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NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024

About SHHS

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society (SHHS) is a membership organization established in 2000, committed to gathering, preserving, and celebrating the historical memories of our neighborhood. The SHHS sponsors a monthly lecture series on topics of interest primarily focused on Squirrel Hill and Pittsburgh history. The programs take place on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Church of the Redeemer, 5700 Forbes Ave. A Zoom option is also available.

How to contact the SHHS:

P.O. Box 8157
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Website:

squirrelhillhistory.org

Email:

sqhillhist@shhsoc.org

Most of our programs are recorded. If you would like to view past programs, go to squirrelhillhistory.org and click on the link "Squirrel Hill Past Program Videos and Events."

SHHS Newsletters are sent only to SHHS members. Past issues are posted on the password-protected Members page on the SHHS website. If you are a member and need the password, email the SHHS to request it be sent to you.

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society, Inc. has been determined to be exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). All contributions to the SHHS, including dues, are deductible from federal taxes under Section 170 of the IRS Code.

The Squirrel Hill Historical Society (SHHS) is a membership organization established in 2000. It is committed to gathering, preserving, and celebrating the historical memories of our neighborhood.

To submit an item of historical interest for publication, suggest a topic for a speech, ask a question, or give feedback, send an email to sqhillhist@shhsoc.org, or write to SHHS, PO Box 8157, Pittsburgh, PA 15217.

Thank you to all who renewed or joined the SHHS!

The password for the Members Page on the SHHS website has now been changed and was sent to all members. The password gives access to the Members Page, which has a keyword-searchable archive of all past SHHS Newsletters.



President's Message

Dear SHHS Members,

Welcome to the April SHHS Newsletter, and Happy Passover to our Jewish members!

We want to thank all renewing and new SHHS members. Your new password for the Members page has been sent to you. If you did not receive it, contact us at sqhillhist@shhsoc.org to request that it be resent to you.

April brings many special events besides April showers. April Fools Day is April 1, the solar eclipse is on April 8, Passover begins on April 22, and Earth Day is the same day.

While some dates and events are firm, others, such as our April program, underwent a change. Due to illness, our April speaker, Ann Belser of *Print, The East End Newspaper*, is not able to give her presentation, so it was rescheduled for November. In its place will be a talk by **David Rullo**, author of the book, *Gen X Pittsburgh: The Beehive and the '90s Scene*. See page 3 for details.

The *Smart Cities* website recently announced that Pittsburgh is one of the smartest cities in the US! The website defines "Smart Cities" as "municipalities and urban areas that are deploying connected technologies and IoT solutions to improve everything from critical infrastructure and public safety, to efficiencies in city lighting and energy usage, to better traffic flow and mobility—which make cities better places to live, work and play while lowering their carbon footprint." *IoT* stands for "Internet of Things" and can be defined as the network of physical objects—"things"—that are embedded with sensors, software, and other technologies for the purpose of connecting and exchanging data with other devices and systems over the internet. For more information, visit the "Smart Cities" website.

We know you will enjoy our 2024 programs on Zoom and in person at the Church of the Redeemer.

Thank you for your support!

Jim Hammond, President SHHS

SHHS Officers and Board

The SHHS is an all-volunteer organization. Board Members are Wayne Bossinger, Toby Chapman, Audrey Glickman, James Hammond, Tony Indovina, Stanley Klein, Todd Miller, Charles Succop, Helen Wilson, Todd Wilson, Eveline Young.

President: Jim Hammond
Vice-President and Newsletter Editor: Helen Wilson
Program Coordinators: Todd Miller and Toby Chapman
Membership Coordinator: Stanley Klein
Email Coordinator: Tony Indovina
Treasurer: Eveline Young
Media Specialist: Audrey Glickman
Website Manager: Janine Michael
Principal Researchers: Wayne Bossinger, Helen Wilson, and Tony Indovina

All SHHS members are welcome to contribute articles, suggest programs, and participate in our activities.

Editor's Note: Quoting Ann Belser: "Why we do what we do..."

Helen Wilson

In every issue of *Print, the East End Newspaper*, owner and writer Ann Belser—who is now rescheduled to speak in November—entitles her editorial column, "Why we do what we do ..." In the April 17 issue of *Print*, she writes about problems associated with digital storage of information, including past issues of newspapers and magazines. To be sure, researching information has become easier now that we can sit at a computer and type in keywords rather than go to the library and scroll through microfiche reels or page through moldy newspapers, but Ann asks what could happen if the internet goes down or a personal computer goes haywire before a document is saved? Can the information ever be retrieved?

The topic is timely for the SHHS. We continually get questions from people wanting to know about people, places, and events that happened in the past in the Squirrel Hill area. Larger Pittsburgh newspapers would not have covered such local stories. For those, we have to search back issues of local newspapers. But where to find them?

Years ago the SHHS was fortunate to have been given an almost complete set of bound volumes of the *Squirrel Hill News* newspapers from 1935 to 1970. Past president Michael Ehrmann and SHHS board member Ralph Lund had the newspapers digitized by Carnegie Library and later put on the University of Pittsburgh's *Historic Pittsburgh* website, historicpittsburgh.org, where they can be searched by keyword. Then last year, we were contacted by someone who had missing issues from 1964. She mailed

them to us and we delivered them to the *Historic Pittsburgh* staff to become part of the collection. But—if something ever happens to the digital files, the actual newspapers still exist.

We are searching for more newspapers and are publicizing our search. The "ad" below was put in SHUC's "In a Nutshell" online newsletter, appears here in our newsletter, and will be put in the next Squirrel Hill Magazine. We hope it brings results!

We Need Your Help!

How does a community remember its past? One of the best ways is through its local newspapers. If stories aren't written down, they can be forgotten. The Squirrel Hill Historical Society needs your help. Do you have any issues of *The Squirrel Hill Gazette* and/or the *Squirrel Hill News*? We don't have any *Squirrel Hill News* issues from 1929 to 1934. They were lost when the newspaper's offices were destroyed in a fire in 1956. The newspaper also published issues after 1970, but the SHHS has no copies of them, either.

Likewise, we have only three copies of *The Squirrel Hill Gazette*. We want more, any date!

Please check your attics and basements for issues of the newspapers and lend them to us to be digitized. We'll also take copies of *Pittsburgh East* and Allderdice's *The Foreword*.

Help us keep Squirrel Hill's history alive! If you have newspapers, contact us through our website, squirrelhillhistory.org, or email us at sqhillhist@shhsoc.org. We will scan the newspapers and return the originals to you.



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SHHS Programs (Live and on Zoom)

April 2024

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, all programs are presented live and on Zoom on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Live programs are held at Church of the Redeemer, 5700 Forbes Avenue. Free parking is available in the St. Edmund's Academy parking lot. Members will be sent a link to the Zoom program a few days before the program.

***Note:** Zoom broadcasts will be contingent on volunteers being available to assist with the Zoom part of the program. Members and those signing up will either receive the link the weekend before the program or a notice of Zoom cancellation. Anyone able to assist us at the program is encouraged to contact us through our website, squirrelhillhistory.org, or email us at sqhillhist@shhsoc.org.

New April SHHS Program (Live and on Zoom)

Tuesday, April 9: "Gen X Pittsburgh: The Beehive and the '90s Scene"

In this presentation, **David Rullo**, author of the book, *Gen X Pittsburgh: The Beehive and the '90s Scene*, takes a nostalgic look at the hip establishments such as the Beehive, Lava Lounge, and Culture Club that replaced the shot-and-beer bars in '90s-era South Side. Rullo is an award-winning journalist and a senior writer at the *Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle*, exploring and contributing to the city's art and literary scene. He is also a poet and musician, exploring the boundaries between electronic music, spoken word, performance art, and experimental music.

Upcoming SHHS Programs

Tuesday, May 14: "Our Futuristic Murray Avenue Neighbor: An Overview of CMU's Robotics Institute"

Dr. Matthew Johnson-Roberson, Director of the Robotics Institute and Professor of Computer Science in the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), will discuss the origins of the Robotics Institute, the Institute's role in recent developments in robotics, exciting challenges for the future, and societal concerns about robotics and artificial intelligence (AI). Dr. Johnson-Roberson previously co-directed the University of Michigan Ford Center for Autonomous Vehicles (FCAV) and founded and leads the DROP (Deep Robot Optical Perception) Lab, which researches 3D reconstruction, segmentation, data mining, and visualization. He received his Bachelor's degree in computer science from CMU and his Ph.D. in robotics from the University of Sydney and has held prior postdoctoral appointments with the Centre for Autonomous Systems – CAS at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and Australian Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney. He is a recipient of the NSF CAREER award (2015).

Tuesday, June 11: Lynn McMahon, author of *The Story Behind the Smile: Eat'n Park*

Tuesday, July 9: "Pittsburgh's Historic Ballparks"

Mark Fatla, author of *Pittsburgh's Historic Ballparks* (Arcadia Press, 2023), states that Pittsburgh has an incredible baseball history with great players, teams, and historic moments, but few people realize that Pittsburgh has often been in the lead in ballpark design and development. Fatla chronicles the nine ballparks that hosted major league baseball in Pittsburgh between 1876 and the present, including the Negro Leagues. Historic photographs illustrate design and construction phases, the major changes as parks expanded and aged, and eventually their demolition. This talk and the accompanying book provide a unique perspective on the rich history of Pittsburgh's ballparks.

Tuesday, August 13: (Tentative) SHHS Board Meeting and Members' Social

Tuesday, September 10: "Jewish Family & Community Services, Present & Past"

Ivonne Smith-Tapia, Director of Refugee and Immigrant Services at Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS) will explain how the organization helps immigrants and refugees build new lives in Pittsburgh and will also provide an overview of the organization's 80-year history. Ivonne joined JFCS as Director of Refugee and Immigrant Services in July 2021. She holds master's degrees in Cultural Anthropology and Social Work with a certificate in Human Services Management. Ivonne worked for more than a decade with the Colombian government, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks promoting community development, education, human rights, and leadership in diverse rural and urban communities in Colombia. She moved to Pittsburgh in 2013 and has worked with the University of Pittsburgh to provide training and technical assistance to Family Support Centers and at the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh leading programming on global issues.

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Tuesday, October 8: “The Story of Dragon’s Den”

Guilia Lozza Petrucci, executive director of Dragon’s Den, a non-profit organization housed in the former St. Mary Magdalene Church on Amity Street in Homestead, will discuss the history of the building and how Dragon’s Den’s innovative programs teach youth from diverse backgrounds and abilities to overcome challenges in themselves, their communities, and the world.

Tuesday, November 12: “Writing the First Draft of History” (*Rescheduled from April*)

Ann Belser, publisher and writer of *Print, the East End Newspaper*, will tell the story of how *Print* came to be, some of the stories behind the stories that have been published, and what it is like running a local newspaper where the people you cover are also your neighbors. She will also talk about some of the Squirrel Hill businesses that Jan Kurth has written for the newspaper.

Tuesday, Dec. 10: “Friends of Neill Log House Update”

Tony Indovina, president of the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH), and some members of his board will report on the results of the project to restore the house, landscape the area around it, and welcome visitors to it once again.

Also in the lineup of speakers are **Rob Ruck** and **Ted Muller**, co-authors of *Pittsburgh Rising: From Frontier Town to Steel City, 1750-1920*. And, if possible, a daytime tour of **Lucyna de Barbaro**’s sustainable home on Fernwald Rd. will be rescheduled.

CONNECTING PITTSBURGHERS WITH JEWISH FOOD

The Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle presents its first-ever Big Nosh Jewish food festival—the largest celebration of Jewish and Israeli food and culture in the region.



CELEBRATE WITH US

Event Dates: April 7-9, 2024

Event Times: 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Event Location: Congregation Beth Shalom

(5915 Beacon Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15217)

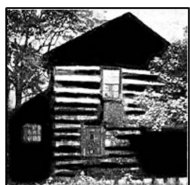
Food at the event Kosher under the Vaad Harabonim of Pittsburgh.



Lawrenceville Historical Society Lecture Series

April 16: Nineteenth Century Lawrenceville Artists

Lectures are held on the third Tuesday at Zion Lutheran Church, 237–37th Street at 7:30 p.m. Parking is available on the street or after 7:00 p.m. in St. Augustine Church’s parking lot on 37th Street.



The East Liberty Valley Historical Society

Spring 2024 Marilyn Evert Lecture Series

Lectures Begin at 7:00 PM

Calvary Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 315 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

A question-and-answer session and book sale will follow each lecture.

Parking in the adjacent church lot and on-street is free.

Wednesday, May 1, 2024: “The Legacy of George Westinghouse”

In this illustrated talk, David Bear provides an update on developments in Westinghouse Park and introduces an enticing new project: restoration of the innovative Point Breeze home of Westinghouse’s pioneering electrical engineer Emil Keller and a reuse that will honor the Westinghouse legacy.

April Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH):

Update on the House Site and Narrative

Tony Indovina, FONLH President and SHHS Board Member

Mission Statement for the Friends of the Neill Log House (FONLH Inc.)

Adopted February 2022



"We secure funds to restore and maintain the Neill Log House, foster knowledge of its historic significance, and work with interested parties to ensure the continued educational use of the structure and its site for future generations."

Individual support for the FONLH restoration effort will always be needed. To make online donations by credit card or PayPal, go to the SHUC website, shuc.org, and click on the "Projects" link in the black menu bar at the top of the page. A pull-down menu will appear. Select "Friends of the Neill Log House." Alternatively, checks can be sent to SHUC (put FONLH in the memo line) at the following address: SHUC, 5604 Solway Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15217.



Neill Log House Site Improvements

Many things are happening simultaneously to keep FONLH on course to realize the major goals we have set. The physical improvements to the Neill Log House are on course to be completed with the acquisition of lighting sconces for the electrical work that has been permitted that will reflect the period in which Robert Neill lived. This will be followed by a touch-up to the interior chinking after the house is newly wired. The site improvements that have been previewed in previous updates have already begun. All but a few selected trees have been removed from the site. Removal took place on one day in mid March through a massive effort by the City Forestry Division. And by the time this article is published, grading on the site will have taken place to remove the earthen trenching that was done around the structure to accommodate foundation repair and to prepare the site for landscaping. Other work will follow over the coming months, including new tree plantings, repair of the steps scheduled by the city, and finally, fencing around a new, expanded site.



Photos by Tony Indovina



Programming Efforts and Preparation of Docent Scripts

At the same time the site improvements are going on, our leadership continues to work on the larger vision of what will take place after the log house is again open to the public, which hopefully will happen in late summer. Central to the opening is the programming effort and the preparation of docent scripts. To assist in the preparation, the SHHS has undertaken an extensive revision of the narrative posted on the Neill Log House link on our website. The revision is being done under the supervision of our vice-president and chief historian, Helen Wilson. The information that will soon be seen on the Neill Log House link will be a completely reorganized narrative about the history of the house, enhanced by new interpretations of details that come to our attention with new research finds. We will alert everyone as to when the new narrative is posted by tagging it on the link with a note that it has been updated, so watch for it soon.

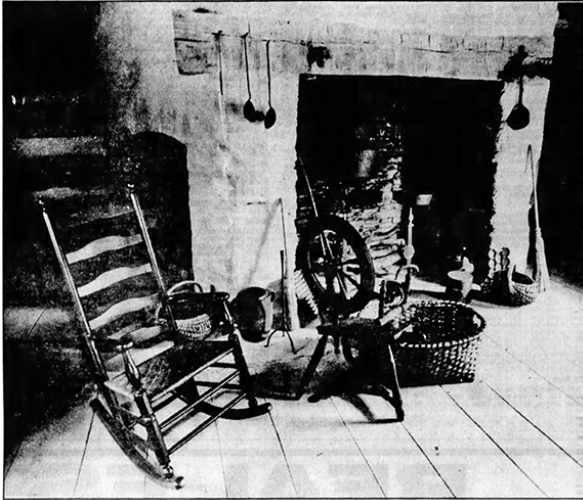
New Section of the Neill Log House Narrative on the SHHS Website: "1990s—Preservation Pittsburgh Efforts"

On the next page is a completely new section of the narrative, written after Helen found an August 27, 1994, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article, "Handyman Special," which provided heretofore missing details of when the log house was reopened to the public after the involvement of Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) ended in the late 1970s. We had some prior knowledge that Preservation Pittsburgh was involved in a maintenance effort involving the Neill Log House after PHLF's exit, but we were not sure what had been done or when it was done.

Preservation Pittsburgh's current leadership had been looking through the organization's records to find specific information, but they, and we, needed the information that came from the article Helen found to fill in the details of this much deserved part of our narrative about Preservation Pittsburgh's important role in the history of the efforts to restore the Neill Log House.

Here is the new narrative about Preservation Pittsburgh's involvement:

It is not known exactly when care of the Neill Log House was transferred from PHLF back to the city, but by the early 1990s, much of the restoration work done during 1968-69 had fallen into disrepair. In 1990, the city replaced the split-rail fencing with cyclone fencing to discourage vandalism. Of the native planting and trees first installed by PHLF around a small enclosure there, only a few small fruit trees remained. And though the city assumed total responsibility for the log house and site, the person who was then Director of the Public Works Division for Schenley Park is quoted as saying that everything was only "casually maintained."



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And so it was that, during the spring of 1993, Preservation Pittsburgh received permission from the city to step in and reopen the log house to the public. To do so, it enlisted volunteer help from a Department of Parks and Recreation program and assumed responsibility to clean up the inside of the log house, while the city was to care for the exterior. This effort that began as a special project of Preservation Pittsburgh during Preservation Week of 1993 continued as a volunteer effort without any dedicated funding to sustain it until at least up through the time the Post-Gazette article about it was written in August 1994. The legacy of Preservation Pittsburgh's efforts is shown in a charming interior photo of the Neill Log House that appeared in the article (left), the last visual record of the interior until the house was later found to be in total disrepair in 2020.

Whatever Preservation Pittsburgh was able to do for a relatively brief period of time in the mid '90s is a tribute to its leadership back then, who demonstrated both a passion for the history of the Neill Log House and the desire to do whatever they could as a total volunteer effort.

Frick Park Receives Historic Designation from City Council

Helen Wilson

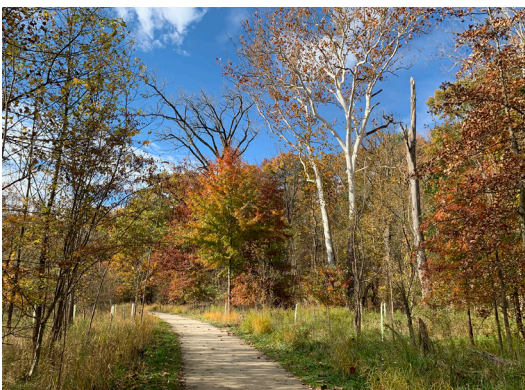


Photo by Helen Wilson

On March 5, 2024, City Council unanimously approved Frick Park's City Historic Designation. The 644-acre park has been listed on the National Register since February 20, 2019, after being nominated by Preservation Pittsburgh, but it didn't have Pittsburgh Historic status, so Preservation Pittsburgh, along with Frick Park Friends, nominated the park for that designation, and City Council approved it. A March 8 article in the *Jewish Chronicle* by Adam Reinherz says, "Receiving historic designation doesn't mean altering a space is impossible; rather, the label ensures 'physical changes to the exterior are subject to a City review process,' according to Pittsburgh's Department of City Planning....The designation also provides access to potential funding, so that our architectural fabric and social fabric are preserved in perpetuity."

The SHHS submitted a letter to City Council in support of the nomination. Here is the letter, dated Feb. 19, 2024:

This is a letter of support from the Squirrel Hill Historical Society (SHHS) for Preservation Pittsburgh and Frick Park Friends' nomination for City Historic Status for Frick Park. The SHHS has done extensive research on the history of Frick Park, and we have found that the park is amazingly comprehensive in what it holds from the entire history of Pittsburgh. We feel it is a unique City treasure.

It is well known that the land that is now Frick Park was owned by Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919), who bequeathed 151 acres to the city for a park, which opened in 1927. The SHHS would like to add some historical information that might not be as well known.

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The northern part of Frick Park was once part of the estate of esteemed Judge William Wilkins (1779–1865), a U.S. district judge, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, Member of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, U.S. Minister to Russia, and U.S. Secretary of War. That part of the park now has a bowling green, a stone “council ring” with several grindstones embedded in the floor said to be from a gristmill in Nine Mile Run, and a grassy slope named “Cowboy Hill” in honor of Samuel Chamberlin Newbury, producer of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood, who lived nearby and loved Frick Park. Some of the land that became the southern part of Frick Park was owned by another eminent Pittsburgh judge and politician, Walter Forward (1783-1852).

The picturesque Louis XII gatehouses and cairn in the park were designed by John Russell Pope (1874-1937), possibly his only works in Pittsburgh. He designed the Jefferson Memorial, the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, the National Archives building, and other public buildings. Architectural elements of the stone gatehouses have been continued in the new pavilions in Shelburne Park, the newly opened Frick Park Extension at Summerset in Squirrel Hill South.

The Pittsburgh Country Club sat on the high hill beyond the beloved Blue Slide Playground, and the fields around it were once the greens of its 9-hole golf course, including the “Fearsome Fourth” hole, on a slope just off of Beechwood Boulevard beside the Blue Slide Playground, which in recent times has been a favorite sled-riding hill.

In the 1950s, the area of the park beyond the Blue Slide Playground was used as an anti-aircraft battery with Nike missiles and a contingent of soldiers, put there to protect the Homestead steel mills during the Cold War.

Below the hill is a storage area for park maintenance materials, where on clear days, Chestnut Ridge can be seen in the distance. Below the storage area is a historic dump on “Concrete Trail” containing concrete slabs, bricks, remains of the country club and battery, and anything else the City dumped there.

At the corner of Forbes and S. Braddock Avenues, Henry Clay Frick had a private field club with a 3-hole golf course where the playground is now. Next to the playground along S. Braddock are sports fields and clay tennis courts, previously the site of a pond where people ice-skated in winter.

Fern Hollow is a picturesque valley that begins a short distance south from the northernmost gatehouse at the corner of S. Homewood Avenue and Reynolds Street in Point Breeze, where a large stone arch bridge was buried under S. Homewood Avenue when the valley was filled in from there to Dallas Avenue. Farther south on Forbes Avenue, the new Fern Hollow Bridge has plaques that explain the long and convoluted geological history of Fern Hollow.

Fern Hollow Creek under the Fern Hollow Bridge runs into Nine Mile Run. The Nine Mile Run valley was an early area of settlement. One source mentions an “old Indian fort” there, likely a temporary Native American hunting encampment surrounded by a stockade for protection. Arrowheads have been found in the valley. After that, settlers farmed there.

Colonel James Burd (1725–1793), while stationed at Fort Pitt, is said to have purchased land in Nine Mile Run valley and built the first recorded log cabin in Squirrel Hill there in the 1760s. He named the tract “Sommerset.” He rented the land to a tenant farmer. The log cabin is long gone, but the name “Summerset” was given to the new residential development on top of the ten-story high slag dump from local steel mills that partially filled the valley from the 1920s to the 1970s.

In the early 1800s, brine wells were drilled in Nine Mile Run valley and the brine boiled off with coal mined in nearby hills, providing early settlers with much needed salt. Nine Mile Run also provided power for gristmills and sawmills in its early years, including one on a tract owned by John Swisshelm, which was later inherited by noted writer and abolitionist Jane Grey Swisshelm.

Nine Mile Run valley underwent a \$7.7 million restoration from 2003 to 2006, a project of the City and the Army Corps of Engineers. At the time, it was one of the largest urban-stream restoration projects in the United States.

The now-closed Irish Centre sits on a tract of land just outside park boundaries. In 1871 the land was purchased by Lena Kayser, who with her husband Gustave began bottling mineral water from an artesian spring they discovered on their property and sold it around the city as a cure for various illnesses. The site was purchased by the Fern Hollow Oil & Gas Company in 1920, which drilled gas wells throughout Nine Mile Run valley for the next four years. Capped gas wells can still be found in the valley.

Frick Park is an endlessly fascinating place and richly deserves City Historic Designation.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society,

James Hammond, President, SHHS

Helen Wilson, Vice-President, SHHS

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The History of the Woods House at the Carnegie Science Center's Miniature Railroad & Village

April 2024

Helen Wilson

When Tony Indovina and I went to find the model of the Neill Log House at the Carnegie Science Center's Miniature Railroad & Village display (See the March 2024 SHHS Newsletter), we thought it would be great if a model of an even older house "on" Squirrel Hill could be put in the display as well—the John Woods House, dating to 1790. (In the late 1700s, the entire hill that holds the present-day neighborhoods of Squirrel Hill, Greenfield, Hazelwood, Glen Hazel, and part of Point Breeze was known as "Squirrel Hill.") I contacted the Science Center and was informed that the model of the Woods House was already there—and that it had been created by none other than past Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy! Miniature Railroad & Village Manager Nikki Wilhelm sent a picture of the Woods House model and the description of it and gave us permission to use them in this newsletter. *(The description has been updated.)*

The House that Mayor Murphy Built



A very special person designed a structure for Carnegie Science Center's Miniature Railroad & Village. Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy hand-built a model of Hazelwood's John Woods House—believed to be the oldest residence in Allegheny County—using beeswax to replicate the stone and carving shingles from heavy paper stock. Exhibit Manager Mike Orban and Program Coordinator Patty Rogers lent guidance.

"Murphy is a long-time train enthusiast," says Rogers, "And, in his 20s, took model building lessons from exhibit creator Charles Bowdish. Murphy likes old homes and buildings and is passionate and knowledgeable about the history of Pittsburgh, so his idea to replicate this structure was a natural." He built the model of the sandstone house from drawings made from photographs and measurements taken at the site.

John Woods, one of the original surveyors of Pittsburgh, built the house in 1792, and Stephen Foster serenaded the Woods family on its porch. The house, located at 4604 Monongahela St., was designated a historic site by Pittsburgh City Council in 1977.

The Woods House was purchased by the Urban Redevelopment Authority in 2001 and saved from demolition. It was renovated by Woods House LLC and opened in 2019 as the Woods House Historic Pub.

The Miniature Railroad & Village is sponsored by Lionel.

Interview with Tom Murphy About the Woods House Model

Tony Indovina

After we learned that a model of the Woods House was in the Carnegie Science Center's Miniature Railroad & Village and that Mayor Tom Murphy had built it, I interviewed Tom about his model-building hobby and his involvement with the real Woods House.

It is fitting that the same person who fashioned the model of the Woods House had a major hand in first saving it from being demolished as an abandoned and tax delinquent property. Tom Murphy served as Mayor of Pittsburgh from 1994 to 2006. It was a common sight during those years to see him jogging through our neighborhoods, and one of those jogs led him to a hillside in Hazelwood where he saw a decrepit structure that he recognized from a historic drawing from the early 1800s he had seen. Because of its historic significance and location along the Greenway, he recommended the house to a program in which the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) was then engaged, a weekly survey of property that merited being purchased by it and then returned to the tax rolls. It would take years and the efforts of other individuals, including Bob O'Connor, who served as a Councilperson during Mayor Murphy's tenure and succeeded him as Mayor, to ultimately find a buyer to restore the structure to what it is today—the Woods House Historic Pub. Bob was known to be passionate about championing the efforts first initiated by Tom.

Some years later, Tom continued something he began with his childhood train collection, making models for the

historic train display at the Carnegie Science Center under the tutelage of the person who was then its Curator of Historic Exhibits. It is fitting that the Woods House is one of several models now in the display created by him (the other two being the Ship Hotel from Route 30 in Bedford County and Mr. Rogers' House).

In my interview with him, Tom described a little of the very laborious work involved in making each model. He related how it took several months to finish each, working one day a week starting at 7 a.m. He began with cardboard cutouts coated with layers of wax. These were skills he learned years earlier in his twenties when he took a one-day-a-week class through the Carnegie taught by a modelmaker from Brookville who, in 1954, donated his very large personal train display to the Buhl Planetarium, where the current exhibit was first located.

Most recently, Tom has taken his talents for creating historic models to a new level. On property he owns in Lancaster Township near Zelienople, he has been working on restoring a barn and two 18th-century log houses he acquired and relocated from Shaler Township and Irwin. He talked about how this project began with a passion he developed for antique tools, which led to uses he could put them to, with the help of local Amish craftsmen. Of course, this is "just" a retirement activity for our former Mayor, Tom Murphy.

References:

Interview with Tom Murphy, 3/25/24

<https://carnegiesciencecenter.org/exhibits/miniature-railroad/a-love-story/>

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Chatting About Telegraphs and Telephones

Helen Wilson, with Edmund Russell

When Ed Russell and Lauren Winkler gave their presentation about telegraphs and telephones in February, people viewing the presentation on Zoom posted questions and comments in the Chat function, which were so interesting that after the presentation, I asked Ed and Lauren if they could respond to them in writing. Here they are:

Q: Was there an official first transcontinental message?

A: Yes. The chief justice of the California Supreme Court, Stephen Field, sent it to Abraham Lincoln.

Comment: I remember an operator who sent TELEX messages overseas back in the early 1980s through a company telex machine at Matthews Bronze.

Q: How were problems solved, such as Native Americans, buffalo, getting thru the Rockies?

A: The companies building the transcontinental telegraph employed Native Americans in an attempt to cultivate good relations. Buffalo do not appear as problems in the sources I have found from 1860-61, but there were reports that they knocked over telegraph poles elsewhere later while scratching their backs. Getting through the Rockies was done by going through South Pass, in today's Wyoming, which is a surprisingly gentle route.

Q: How far could a signal travel before being retransmitted?

A: Fifty miles.

Q: How were the messages retransmitted? Electrically or retyped in the office? Were the telegraph key strokes first typed in CA received in DC?

A: At first they were retyped. Later, mechanical repeaters were used. The first keystrokes in California were not received in DC. They were retyped a few times along the way across the continent.

Q: Outside of the city, are some of the former line routes (locations for poles and wires) retained as easements for modern utility companies?

A: I have not studied this topic, so I have no information to offer. It would not surprise me if they used the same easements.

Q: Was there any Pittsburgh connection by way of local manufacturing of telegraph/telephone glass/ceramic line insulators ?

A: I have not come across Pittsburgh manufacturers of these products, but I would not be surprised if Pittsburgh did, given its importance in manufacturing glass.

Q: Were telegraphs used in the shipping industry, and integrated with radio?

A: Yes, shippers used telegraphs extensively. Radio was initially called wireless telegraphy.

Comment: The concern over how the US could hold together and function as it grew brings to mind the Jewish custom of two days for holidays in the Diaspora...due to the time it took (more than a day) to communicate the declaration of Months (new moons) from Jerusalem to farther lands...the tradition being maintained to modern times...two days of holidays in the Diaspora, one day in Israel...

A: Interesting comparison.

Q: When the time zones were created, was the time sync'd by telegraph?

A: I do not know, but I would expect so.

Editor's Note: An extensive article about the creation of time zones appears in the April 2019 SHHS Newsletter, which can be accessed through the Members Page link on the SHHS website. The article says, "Pittsburgh played a major role in the creation of time zones because of its perfect storm of being a railroad hub, being an industrial center, and having the Allegheny Observatory in its midst. Under the direction of Samuel Pierpont Langley, the observatory devised the first regular and systematic system of time distribution to railroads and cities adopting it as an official standard. ... A finalized version of the system was inaugurated on Sunday, November 18, 1883.

Comment: In 1965 we still had party lines, gone shortly thereafter.

Comment: My grandmother sent telegraphs to relatives on their wedding days. She would spend days coming up with brief messages, as the fees were per letter used.

Q: Were telegraph lines used to carry telephone signals, or were the telegraph lines replaced at a particular point in time?

A: I do not know, but I expect telephones usually installed new lines because both systems worked simultaneously.

Comment: As a child in Chicago, circa 75 years ago, we not only had a party line but a coin slot.

A: Wow. I do not know pay phones were in homes.

Q: So the US government allowed "utility" rights to private companies even back then? All the laws that let utilities set up anywhere they wish were freely used?

A: Yes, it did grant rights of way.

Q: So what is going to be the next "big thing" for mass communication??

A: AI, I would guess.

Edmund Russell

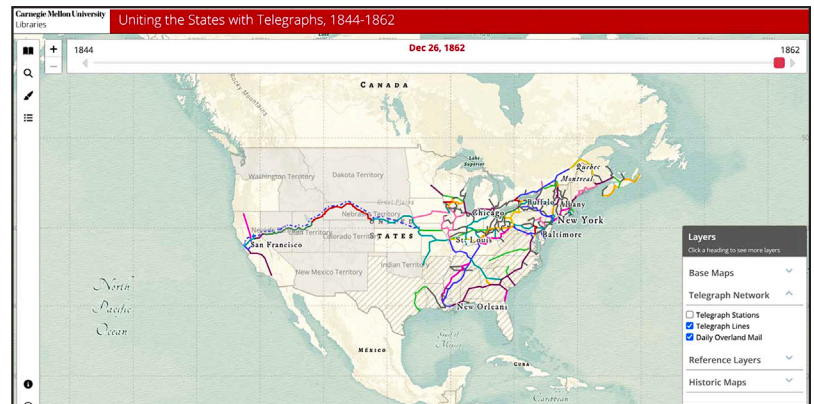
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The first digital map showing the growth of the American telegraph system is now available. It is interactive and free. Edmund Russell and Lauren Winkler, "Uniting the States with Telegraphs, 1844-1862," Carnegie Mellon University Libraries, <https://telegraph.library.cmu.edu/>.

Flooding in Nine Mile Run Valley

Helen Wilson

These two pictures show the flow of Nine Mile Run under the new McFarren St. Bridge in Duck Hollow in normal times (*left*) and after the torrential rains of April 3, 2024 (*right*). A footbridge in that location was washed away in the St. Patrick's Day flood of 1936.

