

Sewickley Valley Historical Society *Signals*

XLIV, Number 4

March 2017

Wednesday, March 29th, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.
Old Sewickley Post Office

Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt: From Grand Alliance to Dear Friends A Presentation by Gary Augustine, Historian



Our subject this month is the story of the most important friendship of the 20th century. Begun during World War II at a time of great peril, nourished by secret correspondence, personal meetings and conferences, this bond forever changed history and shaped the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Like all close relationships it was not free from disagreements, yet these two men never let their differences break the alliance they forged to defeat the great evil of Nazism.

“Our friendship is the rock on which I build
for the future of the world.”

- Churchill

“It is fun to be in the same decade with you.”

- Roosevelt

Gary Augustine is a well known local historian. He was born in Beaver County and has lived in Ambridge all his life. He attended Ambridge High School and received a BS from the University of Chicago in 1960. He was in the U. S. Navy from 1960 to 1964, serving on LST [Landing Ship, Tank] #1156, the USS Terrebonne Parish, named after a place in Louisiana. Gary subsequently worked at IBM for 30 years and then at PNC Bank. He is married and is the father of three grown daughters, all of whom live in the area. Gary's father sparked his interest in history with frequent expeditions to historical sites, but he was also surrounded by the past, living in Ambridge in one of the Harmony Society brick houses, a few blocks from the Laughlin Memorial Library, with the nearby fields and woods where Logstown and Legionville used to be, providing endless fascination. His current project is a book about the many LSTs that were built during WWII by the Dravo Corporation on Neville Island and by the American Bridge Company at Ambridge.

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.

An Early Voyage Past Sewickley

Following is an excerpt from *Sketches of a Tour of the Western Country, including a Voyage down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers*, published in 1810 by Fortesque Cuming.

He traveled from Philadelphia to New Orleans in 1807 and 1808.

On the 18th of July 1807, accompanied by my intelligent and valuable friend A., I departed from Pittsburgh, in a bateau, or flat bottomed skiff, twenty feet long, very light, and the stern roofed with very thin boards, high enough to sit under with ease, and long enough to shelter us when extended on the benches for repose, with a curtain of tow cloth as a screen from either the sun or the night air. We had a pair of oars for one person to work, and a broad paddle to steer with, also a mast and a square sail to set when the wind should favor us. We had a good stock of cold provisions and liquors. The river being neither flooded, nor very low, was just in that state to promise a pleasant passage to its navigators. The current, running between two and three miles an hour, allowed time to examine everything worthy of curiosity.

Many boats were upon the water this day. We saw an ark. This one was huge, ninety feet long and twenty feet wide, made of heavy four-inch-square timbers with planks nailed on, with a vertical bulwark all around, and the stern and bow ending in a v-shaped point. The whole structure was surmounted by a house at one end and a pen full of cows at the other. Traveling with this ark were two flatboats, forming a flotilla. One of the voyagers told us his flatboat was bound for Kentucky. The other flatboat, covered completely and much stronger built, was going to the mouth of the Mississippi.

Leaving the glass works on the left, we passed Sawmill Run, a mill stream with a long wooden bridge crossing it to Elliot's mills. We passed then Robinson's Point on the right, with a fine level, or bottom, as I shall in the future according to the language of the country call all the flats between the hills and the banks of the river. This bottom, well settled and cultivated, extends to about four miles below Pittsburgh, having Brunot's Island opposite its lower extremity. This island contains near three hundred acres of a most luxuriant soil, about half of which has been cleared by Dr. [Felix] Brunot, a native of France, who adds hospitality and sociality to the abundance which he derives from his well cultivated farm. He has judiciously left the timber standing on the end of the island nearest Pittsburgh, making a beautiful locust grove of about twelve acres, through which an avenue leads from his upper landing with taste and judgment about half a mile to his house, which is a good two story cottage, with large barns, and other appropriate offices near it, and an excellent garden and nursery. The views are very fine, particularly that of McKee's romantic rocks opposite, impending over the narrow rapid which separates them from Brunot's Island. McKee's fine farm between the rocks and the mouth of Chartiers Creek, and the creek itself which meanders through a great part of the rich and plentiful County of Washington, afford also fine subjects for the landscape painter.

The course of the river is generally about N. N. W. from Pittsburgh to Beaver, about twenty-eight miles. We continued to descend it, our attention occupied by frequent changes of prospect caused by its winding course. From the point below Brunot's Island is a fine vista of the river with hills on the right and a bottom on the left, a very high hill in front cultivated on the top, Baldwin's Mill on the right three miles distant, reflected in the water to double size, the well-frequented road to Beaver on the same hand, and farms and farm houses in view of each other, the scenery enlivened by multitudes of fish sporting near the surface of the water.

We passed a small island of almost three acres, called Cow Island [today Davis Island], separated from Neville's or Long island by a channel of one hundred fifty yards. The latter takes its name of "Long" from its extending six miles down the river from opposite Baldwin's Mill. It is narrow, but its soil being of the first quality, it might be divided into several good farms. There is however but one farm on it as yet, cultivated for the proprietor, Major Craig of Pittsburgh, who has on the middle of the island a large but very plain wooden farmhouse of two stories, and about sixty feet long. [General John Neville (1731-1803) purchased the island in 1800. Neville served in both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. He was named Inspector of Revenue for the Western District by President Washington and became embroiled in the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion. Neville never lived on his island, but died there at the home of his daughter Amelia (1763-1849), who was married to Isaac Craig (1741-1826).] Here we overtook a covered flatboat with two families by the name of Frazey, migrating from the neighborhood of Elizabethtown in New Jersey to Cincinnati in Ohio. They had embarked at Redstone [today Brownsville] on the Monongahela River.

Hog Island [now gone] on the left just below Neville's Island is very small, and immediately below it on the left we passed Middletown [today Coraopolis], lately laid out, containing ten houses, including barns. From a point two miles below Middletown, the river, opening gradually into a long reach, has a fine effect on the eye. A little below the point, a charmingly situated farm on the right exciting our inquiry, we were informed that it was Squire Way's. The Squire however was badly lodged, if he had no better house than the small hovel we saw on the bank. [John Way (1766-1825) was the first settler of record in what is today Edgeworth Borough. He came with his family in 1797 to settle on a 200-acre plot of Depreciation Land called "Way's Desire" purchased by his father in 1785. In those days, Little Sewickley Creek emptied into the Ohio River about where Burger King is located on Hazel Lane, and Way had built his first cabin of logs there. Cuming, the traveler, did not stop to go inland and so did

not see a barn built by Way in 1798 by the Beaver Road. Later, in 1810, Way constructed the first brick structure between Pittsburgh and Beaver, also on the Beaver Road. That building still stands across from today's Way Park in Edgeworth. It is known as Way's Tavern. Way was a lawyer, and he was called Squire Way after his appointment by the Governor of Pennsylvania to be one of Allegheny County's first Justices of the Peace.]

Deadman's Island [now gone] a little below is small, covered with aquatic shrubs and plants, and shows that it must always be inundated in moderate risings of the river. The banks on each side abound with partridges whose responsive calls are constantly heard, interrupted by the buzz of multitudes of large house flies, probably attracted by the odor of our provisions.

Eight miles below Middletown, we passed Logstown on the left. This is a hamlet of four or five log cabins, in the neighborhood of which, and on the opposite side of the river, a considerable tribe of Indians resided until after the reduction of Fort Duquesne, now Pittsburgh, by General Forbes in 1758. From Logstown it is a mile and a half to Crow's Island [now gone], which is small. Here we met two large keel boats loaded with cotton in bales, from Nashville in Tennessee bound for Pittsburgh, out twenty-six days. They had nine men in each- one steering, six poling, and two resting.

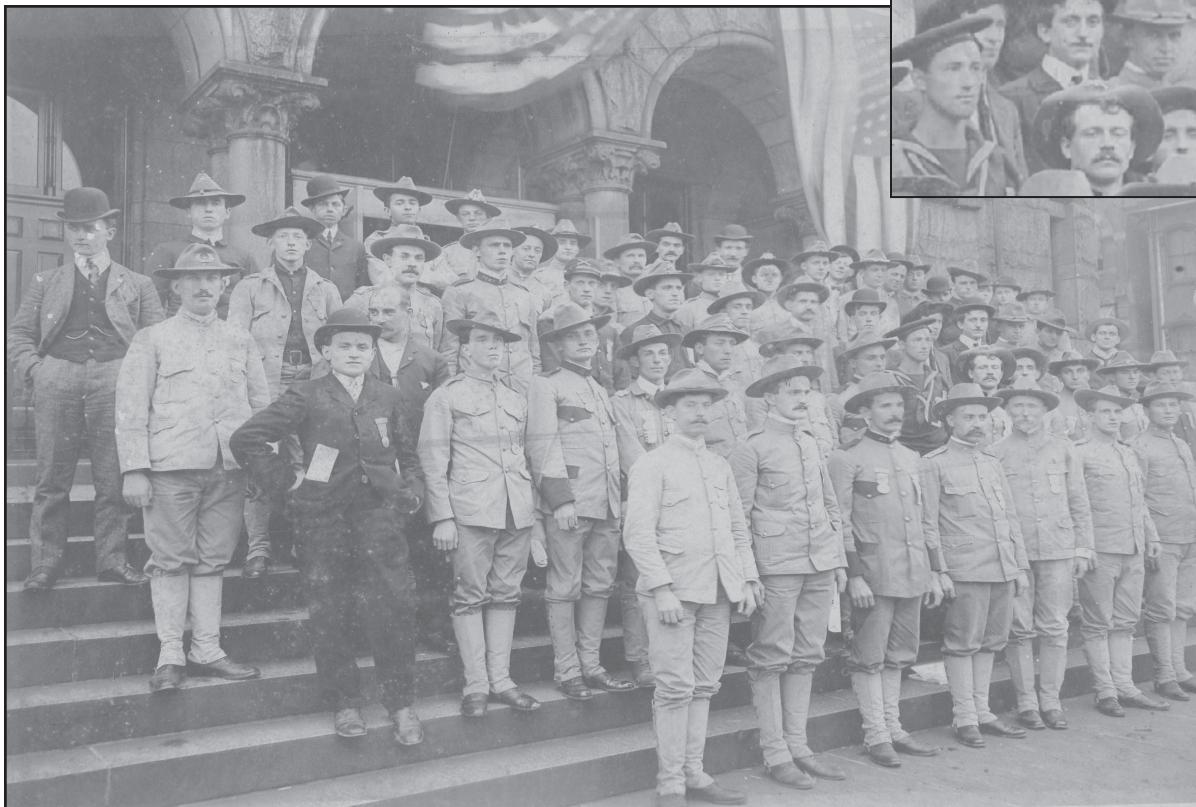
Half a mile from hence on the right, is a good log house with

a sign of a white horse, kept by James Knox. In passing it, a young woman answered several questions we asked her very civilly, which I mention as a rare occurrence, as the inhabitants of the banks of the Ohio have too generally acquired a habit, of not either deigning an answer to the interrogatories of the numerous river travelers, or of giving them a short and boorish one, or of turning their questions into ridicule, which proceeds from the impertinent manner in which they are generally hailed and addressed by the people in the boats.

Two miles lower we passed a good house and a saw-mill in a beautiful rural situation on the left bank, and here we met a decent looking man, poling a skiff against the current. He was going to Pittsburgh and had come upwards of twenty miles since morning.

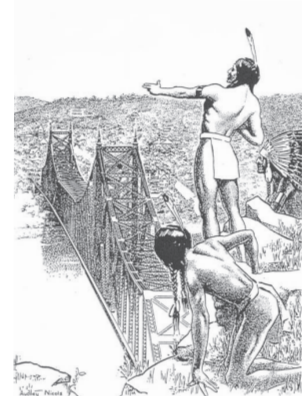
At half past four in the afternoon we were abreast of Big Beaver Creek or River on the right, five miles below the saw-mill. It empties through a level, and is about fifty yards wide at its mouth, with a gentle current. The town of Beaver is but a little way beyond the creek. It stands on a stony plain on the top of a high cliff, which conceals it from the river, and contains thirty indifferent houses, much scattered on three parallel streets. We were shown the site of Fort McIntosh, of which no vestige remains except the hearth of the officers' fireplace. We refreshed ourselves with six cents worth of whiskey and water at General Lacock's Tavern....

Below: Photograph of Sewickley Spanish American War veterans of various ranks and branches on the steps of the old yellow brick school on Decoration Day 1898, including the only female veteran, Mary Elizabeth Caughey Shafer, who served as a registered nurse during the war (indicated by an arrow on the detail). This was found in a box of old *Sewickley Herald* photographs.



Sewickley Valley Historical Society
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March 2017

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