

Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

XL, Number 5

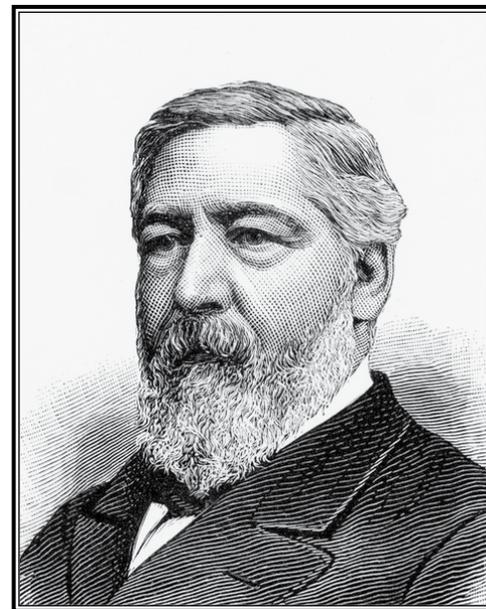
March 2013

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

7:30 p.m.

Old Sewickley Post Office

James G. Blaine: The Forgotten Man



A Presentation by L. John Kroeck

James Gillespie Blaine was born in West Brownsville, Washington County, Pennsylvania, January 31, 1830. He graduated from Washington (now Washington & Jefferson) College in 1847. In 1854, he moved to Maine, where he edited the *Portland Advertiser* and the *Kennebec Journal* and was a member of the Maine House of Representatives from 1859-1862, serving the last two years as Speaker. He was elected as a Republican to the 38th and to the six succeeding United States Congresses, serving from 1863-1876. He was Speaker of the House of Representatives (41st through 43rd Congresses) and an unsuccessful candidate for nomination for President on the Republican ticket in 1876 and 1880. He was appointed and subsequently elected as a Republican to the U. S. Senate and was reelected and served from 1876-1881. He was Secretary of State in the Cabinets of Presidents James Garfield and Chester Arthur in 1881; an unsuccessful Republican candidate for President of the United States in 1884; and Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President Benjamin Harrison from 1889-1892. He aided in organizing and was the first president of the Pan American Congress. He died in Washington, D.C., January 27, 1893, and was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. He was reinterred at the request of the State of Maine in the Blaine Memorial Park, Augusta, Maine, in June 1920.

John Kroeck, President of Sewickley Valley Historical Society, is a lifetime resident of Pittsburgh, having lived at various times in Glenshaw, Shadyside, Squirrel Hill, Mount Lebanon, the Mexican War Streets and, now, Leetsdale. A graduate of Shaler High School, he obtained a B.S. in Metallurgical Engineering from Grove City College in 1966 and an M.B.A. from Duquesne University in 1972. John worked for U. S. Steel, Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel and Westinghouse Electric during his 30-year engineering career. He became an antique dealer in 1996 and has since participated in hundreds of antique shows around the United States. John is married and has three children and two grand children. He has served in various capacities on the Boards of the Friends of Old Economy Village and the Sewickley Valley Historical Society for over 25 years.

In his PowerPoint presentation, John will cover the highlights of Blaine's life, with emphasis on his ties to Western Pennsylvania and the Sewickley Valley. In that connection, he will devote special attention to the U. S. presidential election of 1884, one of the most bitter and closely contested elections in American history, during which B. F. Jones was Chairman of the Republican National Committee and responsible for Blaine's campaign.

Of special interest will be a display of original documents in the SVHS archives from the "Chairman Benjamin Franklin Jones Collection," comprising, primarily, material relating to the presidential election of 1884.

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 Railroad in Edgeworth

Transcribed from an unpublished manuscript by Frederick Way, Jr.,

The Ohio & Pennsylvania Rail Road Co. commenced operations on a single track between Pittsburgh and New Brighton on July 4, 1851. This improvement was viewed with alarm in Edgeworth, where the opinion was that railroads were cow-killers. David Shields and Paul Way, to protect their cattle, demanded and procured an agreement, in which fences were built on both sides of the track. The railroad paid the bill. The original stations did not include Quaker Valley, Edgeworth or Shields; the first stop west of Sewickley in 1851 was Shousetown Lane (later Leetsdale). Immediately after the Civil War, in 1865, the railroad was double-tracked between Pittsburgh and Rochester. The original iron rails, manufactured at Brady's Bend on the Allegheny River, were taken up in 1867 and replaced with steel. In 1900 the four-track line was laid. Until June 24, 1929, the right-of-way through Edgeworth followed the present course of the Ohio River Boulevard and on that date the trains were switched to the new roadbed, which still exists.

Quaker Valley station was located along the present day boulevard somewhat above the intersection of Hazel Lane. Edgeworth station was at the foot of Edgeworth Lane (for many years called Seminary Lane) and Shields station was at the foot of Church Lane. When the tracks were removed riverward Quaker Valley was eliminated and Edgeworth changed to the foot of Quaker Road. The contracting operation of moving the tracks commenced in 1916, and was 13 years in progress before completion.



A 1920 postcard showing, at right, Quaker Valley station, looking east, before Ohio River Boulevard was opened in Edgeworth and the tracks were moved closer to the river

Prior to the railroad, the traffic to and from Edgeworth was no better and no worse than many Ohio River towns. Stagecoaches drawn by four horses ran on schedule between Pittsburgh and Cleveland along the Beaver Road. There still are families in the area who claim ancestors who drove these coaches. Lumber, shingles, window frames, doors, salt and such necessities were available at the river. Storeboats, dish boats, trading scows and Allegheny rafts tied to sycamores at the foot of Hazel Lane and also at the foot of Seminary Lane and did business. Abishai Way's house was built from such Allegheny lumber.

But the usual mode of travel in early times was by horseback. There is record that David Shields on more than one occasion went by

such four-footed locomotion to Philadelphia and back. Stagecoach travel was somewhat risky during the spring thaw, and occasionally a coach spilled its occupants. The Rev. Mr. Kerr was so precipitated in 1835, near the Edgeworth Borough building, and spent five weeks with the Shields family while mending.

But the railroad changed all that. The fashion was to build an elaborately landscaped home along the tracks. Such homes took root from Shields to Academy Avenue. The unvarying recipe was a front yard facing the railroad filled with black cinders too deep for grass to survive in, a cinder path paralleling the rails, bituminous coal smoke wafting in doors and windows and an almost continual roar of chugging locomotives, escaping steam and frightful whistling. Most of these big homes were painted white for reasons too abstruse for comprehension. The war against soot, cinders and tarnish was heroic, relentless and expensive. Housewives were forever buying new curtains. Window washing was such a familiar scene that you don't think of those homes without mental inclusion of an opened window—where a maid was seated backwards on the sill, swiping a white cloth.

Edgeworth had its share of railroad celebrities so located. In Shields were the homes of James D. Layng and of the fabled Leonor F. Loree who once was president of 34 railroads all at the same time.

Charles Watts lived at the foot of Quaker Road, superintendent of Lines West, P.R.R. [See No. 215 on the map on page 3 of this newsletter.] He was a Civil War veteran and had been in Phil Sheridan's cavalry. There is a little book in the Sewickley Public Library he wrote called "Bill and Me" recounting his experiences in the war with his buddy William W. Branson. The P.R.R. for years ran a Pullman named WATTS on the Pittsburgh-Cleveland trains. Charles Watts on occasion had the local commuter stopped in front of his house, if the weather was bad.

In the peak of the "railroad era" the normal way to go anywhere was by train. The locals were plentiful, hauled by high-wheeler locomotives with fancy-topped stacks. The coaches were neat, the aisles clean and the upholstery splendid. In summer the windows were thrown open and cinders were accepted—with a shrug when one went down your coat collar—with a wince if in your eye. The brakemen were young and handsome, wearing blue uniforms and gold buttons and white gloves, forever helping the ladies on and off and saying to the men "smoker in the rear" or "smoker up forward." The conductor stood in the open vestibule while his cargo came aboard, Hamilton watch in hand and like as not a decorative engine on the snap gold case, ready to pull the cord at leaving time, phhhht--phhhht. The engine clouded the sky with smoke, blew off steam with a shattering ear-piercing racket enough to wake the dead, and tolled its brass bell, always impatient to chew up the track ahead of it. Invariably when it started the wheels slid on the tracks causing an awesome uproar of sound and pyrotechnics, whereupon the grave-faced engineer eased the throttle and let her get hold of herself before he tried a second time. Some boys said the engineers did this stunt on purpose to shake down the furnace fires; others claimed this was not so and that the great power of the machinery did it; this writer never did learn which was true.

Woodburn Terrace

The following article by William M. Kelly appeared in the January 1993 issue of the Edgeworth Preservation Newsletter. The map below is adapted from Mr. Kelly's map, which was, in turn, adapted from plate 10 of the 1906 J. M. Hopkins Plat Book of the Northern Vicinity of Pittsburgh, Pa. Although Mr. Kelly states that Woodburn Terrace addresses were all in the "Edgeworth" section of what is now Edgeworth Borough, a city directory from 1895 lists Woodburn Terrace addresses in Shields. It is likely, therefore, that the "additional development" between 1865 and 1905, fronting the railroad in Shields (see below, paragraph 5), was also considered to be on Woodburn Terrace.

Transportation features governed the early settlement pattern of Edgeworth Borough. Even before the Civil War, riverboat captains were prominent and influential in the community. In the manner of their trade, they commonly built large, unique homes facing the river. It was not unusual for fathers, sons and brothers to become riverboat captains and pilots. The early Edgeworth families of McDonalds, Cunninghams, Woodburns, Youngs and Renos had 12 or 15 representatives on the river.

One of these early riverboat captain's homes was that of Captain John Woodburn, whose boat, *Undine*, was well known on the river. This large frame house, later owned by banker and doctor Robert Murray, became the namesake for a district known as "Woodburn Terrace." When modern Edgeworth Borough was earlier divided into the three districts of Shields, Edgeworth and Quaker Valley, Woodburn Terrace extended across the portion known as Edgeworth.

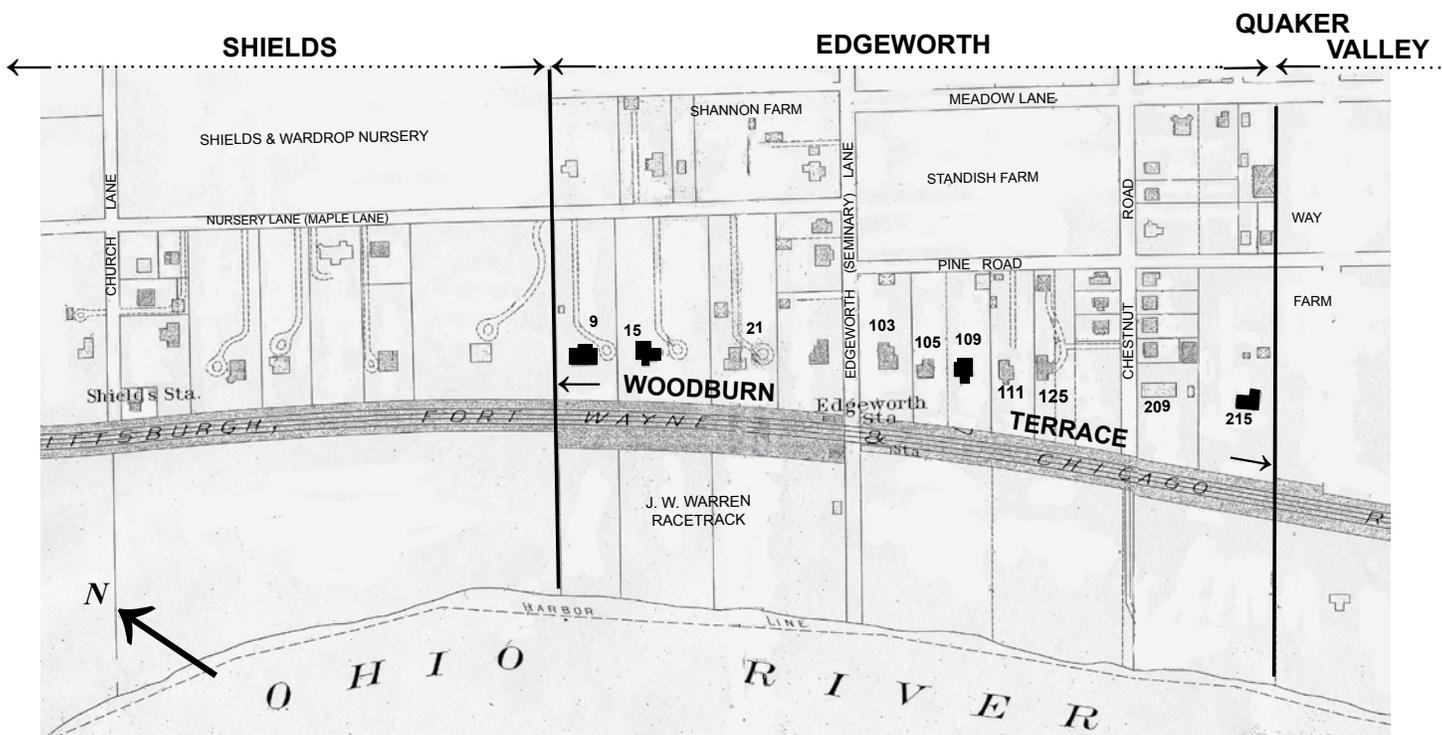
Edgeworth developed a house numbering system, beginning at the Shields border and ending at Quaker Valley. Under this system, the Woodburn house was No. 15 Woodburn Terrace. This house stood from the Civil War until it was demolished around 1950 to make way for New England Place.

Other early river captain's homes still standing are "Hawthorne" (215 Woodburn Terrace), c. 1860, home of Captain William Cunningham; "Maplehurst" (No. 109), c. 1860, home of Captain Joseph M. McDonald; and "Sunset" (No. 9), c. 1876, home of Captain Samuel Young and later of his son, Captain Ezra Young.

In the period 1865-1905, the railroad became a predominant transportation convenience, and the population of Edgeworth increased rapidly. It was fashionable to live in homes fronting on the railroad, which made it possible to shop and work in Pittsburgh on a daily basis. Woodburn Terrace was thus the elite residential area. Additional homes were built by doctors, railroad executives and businessmen, making a total of eleven Woodburn Terrace addresses. Additional development extended into Shields along the railroad and had Nursery Lane addresses.

All of these prestigious homes had the necessary stables and carriage houses, most of which, in subsequent years, were converted to private homes. During the age of the horse and carriage, however, J. W. Warren built the Edgeworth Race Track at the foot of Edgeworth Lane between the railroad and river, along Woodburn Terrace. He and others formed the Sewickley Valley Horseman's Association to create interest in horses of high breeding.

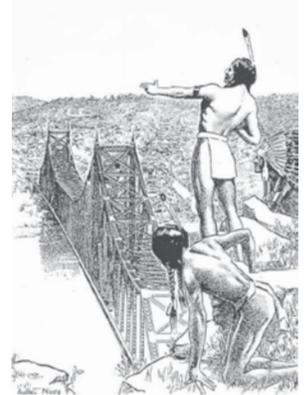
This unusual historic district of Edgeworth embodies the early riverboat society, the early railroad elite and the early elements of the Horseman's Association. It remains surprisingly intact today, the houses still facing the river, but now bordering Ohio River Boulevard. Principal losses are largely limited to the demolition of Woodburn House and Marion Place (No. 125), the home of Francis Marion Love, demolished in 1938.



Sewickley Valley Historical Society
200 Broad Street
Sewickley, PA 15143

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March 2013

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

Mr. & Mrs. Edwin Clarke, Jr.; Mr. & Mrs. Paul A. Giusti; Sewickley Heights History Center

New Members

Earl & Mary Ellen Edwards, Moon Township; Lori Kastan, Leetsdale; Mr. & Mrs. Michael P. Nobers, Leetsdale;
Jim, Brenda & Lindsay Roth, Wexford; Debra & Jim Thornton, Ambridge

Donations

Nancy Orlando; Carol Yaster

In Memoriam

Stephen C. Davis, Sr.

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society Nominating Committee
(Maleet Gordon, Chair; Brewster Cockrell; Wayne Murphy; Agnes Pangburn; Dan Telep)
proposes the following slate of officers and directors for election to a two-year term
at the SVHS Annual Meeting, May 15, 2013:

President: Mike Tomana
Vice President: Connor Cogswell
Directors: William Carson, Daniel Telep, Debra Thornton