

THE SOUTH PARK HISTORIAN

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GREAT PROGRAMS !



Historical Society's Program Chairman George Bercik (right) with author and historian, Gilbert Balliard.

March Program - At the March meeting, local historian and author, Gilbert Balliard, started his discussion with the early history of Ginger Hill, PA, including how the area was named. Gilbert, who was born at Ginger Hill, talked about the Frick Coal Company's Star Mine, the 75 company-owned duplex homes called "Patch Town," and Miss Anna George. The mine was located where the Mathies Mine is today, and the company houses were located two miles from the mine. The houses were lighted by kerosene lamps, and used coal stoves for cooking and heating. The houses of "Patch Town" were torn down during World War II, and the lumber from the houses was sold.

During the Great Depression, Gilbert was employed

by the rich and prominent, Miss Anna George, who owned a mansion at Ginger Hill. The house had 18 rooms and 6 bathrooms. She employed 15 servants and hired hands.

February Meeting - The February meeting was dedicated to the business of the Historical Society. Items discussed at this meeting were Community Day, fund-raising, archiving, and other items that are pertinent to the success of the Society.

January Program - A very interesting program on the history of steamboats was presented by John Cuddy. His talk was illustrated by model boats that were built in detail by Clarence Domer. John discussed early river transportation and the various types of boats that were used for commerce and passenger travel.

New Members

The South Park Historical Society extends a warm welcome to our newest members:

Inez Campbell	Tara Mulkern
Danielle Hunter	Stephanie Onodi
Kristen McGarr	Gemma Pantanella
Jen Kalogeris	William Reddy
Andy Kubis	Marci Snee
Lire Massimino	Jackie Weber

A Special Thanks

We all enjoy and appreciate the programs and speakers that George Bercik, our Program Chairman, schedules for our meetings. He does a terrific job at a difficult task. George, we all thank you.

SULLY'S POOL - A REVISIT

By Virginia Whitfield

In 1932 (70 years ago), Allegheny County's South Park opened a swimming pool on Corrigan Drive. At that time, Afro-Americans were not permitted to use this facility. In 1938, Sully's Pool was opened to accommodate the Black population of Allegheny County. There were other privately owned swimming pools in the area, but Blacks were not permitted to use them.

SULLY'S POOL was more than a swimming pool. It was a gathering place for Black families all over Allegheny County and as far away as Beaver Falls, Brownsville, Uniontown, and Washington County. My recollections go back to 1939 when we looked forward to going to Sully's Pool for family picnics in the summer. I sat in the bleacher area outside the fenced in pool and watched everyone swimming. There was a kiddie pool, but I did not venture in. One lifeguard was assigned during the week to give swimming lessons. My father signed my brother up for lessons, and at summer's end, he had mastered the high diving board. When I turned 12, my father took me to the Company Store to get a swim suit so I could learn to swim. I went for one lesson, but could not put my head under water. I told the lifeguard that I would not return for future lessons. So as a teenager, my visits to Sully's Pool were purely social.

All around the pool area, there were picnic tables under the trees and a pavilion up in the wooded area. Up behind the pool was a flat area where softball games were played. Sometimes organized teams from various neighborhoods would challenge each other, and crowds of people would come out to watch. There was a house (100 Acre House) between the pool area and "THE BARN." Refreshments were sold in the basement level, and there was also a juke box for music lovers. People bought their refreshments and sat in the grass or on the upper porch, or they went inside where some played cards and checkers or just socialized. But the "Barn" was the place to be. It was open only on the weekends and holidays. Around 2:00 P.M., girls would gather to learn the latest dance steps. Around 5:00 P.M., the crowd started to fill the room, and by 7:30 P.M., when the pool closed, the "Barn" would be overflowing. They danced until closing time (about 11:00 P.M.).

Music was supplied by a juke box, which contained the latest R & B tunes. A man named Lee Woods, who lived in Library and was a motorman in the Montour 10 Mine, supplied and serviced juke boxes all up and down the Mon Valley. In the summer, the juke box at Sully's Pool was his priority. He was called at home if there was a problem, and he was there in 15 minutes to fix it. Sully's Pool was not all about swimming, dancing and making new friends. Black organizations from all around the County held special events there. These included fashion shows, beauty contests by the pool, marching bands, private picnics, etc.

There was no public transportation to Sully's Pool. You might ask how all these people got there. They came by cars, trucks and buses. My father had a panel truck in which he installed two benches. He used this to drive us to the pool, often times making several trips on a Sunday. He had one stipulation, be ready at a designated time and location in the parking lot for the return trip home. No one ever missed his or her ride home.

In the 1970's, Black leaders in Pittsburgh addressed the issue of segregated pools. Subsequently, in 1977, both swimming pools were closed, and in 1978, the Wave Pool on Corrigan Drive was opened to everyone. The "Barn" at Sully's Pool was also closed. On an August Saturday in 1988, we held a family reunion at the 100 Acre House, and we were the only ones in that area. We recalled those years when we all gathered at Sully's Pool and how crowded it was. After moving back to South Park in 1997, I visited the area on several occasions, and it was isolated, with just a few young men visiting the boxing gym in the basement of the "Barn." The bath house is now home of the "Phantom In The Park." The pool area is filled in. The changes made in 1978 were in keeping with changes made across the county. The 40-year history of South Park's Sully's Pool is worth preserving as it is a part of our community's history as well as the history of the times. I cherish the memories.

Historical Society Business Items

We Are Still Looking For A Home

Several ideas have been suggested for locating a facility for the Historical Society, and the Society's Board Members and Officers have been working diligently on the project. Our archive files are located in the South Park Library, however, the Library's space is limited and we have extensive files that keep growing every day. If any member of the Society has a suggestion or idea, or would like to be a part of the Building Committee, please contact our President, Bob Bastianini, at 412-833-2163.

A Change For Our Newsletter

Due to the high cost of postage it was suggested that the Historical Society's newsletter, **HISTORIAN**, published quarterly, will be distributed to members attending the general membership meetings. The members who cannot attend the meetings will have their newsletters mailed to them. The Society anticipates that this will help defray the total cost of our newsletter.

Archiving Committee

The Archiving Committee is scheduling an archiving session to organize and catalog our files. If you would like to help, please call Jo Pelesky at 724-348-7618. This is a fun project and a great opportunity to view the Society's photographs, articles and artifacts.

Upcoming Elections

The Society will be casting their votes for new Officers and Board Members at the June 18th meeting. An Election Board has been formed and will be meeting in the near future. The seats up for election are open to all members in good standing. If you would like to be nominated for a position on the Board or as an Officer, please contact Paul Kubis at 412-835-6826 or Joy Marquis at 412-835-8633.

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee, chaired by Katie Kratofil and Paul Kubis, have updated the our membership roster, and in the process of contacting those members who are delinquent. If you have a question regarding your dues, please contact Paul Kubis at 412-835-6826. When the committee has completed the membership roster, a copy will be available to all members.

Ancestry Search On The Internet

By Joy Marquis

In a past issue of our newsletter, **Historian**, I reported on some of my favorite Internet sites for genealogy searches. However, a friend who is researching her family tree recently e-mailed me with a query of what Internet sites she could check out for her family genealogy. I directed her to some of my favorite sites, and they are:

Historic Pittsburgh:

<http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh>

Allegheny County, PA Genealogy:

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~paalegh>

RootsWeb.com:

<http://www.rootsweb.com>

Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet

<http://www.cyndislist.com>

Social Security Death Index (SSDI) at Ancestry.com:

<http://www.ancestry.com>

The Church of Jesus Christ, Latter-day Saints (LDS):

<http://www.familysearch.org>

A simple search for "genealogy" on your computer will take you to most of the above sites. Many sites are now placing census records online at their sites, usually at a cost. However, our researcher, Jeanne Will, has been compiling census records and her knowledge has benefited many of our members.

Users of the Internet who are searching their genealogy should be aware that there are mistakes and misinformation, as well as helpful, useful information.

Genealogy lists are also a very good source of help with your ancestry search. About two years ago I belonged to RootsWeb's Allegheny Genealogy List, and fortunately I replied to a query. It was from Elizabeth (Betsy) Banzen of Venice, Florida, who was working on her family tree, including the McCluggage, Hall, Young side. She has been researching her family tree for years and was very generous to share her extensive research with me. Through her information I was able to piece together family members who were elusive. She had even uncovered a scandal in the family. Hopefully you will find someone who is willing to share their ancestors' history with you.

In Memory

Frank H. Gaul

On March 15, 2002, one of the Historical Society's best loved member, Frank H. Gaul, died at his home at McMurray. Frank, 73 years of age, was born on November 4, 1928, in Smithton, PA, the son of Frank J. and Catherine Schallenberger Gaul. When Frank was a boy, the family moved to Downing Street in Library, PA, where his father found employment with the Pittsburgh Coal Company's No. 10 Mine. Frank attended Stewart Elementary and Snowden High Schools, graduating in 1947.

He married Virginia Jean Zupancic of Broughton, PA. Frank was employed as an industrial engineer by J&L Steel. He was extremely knowledgeable at beekeeping, for which he won many awards. In addition, he enjoyed history and metal detecting.

He is survived by his wife, Virginia Jean Gaul (a member of our Society); a son, Frank Joseph Gaul; two daughters, Catherine Jean Halferty and Mary Elizabeth Kenney; three grandchildren, Edward Michael, Virginia Ruth and Anna Christine Halferty.

Frank, a warm and jovial man, always had time to listen and share history with others. His passing is a tremendous loss, and we will greatly miss him.

Dr. Joseph E. O'Rourke

We were sorry to hear of the death of Dr. Joseph E. O'Rourke in the fall of 2001. Our friend and society member was born in Broughton, PA, the fourth child of John and Hannah O'Rourke.

After receiving his PhD degree from the University of Wisconsin, he was employed by the U.S. Geodetic Survey, traveling around the world several times. Dr. O'Rourke was also the author of several books on geology and mining. He retired to the desert of southern California. He is survived by his brother, James of Columbus, Ohio.

(The newsletter staff apologizes for the untimely reporting of Dr. O'Rourke's death. Unfortunately, the notice of his death reached the newsletter department after the publication of our previous newsletter. Dr. O'Rourke's family was very prominent in the early years of Snowden Township

Photo Corner



She was a beauty then, and is a beauty now. In her youth she spent countless hours at the Piney Fork Pool, where she participated in many synchronized aquatic performances. Away from the pool, she spent her leisure time at her grandfather's, Alexander F. Tyhurst, farm that was located along Piney Fork Creek.

Poised and accomplished, she is an outstanding artist. In addition, she is an expert photographer and has accumulated a large archive of photos for the Historical Society. She loves to research maps and census records.

This beautiful baby is the Historical Society's researcher, Jeanne Will.

IT'S A BARGAIN

Membership in the South Park Historical Society is a bargain. Compared to other historical societies, we have managed to keep our dues at a very reasonable fee. Membership fees are: \$10.00 for individual; \$15.00 family; \$5.00 Senior Members (65 or older); \$5.00 student membership. Please send your check (with name, address and telephone number) to The South Park Historical Society, P.O. Box 555, South Park, PA, 15129.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The South Park Historical Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Library Fire Hall, 6581 Library Road, Library, PA.

Mark your calendar:

April 16 - "Searching For Your Ancestors" with guest speaker Marilyn Holt

May 21 - A patriotic salute to veterans will be presented by our student members

June 18 - Historical Society's Election of Officers

July 16 - A program on the "Life of Early Coal Miners" will be presented by Leonard Marraccini