

Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

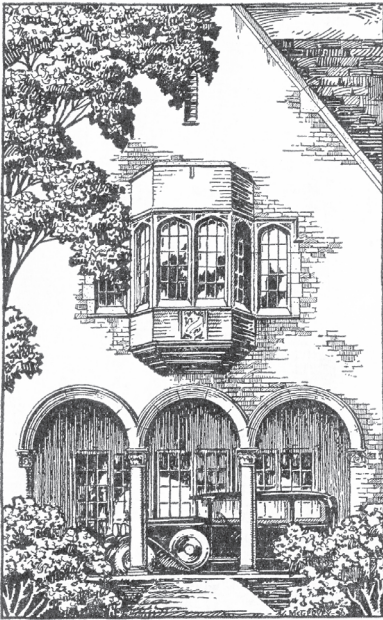
XLVI, Number 2

October 2018

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

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

The Edgeworth Club: Celebrating 125 Years

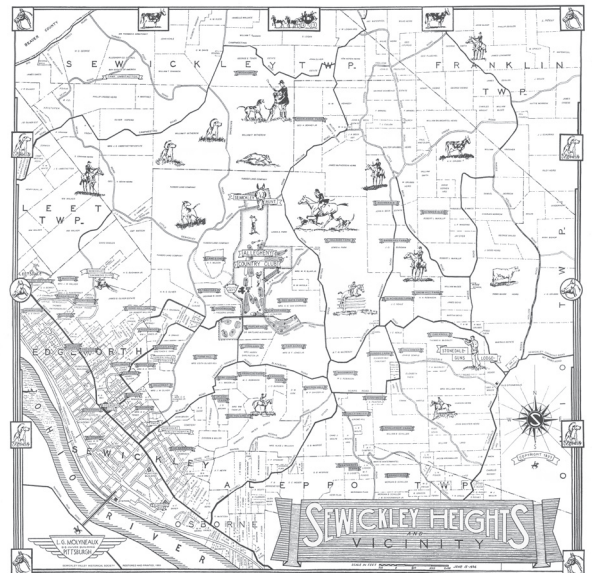


The porte-cochère, from a 1930 booklet by the Edgeworth Club Building Committee, presenting plans for the new Club developed in collaboration with architect Brandon Smith and landscape architect Ralph Griswold

For 125 years, the Edgeworth Club has been a center of social activity in the Sewickley Valley. The Club began in 1893 in a leased clubhouse that still stands on Meadow Lane in Edgeworth. In 1898, construction began on the ill-fated building designed by architects Rutan and Russell, located at the corner of Academy and Centennial Avenues in Sewickley, which served as the clubhouse until December 28, 1928, when it was completely destroyed in a spectacular fire.

In the depths of the 1929 depression, architect Brandon Smith designed a new clubhouse on Beaver Road and Academy Avenue, Edgeworth, which was completed in 1931 and continues to serve the membership and the community to this day.

On Wednesday, October 17, Club President Mark Hudson will present a talk on the evolution of the Club, from its Victorian beginnings as a place, according to the original Club charter, “promoting intercourse and friendship among its members and their social enjoyment, and for the purpose of furnishing facilities for bowling, athletic and other innocent sports.” He’ll also discuss how the current building has been successfully adapted to serve the changing needs of members.



1934 Molyneaux Map of Sewickley Heights & Vicinity Reprinted

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND! A new printing of the Molyneaux map is now available at the Sewickley Valley Historical Society. The map is 24 inches square and is printed in sepia with olive green details on heavy ivory stock. This “equine” edition was probably commissioned for an Allegheny Country Club Horse Show and shows the great estates of the Gilded Age. The maps are \$10 each (PA residents add 7% sales tax). To order by mail, please add \$8.00 shipping & handling and mail your check to SVHS, 200 Broad Street, Sewickley, PA 15143.

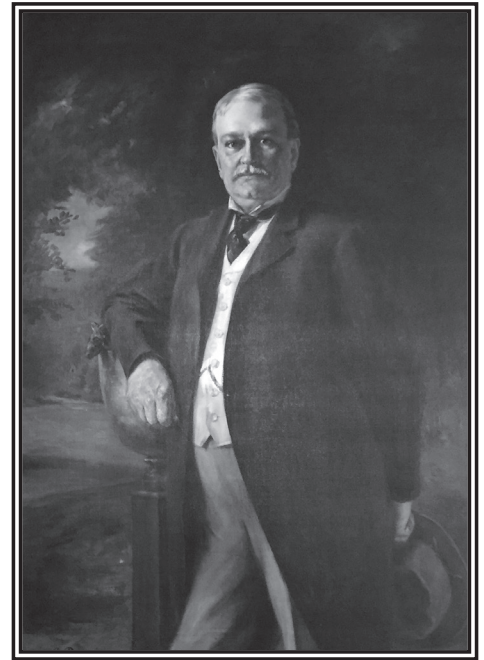
The mission of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society
is to promote interest in and to record, collect, preserve, and document the history of the Sewickley Valley.

Some Recent Acquisitions

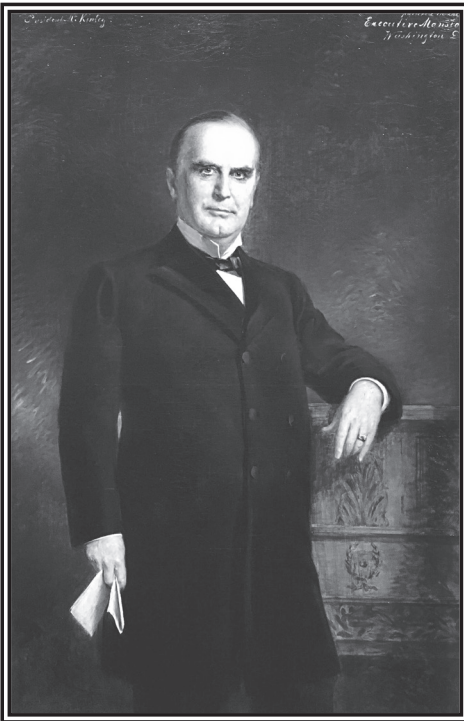
In April, we acquired three oil paintings – two landscapes and a portrait of a child – by Edgeworth native Agnes C. Way (1842-1943) from Terry Miller, a great-grandson of one of Way's sisters.

Board member Simon Noel recently gave us a framed poem by James Francis Burke entitled "WHEN HAY CAME BACK FROM FRANCE: He hears of Doings in the 'Old Home Town.'" The poem was presented at a dinner given in honor of Thomas Hay Walker (1889-1982) by J. Frederic Byers, William B. Scaife and Turner D. Moorhead at the Pittsburgh Club, December 21, 1918.

Finally, we have hanging in our headquarters the life-size portrait, seen at right, of iron and steel magnate James Brown Oliver (1844-1905) by Swiss/American painter August Benziger (1867-1955), best known for his portraits of Presidents William McKinley (*see below*) and Theodore Roosevelt. This handsome addition to the SVHS collection is the gift of member James Oliver Goldsborough, great-grandson of James B. Oliver and Amelia Neville Shields Oliver, and was painted in Shields at the Olivers' home, which stood until the early 1940s near the Shields Homestead on Beaver Road.



President McKinley Sits for a Portrait



In the fall of 1897, President William McKinley took time out of his busy schedule to have his portrait painted by young Swiss artist August Benziger. Benziger was born in 1867 and studied art in Europe. He came to the United States in 1896 and established a portrait painting studio in Manhattan.

In the late summer of 1897, the president summoned Benziger to Washington to in-

terview him about the sitting. Benziger was surprised at how informal the interview was and what a kindly, quiet, and fatherly man the president was.

McKinley was reluctant to sit for Benziger because of two previous bad experiences with portraiture. McKinley explained also he was very busy and he had limited free time. The opportunity McKinley gave Benziger came with a stipulation: McKinley was free to withdraw if he was not pleased with what he saw after the second sitting.

Benziger agreed to begin immediately, with an agreement that planned a second work. Benziger was given permission to attend all receptions, cabinet meetings and conferences so that he could learn more about what type of man McKinley was.

The East Room was selected as his studio. Soon it was full of Benziger's art supplies and easels. A guard was assigned to the room to guard the painting and equipment.

Benziger started on the portrait in late September. McKinley allotted several hours each day for the first portrait sittings. After that, McKinley gave Benziger a few minutes at 8 a.m. to work. McKinley was so comfortable with Benziger he answered correspondence and conducted official business while the artist painted.

One day, after looking at the unfinished portrait, McKinley told his secretary, "Why, I

can't get over it. Mr. Benziger has caught a likeness that is frighteningly accurate. Do call Mrs. McKinley; I wonder what [she] will say." Ida McKinley came to see, and proclaimed, "Mr. Benziger, you are the first artist to capture the fire burned within the soul of my husband."

This was Ida McKinley's favorite portrait of her husband. It was on display at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, and was later donated to the Smithsonian Institution by Benziger's daughter. Today it is on exhibit in the Presidential Portrait section of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington.

Benziger's second image of McKinley became his official White House portrait. McKinley was sitting for the portrait when his aides rushed into the room to tell him that the USS Maine had been sunk in Havana.

Benziger made 51 crossings of the Atlantic during his lifetime, painting the rich and famous in the United States and Europe. This included two other U. S. Presidents, European political leaders, several prominent industrialists and three popes. He became a U. S. citizen in 1951. Benziger died in 1955.

(Excerpted from an article in the [Niles, OH] Tribune Chronicle, October 9, 2017, by Patrick Finan, retired library director of the McKinley Memorial Library in Niles)

The B. G. Shields Memorial Garden

Work continues on the B. G. Shields Memorial Garden. The garden, honoring the memory of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society's founder and long-time Executive Director, is made possible through generous donations from B. G.'s friends and Historical Society members. The basic landscaping and sod have been installed, and a handsome new metal fence enclosing window wells beside the garden has been completed, courtesy of the Old Sewickley Post Office Corporation. In the future, it is hoped that additional plantings and perhaps a bench may be added to the garden. A list of proposed plantings can be obtained from the SVHS office. We plan to have a celebration of the opening of the garden in Spring 2019.

TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE GARDEN, PLEASE SEND YOUR CHECK, MADE OUT TO B. G. SHIELDS MEMORIAL FUND, TO
 Sewickley Valley Historical Society
 200 Broad Street
 Sewickley, PA 15143.

Tribute to B. G. Shields

by William D. Hawes, Member, Sewickley Valley Historical Society

*The Sewickley Valley and surrounding communities were made special in part by the tireless effort of B. G. Shields.
 Friends of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society will long remember B. G. Shields' focus on stories with detail about
 all events and people that made the Sewickley Valley and surrounding communities so special.
 B. G. Shields will be remembered as a special treasure with charm and single purpose to community that should be an
 inspiration to each of us, all of us.*

History as prologue sparks new ideas.

B. G. Shields to me was the face,

A beacon of hope

For what community involvement should be.

Friends, Sponsors, Patrons, Benefactors

Thanks to the following, who, since our last newsletter, have supported Sewickley Valley Historical Society with gifts in addition to basic dues.

George J. Berry III; William & Barbara Burrows; Paul & Mai-Lan Fagan; Carole Moore Ford;
 Robert Frazzini & Anne Zacharias; Brian & Kate Jeffe; Hugh & Eliza Nevin;
 Ian Semple & Katie Rodgers; Joe Zemba & Mary M. Zemba

New Members

Robert Frazzini & Anne Zacharias; Ms. Eileen Hencher; Mr. & Mrs. Bryon Nastasi — all of Sewickley

Special Contributions in Memory of B. G. Shields

Connor Cogswell; John & Susan Holton; Martin & Joanne McDaniel
 Marian Miller; Mary Beth Pastorius; Malachy & Patty Whalen; Joe Zemba

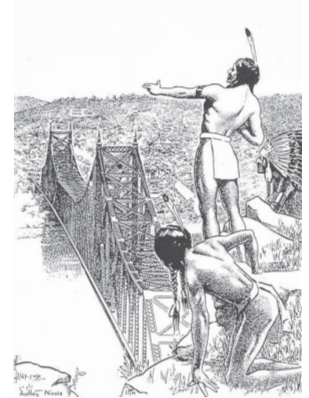
In Memoriam

Mary Louise Scholl

Sewickley Valley Historical Society
200 Broad Street
Sewickley, PA 15143

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October 2018



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*SVHS Photos Included in Sweetwater's
MAVUNO Exhibition*

Sweetwater Center for the Arts has mounted a photographic exhibition entitled “**REFLECTION & REMEMBRANCE**” as part of its annual MAVUNO celebration of African-American culture. The show, which can be viewed in Sweetwater’s mezzanine gallery through October 20, 2018, brings together historical photographs from the community and includes examples from the Historical Society’s Bicentennial Collection.

William and George Parker out on the knoll above Beaver Road at “Sand Hill.” Sons of James Parker (1847-1926); William (Bill) Parker, with banjo, succeeded his father in charge of the horses on the John Way, Jr., farm; George, with zither, helped in the kitchen and waited table. The Ways lived in the Abishai Way House, which still stands in Edgeworth.

D. T. Watson Historic Marker to Be Dedicated

At 3:00 p.m. on Friday, October 19, 2018, a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission roadside marker (similar to the Ethelbert Nevin marker on Route 65 at Edgeworth Lane) will be dedicated at the entrance driveway to the Watson Institute, 301 Camp Meeting Road. The marker, to which SVHS contributed, commemorates the D. T. Watson Home for Crippled Children, founded in 1917, as well as the testing that led to the 1955 approval of the Salk vaccine and the eventual eradication of polio. You are invited to the dedication; parking is in the main lot.