

Sewickley Valley Historical Society

Signals

XLIII, Number 4

March 2016

Wednesday, March 23rd, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.
Old Sewickley Post Office



NOTICE
Refreshments and
Hors d'Oeuvres
will only be served
7:00 - 7:30
Cabaret Seating
First Come First Serve

Pennsylvania Coal Mine Songs & Stories

A Presentation by Jay Smar

Armed with two guitars, a claw-hammer banjo, fiddle, baritone vocals, and flat-footin' (a form of clog-dancing), Jay Smar serves his audience an "acoustic buffet" of traditional American and original folk, ol' time mountain music, bluegrass and gospel tunes, as well as coal mining songs of Northeast Pennsylvania and their origins.

In the last 5 years, he has toured Scotland twice, received recognition from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, performed at the Philadelphia Folk Festival twice, recorded music for the Welsh BBC movie "The Welsh in America" and has been selected by the Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour to be on their professional touring roster.

The mission of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society
is to promote interest in and to record, collect, preserve, and document the history of the Sewickley Valley.

The History of Telephone Service in the Sewickley Valley

On March 10, 1876, the first message “Mr. Watson, come here; I need you” was transmitted from one telephone to another in the Boston laboratory of the Scottish-born American scientist Alexander Graham Bell. For months Dr. Bell and his assistant, Thomas A. Watson, had been conducting experiments with crude box-like instruments connected by wire. Of the challenge involved, Dr. Bell stated, “If I could make a current of electricity vary in intensity precisely as the air varies in density during the production of sound, I should be able to transmit speech telegraphically.” Soon, using his invention, everyone could be connected.

Eleven years later in March 1887, the first central telephone office was opened in Sewickley. Prior to that time telephone service was furnished to only a few subscribers by means of direct lines running from the Pittsburgh Exchange. Among the early subscribers in the vicinity of Sewickley were:

Economy Store, Economy
Sewickley Public Telephone, Sewickley
Western Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, Dixmont
L. H. Williams residence, “Newington,” Shields
D. Leet Wilson residence, Shields

The first Sewickley Public Telephone was located in the store of the C. G. Woods Drug Company at the corner of Beaver and Broad Streets in Sewickley.

The first central office was located in a small wooden building on Green Street, the location today of a municipal parking lot off of Beaver Street. Mr. D. Leet Wilson was President of the Central District and Printing Telegraph Company, which managed the Bell lines in Western Pennsylvania, and it is mainly due to his efforts that an office was established so early in Sewickley. This central office was equipped with a one position switchboard. Two lines connected this switchboard with the main office of the company, located on the third floor of a building at Fifth Avenue and Wood Street in Pittsburgh.

Initially, the Sewickley office had fourteen subscribers:
E. P. Young residence, Edgeworth
Edward O’Neil residence, Sewickley
James M. Kerr residence, Edgeworth
Dr. I. B. Cantler office, Beaver Street
Mrs. F. Fleming residence, Centennial Avenue
Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne & Chicago R. R., Depot Sewickley
John Haworth residence, Grove Street
Merritt Greene residence, Edgeworth
R. F. Shannon residence, Edgeworth
John Patton, Jr., plumber, Beaver Street
J. B. Oliver residence, Shields
Marshall McDonald residence, Boundary & Beaver Streets
John L. George residence, Frederick Street
H. S. Jackson, veterinary surgeon, Elwick Street

Miss Margaret McDonald was the first Chief Operator, serving for ten years. The Sewickley central office was operated day and night at that time. Harry O. Sackett was the first Night Chief Operator, succeeded by Walter Little and George R. Winters. The first telephone central office was maintained at the Green Street site until 1891 when it was removed to a small one-story brick building at 436 Broad Street, where there was a one hundred line switchboard. The office was later moved again to 601 Broad Street. A substantial new building was constructed in the 1960s at Beaver and Straight Streets, to handle all number direct dialing service as the Sewickley Exchange became 741 at 3:01 a.m. on Sunday, August 6, 1961. No longer would a caller need to tell an operator what number to connect. New numbers had to be learned. All numbers now had seven digits, ten digits including the area code 412, added later. For example, the phone number at the Edward O’Neil residence “Wisteria” at 59 Beaver Road had been just #3 for seventy-four years, now it became 741-4333 and then 412-741-4333.

Sewickley Photos

This picture was presented to the Sewickley Valley Historical Society by Michael Kraus, Curator of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum.

The 63rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment was organized at Pittsburgh in August 1861 for a three year enlistment under the command of Colonel Alexander Hays. The 63rd mustered out beginning in July 1864. Surviving veterans were transferred to the 105th Pennsylvania Regiment.

The regiment lost a total of 320 men during extensive service in the Peninsular campaign, at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg and in the Wilderness. 17 officers and

169 enlisted men were killed or mortally wounded and one officer and 133 enlisted men died of disease. The survivors held annual reunions at various places in Western Pennsylvania until the last man was gone.



The photograph on the right, taken from Stoops Ferry on January 23, 1911 by R. W. Johnston, looking upriver at the first Sewickley Bridge being constructed, was recently donated to the Historical Society by Kurt Huckabee. There are few photographs of this bridge being constructed in our files.

Notice there are only two piers to support the bridge superstructure, and it appears that the central

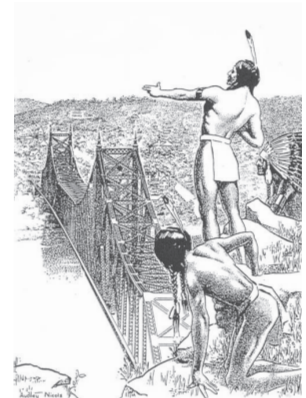


portion of the bridge would be cantilevered out from each side to join in the middle. However, that seemed like such a great distance to span.

Pictured on the left is the demolition of this bridge in 1981, taken from the Sewickley shore, which affords insight into how the center portion was likely constructed. The whole center section, built elsewhere, was floated into place on barges and raised. Depicted here is the reverse of that process: the center section being lowered to barges, to be reused at another location.

Sewickley Valley Historical Society
200 Broad Street
Sewickley, PA 15143

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March 2016

<p>SEWICKLEY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY</p> <p>President Michael Tomana</p> <p>Vice-President Donald Traviss</p> <p>Secretary J. Judson Brooks, Jr.</p> <p>Treasurer David Genter</p> <p>Directors Hal Bonnett Julie Buscher Vincent Delie Douglas Florey Thomas Hay Fran Merryman Mary Anne Riley Jean Sebolt Dan Telep Peter Theis</p> <p>Executive Director Harton S. Semple, Jr.</p>	<p><i>Friends, Sponsors, Patrons, Benefactors</i></p> <p><i>Thanks to the following, who have supported SVHS with gifts in addition to membership dues:</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Ms. Elizabeth B. Bailey</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Walter Reuter</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Paul Berman</td> <td>Ms. Margaret L. Scherbel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ms. Patricia S. Casella</td> <td>Mrs. Fred I. Sharp</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. James C. Chaplin</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Donald W. Spalding</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mrs. Arthur L. Coburn III</td> <td>Ms. Joan B. Sullivan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. James D. Darby Jr.</td> <td>Ms. Phyllis J. Thomas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Grant D. Duffield</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Charles Thorne</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Richard B. Elste</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Henry Thorne</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ms. Carroll Ferguson</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Karl J. Urda</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. Robert B. Hamilton Jr.</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. William W. Walker</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. William I. Jack</td> <td>Mr. James R. Wardrop</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Philip K. Liebscher</td> <td>Mr. Scott Wendt</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Lindquist Jr.</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Malachy Whalen</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Simon Merrills</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Raymond B. White</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Park</td> <td>Ms. Ann M. Yost</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr. & Mrs. James S. Pitcavage</td> <td>Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Zeffiro</td> </tr> </table>	Ms. Elizabeth B. Bailey	Mr. & Mrs. Walter Reuter	Mr. & Mrs. Paul Berman	Ms. Margaret L. Scherbel	Ms. Patricia S. Casella	Mrs. Fred I. Sharp	Mr. & Mrs. James C. Chaplin	Mr. & Mrs. Donald W. Spalding	Mrs. Arthur L. Coburn III	Ms. Joan B. Sullivan	Mr. & Mrs. James D. Darby Jr.	Ms. Phyllis J. Thomas	Mr. & Mrs. Grant D. Duffield	Mr. & Mrs. Charles Thorne	Mr. & Mrs. Richard B. Elste	Mr. & Mrs. Henry Thorne	Ms. Carroll Ferguson	Mr. & Mrs. Karl J. Urda	Mr. Robert B. Hamilton Jr.	Mr. & Mrs. William W. Walker	Mr. William I. Jack	Mr. James R. Wardrop	Mr. & Mrs. Philip K. Liebscher	Mr. Scott Wendt	Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Lindquist Jr.	Mr. & Mrs. Malachy Whalen	Mr. & Mrs. Simon Merrills	Mr. & Mrs. Raymond B. White	Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Park	Ms. Ann M. Yost	Dr. & Mrs. James S. Pitcavage	Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Zeffiro	<p><i>New Members</i></p> <p>Ms. Frances M. Amatucci Mr. & Mrs. Paul Berman Mr. Benjamin Burkley Mr. Kent Clow Ms. Gez Ebbert Ms. Shanan Johnson Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Park Mr. & Mrs. Michael Quigley Mr. & Mrs. Walter Reuter Ms. Joyce Tomana Mr. David Wessel Mr. David Wood</p>
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<p><i>Special Contributions</i></p> <p>Peggy Dury to honor George & Susan Craig Alexander Hays IV to honor Robin & Cynthia Hays Charles M. Murdock in memory of his parents William & Anne McKnight Murdock and his grandparents Robert & Rachel McKnight Peggy Standish in memory of Mary Elizabeth "Bettie" Cole</p>																																		

In Memoriam

Mary Elizabeth "Bettie" Cole
Dr. Clarence M. Miller, Jr.