

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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SPRING MEETING

The Ben Avon Area Historical Association will host a public meeting on Wednesday evening March 15 at 7:30 in the Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon.

The guest speaker will be Audrey Iacone of the Pennsylvania Room at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

Ms Iacone will speak on the importance of local historical preservation and the collection in the Pennsylvania Room.

Everyone is cordially invited and new members will be welcomed so bring a friend. Light refreshments will follow the program. For further information, please call 734-3906.

DEAR FRIENDS SAYS "THANK YOU"

In a recent note to Jim Knox from Kate Young, thanks and appreciation was expressed to BAAHA for sponsoring Dear Friends in concert on December 12, 1999.

The note read: "You gave all your Dear Friends so much pleasure in the last Millennium for our Christmas concert in Ben Avon that we wanted to be sure you knew it was the highlight of our musical season."

A lovely church, perfect acoustics, your good personal story on the first Christmas tree in Emsworth, a warm response from the audience and the special hospitality--all made it a great event for us. Our thanks again, Jim, and to the members of the Association."

The directors of BAAHA also want to express gratitude to Jim Knox for all his great effort to bring this concert to us. All who attended enjoyed it immensely and felt it was a perfect way to start the holiday season.

BAAHA ARCHIVES

One of the focus areas of the reorganized BAAHA is to organize, catalog, and properly maintain the items that have been donated to us in past years. With the help of the University of Pittsburgh School of Library and Information Science, we have taken a giant step toward this goal. A graduate student was assigned to us to review our archive material and come up with a plan for us to implement. We would like to thank Kim Gneere for her time, for her recommendations, and for the comprehensive manual she put together for us.

Our next step is to find a dedicated place to store the archives and make them available for display and public access.

TOUCHING THE PAST

Is Aunt Ethel's high school graduation program or Dad's old report card still in an old shoe box in your attic? Is Uncle Charlie's Army uniform packed away in your cedar chest? If so, consider donating them to BAAHA.

The Ben Avon Area Historical Association is seeking donations of historically significant materials and memorabilia for display purposes and for an archival collection. The most important criterion for donations is that the materials "say something" about this area.

Historical materials can take many forms such as photographs, scrapbooks, vintage school and church programs, diaries, journals, newspaper clippings, published materials, train schedules, maps, sport & military memorabilia, needlework, tools, toys, and even grandma's old potato masher.

We welcome "letters of memories" of your childhood, school days, family stories and special events.

Please call a BAAHA board member at 412-364-1123 and let us review your items. Your donations will help us document history for future generations.

Dorothea Lynde Dix
(Dorothy) 1802 - 1887:
U.S. Humanitarian and
author of children's
books; established
reforms in prisons and
hospitals in the U.S.,
Europe, and Japan.

She was born in Worcester MA, in 1802 and died in Trenton NJ in 1887. After completing her education, she taught school in Boston until 1834 and visited Europe for the purpose of inspecting the methods of treating criminals and unfortunates. On returning to America, she devoted time to investigating the conditions of lunatics, paupers, and prisoners. By persistent effort she induced favorable legislation for the poor and unfortunate. Petitions to Congress were circulated in all parts of the country at her suggestion asking that 10 million acres of land be appropriated to found asylums for pauper lunatics. A bill to this effect passed Congress, but was vetoed by President Pierce. She was superintendent of hospital nurses at Washington during the Civil War. Among several works published by her are: "Conversation About Common Things" and "Prison and Prison Discipline."

THE DIXMONT HOSPITAL

On March 18, 1848, the Western Pennsylvania Hospital was incorporated. A 24 acre tract of land in the twelfth ward, City of Pittsburgh, was donated by Harmar Denny. A building was constructed in 1850, and opened for patients in January 1853. Thomas Bakewell served a president until 1856, when John Harper became his successor.

The legislature in 1855 appropriated \$10,000 for the treatment of insane patients from 21 Western Pennsylvania counties. An additional \$20,000 was made available for buildings. Miss Dorothea Lynde Dix, who was at the height of her fame as a humanitarian, was invited to come to Pittsburgh to give her advise for a suitable location. A 355 acre site, eight miles from Pittsburgh, on the Ohio River was selected.

In honor of Miss Dix, the site was named Dixmont. (Miss Dix later made her home at the institution, living there for 13 years.) On July 19, 1859, the cornerstone of the new building was laid. Patients were received November 11, 1862

when 113 patients were transferred to it from the Western Pennsylvania Hospital in Pittsburgh. The capacity was 675 beds but at times the total population exceeded 1050.

In 1907 the hospital was known as the Dixmont Hospital for the Insane. The words "for the Insane" were eliminated by a decree of the Allegheny County Common Pleas Court in 1921 and the name changed to the Dixmont Hospital.

The hospital was one of the first in the country to establish a training school for nurses.

During the private operation of Dixmont, it had nine presidents: Thomas Bakewell, John Harper, John A. Harper, Robert Pitcairn, William M. Kennedy, Charles C. Townsend, Richard B. Mellon, James H. Reed, and David A. Reed, and Honorable David A. Reed, grandson of the former Superintendent Joseph A. Reed, and a son of the former President James H. Reed.

The Hospital had two superintendents--Dr. Joseph Allison Reed--having been chosen for that position in 1857 continued until his death in 1864. Dr. Henry A Hutchinson was appointed and continued until his death.

Dixmont became part of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Mental Health Program in 1945. It closed in 1984 and the property was sold for development in 1998.

Submitted by Jim Knox

NOTE: BAAHA is extremely interested in preserving the story of this institution for future generations. If you have any stories or artifacts, we would like to hear about them.

JOCK SUTHERLAND - ALL AMERICAN

Editor's note: The following article was written by Jim Knox as a result of a question from BAAHA member Paula Templeton who picked up a suggestion of this in the publicity surrounding the demolition of Pitt Stadium.

Dr. John Bain Sutherland -- All American famous Pitt football coach from 1924 to 1938 had some local roots in Emsworth.

Dr. Sutherland known fondly as "Jock" immigrated from Cooper-Angus, Scotland, to the United States in 1905 and began his career working at Dixmont Hospital. Many men and women who settled in this community from

Scotland and Ireland were able to find employment at Dixmont Hospital.

While working at Dixmont, "Jock" was attacked by a patient with a woman's corset rod as a weapon. The wound was serious cutting his neck from the left ear to the center of his neck. His life was saved by the late Samuel Agnew of Emsworth -- a member of the hospital staff. This wound left a prominent scar and "Jock" frequently wore a turtle-neck sweater to mitigate questions from others. He later was employed as a police officer by Sewickley Borough.

After attending preparatory school at Oberlin, he enrolled in the University of Pittsburgh. He played football at Pitt where he was coached by Glenn "Pop" Warner (1915-18). After graduating from the Dental School, he was appointed football coach in 1924 -- winning 5, losing 3 and tying 1.

Pitt Stadium, designed by W. S. Hindman (Class 1898), was completed in 1925. The next five years under Sutherland, Pitt won 47, lost 7 and tied 5. The Pitt squad was nationally known as "the Powerhouse Team". Large crowds attended all the games during the 15 years Sutherland was coach. The record was 111 won, 20 lost, and 12 ties. Pitt was 7 times East champs; six times National champs; played four times in the Rose Bowl and 21 players were chosen All-Americans.

The top game was in 1938 when Pitt played Fordham at Pitt Stadium before 68,918 people. These two teams had played previously in New York to scoreless ties in 1935, 36, and 37. In the fourth quarter, the score was 7-3 in favor of Fordham. Pitt then scored 21 points winning 24-13.

Dr. Sutherland was also interested in the Nationality Rooms Program serving as chairman of a fund-raising committee in 1934. He took an active part in the Scottish Clans annual picnic at Kennywood for many years.

Jock's brother Archie also arrived from Scotland and for a while worked at Dixmont. His brother Bill later came to Pittsburgh. Bill married Lisbeth McCammon, a sister of Mrs. Ellen McCammon McCarey who lived in Emsworth.

Jock's sister, Marian Sutherland, came to live in Pittsburgh. She was employed at the Juvenile Court Detention Center on Forbes Avenue in Oakland until her retirement. Her sister Louisa came for a visit from Scotland. She worked as a volunteer with Marion caring for about 25 boys from the Detention Center at a summer camp

facility developed by Judge Gustav Schramm in South Park. The Sutherland sisters returned to Scotland after Marian's retirement from the Detention Center. They were both an excellent influence on young boys under their care.

Dr. John B. Sutherland died in West Penn Hospital in Pittsburgh in April 1948. It was the same West Penn that founded the Western Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane in the mid-nineteenth century, later known as Dixmont, where began the career of this famous football coach and leader of men.

This 'n That

In the past couple of days as we prepare this newsletter for publication, I have fielded a couple of calls.

One involved the discovery of old, glass negatives in a local basement. The other was from a Girl Scout Troop concerning their desire to learn about local history.

We will be sending emissaries and materials as necessary. I mention these as signs that our message is getting out. Our association endeavors to make local history an active, participatory sport.

We have previously mentioned the upcoming (2003) bicentennial of Ohio Township's founding. Obviously the main activities will take place in Ohio Township. But let's remember that other municipalities were originally part of Ohio Township. Isn't that old association reason enough to think up parties or other celebrations by the rest of us? Pass on your ideas to us for promotion!

Tell us a story. If you don't want to write an article, we can have someone visit with you and write it for you. That old story that rolled everyone's eyes when told for the hundredth time IS interesting the first time. We will share it with a new audience. If you do want to write, please do. We are gentle editors and accept material in any form including most PC program formats. Dick Herchenroether

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