachment on the Commons broke out again in 1831 when opposition arose over the right of the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Allegheny to erect a church on common ground on what is now West Park. An injunction halted construction of the church after the foundation walls had been started.

The Church Fathers felt they were within their rights and planned to take the case into court because of an act of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania in 1870. The general assembly had selected the site for the city of Allegheny, having it surveyed and laid out in lots. Besides laying out the town site, the Supreme Council of the state also reserved four sections in the center of the town for a courthouse, jail, market house, places for public worship and for the burying of the dead. The ground reserved was the open space in the center of the town which later became known as the Diamond. The old Act also stated, "Without said town there shall be 100 acres for common pasture."

They pointed out that the Council and Burgess of the Borough of Allegheny in 1828 had passed an ordinance which permitted the trustees of the church to occupy a tract of land on the Commons — 240 by 130 feet — upon which they had built a white frame church.

Meanwhile other churches had begun to organize in the community and some people feared that they would also claim the right to the common land.

In 1832 the question of the right of the First Church to this land became an issue in the political campaign of that year. The Anti-Presbyterians won the election. Council rescinded the act of 1828 and took control of not only the church site but also the burying grounds adjoining.

The Commons remained swampy grounds where the citizens not only grazed their cattle but also dumped their refuse until 1856 when the Town Fathers, plagued with complaints, decided to improve the

Commons. They appointed a group of prominent citizens to raise funds by public subscription to transform the land into public parks.

On May 1, 1861, the first move to transform the Commons was made when the lawmakers authorized the removal of the dead from the Presbyterian burial grounds on the West and South Commons.

Further work was halted by the Civil War. But on April 19, 1867, the task was resumed when Mitchell and Grant, New York landscape architects, were commissioned to prepare plans for the parks. On December 28, 1876, the parks were completed and turned over to the city.

The parks had hardly been completed before citizens started agitation for the removal of the penitentiary that stood on ten acres in West Park, where the Aviary now stands. They pointed out that the grim prison that stood in the Commons was an eyesore amid such beautiful surroundings. The agitation continued until the present prison in Woods Run was constructed in 1886.

The state legislature returned the ten-acre prison site back to the City of Allegheny and work was started immediately to turn the acreage into parks. Later a conservatory, the gift of Henry Phipps, was erected on the site.

In the years that followed the City Fathers have taken great chunks of the parks for the right-of-way for the Fort Wayne division of the Pennsylvania road and the freight yards on Federal Street at Stockton Avenue. On another occasion they cut down rows of trees along Montgomery and Union Avenues to widen these streets and provide more parking space for automobiles.

Several years ago the City Fathers cut a street connecting West Ohio Street and Ridge Avenue through West Park. And recently plans were started for taking a portion of the park for the widening of North Avenue from Brighton Road to Cedar Avenue. Whether the citizens will permit this latest encroachment to be carried out remains to be seen. But in any event the parks are getting smaller every year.

No history of Allegheny's parks would be complete without mention of one man who was really proud of them. He was George Geisinger. For years the one-armed Civil War veteran directed the policing of Allegheny's parks. And heaven help the youngster or even the grownup he caught walking on the grass.

Alleghenians were permitted on the grass just two days a year. Those days were Jubilee Day, that marked the end of the school year, and the Fourth of July. The rest of the time you were apt to feel the

sting of Patrolman Geisinger's cane if he caught you walking or playing on the greens.

The officer also insisted that the residents keep the parks clean. And many a man or woman came in for a severe scolding when he caught them littering the parks with bits of paper.

But playing on the grass and dropping paper on the walks were not the only things that irritated the park guard. For kids swimming to the island in Lake Elizabeth to steal the duck or swan eggs and swimming in the park fountains always sent his blood pressure soaring.

Time and again Geisinger would shut off the water in the fountains at Cedar and North, in East Park near the Fourth Ward School, Ober Park at Ohio and Federal Streets or the fountain in front of the Allegheny General Hospital on Stockton Avenue.

But it wasn't long before calls from irate citizens had the fountains back in operation. They didn't mind the officer enforcing the keep-off-the-grass rules, but fountains were useless without water.

Several times Henry Ober, who donated the fountain that graced the park bearing his name at Ohio and Federal Streets, demanded Geisinger's dismissal when he shut off the fountain and drove the children away. But the City Fathers calmed the troubled waters by lifting the fountain keys that the officer carried and advised him to keep his hands off the fountains and enforce the keep-off-the-grass rule.

Patrolman Geisinger has long since passed away. Lake Elizabeth and the fountains and even the keep-off-the-grass signs have vanished. But old Alleghenians still remember the one-armed officer and how accurately he could throw that cane at kids playing on the grass.

And not long ago I noticed an old man starting across the grass in East Park near Cedar and North Avenues and then suddenly stop and turn as though he expected Geisinger to yell and hurl his cane. He was one of those Alleghenians who still remember.

The periodic campaigns against littering the city streets are not new. For Kate Cassatt McKnight, an Allegheny socialite, was crusading against littering over seventy years ago. Kate hated to see people dropping refuse on the streets. She was forever accosting people for dropping paper on the grass or walks in the park along Ridge Avenue. And many times she ran from her home at 1212 Western Avenue to scold a careless pedestrian.

Once she tried to organize a group of clubwomen in the aristo-

cratic neighborhood into forcing city officials to enact laws against litterbugs. But the women politely refused to join the crusader.

Later she turned to the school children. She appeared before the principal of the Fifth Ward Public School and told him she wanted to organize every boy and girl into an army against littering the city streets. The principal, aware of her wealth and influence, sanctioned the program provided she wouldn't involve the school officials.

Two weeks later every boy and girl in the school was wearing a clean-up button. Kate went so far as to deputize several older children and told them that they were full-fledged officers and could arrest persons they found littering the streets.

Within a month school officials were besieged by persons who had been threatened by Kate's clean-up army — so the school officials stepped in and ended the juvenile police force.

It was in the McKnight home that Kate McKnight assembled a group of women called "The Monday Class." The original members were Mrs. Thomas H. Bakewell, Miss Marie Louise Jackson, Mrs. William A. Ross Thompson, Miss Julia Morgan Harding, Miss Anna S. Phillips, Miss Nellie McKnight, Mrs. William Pierce, Mrs. Frank McClintock, Miss Mary Updike, who later became Mrs. Sumner B. Ely, Mrs. Benjamin Warfield, Mrs. James I. Kay, Mrs. Anthony Murray, Miss Eleanor Sawyer, Mrs. Charles McKnight, Miss Mary Chalfant and Miss Lillian Mercur. These women were all listed in the social register of the day.

This Monday Class was the beginning of the Twentieth Century Club which was organized in 1894 and now meets every Monday in a stone clubhouse adjoining the Historical Society building.

Kate McKnight has long since passed away, but her crusading has borne fruit. For the city now has litter boxes everywhere. And the Pennsylvania Garden Federation took up where she left off. And today a state law prohibits litterbugs from littering our highways with refuse.

No history of Allegheny would be complete without some mention of old Dutchtown, that colorful section of Allegheny that was once the home of thousands of German-born. For although Dutchtown, like many scenes of yesteryear, has long since vanished, it still lives in the hearts of thousands.

Hundreds talk of the Rhine-wine Balls in old Turn and Social Halls where the beer and wine flowed like water — and still others of the scores of singing societies and Turnvereins in Spring Garden, Troy Hill, Spring Hill, Bohemian Hill and the East Street valley that

were filled on week ends with crowds of happy people.

While the singing societies cultivated the voice the Turnvereins were building strong bodies through exercise. And almost every family in Dutchtown back in 1897, records show, had at least one child and in some cases as many as three children being trained systematically in gymnastics and physical culture in one of the Turnvereins.

The oldest Turnverein was the Allegheny Turnverein founded back in 1850 in the basement of the Weiterhausen Church on South Canal Street near Madison Avenue. This Turnverein continued operation until 1861 when thirty of its active members enlisted in the Union Army. Four of this number died in the service.

At the close of the war the Turnverein was reorganized and constructed a gymnasium and meeting hall near the site of its first home.

In 1890 the Turnverein started a campaign calling for physical culture exercises for the pupils in Allegheny's public schools. Representative John H. Need presented the compulsory exercise bill which was passed by the legislature. But Governor Pattison vetoed the bill. Later Allegheny's school board established a period of physical education in the city's public schools.

In 1895 the Turnverein was successful in another campaign, that of having the German language taught in the Allegheny High School.

Previous to that, children were taught German in St. Mary's Catholic Church School, St. John's German Evangelical Lutheran Church School and a one-room school at Gerst Way and Third Street operated by the congregation of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church.

The latter church is still operating a school in rooms in St. Matthew's Church at Middle Street and East North Avenue. But it is a far cry from the original school where the children were taught German as well as English. No German is taught today, and besides a religious education the fifty boys and girls attending are taught the basic state educational requirements.

Many of Allegheny's businessmen sent their sons to these German schools, for they knew that the knowledge of the German language was a must if one was to succeed in business in Dutchtown.

The Allegheny Turnverein and other Turnvereins continued to conduct gymnastic classes until the beginning of World War I when agitation against anything German brought about their closing. The same was true of classes in German in the various schools. Even the

H. J. Heinz Company called the sauerkraut they produced "Yankee Cabbage."

For years Dutchtown's residents came in for considerable ridicule from the writers in the Pittsburgh newspapers because of the numerous suicides among the residents on dark and gloomy days.

But all in all the great majority of the residents were a gay, happy lot whether the day was dark or sunny.

Superstition played a big part in the lives of Dutchtown's residents. Housewives were always employing old world cure-alls to ward off sickness and evil spirits. German housewives bought herbs for their cure-alls at the stands in the Allegheny Markethouse or from Pete Liebach, the hermit, or the so-called Indian herb doctors who made regular visits to their doors.

The boys who made their living by their wits took advantage of the superstitious nature of the householders and sold them all sorts of gadgets guaranteed to ward off evil and to bring health, wealth and happiness to the home.

One sharpie peddled little bags to be hung in the chimney to drive out witches. Another peddled hundreds of candles until stopped by the police. He claimed his candles that sold for fifty cents were made from a special wax imported from Germany and would ward off harm if burned at certain hours of the day. Records show that the sharpie bought the candles for three cents apiece from an Ohio wholesaler.

New Year's Eve was a big night years ago in old Dutchtown. The singing societies and Turnvereins were packed to the doors with men and women celebrants. Folks traveled from house to house wishing the occupants an abundance of health and wealth. Free food and drink were served everywhere. Even the taverns put out the welcome mat.

Nobody was turned away on either New Year's Eve or New Year's Day. For to turn away a visitor, especially a dark-haired man, meant bad luck. And Dutchtown, being superstitious, turned away nobody, whether he had hair or not. The residents did all sorts of strange things to celebrate the New Year. The housewives would scrub their doorsills to chase away old troubles. They served pork because the pig roots forward.

The tables of the homes were always piled high with home-baked goods and food of every description. There was pickled herring to insure the good health of both the occupant and the guest. Rhine wine was served everywhere, for Rhine wine was supposed to bring health and wealth for the coming year.

Every housewife had at least two pounds of new butter on her pantry shelf. This was done to make sure that things were well buttered in the new year. For extra good health giant pretzels were made and served everywhere.

A new broom rested in every kitchen to replace the old broom that was discarded after it had swept away the old year's bad luck.

And before New Year's Eve silver coins were placed on every window ledge and above every door to insure prosperity to the home.

Today only a handful of the old timers still live in old Dutchtown. The others have either passed away or moved to the suburbs with their children and grandchildren.

The younger generation will tell you that they don't believe in the superstitions of their parents and grandparents. But if you look on the window ledges on New Year's Eve you'll see silver coins for prosperity just as their grandparents did in the past. And if you have dark hair they'll welcome you to enjoy their hospitality just as their ancestors did in years gone by.

Today finds old Allegheny a hodgepodge of redevelopment. The Central City has been leveled and replaced by massive cement and brick structures. Bulldozers have leveled hundreds of homes and business establishments in Manchester and Woods Run, and wrecking crews will soon be eating their way through another vast stretch of the old city to make way for high-speed highways.

As I watch old Allegheny slowly disappearing my thoughts turn to wondering what future historians will have to say about the old city. I hope they speak kindly of old Allegheny. For she deserves far better treatment than she has received in the past.