

Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

XXXVII, Number 4

February 2010

BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES THAT HAVE ARISEN IN THE DISPLAY OF OUR COLLECTION OF VINTAGE GARMENTS, THE FASHION EXHIBITION THAT WAS PROPOSED FOR THIS MONTH AT THE SEWICKLEY HEIGHTS HISTORY CENTER HAS BEEN POSTPONED INDEFINITELY.

WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE AND
ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE FOLLOWING PROGRAM:

Wednesday, February 10, 2010

7:30 p.m. — Old Sewickley Post Office

Frank Lloyd Wright's

Fantasy & Reality Residential Designs: Fallingwater & Kentuck Knob

an illustrated lecture by
Patricia Coyle

Fallingwater, called the most famous private residence ever built by Bruce Pfeiffer, Director of Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, was designed by Wright in 1935 for the family of Pittsburgh department store owner Edgar J. Kaufmann. Rising above the waterfall on Bear Run, *Fallingwater* exemplifies Wright's concept of organic architecture: the harmonious union of art and nature. The house, with a guest and service wing, was completed in 1939.

Kentuck Knob was commissioned in 1953 and completed in 1956 for the I. N. Hagan family of Uniontown, owner of the Hagan Ice Cream Company. It is just a few miles southwest of *Fallingwater*, high atop a bluff overlooking the Youghiogheny River Gorge. *Kentuck Knob* is a "Usonian" house, designed on a hexagonal grid and constructed of native stone, tidewater cypress and copper. It was purchased in 1986 by Great Britain's Lord and Lady Palumbo as a vacation house.

Patricia Coyle is the Director of Marketing/Events for *Kentuck Knob*, where she has been employed since the site's opening in 1996. She conducts all on-site events. Her areas of expertise include Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, his relationship with his clients as well as the furniture, gardens and sculpture collection at *Kentuck Knob*.

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.

Newly Arrived in America

James Shearer (1833-1902), a stonemason by trade, and his brother William emigrated from Glasgow, Scotland, to the United States in the spring of 1857. James married Rachael Dickson, daughter of Robert Dickson, also from Glasgow, prior to 1866, and the family lived for a time in Old Allegheny. Robert Dickson owned at least one quarry below Sewickley Cemetery. The Shearer family moved to 597 Hopkins Street, Sewickley, in 1874. Their oldest son, James S. Shearer, engaged in the stone contracting business with his brother Robert at 422 Walnut Street. The Historical Society has a large collection of documents and photographs relating to the Shearer and Dickson families. Below is a transcription of a letter James wrote to his mother, Jean, describing his voyage from Greenock, Scotland, landing in New York and traveling to Beaver, Pennsylvania. As the letter contained virtually no paragraphs or punctuation as well as several incorrect verb tenses and misspellings, it has been edited for easier reading.

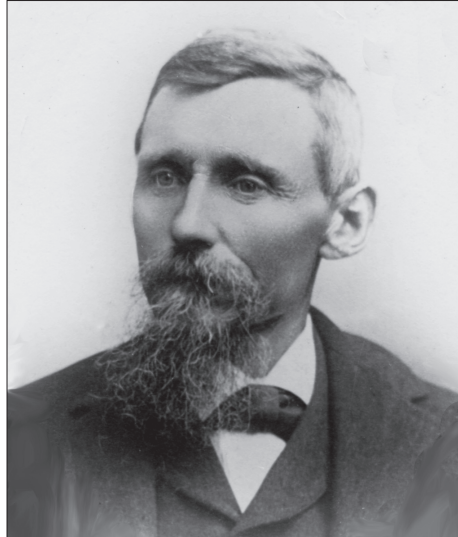
Beaver, 6 Sept 1857

Dear Mother,

I take this opportunity to let you know that I am in good health hoping that you and my brother and sisters are in the enjoyment of the same. I promised when I left home to write you an account of the passage & I will do so now beginning at the time that we left Greenock [Scotland].

We started from Greenock at 6 o'clock PM 31 March. The night was calm and beautiful. Stayed on deck until darkness came on and hid the coast of old Scotland from our view. Then I went to look for a place to sleep in but found none that I liked. Then I went down into the steerage, but the place was so hot and had such a bad smell that it was very uncomfortable. There was a complete dark cloud of tobacco smoke & a sickening smell of whiskey, but some of the passengers seemed to enjoy it very much. Some were playing cards, some passing the bottle about & some throwing up their accounts, some singing & some discussing American slavery. I came upon deck again and Uncle William took us down to the engine room and showed us the engines and fires. I went down to the steerage again about 12 o'clock and slept till 5 AM, when we got some breakfast from Uncle William.

The morning of the 1 April was calm & beautiful. The water was as smooth as a mirror, & we were sailing along slowly. We landed in Liverpool at 12 noon and here we were attacked on all sides with porters & emigrant runners, the one crying "I will take your luggage," the other crying "Hurry, for the ship is just about to sail," but we took it very cool, & while some paid seven & six pence for taking their luggage to the ship, we got ours taken for about one third of that. When we arrived at the pier, which was about a mile and a half from where the Glasgow steamer landed us, here a scene awaited us. Here were



James Shearer, 1833-1902

passengers from almost every country in Europe (but more than one half were from Ireland) crowded on the pier with their luggage, while to make the confusion complete men and women were attacking us on all sides with cries of "Buy oranges, buy lemons good for a sea voyage, buy ginger bread, razors, knives and books, clothes," etc., until I wished them at divel [to rend them apart]. 7 PM got our luggage on board the tender and taken out to the ship, which was laying out in the river. Here was another scene of hurry and bustle, & it [was] every one's lookout that his trunk was not knocked to pieces. We got ours in safe, then went to look for a berth. I went down a hatchway where I thought I would get my neck broken by coming too fast to the bottom, but I reached it in safety. The place was as dark as purgatory, with here and there the cheerful blaze of a candle. I had not moved three steps when I knocked my head against a post, then made my way through a crowd of Irish talking Gaelic & got along to a place where Richard Orr had secured a berth. Threw my bed in it & went on deck again & went out in the tender to Liverpool and my cousin David Russel &

got about ½ pound American tobacco from him & got lodgings for the night.

April 2d

I went to the Glasgow steamer and got our five carpet bags and got to the tender at 10 AM and took farewell of British ground and got on board the ship and had leisure to look at my fellow passengers. Here was the Patlander [Irish], from the old man & woman of seventy to the child at the breast, clad in all cuts and fashions from the native frock coat to the newest cut of a dress coat with here and there a ventilator in it; the Ducthman with his long pipe; the Welshman straight from the mountains, chattering a strange jabberage; the English in his smoke frock and rough & tumble boots; and here and there a Scottish callan [fellow], making altogether such a motley crew that no one would be inclined to pass their days among them. I next went below to inspect the steerage. Found it was dark even in day light, but not at all so very uncomfortable as it appeared the night before. But it was very much crowded. There were two in every berth and three in some. William, Richard and myself were in one. There were in all 987 adults on board, making altogether about 1100 souls.

April 3d

We were all called on deck at 7 AM to pass the doctor, which occupied two hours. Then I went to the galley to boil some coffee, but such a row I never saw before. Here were men and women crushing and pressing, cursing and swearing. It took me an hour before I got it on the fire and as long before I got it off again. Richard Orr went and got our allotment of provisions, and we got our breakfast about 12 n[oon]. The tug came alongside of us at 10 o'clock, and we were all in great spirits to begin our voyage, but we were doomed to a great disappointment, for she slipped her cables at 2 and went off and left us. There

was a bully fight this afternoon. The cook and an Irishman have been pitching into each other right & left. The sports of the evening were music & dancing.

April 4th

The tug came alongside of us at 5 this morning & we weighed anchor at seven. The morning was dull and foggy, but a good breeze sprang up about midday. The tug cast us off at two o'clock and left us to make way. Afternoon wet and disagreeable. Some of the passengers seasick.

Sabbath April 5

Went on deck. The sea was as smooth as a mirror and scarce a breath of wind. Washed my face and took breakfast. Went on deck again about 11 AM. The passengers crowding the deck, some reading, some whistling and singing and dancing. 4 PM an Irishman took a splendid fall down the steerage stair. 6 PM the music kept up till bedtime.

Monday 6 April

Got out of bunk at the sound of a horn being sounded by a sailor, which we had the disagreeable pleasure to hear every morning at 5 o'clock from this to the end of the voyage. Gave our bunks & the place before them a good cleaning, which we had to do every morning to the end of voyage before we got any water or cooking done. The morning was very calm and foggy. We have got something like order among us now. We are all put into messes of from 6 to 12, and our water and cooking done according to the number of our mess. The fun began this afternoon in style. One man struck another in the head with a frying pan, then drew his knife on him, for which he got a splendid kicking from the first mate. Music and dancing. The night calm and foggy, not a star to be seen.

Tuesdau 7 April

There were 21 vessels in view this morning. A fine fight between two sailors took place at 8 o'clock. A homeward bound ship passed us about 4 o'clock. 5 PM two passengers fighting away like gamecocks til the second [mate] came and gave each a blow on the head with a skullcracker & ended the fight & put them in irons for the night.

Wednesday 8 April

The wind pretty strong but unfavour-

able. Got sight of Cork [Ireland]. Midday quite calm. All is very quiet & orderly. In the evening the wind began to rise and blew a strong gale all night.

Thursday 9 April

Got out of bed this morning with sore ribs, for the rocking of the ship had nearly rubbed the skin off them. I scarcely keep my feet. Got sight of Cape Clear [Ireland] and saw it for three hours. Towards afternoon the [wind] got stronger, and the waves rose to a considerable height, and few had got their sea legs on, and some got most splendid falls. Some were thrown off their feet and rolled from side to side of the ship. I went below at dusk & here was a scene. Some were on their knees praying, & some were running about with bottles of holy water, sprinkling it all around and in their bunks, while some were on their feet but never minded it, so they did not break the bottles and spill the precious water, which was to save them from a watery grave. A girl gave me a bottle to take some, but [illegible] fellow that I was I did not know what to do with it. To wet my finger and make the sign of the cross on my brow I thought would be carrying the joke too far, so I put the bottle to my mouth and made pretense to drink. But when I gave it back she took some and threw it on my head and, thus anointed, I sat down on a chest that was firmly lashed to a post to enjoy the scene. But I had not sat long when an Irish girl came and threw herself into my arms, but I ought to rather say arm, for I had to hold firmly with one hand to keep myself on the chest. She was trembling with fear and crying did I think the ship was going down? I tried all I could to quiet her fears, but it was no use. I had to hold her for about 3 hours. I asked her some day afterwards why she came to me. She said I was the only one that had nothing to take care of, and she thought I would not let her drown if I could save her.

Saturday 11 April

The gale still strong and the sea very rough. Some good falls were got. Plenty room about the gallery door this day. Lots of the passengers were seasick. No music nor dancing.

Sabbath 12 April

The mate came this morning and made a noise about the place not being cleaned

properly & made us clean it again before he would allow us to get any water or cooking done. Then it being Easter Sunday & the most of the passengers being Papists, there was great feasting on eggs that they had brought along with them for the occasion. This was the greatest day of music and dancing we had. In the afternoon we passed the ship *Flora* bound for New York with a great number of passengers on board. She left four days before us. We all crowded on deck and gave three hearty cheers which were returned by her passengers.

Monday 13 April

Fine morning, very calm. Nothing doing. Only one fight between 2 passengers, and one of them put in irons.

Tuesday 14 April

A very calm morning; making little progress. Richard Orr got a gentle rap on the head with a rope that sent his cap overboard, nearly taking his head with it. There was a girl of 12 years of age [who] died. She was sewed up in a bag, and the mate read a short sermon. Then she was thrown overboard.

Wednesday 15 April

A very calm morning. After breakfast we got orders to take all of our beds on deck to air them while the sailors fumigated the ship with pitch. I got a splendid fall coming off the forecastle with my bed on my shoulder. While I was on the top of the ladder, it was knocked from beneath me by a water cask, and I fell nicely. A good breeze sprang up in the evening.

Thursday 16 April

We had good winds this day & made a good day's sailing. Nothing particular took place.

Friday 17 April

The wind was pretty strong all day, but unfavourable. We saw the Azores Islands about midday & found we were about 400 miles off our course.

Saturday 18 April

The wind was still strong but unfavourable.

Sabbath 19 April

We made good progress this day. Music & dancing continued almost all day. The wind continued strong all night.

Monday 20 April

A number of the berths fell during the night with the rocking of the ship. She is still rocking very much, and no one could stand or sit without a hold. Many of the passengers were thrown from their feet and rolled about on deck a while. A child died this afternoon.

Tuesday 21 April

Was a fine morning, very calm. Made little progress. Towards evening the wind got stronger.

Wednesday 22 April

A fine morning. Passed a homeward bound ship about 7 AM. Saw a shoal of porpoises about midday & saw some sea weeds floating on the water, which gives us hope we were coming near land. Two men were put in irons for lighting matches between decks.

Thursday 23 April

Was a fine morning. Made little progress. Another shoal of porpoises seen sporting on all sides of us in the evening. The wind was pretty strong & continued so all night.

Friday 24 April

The wind was very strong this morning, and we made good progress. Passed two ships homeward bound at 12 o'clock. Another shoal of porpoises. The day was wet and disagreeable. We sailed well all day.

Saturday 25 April

A very wet morning, but we sailed well & continued so all day.

Sabbath 26 April

A wet morning. Made little progress till 9 o'clock, when a strong breeze sprang up & carried us along at a rate of 12 knots an hour and continued so all day. Another child died today. A fight at the galley door between two passengers. Both were put in irons.

Monday 27 April

A fine day, the wind strong but contrary. There was one birth & one death.

Tuesday 28 April

Was a fine morning, very calm, but the wind got stronger in the course of the day. Passed 2 ships in the forenoon and another in the afternoon in a disabled state. She had lost her fore and mizzen masts, and her

mainmast looked as if it was going to fall, but she was getting up jury masts. All quiet and orderly.

Wednesday 29 April

This morning a little boy died a few berths from us. Very calm, made very little progress. Another child died in the afternoon. In the evening a good breeze sprang up.

Thursday 30 April

Was a very wet morning, but the wind was strong & favorable & continued so all day.



Jean Shearer

1 May Friday

A child died this morning. Wind pretty strong & continued so all day. Nothing particular going on. Made a good day's sailing.

Saturday 2 May

Was a beautiful morning, wind favourable. Passengers getting very uneasy to get landed. Various conjectures were afloat about the distance we had to run, and every mast that appeared was supposed to be the pilot. A steam ship passed us at a considerable distance on our starboard side.

Sunday 3 May

Was a beautiful morning, wind rather ahead. The lead was heaved about 6 AM and [showed] 35 fathoms of water, which

caused great excitement among the passengers, many of whom expected we would be in the harbour in the afternoon. But we stood out for fear of sand banks, as it was very misty.

Monday 4 May

The [wind] was very strong, and a heavy mist [lay] on the water. All eyes were stretched to get the first sight of land. The pilot boarded us about 12 o'clock amid great cheering.

Tuesday 5 May

There was a heavy mist on the water all day and high winds. Got sight of land about 12 o'clock, which caused a great stir. I then went and washed my face, which had not been washed for fifteen days before. Great stir continued all day, preparing to land. I stayed on deck all afternoon enjoying the scenery all around on both sides. The river is beautiful. Summer houses, surrounded with trees, many of them quite different from what we see at home, and beautiful green fields before them affording a most pleasant prospect to the eye after seeing nothing but sky and water for about 5 weeks. We came to anchor at 7½ PM. No one went to bed this night, but singing and washing faces, changing clothes and throwing beds overboard continued all night.

Wednesday 6 May

Great stir & confusion this morning. Everyone hurrying on deck with their boxes & crowding the deck till one could get moving. A tug came alongside of us about 8 o'clock to take on shore the passengers & their baggage. It took her three trips to take us all. We were in the last load, as we stayed back to avoid getting our boxes broken. We got on shore about 4 o'clock [in the] afternoon. Saw very little of New York. Went and got supper and a bed.

Thursday 7 May

Went out to see what was to be seen of New York. Found the streets in a state that would shock the good people of the winds [streets] & vennels [alleys] of Glasgow. The mud was knee deep and in many places almost impassable. Their buildings are all of brick or wood and look plain & mean to a person accustomed to look on the beautiful stone buildings of Glasgow, but we were only in that part of it about the harbour and [that] say[s] nothing about what it may be like at other places.

We got into the steam boat at four o'clock [in the] afternoon and started off on our journey west. There were a good number of *Morning Light* passengers along with us. We got out of the steam boat at about 11 o'clock and got into a railway carriage and arrived in Philadelphia at 4 o'clock [on the] morning of Friday 8 May. We waited in Philadelphia to four o'clock in the afternoon, when we got in the train for Pittsburgh and arrived there at six o'clock on Sunday morning, 10 May, and stayed there all day.

Monday 11 May

We here took leave of the last of our fellow passengers of the *Morning Light* and started off for Beaver in the morning and arrived there about midday.

On the whole we got a splendid passage and very little rough weather and enjoyed it very well, but the ship was too much crowded and too little accommodation about the galley for comfort, but we thought all would be well when we got to New York. But in this we were mistaken, for it was only then that our difficulties began. We had such running about enquiring after rail roads and steam boats and getting our luggage along.

The short time we were in the steam boat did very well, but the rail road cars are not exactly the place to pass many days in. There is a passage up the middle of them and a seat for two on each side and [they] do very well for short distance. But when a person has to spend three nights in them, he feels them very uncomfortable, as there is no way of his getting his limbs stretched. But I, never being very hard to please with a bed, got down on the floor at night and slept. I send you here a wood cut showing how railway traveling operates in a fifty mile journey. So calculate what our faces would be like after traveling about 500 miles.

So much for the account of the passage. No doubt you would be extracting more particulars, but for me to have written an account of everything that took place would have taken more time than I have to spare and filled a paper as large a[s] the *Glasgow Post*.

When we arrived at Beaver, William got work at the job he was at last summer, but Richard Orr and I did not get work for a week. Then we got a job to go to Allegheny to build a turn table for the Pittsburgh Fort Wayne & Chicago railroad, and we have continued building on the railroad

since that time. As I had never built any, I thought I could not do it; but as it was money and not work that I came here for (I have the same wages for building that I would have for stone cutting), I went to work and am getting along first-rate.

It is very hot here sometimes, but not at all unbearable except at night in bed, when it is too hot even to lay naked. Sometimes I have to rise and go to the window to get a breath of air. At other times I lie in my bed with a handkerchief, trying to fan myself asleep. But for all that, I like the country very well. But I would not advise any of you to come out here until the heat is past, at least if you like a night's sleep, you will not.

Give my respects to Mr. and Mrs. Horn, Mr. & Mrs. Jameson, to the Misses Jonston and all enquiring friends. Tell Colin McLauchlan that there is work for more masons here than there are masons to work it, but that when he comes here at first he might have, like me, to turn his hand to the first thing that came his way, as there are more builders than stonecutters needed.

Your affectionate son,
James Shearer

Friends, Sponsors, Patrons, Benefactors

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

Mr. & Mrs. Richard B. Elste, Ron & Bonnie Casper, Mrs. Margaret O. Childs, Susan Cockrell, W. Brewster Cockrell, Sallie & Stephen Davis, Margaret Gilfillan, Susan Jones, Mary & Wayne Murphy, Michael Murphy, Sally S. Ruffin, Fred & Carol Sharp, Frank Simons, Peter & Susan Sour, Don & Betsy Spalding, Rob Thomas, R. Bruce Williamson, Rives Yost

New Members

Matthew J. Feczko & Michael Murphy, both of Sewickley; Michael Shealey, Pittsburgh

In Memoriam

Joseph D. Dury, Jr., Gloria J. Kerchner

Donations

Minta Brown, in honor of Sonny Schurman

Mr. & Mrs. John K. Holton, Mrs. Margaret P. Joyner, Mr. & Mrs. Peter Stein, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Wasco, Mr. Joe Zemba, in memory of Joseph D. Dury, Jr.

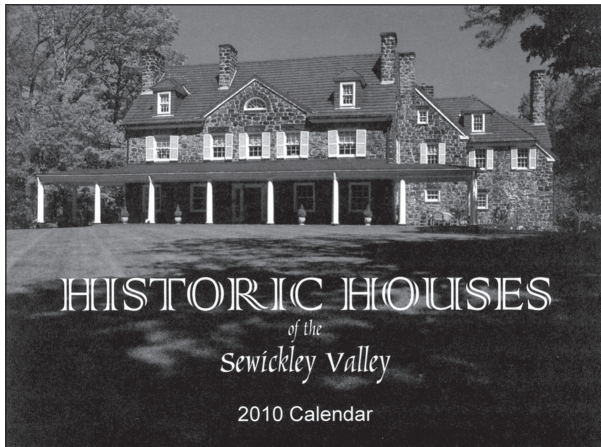
Mary L. Barlow, Sara D. Casey, Mary Anne Riley, Mr. & Mrs. David Thompson, in memory of Phyllis K. Semple

Calling All Quilts!



The Beaver County Historical Research and Landmarks Foundation (BCHRLF) has undertaken a project to document and publish the quilts of Southwestern Pennsylvania before this valuable piece of women's history is lost. Each quilt will be photographed and measured, and details about its history, ownership and design will be noted. Any type of hand-made quilt is welcome: patchwork, appliqué, embroidery, crazy quilts, whole cloth quilts, quilt tops that have never been completed as finished quilts. BCHRLF will have pattern and fabric dating resources available but will not appraise the quilts. Once completed, the intention is to submit the collected pictures and information to the Michigan Quilt Index, which is in partnership with The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, for inclusion in their nationwide database.

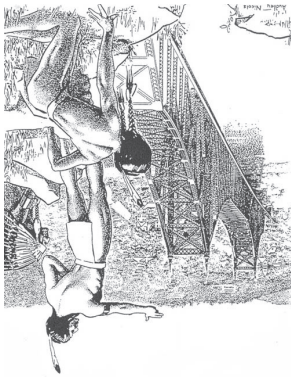
On Friday April 9, 2010, you can bring your quilt treasures to the Old Sewickley Post Office (Sewickley Valley Cultural Center) for inclusion in this project. There will be no fee for the documentation. Call the Historical Society at 412-741-5315 to register.



2010 Historic Houses Calendar now available!

Edgeworth Preservation's 1996 book *Historic Houses of the Sewickley Valley* may be out of print, but thirteen of the glorious William J. Penberthy photographs of Sewickley Valley houses can be yours in the Sewickley Valley Historical Society's second *Historic Houses of the Sewickley Valley Calendar*. This large format (12" x 9"), full color 2010 calendar, printed on heavy stock, is available for \$12, plus tax, at Historical Society Headquarters and at Penguin Bookshop.

Signals is designed and edited by Susan C. Holton. Visit our website, www.sewickleyhistory.org — e-mail us at sewickleyhistory@verizon.net — or call us at 412-741-5315. We're open 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, or by appointment.



February 2010

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Sewickley, PA

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