

# Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

XXXV, Number 4

February 2008

Wednesday, February 20, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.  
Old Sewickley Post Office

## Recording the Weather in 19th Century Pennsylvania: The Beaver County Barometer

A Presentation by Robert Clendennen



### Recording the Weather in 19th Century Pennsylvania: The Beaver County Barometer

is the result of an interesting discovery made by Bob Clendennen while researching the origin of a stick barometer in his collection. The Beaver County barometer is one of those purchased through an Act of Legislature of March 31, 1837, which authorized the spending of \$2000 for work in meteorology and the purchase of instruments for each county in the state of Pennsylvania. One of only three of the original barometers still in existence, its register plate bears the following inscription: "Furnished to Beaver County by the Joint Committee of Meteorology of the American Philosophical Society and the Franklin Institute of Pennsylvania by authority of the State of Pennsylvania. L. C. Francis fecit, Philadelphia, No. 49." The barometer was formerly in the collection of the well known Leetsdale antique collector and dealer Margaret Mutschler.

Bob Clendennen, a lifelong resident of Beaver County, attended Youngstown University and Geneva College. He and his wife Patty own and operate Conserve Electric Company in Beaver Falls. He has been active in many local historical organizations, including Beaver County Historical Research and Landmarks Foundation and Beaver Area Heritage Foundation. He is a past president and current advisory Board member of the Friends of Old Economy Village, formerly The Harmonie Associates.

Bob has been an avid collector of Western Pennsylvania antiques for over thirty years, with special interest in decorated stoneware, needlework samplers and the material culture of the Harmony

Society. His expertise in Beaver County pottery resulted in his participation in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society's exhibit "Made in Western Pennsylvania: Early Decorative Arts" and the recent exhibition at The Westmorland Museum of American Art, "Made in Pennsylvania: A Folk Art Tradition." Clendennen collaborated with Phil Schaltenbrand on the Beaver County chapter of the book *Big Ware Turners: The History and Manufacture of Pennsylvania Stoneware*. He has also written several articles on Beaver County pottery for the *Ohio Antique Review* and *Milestones*, a magazine published by the Beaver County Historical Research and Landmarks Foundation.

### **NOTE THE DATE CHANGE:**

**THE SVHS BUS TOUR TO THE WASHINGTON COUNTY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HAGERSTOWN, MD**  
formerly scheduled for Saturday, April 26, 2008, will take place on  
**SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2008.** See page 3 of this newsletter for details.

*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.



### Depth of His Love.



“Oh, William, do you love me still?” the charming matron cried.  
 “Yes: better, far, than when you talk,” the heartless wretch replied.

from *The Sewickley Valley*, vol. 1, 1895



This copy of an old photo of Stoops Ferry was given to the Historical Society by Ross Rogers.

## A Useful Website for Historians... <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh/>

This is the website for **HISTORIC PITTSBURGH**, a comprehensive collection of local resources that supports personal and scholarly research of the western Pennsylvania area. The site enables access to historic material held by the University of Pittsburgh's University Library System, the Library & Archives at the Heinz History Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, Chatham College Archives and Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation.

It includes maps; images; census schedules; a chronology of Pittsburgh; archival finding aids; links to related websites; information on conducting genealogical research and on book and antique appraisal; and a full text catalog in which you can search in over 500 nineteenth and early twentieth century books, including poetry, genealogy, fiction and biography—and, it's easy to use. Check it out!

Another website for the historian: <http://users.rcn.com/timarg/PaHR-Access.htm>. People For Better Pennsylvania Historical Records Access (PaHR-Access) is lobbying the Pennsylvania legislature to make available, on-line, death certificates that are at least 50 years old and are for persons born more than 100 years ago. The Sewickley Valley Historical Society has written a letter to the Governor in support of this project, which would simplify genealogical and other research.

## In Memoriam

Frank Cortazzo; Don Dunbar; Perry M. Gwaltney, Jr.; William L. Moore; Christine Ritchie Stolzenbach (an incorporator of SVHS)

## Sponsors, Patrons, Benefactors

*Thanks to the following, who have generously supported the Sewickley Valley Historical Society with gifts in addition to membership dues:*

Kathryn & Michael Bryson; Chip Carton; Ron & Bonnie Casper; Margaret O. Childs; R. B. Elste; Dr. & Mrs. Robert Fusco; Anne & David Genter; Bob Kopf; Betty & John Moraca; Mr. & Mrs. John M. Roberts; Beth & Ken Rom; Fred & Carol Sharp; R. P. Simmons Family Foundation; Michael J. Tomana; Mr. & Mrs. Frank Wasco, Jr., in memory of William L. Moore; Lynne A. Whitlow, in memory of William L. Moore

## New Members

Harper Bauer & Lara Nash, Barbara Burge, Amy Smith, Judy Vescio — Sewickley

## Bus Tour to the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, Hagerstown, MD

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society tour to the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts in Hagerstown, Maryland, will take place on Saturday, May 3. A bus will depart from Sewickley Valley Historical Society Headquarters, 200 Broad Street, at 8:00 a.m. for the approximately 3½ hour journey. Museum admission is free, and lunch will be included in the cost of the trip. The bus will return to Sewickley by about 6:00 p.m. The cost will be between \$35 and \$50 per person, depending on numbers. **Please let us know at 412-741-5315 if you plan to attend, so that we can finalize plans.**



The Washington County Museum of Fine Arts was founded by William Henry Singer, Jr., and his Hagerstown-born wife Anna Brugh Singer and incorporated in 1929. In it are displayed the lion's share of the estimated 20,000 pieces of art in the Singers' collection, including oriental jades, baroque Italian furniture, bronzes by Rodin, Impressionist paintings, ceramics and textiles. In addition, there is a wing devoted entirely to the works of Mr. Singer. The museum is in a park, beside a beautiful lake.

William Henry Singer, Jr. (1868-1943) hailed from Western Pennsylvania, living in both Allegheny City and Edgeworth. His

home and studio, "Hillcrest," which survives today, was built in 1904 on the grounds of his father's now demolished Edgeworth summer house, "Edgehill Manor." Although he worked for a time in the family steel business, the Singer-Nimick Company, Singer's chosen profession was painting. The Singers traveled to Paris in 1901, where he studied at the Académie Julien for a time before settling in the artists' colony at Laren, Holland. Singer never took to the landscape in Holland, but he was dazzled by Norway when he was introduced to that country in 1903 by the Norwegian artist Martin Borgord. The Singers started spending summers in Norway and winters in Holland, with occasional trips back home to the United States, a pattern that continued until the painter's death in Norway in 1943.

Singer's art was the focus of the 2000 exhibition sponsored by Sweetwater Center for the Arts and Sewickley Valley Historical Society, *A Brush with History: Artists of the Sewickley Valley*. He was essentially an oil painter, but he sometimes worked in pastels. Landscapes, especially Norwegian scenes unsullied by the human presence, were his subjects. His style employs a technique called pointillism, in which small points of color are used to create a vivid overall effect. His work can be found in private collections and in museums all over the world. The four main repositories of his work are the Singer Museum in Laren, Holland; the Singer collection at the Bergen, Norway, Museum; the Singer home at Olden, Nordfjord, Norway; and our destination, the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts in Hagerstown.



Blackburn Church  
at the turn of the 20th century



Blackburn Church in 1996

## Blackburn United Methodist Church Needs Your Help!

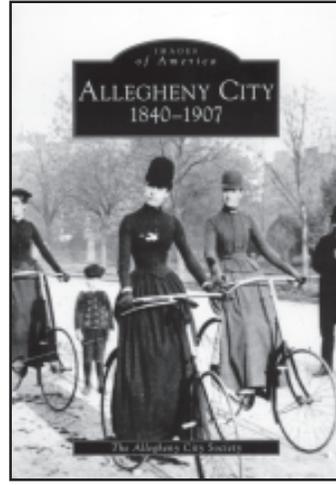
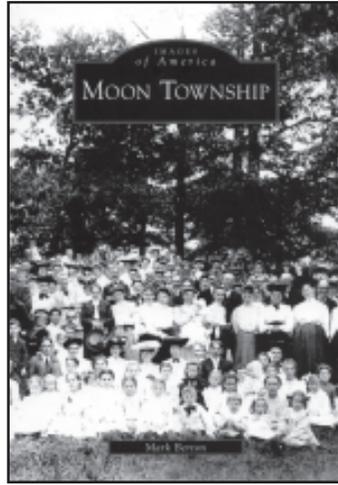
This small frame church on Blackburn Road, the only church on Sewickley Heights, has a long history. It was organized about 1811 by the Rev. Thomas McClelland, the first Methodist preacher in the Valley, and became known as the Hambleton Bible Class. In November 1830, the land on which the church now stands was sold for 50 cents to three men for the establishment of a cemetery and, if they chose, a church. The first sanctuary, a log building, was erected in 1833. It was replaced in 1853 by a brick Quaker-style edifice and took its name from the minister who headed efforts to build it, the Rev. W. P. Blackburn. The third and final version of the church was erected in 1890, after the brick building was struck by lightning. This church was built under the direction of the Rev. David L. McKee and was remodeled in 1911, thanks to the generosity of Mrs. W. P. Snyder. A basement was added in the late 1940s; a narthex, pastor's study and restrooms were added in the early 1960s; and the windows were replaced in 1977. Blackburn School, which was across the road from the church, educated children from at least the 1890s until the summer of 1950. The oldest existing headstone in the burial ground, in which ten Civil War veterans are buried, dates from 1822; the cemetery was closed to burials in 1967.

Today, Blackburn Church has a very small congregation and is in desperate need of maintenance. If you would like to contribute to the preservation of this Valley landmark, please contact Melvin Henning, 2395 Wharrey Drive, Sewickley, PA 15143, 412-741-7180.

# Two New Volumes Available from SVHS

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society is offering two new volumes from Arcadia Publishing's *Images of America* series:  
***Moon Township*** and ***Allegheny City, 1840-1907***.

**M**oon Township was formed in 1788 as one of the seven original townships of Allegheny County. Its history crosses borders into neighboring Findlay and Crescent Townships and includes Glenwillard (Shousetown) and Stoops Ferry. Its story is told through vintage photographs by Mark Berton, who spent four years as a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* and is the author of *Dixmont State Hospital* and managing editor of Dollard Publishing,



**E**stablished in 1784, Allegheny Town was incorporated as Allegheny City by 1840 and became home to such prominent Americans as Andrew Carnegie, Mary Cassatt, George Ferris and Mary Roberts Rinehart. In January 1907, Allegheny City was the third-largest city in Pennsylvania; by the end of that year it had been annexed by Pittsburgh. Many of Allegheny's citizens built summer "cottages" on Sewickley Heights. This volume is the work of the Allegheny City Society.

Each of these books is available for \$21.39 ( \$19.99, plus 7% sales tax ) in person, or for \$21.39, plus \$5.00 shipping and handling (by mail) from Sewickley Valley Historical Society, 200 Broad Street, Sewickley, PA 15143.

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*Signals* is designed and edited by Susan C. Holton. Visit our website, [www.sewickleyhistory.org](http://www.sewickleyhistory.org) — or e-mail us at [sewickleyhistory@verizon.net](mailto:sewickleyhistory@verizon.net).

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