

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Vol. XX - Number 2 March, 2005

Center Stage for the greater Avonworth communities



155009C27555

View of the Avonworth and surrounding areas courtesy of Mike Fincke and NASA

Mike Fincke Day February 17, 2005

By Betty Jane Robertson

Our "dream" has come true! A real-live astronaut, Mike Fincke, has returned to his hometown of Emsworth and delighted and inspired all who saw and heard him. Tracy Ferguson's endless communication with NASA, the schools, and the community has paid-off.

With the cooperation of Emsworth Borough Council, headed by Maria West, a warm welcome awaited him – with flags flying and a Welcome Home banner on the borough building.

The Ohio Township Police provided a proper escort for the transportation in a van driven by Doug and donated by Charles Lenzner for the day. How exciting it was for Tracy, Woody Cunningham, our emcee, and

I to ride in the van with Mike and his mother, Alma.

Every school was decorated to the nth degree with eager students there for his arrival. Credit is due the teachers, administrators and building personnel who prepared everyone and everything so well. The behavior of the students demonstrated the great amount of preparation.

Mike worked from 8:45 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. visiting the schools, with a break for a delicious lunch prepared by the parents for the occasion. For one who had traveled in space for 188 days, Mike was the most down-to-earth person that we could imagine. The way he geared his presentation to the different age levels was a sight for a teacher to behold.

Mike's remarks were so positive and up-building that we wished we could hear more of the same in all aspects of life. He credited a loving and supporting family, dreaming accompanied by hard work, being an avid reader, working together on constructive projects, never giving up and trusting and thanking God for being part of his life, and made one feel like shouting "Hallelujah!" To see and hear someone so joyful in his work personify that joy was the key to a successful day. Every autograph and picture was happily performed.

After a dinner break, Mike returned to the high school auditorium at 6:00 p.m. where interested adults and students with their parents congregated. The 171st Air National Guard Honor Guard presented the colors and Kim Hasara sang the National Anthem, starting the meeting in a patriotic vein. The evening audience was as captivated by Mike as those of school age had been. Mike stayed until almost 10:00 p.m. signing autographs and posing for pictures.

My wish, spawned by this great day, is that in our daily lives as we live on this planet Earth (which Mike loves) we can be less

negative in our thinking, more positive in our acting and learn to work together in constructive ways. This whole day was a culmination of three groups working together: Avonworth School District, Ben Avon Area Historical Association and Emsworth Borough Council.

Although most of us will travel to outer space vicariously, Mike's presentation made it seem a reality. May Mike reach the Moon as we continue to watch his progress as a stellar representative for NASA.

The Lincoln Highway

By Bob Klser

YOU PROBABLY KNEW

That the Lincoln highway (US Route 30) was created in 1913, and runs from Times Square to San Francisco.

BUT DID YOU KNOW

That from 1915 to 1927 US Route 30 came right through our Boroughs. Originally, Route 30 crossed the Manchester Bridge (which replaced the "Union Bridge") and wound its way up to California Avenue via Galveston, Western, and Chateau Streets/Avenues on the North Side. [Ed. Note: The northern pier of the Manchester bridge is the one on the river bank near Heinz Field.] The route continued all the way through Bellevue and Avalon and went through what is now Laurel Village, down Brighton Road past the lumber yard to what we know now as the Ohio River Boulevard near Dickson. Then, onto Brighton Road (by Belle Riviere). The name changed to Beaver Road in Emsworth and followed the current Boulevard just by the Avonworth Soccer/Baseball field.

If you have a minute, it is worthwhile to examine the concrete pylons on the boulevard that are about 100 yards south of Camp Horne Road. Their murals depict the portage railway near Altoona, and the NEW ORLEANS Steamboat, built in Pittsburgh.

For this period, Route 30 essentially ran along the river, down as far as Chester, West Virginia.

However, in 1927, the route from downtown Pittsburgh switched to Steuben Street, up through Crafton. Now it runs through the Fort Pitt Tunnels, up (the Parkway west) to Route 60, and veers off just before Robinson Town Shopping Center and the Pointe, and heads west towards Clinton. If you are traveling west, and are tired of interstates, you might have a wonderful ride on old US Route 30.

THINGS YOU NEVER WONDERED ABOUT AS YOU DROVE HOME FROM TOWN ON THE OHIO RIVER BOULEVARD

by Bob Kiser

For several years, I have wondered about the concrete piers on the left (or river) side of the Boulevard, and just past the small Duquesne Light Substation (The Hiawatha Substation) west of the McKees Rocks Bridge. Here is what I found, and where I found it.

In the late 1920s Allegheny County replaced the O'Donovan Bridge with the McKees Rocks Bridge, (basically right alongside it). At this time, Route 30 ran along California Avenue, from the North side, through Bellevue, and down past the Ben Avon Lumber Company, back to Brighton Road, and down towards Sewickley on the "River Road."

Anyhow, the Ohio River Boulevard was included in the bridge project, from the North Side and north to Emsworth. Up till then, the Boulevard north of the O'Donovan Bridge did not exist. Coming out from town, and passing the McKees Rocks Bridge, you now notice that you pass over the Verner Hollow Bridge, then on the left you see the small Hiawatha Substation, and then the concrete piers. There are 10 of them, measuring about 12 feet high, tapering up from square bases 6 to 8 feet on each side.

These piers are hollow, and have doors, I can only imagine these "rooms" held valves and other equipment. Interestingly, the area is thick with deer droppings, and unfortunately also contains a dead deer which is curious, this close to downtown Pittsburgh. In any case, the concrete piers were

the bases for the steel framework that held large water tanks for the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Remember that this was the steam engine era, before diesels, and water was loaded into the steam engines by way of pipes running down the hill to the train tracks in order that they could make the climb towards the city of Pittsburgh, especially if they were hauling coal to Brunots Island. Brunots Island is the site of a Duquesne Light power plant accessed by the train trestle you see on the right (traveling toward downtown) shortly before the exit for Marshall Avenue and Chateau Street.

These tanks replaced earlier tanks that were located beside the tracks at the base of the hill. (ie over the hill from the new tanks.)

Where I discovered all this information was from Bill Shaw, who was kind enough to loan me a wonderful booklet issued in 1931 by Allegheny County. Its title is :McKEES ROCKS BRIDGE OHIO RIVER BOULEVARD.

Much of this "history" is not all that old, and I think we are smart if we look around, and write things down. If you see a "project" it might just be waiting for you to write about it. .

In Sewickley

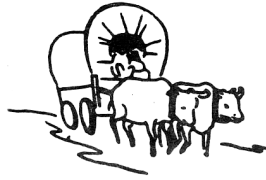
The Sewickley Valley Historical Society meeting in April will interest students of architecture. The program is *Henry Hobson Richardson and his Heirs* and the speaker is Albert M. Tannler of Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation.

The program is scheduled for Wednesday, April 27 at 7:30 p.m. in the Old Sewickley Post Office.

We appreciate your support and that of everyone who sends donations in addition to the mailing list dues.

Jane Morgan	Jacksonville FL
Janet & Mark Shaffer	Franklin Park
Janet White Buckley	Wichita KS
Virginia Niemela	Newtown Square PA
Len & Barbara Barcoucky	BA
Viola Shoup Ohler	Harmony PA
Margaret Buzza	BA
Kathleen Elder	BA

Ben Avon Area Historical Association
 c/o 136 Dickson Avenue
 Ben Avon
 Pittsburgh, PA 15202



Please Join Us!

Jim & Marge Miller	BA
Beverly & Thomas Leonard	St Cloud FL
Nancy Nuttall	BA
John Suskewicz	Ohio Twp
Mary Ellen & Dave Davisson	BA
Beth McNeil Johnson	Nokomis FL
Mary Lou Ramsey	Ft. Lauderdale FL
Norma Grooves	Lavalle MD
Ed & Jan Steinhauser	BA
Jim & Bonnie Bass	Ross Twp
Evelyn Wilcox	BA
Nelson & Carol Craige	BA
Brian Jensen	BA
Warren & Verna Kuhlber	Aleppo Twp
Lawrence W Snively Jr	Rockville MD
Marilyn Simon	Kilbuck
Jim & Dodie Senior	BA
Jean Buckman	BA
Norma Grooms	Lavale MD
Ed & Mary Ann Graf	Pittsburgh
John & Suzanne Graf	BA
Tim & Karen Graf	Alexandria VA

Ben Avon Historical Association c/o 136 Dickson Avenue, Ben Avon PA 15202			
Name:			
Address:			
Boro/Township			
Phone:			
Membership:	Family \$10	Indiv. \$5	Other
I would be interested in helping with:			
Articles for Newsletter			
Short Projects or Jobs			
Log House Maintenance			
Publicity			