

# Sewickley Valley Historical Society *Signals*

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September 2005

## *A really FESTIVE occasion is coming up soon!*

**T**alk about getting the season off to a good start! In the next few days, all members will receive an invitation to what promises to be the most elegant gathering SVHS has sponsored for many a year: the unveiling of the A. F. King portrait of Robert Peebles Nevin on Saturday, September 17, at the Allegheny Country Club.

Invitations will be sent to many members of the art community, but we may miss some art lovers who have an interest in King, a close associate of George Hetzel, founder of the Scalp Level school of Western Pennsylvania artists. If you know someone who would

enjoy the slide lecture on King by Barbara L. Jones, Curator of the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, or a friend who might just enjoy an evening out with a congenial crowd, please call the SVHS office at 412-741-5315. We will be happy to send them an invitation.

Several people have asked what has brought this occasion about. Last year, Susan Nevin Cockrell donated the King portrait to the Society as an addition to what SVHS hopes will be a collection of portraits of local subjects to hang in our headquarters. Art conservator Ann Guip was commissioned to restore the painting and its ornate frame.

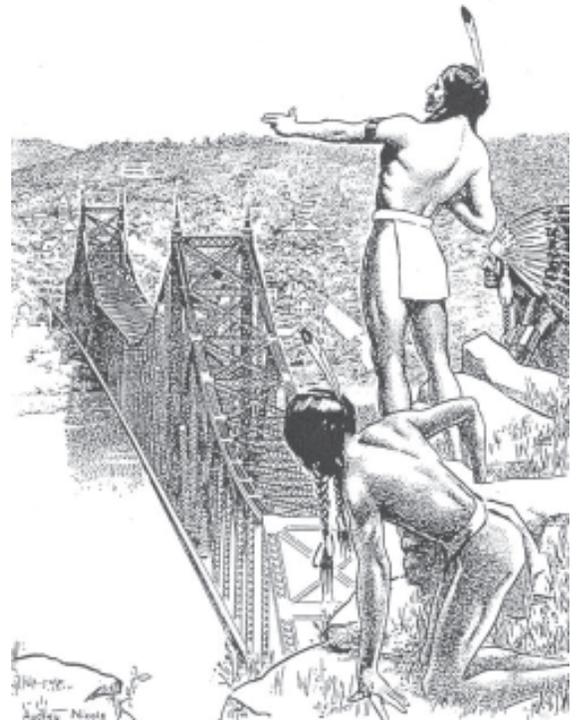
**I**n charge of arrangements for this festive evening are SVHS board members Agnes Pangburn and L. John Kroeck. Join with them on Saturday, September 17, for cocktails (cash bar) and hors d'oeuvres at 6:30, followed by a delicious dinner beginning at 7:30. Reservations must be made in advance. The cost per person is \$60.00.

## *A call for volunteers...*

SVHS will be represented in the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Sewickley Harvest Festival on Saturday, September 10. Hours are from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Board member Bill Carson invites members to join him for this community event at which we put our best foot forward. Bill & Company will be encouraging membership and selling items of Sewickleyana.

Here's your chance to have a day of fun in the sun. Call Bill at 412-741-8439 if you would like to help. He needs YOU!



*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.



*Fame*

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society recently contributed \$10,000 to CITIZENS FOR SOLDIERS, the local group that has replaced in granite the Civil War statue *Fame* in Sewickley Cemetery. The new monument was dedicated on the magical evening of July 12, with thunder crashing and a storm threatening, exactly 139 years after the original statue was raised in 1866. SVHS has been concerned about the deterioration of this relic for many years and is happy to see it renewed to last the ages. CITIZENS FOR SOLDIERS continues to raise money to pay off *Fame* and to make the site a memorial to all of America's veterans with the addition of granite markers in the ground commemorating each of America's wars as well as the possible replacement of the four Rodman cannon that formerly guarded the site but were given to a scrap metal drive in 1943, at the height of World War II. SVHS members are encouraged to visit the new *Fame* monument and to see the old statue in the mausoleum chapel at the cemetery.

*In Memoriam*

Arthur L. Coburn, III

Bette Fletcher (Mrs. Charles H., Jr.)

Jean George (Mrs. W. Krome)

Georgena Hay Eckard Glancy

Founding member, long-time SVHS volunteer who devoted many hours to the preparation of the Molyneaux map

Edgar S. Lewis

Charles L. Singer

W. Bruce Thomas

Hepburn Walker, Jr.

Sewickley Valley Historical Society is going to press. According to SVHS President Joseph A. Zemba, Arcadia Publishing, Portsmouth, NH, has agreed to include Sewickley in its *Postcard History Series*.

During the summer, B. G. Shields and Susan Holton worked on submitting the specifications for the book that will feature Sewickley during its golden era. Samples from the SVHS postcard collection showing scenes of Water Works Park, life on the Heights and life along the Pennsy lines were submitted to Arcadia, including the article published opposite as a preliminary.

Arcadia liked what it saw and has set forth March 2006 for this photographic history. The Sewickley book should be on the market by late summer.

SVHS will draw primarily upon its own extensive collection of cards for this project. Additionally, Cynthia Giles, Leroy J. Egan, Mim Bizic, Dan Telep and B. G. Shields have offered cards from their collections for consideration. The search is on now for more. Members are invited to bring in cards for consideration. Hiding in that bureau drawer may be a very rare piece, so start your search.

*Proof that demographics are changing...*

A look back at local listings in the 1905 Polk & Dudley's *Suburban Directory* proves that Chinese-Americans had a monopoly on the laundry business. Down in Ambridge, Lee Sam, Sing Sou and Wah & Kim competed. In Bellevue, Yee Foo had business all to himself, as Wah & Kim did in Economy. In Leetsdale, On Wo and Woon Yee competed. Sewickley people took their togs to Lee Yee, Tang Lee and Wah Yee Tang.

*Thank you, Mary Jane*

It's time for the *Signals* editor to take a bow. Since January 2000, Mary Jane Williams has faithfully gone to press with the SVHS newsletter. Now, Mary Jane is stepping aside so she can devote more time to the publication of *News and Views from Sewickley*, the newsletter for Sewickley High grads she has been publishing since 1994. *News and Views* really took off and is mailed all over the United States.

Mary Jane is the perfect publisher for this journal because she is a Sewickley person through and through. She was born in Sewickley in the house on Elizabeth Street where she and her husband Ernie still live. She was graduated from Sewihi in the Class of 1944. For many years she was associated with Sewickley Valley Hospital in public relations. She has served on the board of SVHS. Not only that, who else do you know who can boast an entire family of three children and five grandchildren all of whom live in Sewickley?

But don't go saying farewell to Mary Jane. She will remain an active member and has promised to keep the SVHS scrapbooks in order.

## Postmark: Sewickley, PA

B. G. Shields

"Don't forget to send a postcard" was an oft-quoted remark in the first decade of the 20th century. Americans entered the beginning of the 20th century under the cocksure and ebullient leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt realizing how prosperous their country had become, and they were in a mood to travel.

Travel they did, and so it is more than coincidental that the craze for picture postcards exploded dramatically between 1900-1910, when two million cards were handled daily worldwide. Americans were not only fascinated with scenes from abroad but also with images of their own country that were now available, and in color. One could indulge oneself without straining the budget, because mailing a card was half the cost of sending a letter by post. Before the early talkies, addressing a picture postcard was a hobby shared by rich and poor alike.

Nobody then was thinking about deltiology, today's word for postcard collecting. But, actually, they were more apt to put the postcard a friend had mailed them from Saratoga or the Great Smoky Mountains in their dresser drawer for another look than a letter describing these wonders. Thus, these personal souvenirs from close and faraway places were preserved for posterity.

The production of postcards began much earlier than the Edwardian era. Austria is credited with producing the first one in 1869. The United States began producing postcards in 1873.

Although the idea was an instant success, it would be 30 years after the Austrian debut before the postal card as we know it today was developed. Postal authorities controlled production of the early cards. They mandated that messages be written on the same side as the photo, with the entire front saved for the address and stamp. It was not until 1902, according to Tonie and Valmai Holt, authors of *Picture Postcard Artists* (London and New York, Longman, 1984), that the message and address were moved to the same side as the stamp, with the front reserved for the photograph.

It is, therefore, not unusual that the early cards that have turned up so far in local collections with the postmarks of the Sewickley Valley—Sewickley, Leetsdale, Shields and Edgeworth—are post-1900.

The very earliest local card with postmark discovered so far in our collection is utilitarian, referred to as postal stationery, not scenic. Addressed to Miss W. L. Shields, Shields, Pa, it is postmarked Sewickley, June 8, 1896. Postmaster H. L. Hegner advises Miss Shields that one cent is due on a letter mailed to her.

By the year 1908, a variety of published cards offered local scenes. L. G. Lambright, Sewickley, PA, appears as the publisher of many.

Some of the Lambright cards were printed in Germany, a country highly regarded for publishing skills. E. C. Kropp of Milwaukee also produced a variety of Sewickley cards. Even local photographer A. H. Diehl began producing this novelty.

If ever there was a scenic background for the picture postcard, Sewickley Valley was one of them. The Ohio River with steamboats always coming around the bend, Waterworks Park with its shady winding paths leading to pavilions for picnicking, scores of picturesque houses along the streets of the local boroughs and the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad—all were ideal subjects of pictorial interest.

After the migration of the steel barons of Pittsburgh around the turn of the century, people would ride all the way down on the train from Pittsburgh just to see how the "upper crust" lived. And the millionaires on Sewickley Heights didn't seem to mind basking in the prestige of having their estates reproduced on postcards for all the world to see.



Postcard entitled *Entrance to Water Works Park, Sewickley, Pa.*

The concentration of wealth in Sewickley Valley also provided a demand for privately printed cards for seasonal greetings as well as personalized postal cards. These personally subscribed cards were produced in black and white, with images of local personalities, private homes and children. Photographers came regularly to the schools to record little faces for posterity.

So far, the Sewickley Valley Historical Society has recorded well over a hundred Sewickley postcard scenes, many more than the average small town. The peak era came during the first 25 years of the 20th century. However, even as late as the 1980s, some local cards were being produced.

Oddly enough, many of the picture postcards of Sewickley subjects were never addressed or mailed, proving that people bought them for their scenic or sentimental value. Naturally, those with a name, message and postmark are more valuable in the eyes of the collectors of Sewickleyana.

Also, even today Sewickley remains a prestige postmark to philatelists, whose hobby has a logical correlation with deltiology.



This issue of *Signals* was edited by Susan C. Holton

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

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\* Gifts in honor of B. G. Shields

## *New Members*

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society welcomes the following new members: The Rev. & Mrs. Dana Jones and Barbara Taylor from Sewickley; Kathy Lang, Pittsburgh; and Dorothy S. Carter, Lexington Township, Maine.

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**Sewickley Valley Historical Society**  
**200 Broad Street**  
**Sewickley, PA 15143**

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**September 2005**

