

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Vol. XXVI - Number 4, May, 2011



www.benavon.com/BAAHA/
mailto: baaha@benavon.org

Memorial Day -- May 30th

We continue our Memorial Day tradition of inviting the public to visit the Log House (Western Avenue at the Emsworth Lock and Dam). Plan to stop by following the Memorial service at Lance Cpl. Patrick B. Kenny field. Find the pedestrian tunnel under the boulevard and it is only a short walk from the field.

The Dickson Log House will be open from the close of the Memorial Day program until 1:30 PM.

Historically U.S. military families are unique among other nations' in that they serve to preserve our Constitution. Their missions and objectives are determined by civilians elected by Constitutional rule of law. Their sacrifices in that pursuit are truly selfless and worthy of our gratitude.

Moving OUT!

By Jean Henderson,
BAAHA board

Here's a personal nightmare of mine!! There I am, surrounded by empty packing boxes, knowing that the moving van is waiting outside on Dickson Avenue and I have four floors of STUFF to pack that's been accumulating for decades!! What to do with all our STUFF??

Howard and Carol Fisher faced that same dilemma during the summer of

2010 when they moved from their home on Penhurst Road in Ben Avon Heights to Brevard, NC. Howard had lived in that house as a child with his parents, Howard and Dorothy (Schleid) Fisher, until he went off to college. Then he moved back into the same house in 1979 with Carol. So, for more than 50 years, Howard and his STUFF were in the same house! Howard told me as I was conducting an oral history interview for BAAHA, "I'm starting to get moss on me so I figure it's time to move!"

It was an exciting time for them, but a sad one for all their friends and neighbors of over half a century. But, indeed, such a transition time can be of great benefit to BAAHA!

In the midst of cleaning out drawers, Howard came across a packet of letters his Mother had kept – letters written to him as a child from his fifth grade school friends while he was visiting his grandparents in Coral Gables FL. Every winter, he and his Mother would take the train to Florida for six weeks. His teacher in Ben Avon would send down his homework assignments; that was his morning activity before he could go out and play in the Florida sun!

The teacher also had the class write letters to Howard as a penmanship exercise ... and Howard found them, among all his STUFF! His Mother had

even saved the envelopes, each with a 3 cent stamp. Here they are – we're printing them exactly as they were written – mistakes and all. Maybe you'll recognize some of the authors' names!!

7219 Perrysville Ave
Ben Avon Pgh (2) PA

March 9, 1948

Dear Howdy, I hope you are feeling fine and having a lot of fun. There is nothing much I can tell you but I really miss you. We have just had a little but of snow. We are doing the usual thing – slavery of Arithmetic, Reading, Elingish, Spelling, Health, History. These weeks are going very fast, that is why school is not so bad now.

Your Friend, Fred Stout III

PS School is no fun whihout you.

PSS BE BACK FOR MY BIRTHDAY

7012 Ohio River Blvd

March 5, 1948

Hi Howdy, I hope you are having a wonderful time in Florida. I hope you like it there because I'm sure I'd like to be there too. It must be nice there because lately you don't know what the weather is going to be up here.

Yesterday we got are new history books. I hope you will like them because I'm sure the kids up here like them better for these books tell more what has happened later than the other books, Life in Early America.

Please come back soon, write, write me soon too.

With love, Laura Bartley

7320 Terrace Ave
Ben Avon PA

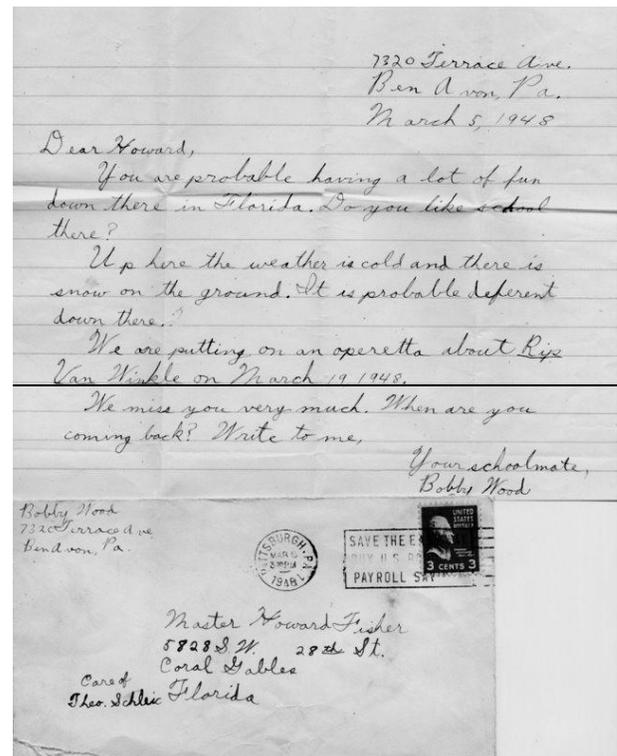
March 5, 1948

Dear Howard, You are probable having a lot of fun down there in Florida. Do you like school there?

Up here the weather is cold and there is snow on the ground. It is probable deferent down there. We are putting on an operetta about Rip Van Winkle on March 19, 1948.

We miss you very much. When are you coming back? Write to me,

Your schoolmate, Bobby Wood.



7011 Flaccus Road
Ben Avon Pittsburg (2) Pa

March 4, 1948

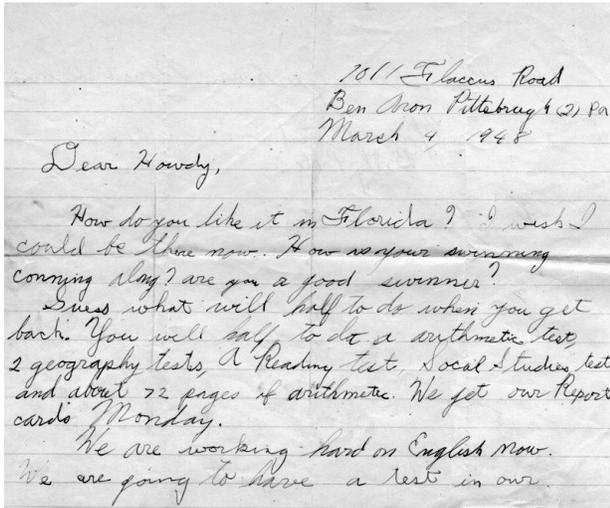
Dear Howdy, how do you like it in Florida? I wish I could be there now. How is your swinning coming along? Are you a good swinner?

Guess what will half to do when you get back. You will half to do a arithmetic test, 2 geography tests, a reading test, Social Studies test and about 71 pages of arithmetic. We get our Report cards Monday. We are working hard on English now.

We are going to have a test in our Spelling the salfernoon. Must be liveng you now.

Your freind, Billy Pyle.

PS Please write back.



50 Oxford Road
Pgh PA

March 5, 1948

Dear Howdy, How much fun are you having in Florida? Are you swimming every day? Have you run into any snakes?

Every things the same on the hghts, except Steve and Sparkie have built a hotel in the woods and cost is 25 cents a day. In cubs we learned 2 new games one is called hot hand. You have a group of kids gather around the person who is it. One kid give the person a swat on the tail, then the person turns around and tries to guess who did and if he does the person who did goes in and take it, it, but if he doesn't he has to take it it again. The other game is heavy heavy hangs over you head. You play it by collecting something form

everyone and take it out of the room and the first person closes his eyes and the person brings it in again. If the person guesses what's hang over his head gets to keep the thing till the end of the game and then gives it back, but if he dosen't guess he has to pay a consaquince. The person who has the most things at the end of the game wins.

If you come looking for Steve look out. There are 4 waterguns around. They all hold 150 shots and shoot 30 feet or more.

Your Friend, Dick. (Snively)

PS was my seal broken before you opened my letter.

1015 Norwood Ave
Pgh PA

March 5, 1948

Dear Howdy, I hope you are having a nice time down in Fla. I know your weather is nicer than ours. Our weather you never no what it is going to be. It is snowing today.

We got new history books there names are Life in Modern America. The teacher says they will be more inresting that Life in Early America, America. I hope you like the book.

Write to me soon.

With love, Susan Stanley

These letters are a charming remembrance of childhood in the 1940's in our community. Howard also donated to BAAHA a 1955 senior class photo taken in front of the US Capitol Building in Washington DC. BAAHA is very grateful to the Fishers for these invaluable gifts.

And now, a request should the moving van be waiting outside your home! Your STUFF might have historical value for our community. We can arrange a pick up, so call 412-719-2731 or email to baaha@benavon.org.

BAAHA Links: History and Landmarks

by John Warren

This spring, if you would like to learn more about the history of Pittsburgh, we recommend shutting down the computer and taking a walk around our downtown streets. Downtown Pittsburgh is compact and walkable – more so than just about any city in the country.

Before you shut down the computer, however, you should visit a page <http://www.phlf.org/phlf-tours-events/self-guided-tours> at the website of the **Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation (PHLF)**. From that page, you can print five different two-page booklets, each describing a different self-guided walk in downtown Pittsburgh. The topics are: Grant Street, Fourth Avenue, Penn & Liberty, Market Square, and Bridges & River Shores.

Please note that these booklets were prepared in 2010, and they include some information about guided tours that were offered last year, so disregard those dates!

To check on guided tours and other events scheduled for 2011, click on the 'List View of Events' link under 'Tours and Events' on the menu at the top of the page. The 'List View' page provides dates and descriptions of upcoming guided walks and other events. You can register for an event and (if there is a fee) charge your ticket to a credit card. The page includes information about PHLF's free self-guided tours of the Old Allegheny County Jail Museum.

Impact of PHLF—a brief detour

Since the organization's founding in 1964, PHLF has been this region's leading voice in promoting historic preservation and neighborhood revitalization. Assistance from PHLF was

vital to BAAHA at one critical point in our organization's history. It was the Summer of 1984 when Gladys Phillips learned a house on Western Avenue would be demolished in order to make room for a new building. Knowing this house contained a log portion she worked with the owner to buy the logs and a small plot of land. Heritage Restoration was engaged to disassemble and reassemble the logs.

She also needed money. PHLF provided \$10,000, interest free if repaid in six months. That liquidity got everything moving. Including rounding up local support to incorporate BAAHA and raise the money to repay the loan and other expenses. The PHLF promissory note was issued August 10, 1984 and repaid in full February 10, 1985.

Support for Architectural Historians

One of the greatest contributions that PHLF has made to the Western Pennsylvania region was its support for the work of two outstanding architectural historians, James Van Trump (1908 – 1995) and Walter Kidney (1932 – 2005). In this article, we will highlight a couple of books by each man and suggest some websites that would complement your reading of those books.

If you lived in Pittsburgh during the Seventies and Eighties, you probably remember James Van Trump. He was one of our most recognizable public figures. Walter Kidney kept a much lower profile. In Kidney's obituary, Patricia Lowry of the Post-Gazette contrasted the two men: "With the death of his sometime collaborator at Landmarks, James Denholm Van Trump, in 1995, Mr. Kidney inherited the mantle of dean of Pittsburgh architectural historians. The two couldn't have been more different in demeanor, especially in their later years.

Mr. Van Trump – Jamie, as almost everyone knew him from his television appearances – was flamboyant and outspoken, with muttonchops and long, wild white hair. Mr. Kidney, who kept his hair closely cropped, spoke in quiet, measured tones and nurtured a droll sense of humor.”

Each man, in his own way, was a powerful advocate for historic preservation, making his case with eloquence and authority, in person and in print. Follow this link <http://www.phlf.org/landmarks-store> to a section of the PHLF website that describes most of their books. Circulating copies of all the books highlighted in this article are available from the Carnegie Library system.

James Van Trump

Van Trump was born in East Liberty and educated at Carnegie Tech and Pitt. Along with Arthur Ziegler, he founded PHLF in 1964. One of the organization’s first projects was to document historic buildings in Allegheny County. If you check out the Van Trump-Ziegler book, Landmark Architecture of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (1967), you should also check out – to see what difference several decades of preservation advocacy had made – the first successor book that Kidney produced, Landmark Architecture: Pittsburgh and Allegheny County (1985), or the version he published a dozen years later, Pittsburgh’s Landmark Architecture: The Historic Buildings of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County (1997).

For more photographs of landmark buildings, browse the image collections at the Historic Pittsburgh website <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/images/pittsburgh/collections.html> . The photographs there document the construction of

Allegheny Observatory, the William Penn Hotel, and other notable buildings.

Van Trump’s Life and Architecture in Pittsburgh is a book to be savored. Published by PHLF in 1983 to mark the author’s 75th birthday, the book is a collection of 64 short essays – material composed for booklets, magazines, and radio commentaries – written over a 25-year period. Ziegler wrote the introduction and Kidney, who edited the collection, dug out nearly 100 photographs to illustrate the essays.

Some of the essays stray from the subject of architecture to focus on Van Trump’s recollections of what it was like to be a kid growing up in East Liberty at the time of World War I. For instance, he describes how, on a hot summer day, he would “lie in wait for the iceman’s wagon with its sleepy horse. The iceman was a hulking, good-natured man who wore a piece of soaking burlap over one shoulder where he carried huge cakes of ice up the flights of steps in the apartment house. While he was scaling the heights, my little friends and I would raid the cold, splintery interior of the wagon, hunting for broken pieces of ice which we would carry off. How wonderful on a hot day were these icy fragments!”

Another essay includes Van Trump’s memories of catching the double-decker trolley (photo on next page) at Penn and Highland and riding to Highland Park – on the top deck, of course (“flying was never as good as this”). You can complement what he wrote about the park by paging through this entry on the blog of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy <http://pittsburghparks.wordpress.com/2009/07/19/a-glimpse-into-the-past/> . If you poke around that blog, using the index, you can find a similar entry on Riverview

Park, plus a lot of good contemporary material.

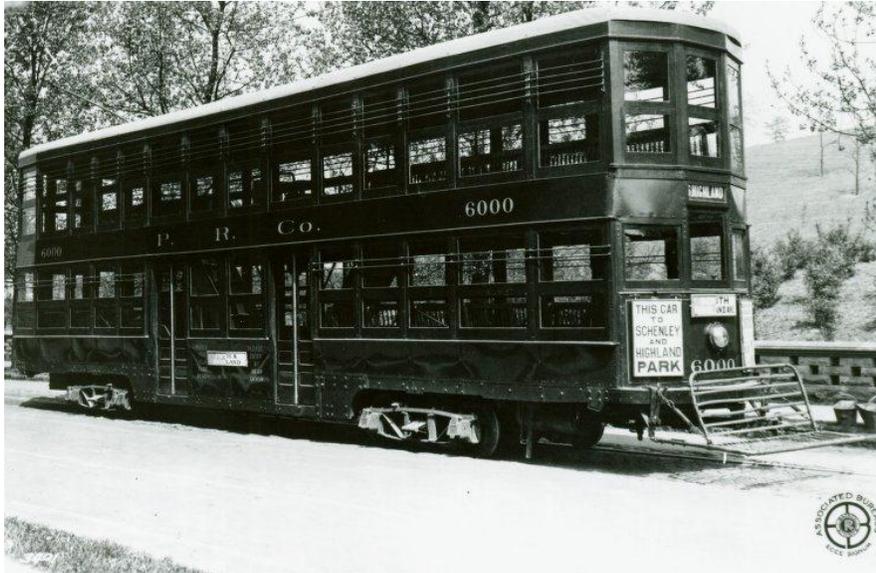
Walter Kidney

Kidney grew up in Johnstown and visited Pittsburgh often. He got to know Van Trump and Ziegler in the Sixties, but didn't settle down here until 1978.

To create Allegheny Cemetery: A Romantic Landscape in Pittsburgh (1990), Kidney joined forces with the renowned Pittsburgh photographer, Clyde Hare. Founded in 1844, Allegheny was the first example in Pittsburgh of the "rural cemetery" that was pioneered at Mount Auburn near Boston http://www.mountauburn.org/national_landmark/history.cfm.

For additional photographs of the landscape and monuments at Allegheny (and Union Dale, which was also a product of the rural cemetery movement), we recommend a visit to the blog <http://fatherpitt.wordpress.com> operated by a local photographer who calls himself Father Pitt. For the Allegheny and Union Dale photographs, click 'Cemeteries' in the index on the right.

But we bet you won't stop there. The Father Pitt site is full of treasures for anyone interested in Pittsburgh's



This double-decker trolley began service on the Highland Avenue line in 1913, when James Van Trump was five. The trolley is described as the largest in the world, seating 110 people. It ran on the line until 1924.

architecture and natural beauty. You will find pictures there that relate to every book discussed in this article.

This article is the fourth in a series spotlighting websites which focus on local history, and thus might

be interesting to readers of this newsletter.

As you may know, each issue of the newsletter can be found at our website <http://benavon.com/BAAHA/baaha>. Thanks to Jeff Cieslak (our webmaster), you can read the newsletter online as an HTML page or display it as a PDF file. The PDF version can also be printed or downloaded. Share it with family and friends, and convince them to join in supporting BAAHA! And when reading online, the numerous links we provide in these articles are only a click away!

Short Items

Anniversaries

One board member often asks "What anniversaries are we forgetting?"

April 12, 1861 was the day South Carolina began shelling Fort Sumter. This officially began the active hostilities of our Civil War. Naturally there will be many events during the next four years as 150th anniversaries of various battles

and so on are remembered. Senator John Heinz History Center is a partner in a Pennsylvania wide planning group. You can find events by browsing to www.pacivilwar150.com and looking for the Events Calendar link. The site also has articles and other links to information about the great conflict.

Correspondence

We remain surprised by the variety in the notes sent to our email address. One asked for information about the Kon-Tiki Lounge. This was the restaurant and bar business in the Avalon Motel on Ohio River Boulevard. I understand it had a nice view of the river, but that's the extent of my knowledge.

Another note was sent looking for aerial photos of the Avonworth area. Not too hard to find generally, but this writer wanted pre-1940 photos specifically.

Sometimes queries are genealogical searches. "Did we know anything about Benjamin Frederick Wilson?" This man lived 1830-1896 in or near Glen Osborne. He bred dogs and was known for an English Setter named "Count Noble." The Ben Avon connection was thought to be to another dog expert, Herb Cahoon.

We know a little of a Mary Jane Cahoon, thought to be Herb's niece, but nothing specific on Herb. Meanwhile we learned and passed back the information that Elwin G. Smith (founder of the steel erection and fabrication business in Emsworth) also owned English Settlers used in field trials.

A paralegal at a Philadelphia law firm wanted information on the business incorporated 10/25/1945 at 7219-7221 Church Avenue as Ben Avon Motor Sales, Inc. That is the address of the present volunteer fire company garage and Fire Escape coffee shop.

Most of you older supporters know it originally was built for Hamilton Motors (1925) to expand the business started across Church Avenue in 1913. By the 1950s it was a Ford dealership. Lyons Ford was the final name when it moved to Bellevue. Ferry Electric used the property for many years, then a private family and finally a period of vacancy before the current occupants moved in.

Why the interest in Ben Avon Motor Sales? I wish I knew but never found out.

We also received a nice autobiographical essay written by Ralph "Pete" Peters for his grandchildren. This fits well with the transcripts of oral history interviews we are collecting.

Natural Life

A resident of the river side of the Ohio River Boulevard asked if we had seen a bald eagle? Looking into it

a bit it turns out an eagle nest is



located south of the river. We are part of the area hunted for food. This photo was taken by an environmental manager of Neville Chemical. Although not showing in this long distance photo, the eagle is eating a fish pinned by his talons to the tree limb.

Send your note to baaha@benavon.org

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



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Renewing Members – THANK YOU!

Lawrence W Snively Jr	Rockville MD
Charles & Sally Davis	BA
Edward & Mary Agnes Birkholz	BA
Tom & Janet Jackson	BAH
Mike Cozza	BA
George & Roberta Maruschock	BA
Lanis Liggett	Coraopolis PA
Bil & Barb Millar	Falls Church VA
Martha Huddy	Williamsport PA
Bill & Nancy Trondle	BA
Dan & Wendy Herchenroether	BA
Donald R Pierce	Fullerton CA
Jane & John Angelini	BA
Marc Fisher	BA
Albert Keller	Towson MD
Mary Elizabeth Colombo	BA
Nelson & Carol Craig	BA
Elizabeth Kern	BA
Leo Stember	Baldwin PA
Carolyn & Phil Wodzinski	BA
Thelma Woelfel	BA
Gary Waldron	Omaha NE

Ben Avon Area Historical Association c/o 136 Dickson Avenue, Ben Avon, PA 15202 baaha@benavon.org	
Name:	
Address:	
City, State, Zip:	
Local Municipality:	
Phone:	
Email address:	
Members (\$10/\$20)	Subscribers (from \$50)
Patrons (from \$200)	Benefactors (\$500+)

The month/year on your mailing label indicates the last time we received a contribution from you.
 Thank you for supporting BAAHA

Think about adding your name by joining BAAHA