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Portal to the Past

"Preserving Our Past . . . For The Future"

Volume 9 Number 5

MAY 2009

Serving the Local Communities from the original Mifflin Township of 1788: Baldwin, Clairton, Dravosburg, Duquesne, Hays, Homestead, Jefferson Hills, Lincoln Place, Munhall, Pleasant Hills, West Elizabeth, West Homestead, West Mifflin and Whitaker.

A reminder to all — the monthly member meetings are now held on the SECOND MONDAY of the month at 7 p.m. at the West Mifflin Borough building, 3000 Lebanon Church Road, West Mifflin

MAY MEETING ~~ Monday, May 11, 2009 7 p.m.

"DADDIO OF THE RADDIO" - PORKY CHEDWICK

Our guest speaker for the May meeting of our society will be none other than the "Daddio of the Raddio," Porky Chedwick. Chedwick was the first white DJ to present a racially diverse audience in a major eastern American city a steady diet of what were, in the summer of 1948, called "race records." The trail he blazed--some 4 years before the more famous Pennsylvania native, Alan Freed, called the music "rock and roll"--was a dual one. Chedwick's original playlist was comprised of old R&B and gospel records that he had collected over the years, making him the world's first bona fide oldies DJ. He called the records his "dusty discs," since he would literally have to blow the dust off the 78s before he could preview them at the records stores. Record stores had no demand for the records and would often just give them to Chedwick, or he'd rescue them from bargain bins with what little money he could scrape together. Years later, radio stations, record companies and concert promoters would take notice and copy Porky Chedwick's formula, creating the billion-dollar "oldies" rock and roll nostalgia industry which thrives still today.

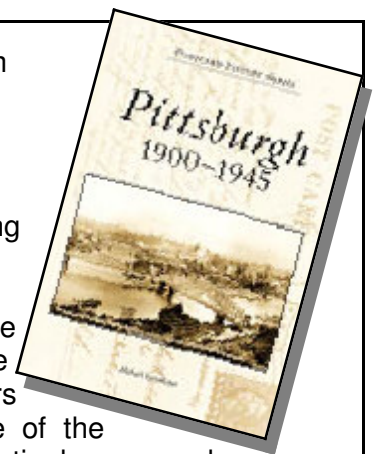


WHAT'S YOUR HISTORY ? Wednesday, May 20, 2009 ~ 7 pm

PITTSBURGH 1900 ~ 1945

Author Michael Eversmeyer is a Pittsburgh architect and historian specializing in historic preservation.

By 1900, downtown Pittsburgh, known as the Golden Triangle, had become a classic central business district at the confluence of three rivers: the Allegheny, the Monongahela, and the Ohio. The valleys of the three rivers were lined with the factories and mills that made Pittsburgh the "forge of the nation." Great industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and George Westinghouse made Pittsburgh the center of the American iron, steel, aluminum, glass, and oil industries. With their success, money poured into Pittsburgh's banks, providing means for the city's growth. The years between 1900 and 1945 witnessed the peak of Pittsburgh's commercial development and industrial might. Pittsburgh: 1900-1945 features postcard views taken during this period and illustrates the power, wealth, and beauty of the city of Pittsburgh during its era of industrial



The following article was submitted by new member Arthur R. Nixon a former Clairton native.

Don't Look Now But There Goes a Clairtonian

Andrew R. Nixon

In 1960, at age 17, after graduating from Clairton High School I took Horace Greeley's advice literally and went west to attend college in Utah. Like many other 17 year olds I was full of wanderlust. I felt I'd been cooped up in a small town all my life and was anxious to see what else was out there. Of course I hadn't figured on the homesick factor so I spent much of my freshman year writing to every friend and family member back home telling all who would listen what a great place Utah was for college. One of my buddies took the bait and joined me, becoming my roommate during my second year. But he fell in love and left to get married and I left to do additional study in Hawaii.

One day while walking the streets of Honolulu I thought I heard my name.

I stopped and looked and lo and behold, two Clairton High School grads were playing pool. The two had joined the army together and were stationed at Hawaii's Schofield Barracks. From that time forward, each time my mother sent me a Clairton Progress newspaper I hitchhiked to the base to share it.

A few years later I was teaching school by day and pumping gas by night in Pocatello, Idaho. About three o'clock one morning a VW with Montana plates pulled in for a fillup. Out stepped a CHS graduate. He had been living in Montana and was en route to relocate to California.

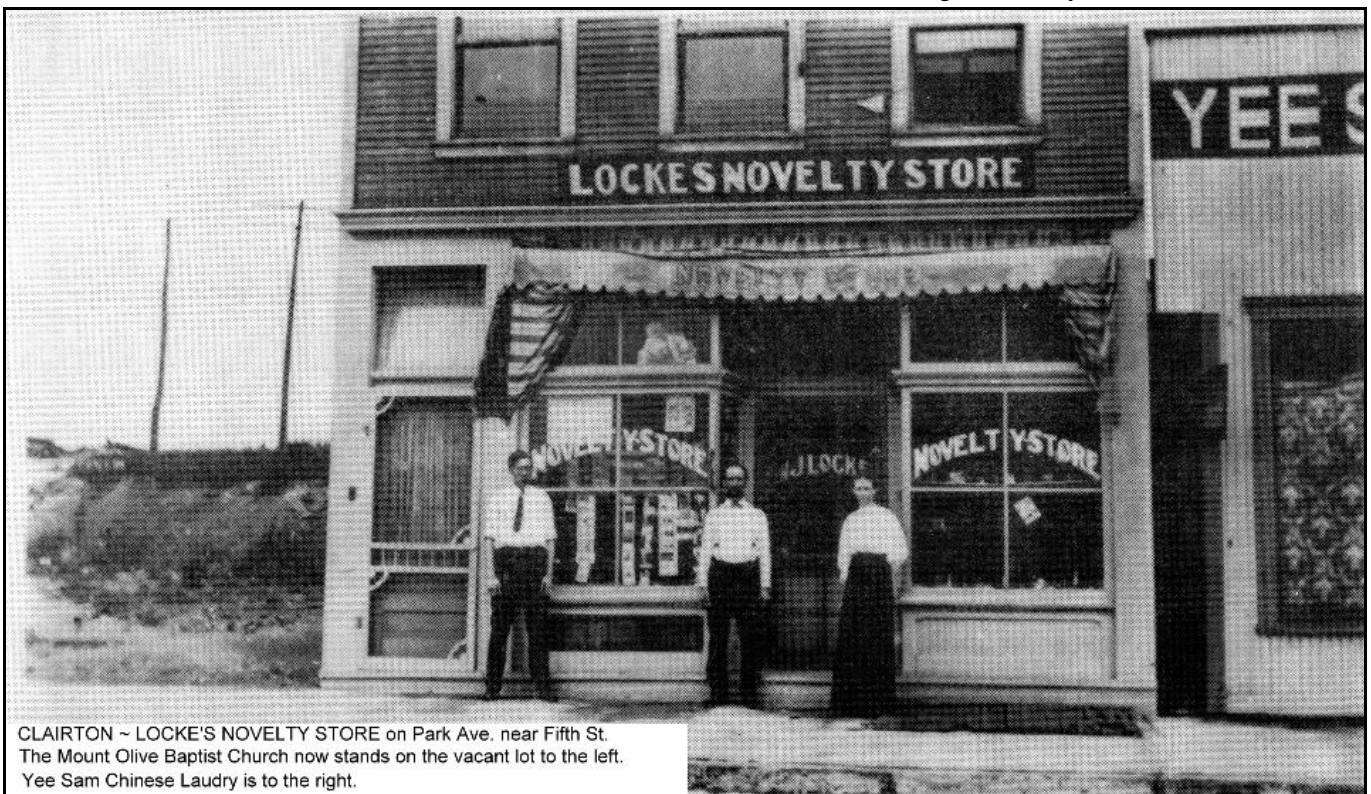
In 1968 I moved to Las Vegas and the stream of Clairtonians continued to pass through like flotsam on the Monongahela River. I stumbled across hometowners in casinos, grocery stores, and at shows. Some were visiting. Others had moved there. Still others were entertainers who were just passing through doing their gigs.

The constant ebb and flow of Clairton residents passing into and out of my life triggered my need to es-

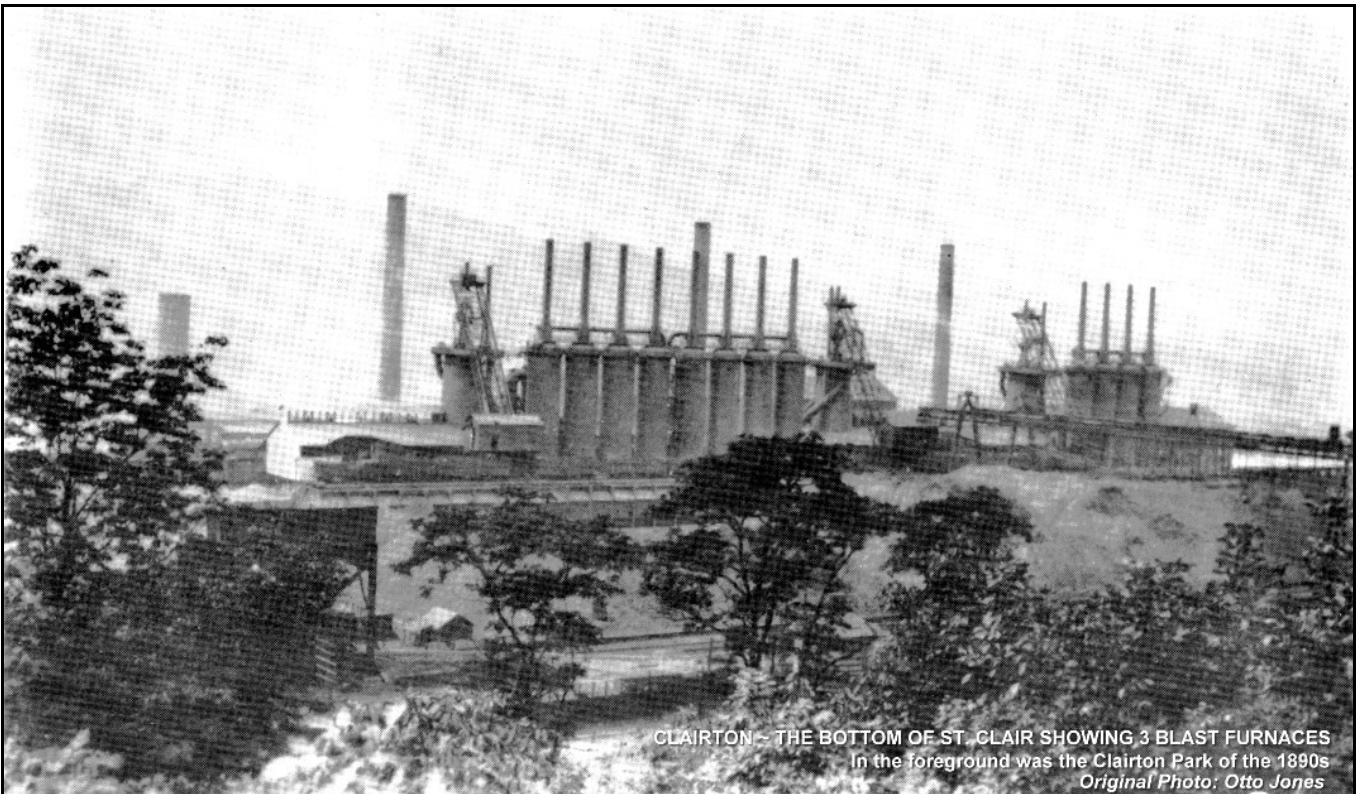
Mifflin Township Historical Society

tablish and maintain a connection with my family and friends who had stayed in the area as well as piquing an interest in the area itself. My own family had a history in Clairton since the early 20th century. But who had come before them? In the decades since I'd left home many changes had occurred. Besides the most obvious economic change with the demise of the steel industry, many changes touched my family personally. The house my grandparents had built near State Street in 1915 had disappeared and the property that was once a garden was overgrown with weeds. The street that abutted their property was closed and also overgrown with weeds. Stores and businesses that had played such an important part of my childhood were gone. I wondered, "If this dramatic change happened since I left Clairton, how much had it changed since before my grandparents arrived?"

The research began in earnest. I discovered that Clairton had once been mostly rural. Its history included the first survey of the land in 1769 and it remained a small rural farming area for the next hundred years or so when coal mining became viable. A glass factory was erected in 1890 and



CLAIRTON - LOCKE'S NOVELTY STORE on Park Ave. near Fifth St. The Mount Olive Baptist Church now stands on the vacant lot to the left. Yee Sam Chinese Laundry is to the right.



the area began to grow. At the end of the century, an era known as the "Gay 90s" Clairton was home to Central Park where the Pittsburgh illuminati came by boat to dance and be entertained. However the property was sold and in the early 1900s the steel industry began to grow, changing the face of Clairton for a century and beyond.

When the little village sought to incorporate as a town in 1903 the name selected was St. Clair. But that name was already taken so the "St." was dropped and the town would be called "Clair Town, or more briefly, "Clairton."

The discovery of such fascinating history was the icing on the cake of me – I was hooked. I had to record my memories just as somebody had taken the time to gather and record the history that I found to be so valuable. On my blog, written under the pseudonym of Dr. Forgot, <http://drforgot.com>, I have included several reflections of Clairton of the 1950s and onward. In addition I have highlighted some of the people from Clairton who have made an impact on society. Priests, doctors, entertainers, university presidents, Congressional Medal of Honor Winners, diplomats, elected

officials, and many others who have breathed the quencher from Clairton's Coke Works, have made an impact on our country and beyond.

This summer my grandson and his wife are expecting their first child and my first great grandchild. Some day she will asks me or her parents or grandparents the inevitable question, "Where did I come from?" The answer will be readily available. The rich history of who she is and who and what came before her will be at her fingertips.

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Honoring Mifflin Township Servicemen

*Pittsburgh Post Gazette
Date 1940s ?*

An honor roll, containing the names of 118 men and one woman from the Thirteenth district of Mifflin township who are serving in the armed forces of the United States, was unveiled at 3 p. m. yesterday on the Homestead-Duquesne road in the Bull Run district. The honor roll was erected and dedicated by the township district's Victory Club. Principal speaker at the dedication was State Senator J. Fremont Cox. The residents of the district took part in a ceremony as shown above as they saluted the U.S. Flag. A parade, featuring Boy Scout Troop I and the Homeville school band, preceded the unveiling.



EDITOR'S NOTE

We know of many war memorials that were in the old Mifflin Township. Do you have any news articles or photos of them?

The Homeville memorial which, when torn down, was mounted on the side of the old West Mifflin Municipal building and then moved to Mitchel Paige Park on Commonwealth

The Bellwood memorial was torn down years ago. It was renewed and rededicated a few years ago by VFW Intrepid Post 914.

The Camden memorial was long gone and a new stone memorial was rededicated a few years ago.

How about those in Munhall, Duquesne, Clairton and others. Send your comments to Jim Hartman via Email hartmanjw@comcast.net



On August 1, 1948, Craig “Porky” Chedwick, from Homestead, Pennsylvania, became the first white DJ on the east coast to present a program of R&B, gospel and jazz, by black artists exclusively.

Unlike most pioneers who followed, relegated to the nightshift, his first efforts were in broad daylight. Porky was already a popular public address announcer at local athletic events and a sports “stringer” for the Homestead newspaper when he read of a small daytime station coming to the suburb. WHOD AM 860, whose manifest would be to provide ethnic and foreign language programming for Pittsburgh’s vast immigrant blue-collar, needed announcers for their debut.

Porky’s reputation was well known by the station’s owners and he was instantly hired to host a 20-minute Saturday program of sports commentary and music of his choosing, sponsored by local auto dealer, Toohey Motors. The music Porky played was so well received, the sports portion was dropped and his “Masterful Rhythm, Blues and Jazz Show” became a half-hour program. It was quickly expanded to five hours, seven days a week and finally occupied the noon-to-five weekday slot as “The Porky Chedwick Show.”

During the summer months, when the station could stay on as late as 8:45 PM, Porky was allowed to fill the hours before sign-off that the station couldn’t sell.

With only 250 watts of daytime

power, the signal was more than sufficient to garner Porky a large following—so much so that Porky’s show eventually became a thorn in the side of 50,000-watt monster KDKA and even competed for listeners with Pirates baseball broadcasts! “The Porky Chedwick Show” became a fixture on AM 860 where it originated in 1948.

The records Porky aired on WHOD were ones he had collected over the years and had been playing at record hops around the city’s racially integrated suburbs, using a single turntable and a borrowed guitar amp.

In Porky’s own Homestead-Munhall neighborhood—described by him as being like a “secluded island” of about 60 homes “with yards infested with children in torn clothes” —a white man playing “Negro music” was nothing special. Poverty had a way of uniting an entire community into an extended family; skin color was of no importance.

The second of ten children, Porky’s parents relied on him to keep his younger siblings entertained and out of trouble. He took on that responsibly with all local kids, using his records to entertain and offer refuge. “I was mainly looking for the gospel sound and down-home rhythm and blues,” remembers Porky, “The songs which spoke of the problems of poor people—that was *my* music.”

In the ’30s and ’40s, “race” or “sepia” records were banished to a record store’s back shelves or bargain bins, since very few were sold. “I used to have to blow the dust off them before I could play them. On the air I called them ‘dusty discs’ and the Porky Chedwick sound was born!”

His “sound” established the vast R&B-based repertoire of uniquely *Pittsburgh* oldies, many of which were never touched by a turntable stylus in any other city. Scores of these records might have been otherwise forgotten because

they were only released on 78 r.p.m., which, by the time radio started to embrace black records, were being phased out in favor of the less fragile 45.

The practice of playing oldies became a novelty, picked up by disc jockeys across America. Record labels emerged, dedicated to meeting the demand for rock and roll nostalgia. (In fact, years later when promoter Richard Nader organized his first major oldies concerts—essentially the catalyst which opened up the floodgate for the ’50s music revival of the 1970s—he cited his influence as none other than his hometown hero, Porky Chedwick!)

By 1949 (interestingly, the year Alan Freed began playing jazz), promoters with long-overlooked black independent record labels had learned of Porky’s success with oldies, so they inundated him with contemporary R&B, which he happily accepted—although oldies would always dominate his playlist.

Nothing could ever make him play a record unless he was confident his “movers and groovers” would dig it; it was a fact that alienated some record company reps, but one that would serve in his defense during the payola investigations. From WHOD’s little studio, situated behind a Homestead candy store, the sounds of Roy Brown, Wynonie Harris and The Dominoes—and their sometimes provocative lyrics—were first played regularly on the east coast by “The Platter Pushin’ Pappa.”

“The Station of Nations,” WHOD, abandoned its ethnic manifest in 1956, when it was sold to Dynamic Broadcasting. The new owners re-christened the station WAMO, an acronym for the rivers Allegheny, Monongahela (literally outside the station’s back door) and Ohio.

WAMO’s format became country, with “The Porky Chedwick Show” the only exception to the twang! Rock and roll had by then captured a national audience and record companies—not just black labels—were ferociously pitching their product to Porky.

THE CITY POOR FARM

The following is continued from the article on the CITY POOR FARM which started in the April 2009 issue from THE LOCAL NEWS of August 1890.

*The Local News
Saturday, August 23, 1890*

"General" Sweitzer Planting Potatoes

The "General" Sweitzer, who was I believed, moved from Allegheny City at the time the inmates were first brought to the present farm. Insane, but quiet to a remarkable degree, so much so that the only word he was known to have uttered during all those years was "bacca" and that only when he was out of the luxury, and if he was not supplied soon, a piece of some part of his coat or pants would supply its place. He would stand for hours looking up with his hands in his pockets and would stand all day unless the overseer would take hold of him and lead him to work, at which he would adhere with diligence until stopped. He was a good farm hand but must be allowed to do it his own way. I remember his way of planting potatoes was by placing one piece at the heel another at the toe of his boot and so on the whole day through and nothing could induce him to vary this certainly systematic way of planting potatoes. General is still living I believe.

Nameless Innocences

But suppose we take a walk through the house, starting on the first floor of the women's ward, the first floor was mainly wash room, nursery, store room, and school room. The nursery for babes, was as you perceive a large airy room full of cribs and cots. Here are the foundlings and other little fellows; that little fellow is Garrison Allen, so named by his being found in Garrison Alley; this is little Jim Carter, he having been found in a cart; this is Tommy Wagoner, from being found under a wagon, and so on, all named from some striking occurrence or place from which he was found or taken. One of those nurses is called Biddie Moss, can hardly be called square but makes a good nurse, but growls a great deal about too many babies and too much boss. No matter when you



would ask Biddie how old she was she would say past two years. Biddie, with her sister Sallie had been inmates for a long time, both feeble minded. This is the school room. There I think you will see as bright and cheery a set of boys and girls as attend the common schools of our cities, some of them extra sharp through with contact with the city world and city manners, and under the care and tuition of Mr. Horton, learn quite as fast as any children of the age, clean and gentlemanly in their manners. The teacher you notice as being an exceedingly polite and polished gentleman nevertheless, and a scholar too; an Englishman by birth, at one time a successful businessman, but the temptation of drink was too strong and he had come here to keep from temptation, and has been here for years, never touched it nor shown the least sign of wanting it, he has care of the boys day and night, as well as teaching all those of both sexes five hours each day.

From the City Farm to Heaven

But we cannot carry long here but come to the second story of the womans ward. This room we call the old ladies room, see some six or eight of them. That old lady there is Mary Land, she is about 89 years old, and a lady in every respect and as you see, very tidy, calm, and with hair as white as the driven snow, and as serene as if she was sitting at her own fireside in her own house. She is of English birth, and the mother of eleven sons, all of whom have gone

before her and she appears to be only waiting to cross the dark river to meet her boys. Mary always wants to be doing something, knitting, etc., to assist in helping the cause of the home.

That old lady is Nancy, though quite old she at this time makes most of the pants and vests worn by the men of the institution. She, however is a victim of the opium habit, taking an ounce of it every day and would take more could she get it. Time and again has the doctor tried to break the terrible habit but in vain. I remember once he by reducing it a little in strength every day though he might succeed, but one cold dreary day Nancy was missing; the roads almost impassable but her inordinate desire made her walk to the city (for there were no railroads then) in order to get the stimulant she so greatly required; so after that the doctor concluded it was no use and Nancy gets her ounce of laudanum daily and while she has it works like a steam engine, making regularly a pair of pants each day, entirely by hand too. All the ladies in this room are old and respectable, and not here through any dissipation, but came here to end their days in peace as you see them.

In the next room is Atchie as we call her, a lunatic, a great talker, but also a good worker. Margaret Atchison and her whole family, husband, and five or six children are all inmates. The father and mother mildly insane but not able to care for themselves, but obedient and willing to do as they are bid and a great help about the premises.

Mary McClance, a very fine old

lady about 80 ears of age, a devout Catholic who through rain or snow would walk weekly to Glenwood to attend her church and even a walk to the city appeared of little moment to her. She has had her grave clothes ready for many years, and looks at them as many a young dame would her wedding outfit.

And here is Dutch Mag, a smart, tidy, little German, quick on her feet as a ferret, and as quick with the knitting needle, and knits yards of lace. Mag makes all or nearly all the comforts used in the house, but she had a peculiarity of losing her spool of thread, and suspicion having been aroused a search was made of her numerous boxes and bundles and enough spool cotton to start a small sized trimming store. Mag, not being of sound mind was naturally much excited when her theft was found out, and it was a long time before she could be prevailed upon to make any more comforts, but a few ounces of tea soon made her forget the grievance which she supposed had been heaped upon her.

The Local News
Saturday, August 30, 1890

MORE QUEER PEOPLE

We will now pass into the men's ward and I may be able to introduce you to some of the characters there.

This room is the men's sitting room and no doubt you think it occupied by a motley assemblage. You perceive they are allowed the privilege of using their pipes here which is a great console to many of them. There are some playing checkers, some dominoes, others reading the newspapers with a crowd of hearers surrounding them, all anxious to know what is happening in the outside world, and commenting on the different attractions that is brought before them.

This is Matthew Finn, who imagines he has not had a wink of sleep for the last three years, but if you watch him closely for a few minutes you will see him nodding himself fast asleep. He has been quite a sufferer; you notice his arm has been lately amputated, which is the third operation on that

member, commencing with a cancerous wart on the thumb, which was taken off and since then the arm has been operated on twice. Poor fellow he is not long for this world.

Mathematician and Dentist

That tall rather fine looking fellow is the lightening calculator, a very peculiar mental phenomenon. Ask him any mathematical problem and he answers it as soon as the question is asked, taking apparently no mental effort or time for any calculation; no difference if the answer runs in billions, it comes out correctly. Time and again have parties come up from the city to investigate and test him, and on no occasion has his answers been found incorrect. He says he cannot account for it himself, but, that what to say, comes as soon as he knows what the question is. He does not appear to have any other gift, can scarcely write his name legibly or add up a column of figures correctly on a slate; but is an expert with the pen knife, making all manner of little trinkets. That which he is now working on is a set of false teeth for an old man in the hospital, made in one piece out of a block of Maple, and is as you perceive a very good imitation of a good set of teeth. He is epileptic. At one time he professes to have traveled with Barnum at fifty dollars a week, he is very crank and as a consequence you see the inmates are not very sociable with him, but leave him a free scope to do what he pleases so far as they are concerned.

The old gentleman, Mr. Dillon, was at one time amongst the best in the city, a good businessman and faithful to his trust in every position, and is said to have been much sought after when good solid honesty was required and now the same may be said of him. He is the messenger of the place, going for the mail and is given commissions by the inmates to buy any little trinkets they need. He is 89 years of age and a consistent Christian, never at any time has he done aught that might bring disgrace upon him or his. And even though he may be considered somewhat childish, is looked up to by all with whom he comes in contact and his word is as good as his bond, as no

one has a suspicion that a falsehood could possibly come from his lips, and honesty appears to be incorporated into his system. He died the same day that Jas. Hays the millionaire did.

Rum's Wreck

This man, Dr. Smith I may call him, is a wreck of what was once a model of physical and mental development, a practicing physician, who was destined to be at the head of his profession and who in his younger days was called upon to consult with such physicians as Dr. McCook, Reiter and others of equal standing. Not many years ago he had charge of the medical department of this Home, having been prevailed upon by his friends to take charge in order to be out of the reach of temptation, which was fast overcoming him, *the love of rum*. But it did not appear to accomplish the end desired, the board were compelled to make a change and after a few years of ups and downs, you see him a poor decrepit man, old far beyond his years, for you would imagine from his appearance he was at least seventy years of age when really he is only 47. With tottering limbs and tongue scarcely able to articulate plainly, has come back as an inmate to live as comfortable as we can make him, until he is called to the other shore. His family connections are amongst the best in the city, and would do anything in their power to help him but the habit has too fast a hold on him, so great that he would sell his very soul if it were possible for a dime. I have seen him drink pure alcohol, enough to kill an ordinary man.

What a lesson here to those who in their young manhood imagine they can successfully cope with the demon "intemperance" and can at any time drink or quit, as seemeth best to them; while here is a man who could now be honored as the head of the medical profession, as has often been acknowledged by those who were at the head, calmly waiting his last honors in the Poor House, which came even while I had charge of that institution; a family wrecked. The wife a beautiful intelligent lady dying, it may be through grief, while the son, I

understand, inheriting the appetite, was fast approaching the end of his father, if he has not providentially been rescued from it during the past few years. When I look back a few years and see the Doctor bending anxiously over the bed of a poor dying little one, it mattered not whether it be *only a pauper* or not and exhibiting as great a desire for its welfare, as though it were the child of a millionaire, it makes my heart sad to know what might have been, had not the accursed stuff got control of him.

Always Praying

See the poor creature on his knees, we call him *Praying Davie*. He was picked up in the streets of Pittsburg, not being able to take care of himself or even tell his name or where he hailed from. He is in that position almost continually day and night, and his prayers are of such a boisterous character as to make him in the end speechless; and the only sound that comes from him is a kind of a groan. I have known him to keep on praying for weeks at a time, until literally exhausted. He has to be compelled to go to the table for his food, and also to retire for the night. Davie disappeared one day and was never heard of since.

Blind Carr is one of most contented men. Totally blind but he is able to get around the house and grounds as readily as the rest of them. His eyes destroyed by an explosion at Zugs Mills many years ago. His family are very attentive to him, but the children all small and as a consequence his wife is unable to keep all at home. He is known now-a-days by many who pass from the Union Depot, as the blind man who stands along the side-walk, presumably selling lead pencils, but taking anything the charitably disposed, see proper to give, always in good humor, taking the dispensations of providence with a philosophical view and making the best of it.

In the men's Hospital we find all manner of complaints. Peter, that large framed man, is nothing more than a child. Has been paralyzed in the lower extremities for years; sets in his large arm chair when placed there, from morning 'till night, demented but good humored, always getting a little

better when asked how he is, and intends taking a walk out doors in the morning. Poor Peter will never leave the house until he is carried to his last resting place. Little is known as to the cause of his present condition, but dissipation is supposed to be the cause.

This is Johnny No Legs, named so by his being bereft of that very necessary means of locomotion. But, he as you see, appears to get around on his little hand crutches with some degree of speed. But the great difficulty with keeping him in order is instead of half soiling his shoes, we find it necessary frequently to half sole his pantaloons. His misfortune was caused by a locomotive performing the amputation, as he was taking a nap on the railroad track while under the influence of liquor. Nothing of his antecedents is known.

This old gentleman Dunkirk, is an example of the vicissitudes of this life, he at one time was considered amongst the best in the eastern part of the state, financially. Belonged to one of the oldest families, (so he represented, when he came here) and floated out here in search of something to do with which to earn his daily bread. You can see refinement written in every linement of his of his countenance, and his every word indicate a well-dedicated mind. Ask him how it comes he is here, the only response is that it is better to let by-gones by by-gones, as no good would be accomplished by raking up his antecedents. I believe he is here under an assumed name as he does not look like a dissipated man, avers he does not know what liquor tastes like, and said one time apparent friends took all he had.

The Local News
Saturday, September 6, 1890

SOME ODD CHARACTERS

This is one of the nurses, though an inmate, as you know we have no hired nurses. John and a very faithful one too, he has an oversight over this ward, and is a really professional nurse, having been at the call of old

Dr. Reiter, for many years, when delicate cases required expertness in nursing and he was noted as being very faithful. He as you perceive, don't look very far advanced in years as his quick, light step indicates considerable vitality, but nevertheless he has passed the four score years mark. But not any disease however repulsive it may be, keeps John from doing his duty to the sufferer, and we all know the doctor's orders will be faithfully carried out.

I may here note that John fell a victim to his duty having become infected with typhus fever from patients of whom we had quite a number at one time, and being too aged to stand the inroad of the disease.

This man Watson is a highly educated intelligent man, and well known by all the newspaper men of the city, having at different times held the post of assistant editor of several of the New York dailies as well as the Pittsburg papers. He had charge of the men's department of the hospital, which, under his supervision, was as tidy and clean as it was possible to make it. Time and again have the newspaper men tried to raise him above his present level but the old habit of taking morphine had too fast a hold of him and every time, he was compelled to return terribly emaciated, and on the verge of madness. Darkness had a peculiar and terrible horror to him, even when at his best it was if all the demons were let loose upon him, so that it was pitiable in the extreme to hear his cries and entreaties for a light. He was not considered insane, but no doubt the terrible habit that had so firm a hold of him was the cause of the fearful hallucination and I feel certain that any one who had to work with such a case, when the morphine delirium was upon him, would pray for strength to keep them from becoming habituated to it, as his was a mind strong, intelligent and as likely to be able to withstand the inroads of any such subtle enemy yet not able at this time to will and to do the thing he so longed to be able to accomplish, break the chains of this terrible habit. If anyone reading this is now experiencing the entrancing delights of the first stage of this habit, let him take warning as the end is misery and death.

Africa's Sable Daughter

"Bunty" Mary was one of the characters of the institution. Short and stout, black as Erubus, old beyond ken; but, ugly even to hideousness though a face that had been burned by her falling in the fire while in an epileptic fit before her advent to this alms house. She was a noted cook, pointing with pride to the manner she cooked for some of the old families of the city, her favorite appeared to be Mrs. Hubley's. She did not remember Gen. Washington, but she said when she first came to Pittsburg there was scarcely a house in it and the rivers "were just only little creeks," and that the "Injuns" were running round thick where Allegheny City now stands. Mary could not be induced to wear shoes or stockings, winter as well as summer the soles of her feet becoming so thick by such habit as to make them impenetrable to almost everything. I remember her limping around one time and asked her what was the matter, and she said she thought she had a corn on the sole of her foot, but upon looking at it I perceived something white and by the use of a knife extracted from it a three-cornered piece of a bowl at least three-fourths of an inch long, which had just commenced to make its way through the flesh. She never used an iron in smoothing her washing, but by folding them smoothly in a small package she, by continually slapping with her hands, brought them to as smooth a surface as though the iron had been the instrument used. Mary took sick one time and on going to see her one day I noticed her making peculiar motions with her head. I asked her what was the matter, when she said, "listen, don't you hear it?" I said no, what is it. Mary? Why, she said, my brain is all dried up to about the size of a marble and is rattling through my skull making a terrible noise, listen! Giving it another shake.

Mary was one of the necessities about the house, always ready and willing to perform any call made upon her, and doing her duty well. Her stories of the old settlers of the city were interesting and nothing pleased her more than to have someone listen to her eulogies upon some of the noted ones of the old times.

Tried to Burn it Down

For a number of years after we first came to the Home it was heated by open grates, a very dangerous idea under any circumstances, but especially where you have so many feeble minded characters to deal with. Of course we always put at least one person in a room that we had confidence in, to see that all things were safe. Still no one could tell at what moment some freak would strike some of them and a fire would be the result. As a consequence I had to sleep with my ears wide open for any unusual noise and it was well that I did, as one night I was awakened by the breaking of glass. Springing from my bed I made my way into the hall when a strong smell of smoke greeted me, following the scent, I found it coming from the women's ward where the mildly insane and idiotic were rooming. By this time a perfect pandemonium reigned, the women were all knocking at their doors and screaming for fear. Getting the door of the room open in which the fire was located, a sight met me which was fearful in the extreme. In the centre of the room was piled the clothing from off the different beds, blazing away in good style, having been set on fire by a woman named Tooney, a woman we always considered safe and trustworthy. My first impulse was to get rid of the fire by throwing the burning quilts, etc., out of the window, paying no attention to anything else, while Mrs. Tooney was paying particular attention to me by beating me over the head with a chair, but fortunately for me, my head was small enough to get between the rungs of it and my shoulders received what was intended for my head. After getting the fire out of the window, I then paid my respects to Mrs. Tooney who, by this time was a furious maniac and I could only get her on the floor and sit on her till help arrived, when we landed her in the lockup to cool off till morning. In the excitement her little boy Patsy, was missed and the terrible thought that she had thrown him out the window came into our minds, but on investigating did not find him

on the pavement but hid in a dark corner of the hallway. The result of this adventure was the putting in of steam heating apparatus at once "a consumption devoutly to be wished."

Mrs. Tooney was ordered to Dixmont where she arrived in a day or two after her escapade and kept safely from doing herself or anyone else any harm.

A Seasonable Chap

September, as we called him on account of his coming to the home in that month, and not being able to get either his name or his residence from him was an out and out Zanke, a tall, angular specimen, good natured, and a natural farmer, came to the institution by swimming the river and took up his residence with us as a matter of course. He was always willing to work, but his method of designating the different pieces of machinery was always a source of amusement to those working with him and he always wanted to carry the horses to water, etc. September one day took a notion into his head to look at the lay of the land on the other side of the river and the first we knew of it was the residents of that side sending word that a perfectly nude man was taking a walk there. Upon investigation, we found that September had disrobed on this side, swam the river and was sight-seeing in that condition but came back without trouble by allowing him to swim back again. He took French leave on us one day, and we never heard of him again.

A Sorrowful Case

Ellen Wilson was a very fine woman, in every respect, but her husband, who at the time held a very responsible position in the Monongahela house and who was very devoted to her at all times, paying her board as well as that of her children, for a long time, but was compelled to place her in safe keeping, as she was subject to periodical attacks of insanity, generally once each month, which lasted at times only a few days, but while under such an attack she was quite violent and entirely changed as to her behavior. I remember once hearing quite a commotion in the yard and found that Ellen had gotten in the third story window, which had no bars in it at the time and was sitting on the sill swinging her feet

on the outside, threatening to jump out. My wife ran and caught her round the body at which Ellen tried her best to get loose and jump, and by the time I got there to assist in getting her in the room again my wife was nearly ready to let go, as she was very hard to hold being perfectly nude and a strong woman beside. We got her pacified and placed her in a safer place. Her husband died about this time and Ellen was obliged to remain in the Home as an inmate in very fact. I knew of no case that excited my pity so much as this, a woman intelligent and refined and well able to earn her own living under ordinary circumstances. By this affliction, after the death of her husband was compelled to become a pauper, and she felt her condition very severely indeed.

A Grim Joke

Old Dummy, we called him, whose name was Michael Bohn, was one of the most faithful creatures and was assigned the duty of helping in the private kitchen making the fires and helping in the preparation of the vegetables, and making himself useful generally. He was deaf and dumb and a cripple, and particularly enjoyed catching anyone in a scrape.

Our first carpenter was a colored man, who made all the shop work needed around the institution as well as all the coffins required. He was scarcely able to walk by leaning on two canes, but could stand by the bench very well and his hands were so shaky that the blows aimed at the head of the nail frequently missed its mark, but though slow, by continued application, he got there all the same, and in fact made some very fine work. I remember once a man was brought to the Home, who though being large, was made extraordinarily so by being swollen all over with dropsy, the flat being given by the doctor that man could not live, Lewis, knowing he had no coffin large enough to suit such a case hobbled up the stairs, took his measure and commenced work on it at once. After several days hard work he succeeded in getting one built the necessary size; but lo! And behold, while Lewis was sweating over his job, the man himself was fighting the disease and improving every day and at last

got well and left the institution, leaving the elephant on Lewis' hands; but not to be outdone, he got privilege to set it up in his room, immediately adjoining the carpenter shop and putting some shelves in it had a very respectable cupboard. But in the course of a few months the party for whom it was made was compelled to return to the farm and the coffin was used as originally intended, by his being its occupant and being buried in it.

A Peculiar Phase

One of the most peculiar case of delirium tremens I had to deal with was Pat Caharty. Pat was a faithful worker while at the Home, but when he got away drink he would, while he could get anyone to give him a drink. At one time he came back to the farm terribly used up and I saw delirium was about take charge of him. I placed him in a barred room so that he could not hurt himself, and waited. I went to him with his supper, he would not eat but lay staring at the foot of the bed, and I asked him what he saw, he said there was half a dozen sisters walking round him, placing candles at his head and feet and that he was dead. Another time he was plodding around the room and said the ceiling was full of brooms and pitchforks and some one was poking through at him. Next time he was trying to get up the chimney which he said a rabbit had gone up and told him to follow, and all such ideas as these haunted him for three or four days, all the time as quiet and peaceable as could be until at last the doctor succeeded in getting him to sleep, when the wearied brain settled into its normal state. I state this as being peculiar from its absence of that horror and terror that almost always accompany the drink delirium and the only case I ever observed (and I have had to handle a good many) that was so child-like in its simplicity.

The Local News
Saturday, September 13, 1890

MORE DARK PICTURES

Emily Gaw, or female preacher, was insane, but how she became so was never entirely known. She was an inveterate talker, so much so that it appeared as if she scarcely slept. At times she would keep her preaching up day and night, for a week at a time. Being perfectly acquainted with the Bible, she would stand at her window at night and quote scripture for hours, and as her mood varied she would hurl anathemas, or blessings upon her auditors. She was a sister-in-law of the notorious Dave Jewell, who committed murder years ago and for which he suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Her family connection, save in this instance, was of the best.

Irama Wassan, a maiden lady of uncertain age, but an extremely jolly one, whose face was continually shining with mirth, whose chin and nose were brought in close proximity when she closed her mouth (which was toothless) had charge of the wash house and ironing room. She spent her entire time keeping them in order, and being a devotee of the pipe she indulged in that frequently, sitting with her elbows on her knees enjoying it the full. Good natured as she was, it required extreme hardihood on the part of any of the inmates to intrude on her domain out of the usual course of washing and ironing days. Irama died, and according to the general opinion, she still inhabited the wash house and ironing room, and it was utterly impossible to get any of the women who had known her, to go into them after dusk. She was one of the ghosts I could not lay so far as the imagination of the inmates were concerned.

Editor's note: Next issue will complete the articles on the City Poor Farm

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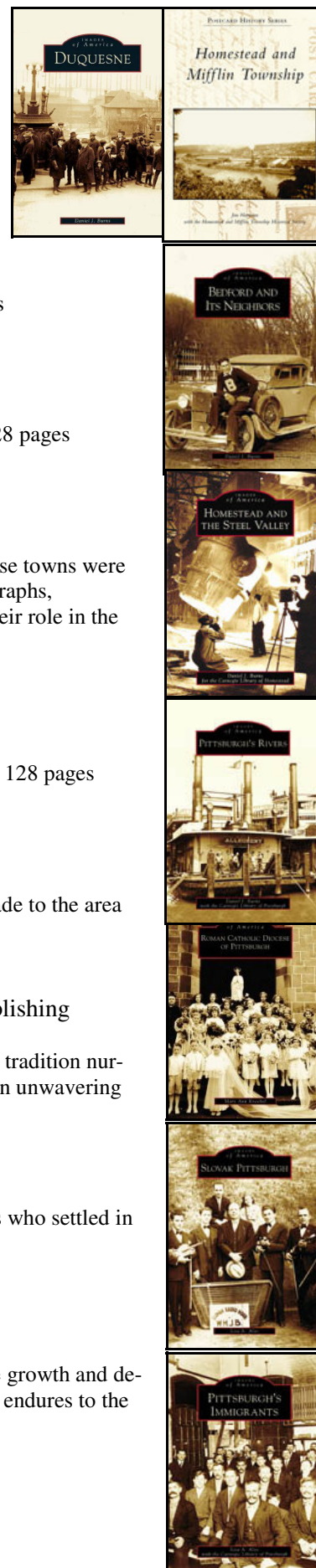
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