

Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

XXXVII, Number 7

May 2010

Wednesday, May 19, 2010

6:00 p.m.

Dedication of the Park Place Marker

in memory of

Captain Frederick Way, Jr.

followed by a

Reception & Informal Program

at the Old Sewickley Post Office, featuring

B. G. Shields, members of the Way family & Rick Sebak

Annual Meeting

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society Nominating Committee

(Nancy Baldwin, Gloria Berry, Steven Davis, Jane Hitchins, Cordelia Jacobs)

proposes the following slate of officers and directors for election at the Annual Meeting, May 19, 2010:

Secretary: yet to be decided

Treasurer: Margie Gilfillan

Directors: James Darby, Peter Floyd, Michael Murphy, Ross Rogers, Peter Sour

DEADLINE for reservations for the **SVHS TRIP TO STATE COLLEGE** is
FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2010.

Please make your room reservations **DIRECTLY** with the Hampton Inn, using the group code **SVH**.
The rooms (with 2 double beds) are \$99, plus tax. The Hampton Inn can be reached at 814-231-1590.

Details on the trip can be found on page 3 of this newsletter, or call 412-741-5315.

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The following paragraphs are from the beginning of an unfinished and unpublished autobiography by Frederick Way, Jr., entitled

Sewickley Valley Stern Marks



Robert Wilson Way & Frederick Way, Jr., with Bob & Casey

Wilson Way. As reasonably as I can assume, the intent was to honor Robert Knox Wilson, a venerable old bachelor with a great deal of money, who was my Grandmother Way's brother, and who lived in Leetsdale. His birthday fell on January 16 according to the family records; possibly a coincidence and possibly not. Having arrived at this decision, my parents, I suppose, felt quite rightly that the Wilson business had been given sufficient recognition, and henceforth I was called Frederick Way, Jr.

Nobody bothered to alter my birth certificate or change the record in the First Presbyterian Church of Sewickley, so, of consequence, I have lived these many years under a technical alias. My father had no middle name, although in family circles it was argued he was named for Frederick Rapp, the Economite, who had been a good friend of the Way connection, and possibly the Wilsons as well. D. Leet Wilson, another brother of Grandma Way, addressed all correspondence to my father using the middle initial R of consequence of this belief, but my dad's own mother emphatically denied that she had Frederick Rapp in mind. When teased about this she would state: "I simply liked the name 'Frederick,' and that's all there is to it."

People without middle names are an odd lot. During my years I have had a great many letters of the alphabet inserted as a middle initial, by correspondents and in print, for the plain reason that many intelligent persons think such omission incredible, and are compelled to invent one for you. My eldest son is named Frederick (no middle initial)

Way III, and he has had adventures with this name, particularly in the Army. It is probably best to provide a middle name for a male child.

The frame house at 315 Hazel Street where I was born was built in 1899 by my grandfather John Way, Jr., who also had no middle name, and who deliberately annexed the 'Jr.' to single himself out from another John (no middle initial) Way, his cousin, who at the same time agreed to be known as John Way, Sr. I will say no more about this at the present, but I have purposely mentioned the fact early in this recitation as a preview of obstacles which must be overcome.

The house at 315 Hazel Street, as I have said, was built by John Way, Jr. It was a wedding present to my father and mother, who were married on December 7, 1899, at the First Presbyterian Church, Sewickley.

The Hazel Street house still stands. We lived there until the spring of 1915 and then moved into the old Way Mansion on the hill [the Abishai Way House]. I have not set foot in the place since we left it in 1915, but I always look at it with a queer feeling as I frequently pass by.

Hazel Street commenced as a lane, or footpath, leading from the Beaver Road to the Ohio River. It goes back at least to 1797 when John (no middle name) Way, wife and three children arrived to build a log cabin overlooking the river on approximately the location where the electric plant later was placed. This is the first mention I have made of this particular John Way; the John Way Sr. and John

Way Jr. spoken of a moment ago were later editions.

John Way of the log cabin was as poor as a church mouse, and as happy. His occasional neighbors dotted here and there over the adjoining five or six miles of river bottomland, both up and downstream, were no better off than he was. Most of them lived on the opposite or "Virginia side" of the river where Indian titles had been extinguished long since. Sewickley Bottom was on the "Indian side" and was not healthy for white scalps until after [Mad Anthony] Wayne went through. A traveler descending the Ohio River in a flatboat, 1806, noted in his diary that John Way "is badly lodged, if he has not a better house than the log hovel we saw on the bank."

There was no trace of this log cabin in my time. John Way and his wife had become legend with no pictures of any sort handed down to show what they looked like. Yet the region was indelibly marked for their having been on the scene. They were Quakers from eastern Pennsylvania, and today's Quaker Valley school system gets its name from them, as does the tiny rivulet named Quaker Run, and also Quaker Road in Edgeworth.

As addendum to these remarks I should notice one fact. When Uncle Robert Knox Wilson died, his will provided a sum of \$2,000 for my younger brother Robert Wilson Way, who had been named for him. This magnificent sum was placed in a savings account in the Sewickley Valley Trust Company. So my brother was a millionaire in my young eyes, even though he was not allowed to touch his treasure.

I was born, February 17, 1901, in Leet Township, Pa. The shipping tag read: Care of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Way, 315 Hazel Street, Quaker Valley, Sewickley P.O., Pa.

My memory does not hold recollection of having lived in Leet Township. When I was three, or thereabouts, a new borough was formed, called Edgeworth. It will always seem to me that I was brought up at 315 Hazel Street, Edgeworth, from the very beginning.

The name my parents gave me at birth was Frederick Wilson Way, but this was soon changed. Eleven months after my arrival a second son was delivered at the original address noted above. For reasons best known to my parents, and never altogether clear to me, this new package, which came on January 15, 1902, was labeled Robert

New Members

Henry & Karen Thorne, Pittsburgh



The National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century

is always looking for new members who can prove that they are lineal descendants of an ancestor who lived and served prior to 1701 in one of the original colonies in the geographical area of the present United States.

For further information, contact Sharon R. Capan, President, Three Rivers Chapter, at srdcapan@aol.com.

Register now for the SVHS State College trip, June 11, 12 & 13 (optional),



The Reynolds Mansion, Bellefonte, PA

hosted by B. G. Shields. We'll meet at the Old Sewickley Post Office at 3:00 on Friday afternoon, June 11, to drive to State College, where we'll stay at the Hampton Inn. On Friday evening, dinner will be at the Nittany Lion Inn. Saturday will include a visit to the Centre County Historical Society, an easy walk from our lodgings, followed by a short drive to the Victorian town of Bellefonte. There we'll visit Tallyrand Park, Union Cemetery and the Historical Society. Later we'll have lunch at the 18th century Gamble Mill. After lunch, we'll drive back to Lemont to see the recently restored Granary, which is just down the street from B. G.'s house, and then enjoy a Strawberry Festival in the adjacent public park. Sunday will feature a visit to the Pennsylvania Military Museum in nearby Boalsburg.

DEADLINE FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS IS FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2010.

(See page one of this newsletter for details.)

Please call SVHS Headquarters, 412-741-5315, for additional information.

The following article was written by Duke Moore, son of SVHS Archivist Dorothy M. Moore. The Historical Society recently acquired Mrs. Moore's extensive archives.

MOM IS 90! WOW!

Dorothy Moore was one of the sparks that ignited the Sewickley Valley Historical Society. She recently turned 90. At her birthday party she stated that she had stayed up until midnight the night before to be sure that she lived to see 90.

Dorothy Moore was born prematurely at home on March 1st, 1920. Her premature birth was complicated by the fact that she was allergic to milk. Her mother kept her alive by feeding her the broth of pigeon soup. Her older brother was a sharpshooter with a slingshot and faithfully provided a continuing supply of pigeons.

The early 1920s were the heyday of alcohol prohibition, and moonshiners fought bitterly with rival moonshiners. Her father was the favored supplier for the lucrative market of Sewickley Heights. As such, rivals wanted his territory, and to get it they torched his Fair Oaks farmhouse. Dorothy at that time was just five and had gotten her first pair of shoes. They were kept by the kitchen door to avoid tracking dirt through the house. Unfortunately it was the kitchen that the arsonists set fire to, so as to make the fire look like an accident. The family got out of the house okay, but Dorothy kept trying to run back in to get her shoes. Her brother finally had to lock her in the barn to keep her safe. It has only been in recent years that the moonshiner aspect of the story has come out, because in the old days

it was not considered something to be proud of. Today it is a fascinating piece of lost local history.

As a student at the Fair Oaks Grade School, Dorothy had a voracious appetite for reading. The school at that time did not have a built in library, so Dorothy would walk to the Ambridge Library and read anything and everything. It was a habit that she continued even when attending Leetsdale High School. She would walk from Fair Oaks to Leetsdale to go to school, then walk from school to the library before walking back home. Although her mother approved of school books, she considered all other reading to be only an excuse to avoid farm chores. Consequently, Dorothy hid library books in the bathroom under the ball-and-claw footed bathtub.

As an adult she suffered migraine headaches. Visiting relatives in 1958, she discovered that her sister-in-law's daughter, Jane, had the same problem. Jane had taken up the hobby of coin collecting to help combat the onset of migraines and suggested that Dorothy find a hobby. Dorothy hit upon the idea of doing a family genealogy as a hobby. The idea had come from the then common pastime of letter writing. In letters, relatives and friends often asked questions about family and/or local history. Dorothy would scrutinize old editions of the *Sewickley Herald* in an effort to answer such questions. It was a daunting task, because there

was no index for easy reference. Thereby Dorothy set about creating an index.

She had begun her genealogy hobby by painting a tree on a wall in the guest bedroom. Each leaf was to eventually contain a name and a date. The painting still exists, but the names and dates never got added, because family genealogy quickly evolved into *Herald* [obituary] indexing. By 1964 she had such a stack of handwritten 3 x 5 index cards that she needed a pile of shoeboxes to store them in. By 1973, with her two sons no longer living at home, the dining room was no longer needed as a dining room. Therefore the dining room table became her desk, and buffet drawers became card files.

At that point she stopped into the office of the *Sewickley Herald* to ask the editor, Betty Shields, if the *Herald* had any use for her ever-growing files. B. G. Shields was so impressed that she thought that the files deserved an institution of their own. That was the spark that ignited the formation of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society. Dorothy served a term as a board member and worked as the secretary for the first three years. She continued as the Society's archivist through 2007, at which point her health gave out.

1997 was Dorothy's proudest year, because at that point she had completed indexing [obituaries in] the *Herald* from its inception in 1903 through 1997. By mid-2007



Dorothy Moore in the Sewickley Public Library History Room, 1974

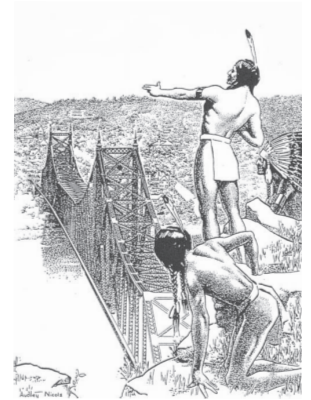
she had fallen behind, but in mid-2008 she overcame her health problems and was able to keep up-to-date through mid-2009. By that time she had created about 100,000 file cards, many written on both sides.

At her 90th birthday party in 2010, Dorothy's only regret was that her hands were too shaky to continue her work as the Sewickley Valley Historical Society archivist. She is always happy to elucidate local history, but lately, with her two sons to visit her, she has been elucidating family history. She jokes, "With all the skeletons rattling in the family closet, you would think that there's a rock 'n roll band in there!"

Sewickley Valley Historical Society
200 Broad Street
Sewickley, PA 15143

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May 2010



SEWICKLEY
CEMETERY 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

SAVE THE DATES!

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, 2010

SATURDAY, MAY 29, NOON - 8:00 PM

SUNDAY, MAY 30, NOON - 4:00 PM

CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT: 63rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

MUSIC: Maidens IV (Celtic Song & Dance)

THEATRE: Mockingbird Theatre Company (a traveling theatre troupe with a horse-drawn stage, presenting a melodrama and variety show)

FOR SALE: Good Food by Fondi's, plus Kettle Corn & Shaved Ice

SELF-GUIDED TOURS of Sewickley Cemetery

Event sponsored by John Dioguardi and Rome Monument