

# Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

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November 2018

Wednesday, November 7, 2018

7:30 p.m., at the Old Sewickley Post Office

## Celebrating Pittsburgh: Its Character and Significance

A PowerPoint Presentation by

Louise Sturgess, Executive Director, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

This presentation was created in 2008 for the Frick Art & Historical Center's exhibition, "A Panorama of Pittsburgh: Nineteenth Century Printed Views." Following an overview of Pittsburgh's physical development, the program concentrates on a series of 19th-century lithographs, watercolors, prints and a letter, which were used to describe, publicize and promote the city. It concludes with a tour of 21st century Pittsburgh, showing how the 19th century lives on in notable landmarks. Memorable quotations from David McCullough, Walter C. Kidney, David Lewis and Clyde Hare, among others, help define Pittsburgh's unique character and significance.

A fifth-generation Pittsburgher, Louise Sturgess has worked for the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) since 1981. As executive director, she is primarily responsible for PHLF's educational programs, which serve more than 12,000 people each year. On any given day, Louise is a fundraiser, editor, program organizer, lecturer and tour guide. Through her work, she promotes the value of historic preservation and reveals the national importance of Pittsburgh's history and architecture.

### Two views of the newly landscaped B. G. Shields Memorial Garden



*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.

# Celebrating Sewickley: The 1895 Version

*What follows is from an introduction G. F. Muller wrote in June 1895 for Sewickley Valley Society, Sewickley's first "Blue Book." In addition to what is excerpted below, Muller includes a history of Sewickley that he based on personal recollections as well as information gleaned from Agnes Ellis's 1893 book *Lights and Shadows of Sewickley Life*, which is available from SVHS in a reprint edition. A copy of Sewickley Valley Society is in the Sewickley Valley Historical Society's collection.*

*Journalist George Frederick Muller was born in Allegheny City on January 25, 1843, and died July 24, 1923. He is buried in Sewickley Cemetery. He was educated at Sewickley Academy and served in the Civil War in 1862. He married Melusina Camp in 1867; they had two children. He was one of three schoolboys (the others were John Dickson Tracy and Charles Stanley Reinhart) who, in 1857, published what has been called Sewickley's first newspaper, the Sewickley Privateer. He worked on various Pittsburgh newspapers, including the Pittsburgh Leader, was editor of the Pittsburgh Telegraph and, from 1900 to 1904, owned The Sewickley Valley. He had a hand in the founding of the Pittsburgh Press Club in 1885 and was made an honorary life member in 1911.*

## Sewickley—the Village and the Valley

When, in the course of human events, there is founded and built a city, there are also, as a natural sequence, suburbs to that city—places of more or less natural beauty, and of distinguishing characteristics more or less marked.

In the case of the twin cities, Pittsburgh and Allegheny—which are virtually but one—the growth and development of their suburbs, until quite recently, has been determined by the topography of the region adjacent to these cities. Three lovely valleys lead to as many points of the compass from Pittsburgh, and out of these valleys lie the suburbs to which Pittsburghers depart when their daily duties are done.

With attractive suburbs, the Iron City is richly endowed. These have grown into beauty and extent up and down the three valleys of the Allegheny, the Monongahela and the Ohio rivers. Since the electric car has developed hill-climbing and grade-defying attributes, these outskirts are spreading in all directions back from the rivers and the great hills that hitherto formed a barrier to the city's growth. Each and all of these outlying portions of the cities have their attractions, but the village of Sewickley and that stretch of the Ohio known as the Sewickley Valley, alone preserve their true suburban characteristics uneffaced by the rapid growth of Allegheny City. To this favored section can truthfully be applied the term Queen of Suburbs, and certainly the most delightful residence spot in Western Pennsylvania. Its claims are such that a desperate effort has been quite recently made to include Sewickley in the ambitious scheme of a Greater Pittsburgh. This has been wisely abandoned. The village and the valley of Sewickley are too far from the city to be incorporated therein by the most pretentious (and grasping) scheme, and yet near enough to enable every Sewickleyan to reach his city office in from thirty to forty-five minutes after leaving his or her own door.

The homogeneity of the village and of the valley is one of their marked features. Sewickley is, *par excellence*, a place of lovely homes; a place beyond the admission of trades and the realm of the vast industries that darken the sky above the Iron City and fill its vicinity with the external din of a million noises. There is not a factory in the valley. There are only stores enough in the village to meet local needs, and there is nothing more suggestive of trade throughout the valley than the delivery wagons of these stores, or the vehicles representing the adjacent dairies and the local butchers

Sewickley being northwest of Pittsburgh, and the prevailing winds of Western Pennsylvania being from the west or the northwest, the legacy of smoke from Pittsburgh's myriads of chimneys very seldom drifts Sewickleywards. The daily ride to and from the city, along the northern shores of the Ohio, is a daily pleasure that never loses its charms. The windings of "La Belle Riviere" reveal new beauty at every bend, and each season of the year varies the ever-beautiful permanence.

It is not the province of this introduction to Sewickleyan's first "Blue Book" to "boom" Sewickley, or anything in the village or valley, but simply to set forth the main causes that have produced such a delightful place.

The Sewickley of to-day owes its existence, as well as its leading characteristics, to the railway which binds it in a beautiful band of steel to the two cities. The Sewickley Valley of to-day begins, strictly speaking, at Haysville station, and includes Aleppo township, to which Osburn [Glen Osborne] station is tributary. The village borough begins a short distance west of Osburn and extends to Quaker Valley station. Then comes Edgeworth, Shields station, and finally Leetsdale and Fair Oaks, the latter station being at the western edge of Sewickley Valley and the eastern limit

of Economy's broad acres. Here is a portion of valley—Haysville to Leetsdale—that has no superior in the Union, certainly not in the Keystone State—as a residence region and as embodying more beauty and general desirability as a place wherein to establish a home. The hills on either hand of this five-mile stretch of lovely valley are noble in size and outline. They descend almost perpendicularly to the Ohio opposite to the village, and slope gently back from the northeastern limit of the terraced plain upon which stands the village and its continuity of beautiful homes, up and down the river. These houses, beginning at Haysville, form an almost unbroken series of pretty houses with ample and attractive grounds, filling the valley from the railway to the hills. The everlasting solidity of the latter and the shimmering beauty of the Ohio, form the frame in which these hundreds of charming houses are set. There is nothing to offend the eye. Even the derricks that tell of a supply of the most superb fuel that ever warmed a house, are so tree-embowered as to lose their ungainly outlines. The village is not like other villages. Its broad streets are splendidly paved, its public buildings are handsome and artistic in architecture. There are flourishing trees everywhere, and if there exists anything unsightly in Sewickley it keeps in the background most effectually. Added to these traits is the purity and abundance of its water supply, its sewerage system, its superb public school, its churches and its many excellent stores.

And it might be here added, that for over forty years no license to sell intoxicating liquors has been issued in the village, or in the valley, for that matter. No place of a similar population

in Pennsylvania has such a record. Naturally, law-abiding, law-respecting men choose Sewickley as a place wherein to establish a home. And there are so few instances on record where this course has been regretted as to render the record practically unbroken in this respect. This thorough satisfaction in the place is shown in a Sewickley custom. When the sons and the daughters of the older residents woo and wed, they usually select Sewickleyans. If the sons go forth from the valley or the village for their brides, they almost invariably build the new home in one or the other. No higher tribute could be paid to a locality. Sewickley is very extensively and very closely related to herself—a very delightful state of affairs. This love of locality is a trait that has come to be trusted by newcomers. They come, they see, they are conquered, they marry and they “settle down”—all in Sewickley.

Thus it is that there exists in the village and valley of Sewickley a social warmth and a geniality of atmosphere, quite in keeping with the purity of the air and the serenity of the sunshine which is the portion of Sewickleyans. In fact, the place is specially favored socially. The extremes of wealth and poverty being absent, there is a more general uniformity of tastes and dispositions than is usually found in a place where some seven thousand human beings dwell within neighborly distance of each other.

The names appearing in this book have been carefully collected, and they enter into the make-up of the first Blue Book of the Sewickley village and valley ever issued.

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## New SVHS Preservation Grant Fund

Imagine the Broad Street entrance to Sewickley without the Old Post Office building. The grand structure was abandoned by the U. S. Postal Service in the mid-1970s; but, thanks to a group of far-sighted Sewickley area residents, the building was saved. Fittingly, today the building contains the offices of Sewickley Valley Historical Society as well as continuing to serve the community through the many activities and programs of Sweetwater Center for the Arts.

One of the goals of the Historical Society is to promote historic preservation in the eleven communities that comprise the Quaker Valley School District. To that end, we have established a Preservation Grant Fund to help non-profit and public organizations preserve local historic sites. Up to \$10,000 will be awarded in matching funds for projects deemed worthy by the Society's Preservation Grant Subcommittee. The first award, granted this year, supports exterior rehabilitation of the Christy House on Frederick Avenue in Sewickley.

**APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY DECEMBER 15, 2018, FOR THE 2019 CONSTRUCTION SEASON.**

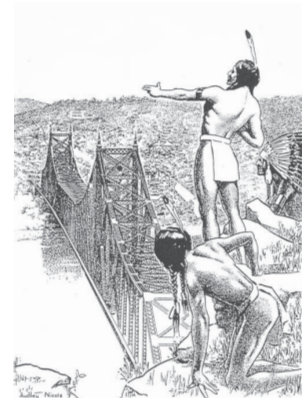
Forms are available on the SVHS website—[www.sewickleyhistory.org](http://www.sewickleyhistory.org)—or by calling the office at 412-741-5315.

**We hope that you will support the Preservation Grant Fund. Any money you donate will be given back to the community. Please send contributions to SVHS, 200 Broad Street, Sewickey, PA 15143.**

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

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**November 2018**



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*Thanks to the following, who, since the last newsletter, have supported SVHS  
with gifts in addition to basic dues.*

Susan Clancy; Linda & Scott Schober

*New Members*

Robert Frazzini & Anne Zacharias, Sewickley; Robin Russo, West Bridgewater

*Special Contributions*

The Anne L. and George H. Clapp Charitable and Educational Trust

*Contributions in Memory of B. G. Shields*

William D. Hawes; John & Sadie Kroeck; Mary Jane Williams

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**If Quaker Valley schools are closed because of inclement weather, the Old Sewickley Post Office building is closed, and Historical Society programs are cancelled. Check KDKA, WPXI or WTAE television newscasts or the stations' websites for closing information.**