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SKETCH FOR A HISTORY OF THE WHEELING SYMPHONY

by

Kenneth R. Nodyne

As the 1920's, the Golden Decade of Prosperity, entered its final year, times appeared to be propitious for the ambitious undertaking of launching a symphony orchestra in Wheeling. The survival of the symphony through the depression of the 1930's and its eventual rise to metropolitan status can only be attributed to the generosity, determination, and dedication of a few individuals.

One of the driving forces throughout much of the life of the symphony has been Mrs. Gibson Caldwell who set up a trust fund which helped the symphony endure difficult times.¹ Coupled with this financial aid, Mrs. Caldwell long took an active part in the practical work which enabled the symphony to perform "under the stars" of the newly created Oglebay Park and in the brilliant rococo interior of the new Capitol Theatre.

The continued support of a group of inspired amateurs led by Earl Summers, Sr. and his prodigy son equalled Mrs. Caldwell's efforts. In the opinion of Mrs. Caldwell the "orchestra would not exist if it weren't for the Summers." Also very important during the early years of the symphony was the selfless hard work of the first conductor, Enrico Tamburini.²

Organized at a time when the Musicians Union was becoming increasingly powerful, the symphony managed to operate on a small budget with an agreement that the orchestra would be half union and half amateur. The success of the symphony is also due to the highly cooperative attitude of the union and its early President, Bill Stevens. Indicative of the congenial relations between the Union and the management was the awarding of a gold card of honorary membership in the Union to Mrs. Gibson Caldwell.³

The idea for the founding of the Wheeling Symphony grew out of musical soirees held during the mid-1920's at the home of Mrs. Gibson Caldwell. The string quartet which played at these musicals consisted of David Daniels, Dale Goodwin, Enrico Tamburini, and Earl Summers, Sr. The enthusiasm aroused by this quartet led friends of Mrs. Caldwell to confer with her regarding the possibility of establishing a symphony in Wheeling. Simultaneously, the development of sound motion pictures resulted in the unemployment of large numbers of musicians who heretofore had played for the silent films and the vaudeville houses.⁴

As the 1920's drew to a close, Wheeling possessed an intelligent potential audience, affluent backers, and a plethora of talent. The zeal of Mrs. Gibson Caldwell, the Summers, Henrietta Fulk, Enrico Tamburini, and numerous others carried the symphony through the economically enshrouded 1930's.

The genesis of the symphony took place at an informal gathering at Mrs. Caldwell's home at Kenwood Place in the Spring of 1929. Earl Summers, Jr., remembers being present while Mrs. Lucy Tomasene, Mrs. Margaret MacGregor, Mr. Eugene Baer, and Rabbi Charles Shulman discussed the formation of a symphony.⁵

The actual organization of the symphony occurred on Friday, June 7, 1929, at eight o'clock in Vance Memorial Church. At that first meeting of the symphony Mr. Baer was elected Chairman over Judge Brennan by a vote of 23 to 4. Mrs. Caldwell was unanimously selected for the important post of librarian. She purchased much of the music used by the symphony.⁶

The Inaugural Concert at Oglebay Park on Sunday, June 30, 1929 was under the baton of Enrico Tamburini. The nascent orchestra began its existence with Mozart's overture to Don Giovanni and works by Bizet, Brahms, Schubert, Bach, and Beethoven.⁷ Early concert programs reflect the musical tastes of the time with frequent excerpts from Wagner, the now rarely played Meyerbeer, Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony", and Tchaikowsky's Swan Lake.⁸

Maestro Tamburini, the conductor of the symphony from 1929-1934, nurtured the young orchestra with great care. A recent immigrant, Tamburini had played the cello in the Capitol Theatre orchestra during the late 1920's. The future locale of many concerts, the Capitol Theatre opened on Thanksgiving Day, 1928. Earl Summers, Sr., the theatre conductor, recalls rehearsing the orchestra amid the cacaphony of hammers banging seats into place.⁹ Throughout the history of the symphony, winter concerts have been held at the now razed Virginia Theatre and at the Madison School.¹⁰

Summer concerts at Oglebay Park have been an integral part of the symphony's seasons from the beginning. Mrs. Henrietta Fulk helped to popularize the outdoor concerts by distributing announcements to local merchants. These "garden symphonettes" featured pops concerts in the sunken garden at Oglebay with cuisine, lanterns, and scenery appropriate to the nationalities whose music was played on that evening. On Italian nights, Mrs. Alexander Glass supplied the wine; on German nights, Siebert's restaurant provided beer in steins with bar maids dressed in traditional costumes.¹¹

When rain fell, the concerts moved indoors to the old barn which stood on the present site of the children's center. Complete with stage, the barn provided adequate equipment to handle the affair. At the conclusion of one season, the gregarious Tamburini cooked spaghetti for all the members of the symphony. Earl Summers, Jr., now concert master, recalls how he and his young colleague, Sarah Caldwell, played pranksters on that occasion by blowing pepper at everyone at the table, causing a general round of uncontrolled sneezing.¹²

Tamburini left the symphony in 1934. He was replaced by Antonio Modarelli, then conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony. For two years, Modarelli held the podium of both symphonies. He then relinquished his Pittsburgh post and devoted his attention exclusively to the Wheeling Symphony. When an orchestra was later organized in Charleston, West Virginia, Modarelli served as conductor of both symphonies. He later settled in the state capital.¹³

World War II posed a problem for the symphony. Talented artists out of uniform were in short supply. Frequently, the conductor, orchestra, and board of directors did not know whether enough people to carry on the season could be found. With the help of proficient amateurs and a curtailed schedule the symphony hobbled through the war years.¹⁴

Beginning with the tenure of Henry Mazer (1947-1960) the symphony became a truly professional organization. Top artists such as Yehudi Menuhin and Gladys Swarthout came to Wheeling. The Silver Jubilee Season, 1952-1953, included such luminaries as Benny Goodman, Zino Francescatti, and Rudolf Serkin. During the 1950's while Rudolph Bing, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera mounted few Wagner performances because of an alleged absence of qualified singers, Wheeling was hearing the great Aspid Varnay in the "Immolation Scene" from that composer's Die Goetterdämmerung.¹⁵

When Henry Mazer left to become conductor of the Orlando, Florida orchestra, an interregnum ensued. During this time guest conductors were invited for trial performances. Mazer's successor, Henry Aaron was caught up in that unhappy perennial conflict between professional musicians and the public over traditional repertoire versus contemporary works.¹⁶

Mr. Aaron was replaced by Robert Kreise, a supreme classicist, who filled his winter programs with many of the traditional favorites and his summer concerts with light music. After Mr. Kreise's departure, another year of guest conductors followed during which potential candidates demonstrated their proficiency with the baton.¹⁷

In 1973, the helm of the symphony passed to the vigorous young Jeff Cook, formerly Assistant Conductor with the Rhode Island Philharmonic and Associate Conductor of the Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra. Under Mr. Cook's direction, the Wheeling Symphony won an ASCAP award "for adventurous programming" in contemporary music for the 1973-1974 season. The award carried a five hundred dollar stipend.¹⁸

Dr. Paul N. Elbin's presidency of the Wheeling Symphony from 1973 to 1975 matched on the administrative front the artistic accomplishments of Jeff Cook. Elbin's presidency saw a deficit of \$15,000 converted to a \$12,000 surplus.¹⁹ The symphony achieved "metropolitan status" with an annual budget in excess of one hundred thousand dollars.

The current Bi-Centennial season finds the symphony in sound condition, both artistically and financially. With outstanding musicianship, the symphony continues its role as an integral element in the cultural life of Wheeling.

FOOTNOTES

1. Author's Interview with Earl Summers, Jr., September 25, 1975.
2. Author's Interview with Mrs. Gibson Caldwell, September 13, 1975.
3. Interview with Miss Sarah Caldwell, October 16, 1975.
4. Interview with Earl Summers, Jr.
5. Ibid.
6. Typescript of Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Wheeling Symphony Society, June 7, 1929.
7. Bound Programs of the Wheeling Symphony, Ohio County Public Library, Volume one.
8. Ibid.
9. Author's Interview with Earl Summers, Sr., September 29, 1975.
10. Programs of the Wheeling Symphony.
11. Author's Interview with Mrs. George W. Fulk, September 25, 1975.
12. Interview with Earl Summers, Jr.
13. Ibid.

14. Interview with Mrs. Gibson Caldwell.
15. Bound Programs of the Wheeling Symphony.
16. Ibid.
17. Interview with Earl Summers, Jr.
18. Interview with Conductor Jeff Cook, September 12, 1975.
19. Interview with Earl Summers, Jr.

THE TWO VAN METRE'S FORTS

by

Richard Klein

The evidence for the existence of Van Metre's Fort is sketchy, and limited to a handful of brief primary references which have been misused or overlooked by previous historians of the Upper Ohio Valley. The purpose of this article is the elucidation of these primary sources, the investigation of their significance, and the reconstruction of the proper location of this fort and of its place in Northern Panhandle history.¹

The life of Van Metre's Fort coincides with the exploits of Major Samuel McCollough, who commanded the fort from 1777 until his death on July 30, 1782, at the age of 32.² Major McCollough was commanding Van Metre's Fort on the morning of September 1, 1777, when Fort Henry was attacked. Whether this attack was the occasion of McCollough's famous leap off Wheeling Hill is disputed. However, he did arrive at Fort Henry from Van Metre's Fort on September 3. This delay is surprising when one considers the reputation for bravery which Major McCollough had. Withers comments, "After the attack was made, the alarm reached Shepherds Fort six miles distant, and a messenger sent from there to Holidays Fort."³ Relief came from Catfish Camp, now Washington, Pennsylvania, on September 2, so it is puzzling that McCollough arrived a full day later.

The death of Major McCollough likewise indicates his presence at the fort. On July 30, 1782, he and his brother John left the fort to investigate the possible presence of Indians near Short Creek. While returning from their mission, they were ambushed and Samuel was shot to death. John, who was wounded but not fatally, killed an Indian who was removing Samuel's scalp and then escaped safely to warn the fort.⁴

The History of the Panhandle relates:

The next morning a party of men left Van Metre's Fort and found the body of Samuel McCollough seriously mutilated.⁵

This mutilation is explained:

The Indians, influenced no doubt by a species of hero worship, inherent in their nature, causing an undoubted admiration of personal valor, had abstracted the heart of their victim; which it was afterwards learned, from one belonging to the party, had been eaten by them.⁶

Parkman, acquainted with Indian customs, says:

The Indians, though not habitual cannibals, sometimes eat portions of the bodies of their enemies, superstitiously believing that their own courage and hardihood will be increased thereby.⁷

Doddridge further states that Samuel McCollough's body was buried in Van Metre's Fort.⁸ McCollough's grave is located on the farm of Mr. Leroy Speare of Wheeling, West Virginia, and it is here that Van Metre's Fort stood. A title search of this property confirms that it is part of the original tract of land granted to Joseph Van Metre in 1773, and transferred to his son Morgan in 1778.⁹

The fort was built at the order of Lord Dunmore in 1774 and was called Van Metre's Fort since it was a private installation. United States Government forts had the title, Fort, preceding the name. At the outbreak of the Revolu-

tionary War, the colonial government of Virginia seized all English frontier forts. Fort Fincastle became Fort Henry, Fort Dunmore was renamed Fort Pitt. There are no records of the renaming of a private fort.¹⁰

An early document places Samuel McCollough at Van Metre's Fort. The significance of the date of this receipt will be shown below.

Sir, please to let the bearer ensign Wm. Leet have twelve pounds of lead for the use of the militia stationed at this place and obliged, sir, your humble servant Samuel McCollough given under my hand at Van Metre's Fort this 4th day of August 1778 to Zephariah Blackford at Fort Henry.¹¹

With the evidence presented, Van Metre's Fort should be recognized as situated on Joseph Van Metre's land and as enclosing the grave of Samuel McCollough. However, further evidence indicates that there existed a second Van Metre's Fort. Confusion concerning the number and location of these identically named forts has plagued historians to the present.¹²

The second fort:

stood upon an elevated site above Blacks Cabin and was erected as nearly as can be ascertained about the year 1777 and was indifferently called the Court House Fort and Van Metre's Fort.

Among the documents of Col. Shepherd, Commandant of Ohio County, is this:

Recieved [sic] one rifle gun of the State of Virginia, two rifle guns of the United States, four pounds of powder, nine pounds of flints of Zephariah Blackford for the use of Van Metre's Fort. Recieved by me. Commd. Strough Leet
May 26, 1778¹⁴

We have already seen that Samuel McCollough was commanding another Van Metre's Fort at this same time.¹⁵

Thus, there is documentary evidence that there were two different commanders for a Van Metre's Fort at the same time. This indicates that there were two forts.

Doddridge states that the fort commanded by Samuel McCollough and the site of his burial is the same site where the first court of Ohio County was held. He refers to this site as the "Court House Fort".¹⁶

A court order dated June 2, 1783 shows that the Court House Fort was located at Blacks Cabin, now West Liberty, West Virginia, and therefore is not the same as the fort which McCollough commanded.¹⁷

The Court House Fort was built sometime in 1776. The Order Book states: Blacks Cabin, Ohio Co. Jan. 6, 1777.

On the 27th of December last as well for the purpose of electing and constituting a committee in and for said County, as for the making choice of the seat for County Courts to be held at in the future, within said County which was done accordingly. A majority determined in favor of a place known by the name of Blacks Cabin on the waters of Short Creek to be the place of holding courts in future.¹⁸

At this same session, the land for this court was arranged to be bought from Abraham Van Metre.

For as much as the tract of land agreed upon for holding courts at, in future doth of right appertain unto Abraham Van Metre of Opeckan Creek in the County of Bartley.

Ordered therefore that Zacharia Sprigg and Silas Hedge, Esq. be appointed to contract and covenant [sic.] with said Van Metre for not less than two acres of said tract, including the Cabbin and Spring, in behalf of this county for the purpose of erecting and building thereon a Court House, Prison and other necessary public buildings, for any sum not exceeding twenty pounds and report make of their proceedings therein as soon as may be to this Court.¹⁹

The History of the Upper Ohio Valley suggests the fort at Blacks Cabin was the site of the first court held in Ohio County and that it was built in 1777, "as nearly as can be ascertained".²⁰

Since Abraham Van Metre would not have built a fort on the land already bought by the county, he must have built it previous to the January 6, 1777 meeting. Also, since this fort was called Van Metre's Fort, as the note from its commandant Strough Leet shows, it must have been built by Abraham Van Metre.²¹ A survey will determine if the fort was built on the two acre tract purchased by Ohio County. Wherever the fort of Abraham Van Metre stood, its location is cited as Blacks Cabin, which is not near the property of Joseph Van Metre.

There can be no doubt now that two Van Metres built forts which bore their names. While the location of the Court House Fort is uncertain, that of the first, where Samuel McCollough is buried, is known. At the present time, excavations are being conducted at the site of this fort, to determine absolutely its location and construction. This excavation is directed by Mr. Alan H. Cooper of Wheeling with the author and other members of the Kanuwara Chapter of the West Virginia Archaeological Society.

The research and excavation into this feature of West Virginia history holds great interest for the participants, since through them a lost section of this history will become a real part of their lives and will itself live once again.

FOOTNOTES

1. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Mr. Alan H. Cooper for his help in composing this paper.
2. McCollough was appointed Major of Militia of Ohio County. West Virginia, Ohio County, Clerk of Courts Office, Order Book I, January 6, 1777, p. 1.

The birth and death dates of McCollough are contained in a D.A.R. geneology in the possession of Mr. Robert McCollough of Wheeling.

3. Alexander C. Withers, Chronicles of Border Warfare (Clarksburg, 1831).
4. History of the Panhandle (Pittsburgh, 1896), pp. 135-137.
5. Ibid., p. 135.
6. Randolph C. Downes, Council Fires on the Upper Ohio (Pittsburgh, 1968), p. 165.

7. Parkman, Indian Habits and Religions, cited by Downes, ibid., p. 156.
8. Joseph Doddridge, Notes on Early Settlements and Indian Wars of Western Virginia and Pennsylvania (Albany, 1876), p. 302.
9. Joseph Van Metre was the son of Abraham Van Metre, who was among the early landowners of West Liberty.

The titles are contained in:

West Virginia, Ohio County, Clerk of Courts Office, Deeds in Fee I, passim.

10. Allen Glauster, Frontier Forts (rev. ed.; Philadelphia, 1903)

Dunmore ordered the county militia of Western Virginia to defend the Ohio River border with forts built at strategic locations. The militia and the forts were concentrated at three points, Wheeling, Pittsburgh, and at the mouth of the Kanawha River (Fort Randolph). These forts were garrisoned and held scouting parties to thwart the crossing of the Ohio by Indians. In 1774, there were two large forts, at Pittsburgh and Redstone, now Brownsville, and several private forts and blockhouses, which were built for temporary shelter and not for prolonged siege.

11. West Virginia, Ohio County Public Library, Drapper Mss., NN-3, p. 94.
 12. cf. Doddridge, supra, n. 8.
 13. History of the Panhandle, p. 144.
 14. West Virginia, Ohio County Public Library, Drapper Mss., NN-3, p. 103, (Shepherd Papers).
- Shepherd was made colonel at the first Ohio County Court; see supra, n. 2.
15. supra, n. 11.
 16. supra, n. 12.
 17. West Virginia, Ohio County, Clerk of Courts Office, Order Book I, June 2, 1783, p. 162.
 18. Ibid., p. 1.
 19. Ibid., p. 2.
 20. History of the Upper Ohio Valley (Pittsburgh, 1896), p. 85.
 21. supra, n. 14.

THE FRESCOES OF WEST VIRGINIA INDEPENDENCE HALL

by

F. Wayne Barté and Beverly Fluty

While restoration work was progressing this summer at the West Virginia Independence Hall, otherwise known as the Wheeling Custom House, a work of artistry was uncovered that was not totally unexpected. The rediscovered art form was the frescoes that once decorated the ceiling of the Post Office vestibule on the first floor and on both the walls and ceiling of the Courtroom on the third floor. It is also very likely that additional paint removal will reveal other frescoes.

I initially stated that the discovery was not totally unexpected because research of the records and journals of the West Virginia Independence Hall by Mrs. Beverly Fluty, President of the Independence Hall Foundation, revealed no fewer than ten specific references to the presence of the frescoes at the Custom House:

Notes on Frescoing Wheeling Custom House

1856 - Specifications for Building the Custom-House at Wheeling, Virginia

"The painter must "fresco," in the best manner, the ceilings of the vestibules of the post office, custom-house and court rooms, and the ceilings and so much of the walls of the custom-house, and court rooms, as may be required of him."

1858 - November 1, letter from James Luke, Superintendent, addressed to Hon. Howell Cobb (sp?), Secretary of the Treasury

"Sir

I wish to be informed in regard to the manner of executing the fresco painting of the Wheeling Custom House, whether it is the Department's intention to have it done in oil or water colors, as the specifications are not explicit on that point

I am very respectfully

your obe Servant

James Luke

Superintendent"

November 11, letter from James Luke, Superintendent, addressed to Hon. Howell Cobb, Secretary of the Treasury

"Sir

Yours of the 5th inst in regard to omiting [sic.] frescoing of the wall of Wheeling Custom House is received. I would say in reply that it is to late to dispense with the painting, as the walls and ceilings of the rooms to be frescoed are all finished brown mortar, and part of the frescoing done in vestibule of Post Office, to dispense with the painting it would incur an expense equal in

amount that it will cost to do it. I have seen the Contractors about the matter, and they say that they could not make any reduction on the contract as they have brought a fresco painter here at a considerable expense, whom they would have to pay, whether the painting is done or not.

I am very respectfully
Your obed Servant
James Luke
Superintendent"

December 1, services performed include:

"For 373 Sup Yds Frescoing 65 Ceilings in vestibule in PO and Court room \$242.45"

December 1, Monthly report of operations for the month of November on the new Custom House which includes:

"Painting Painters (8) have frescoed the ceiling of the vestibule of Post Office, court room and part of the walls, done the painting and glazing of court room and part of 2nd Story"

- 1859 - February 1, report of operations on the New Custom House during the month of January which includes
"Painting Painters (6) have finished painting graining and varnishing and frescoing the building with the exception of oiling and varnishing floors, varnishing and polishing mahogany work and part of the iron work on 2nd and 3d Stories"
(building opened April 1859 BBF)

- 1875 - August 7, report on Wheeling Custom House by D. B. Thomas which includes:
"Third Story
...The walls and ceiling are painted in fresco, and the greater portion of it is in a good state of preservation, and I am of opinion that the whole of the frescoing of the room can be restored to look nearely as well as new at an expence not exceeding say 250. Dollars, and would recommend that it be sc restored..."

August 12, estimate of the cost to repair by D. B. Thomas includes

"To restore the frescoing of Court room 250.00"

- 1876 - February 29, final report of repairs by D. B. Thomas which includes:
"E. F. Dardine Contract.
For Fresco Painting U.S. Court Room 210.00"

1874-1875 - Wheeling Directory, J. Wiggins & Co. page 66
 "Dardine, E. F., artist in fresco 710 Main
 (There is no Dardine listed in the 1859-60 Wheeling
 City Directory - BBF)

Technically, the word fresco is the name of a medium, not unlike oils or water colors. It consists of painting on freshly laid plaster with colors which have been ground with water only. In frescoing, the medium is the fresh, wet plaster itself, the plaster being a mixture of lime and sand or cement and sand. Each day a workable area of plaster was applied and the following day this previously applied area would be painted with the fresco. The paint would penetrate the surface of the plaster and then the paint and plaster would dry as one. The end result would be a painting protected by the crystalline surface of the plaster which would form a glassine layer, thereby "fixing" the artistry permanently.

The "true fresco" painting is built up layer by layer to the desired product.

The durability of this art form is to be found in the fact that it is not merely a coating of paint on the wall but the surface of the wall itself, much like the skin on our bodies. Probably the most noted work of fresco is the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel painted by Michaelangelo.

With this brief review, let us now examine the case of Wheeling's very own frescoes. Based on the information referred to in the researched documents, the Independence Hall Foundation decided to attempt to uncover the hidden art form rather than applying additional layers of paint. The project was undertaken by a painting contractor who scraped and buffed his way through fifteen to twenty layers of paint before reaching the frescoes. Once the perimeters of the murals were determined, the contractor began to expose as much of the panels as possible. Much to the surprise of the Foundation, the murals were more extensive than they had originally thought.

Due to the lack of sufficient funds to complete this project, the Foundation asked West Virginia First District Congressman Robert H. Mollohan to request the technical assistance of the staff of the Smithsonian Institution. The staff evaluated:

- A. The artistic merit of the frescoes
- B. Their value
- C. The question of whether they should be saved and preserved
- D. If they should be preserved, the proper method of restoration and an evaluation of the costs involved

Congressman Mollohan emphasized that time was an important factor because in September the Foundation was to open bids on an adjoining portion of the building, scheduled for immediate restoration. The Foundation was hesitant to proceed with any work that might damage the frescoes prior to a knowledgeable evaluation.

The Smithsonian sent two of their experts, Mr. Anton Konrad, conservationist from the analytical laboratory, Museum of History and Technology; and Mr. Richard Murray, art historian, National Collection of Fine Arts.

The two specialists visited Independence Hall where they conducted a visual analysis of the frescoes, as well as an analysis of a number of rather primitive paintings of birds and animals that were also uncovered on the third floor walls during the paint removal process.

An analysis of the frescoes by Mr. Konrad revealed that technically the designs were not "true frescoes" but mezzo-frescoes. These are painted decorations applied to dry plaster as opposed to the paint application to the wet plaster.

The decorations uncovered to date have been primarily of geometric design. Some are gilded semi-circles repeating the curve of the windows and doorways. Others are repetitions of the ACANTHUS leaf design of the cast iron Corinthian columns of the courtroom, while others look like ornate gilded picture frames which were painted on otherwise massive blank walls. This occurred in the traditional French provincial use of moldings and routings. Decorating the ceilings of the first floor are designs that are approximately eight feet by ten feet with a center design enclosed within a rectangular gilded frame.

The question of the animal sketches was answered by Mr. Konrad who said that the figures were apparently drawn by workmen as the job of plastering was nearing completion. The drawings could be compared to graffiti of an 1850 vintage. Mr. Konrad indicated that he had seen similar designs before, and it is not uncommon to uncover these during restoration work.

Herdis Teilman, Curator of Painting and Sculpture, Carnegie Institute, issued a concurring opinion. Mr. Teilman believes that it is quite possible the artist, knowing that they would be covered over, did the birds and animals for his own amusement. With regards to total restoration of the frescoes, both specialists were in agreement that the total project would be expensive to the point of being prohibitive.

One suggested alternative that has been used successfully in other restoration projects is to expose a certain amount of the original work, and then renovate the balance of the wall and ceiling in a conventional manner. The frescoes can always be uncovered at a later date when funds become available. In addition, artists' renderings could be strategically placed so as to depict how the room originally looked.

To date, the Foundation has not arrived at any specific avenue as to just how or to what degree the frescoes will be restored or preserved. However, a decision will be forthcoming in the near future.

COUNTY COURT ORDER BOOKS

by

Douglas McKay

Samuel Bruce had his problems in 1780, among which was an aching back. On the 7th day of August in that year the County Court of Ohio County, Virginia, consisting of Solomon Hedges, Charles Wells, Zachariah Sprigg, James Miller, James Gillispie and John Williamson heard the case of Commonwealth vs. Samuel Bruce. Upon conclusion of the case the Court rendered an opinion which was dutifully transcribed by the Clerk in an order book as follows:

"It appears"... "he was Committed on Supposition of stealing of a Bell the property of James Dornan of the Value of Nine pounds - the Court after hearing the witnesses examined is of Opinion that the sd Bruce is Guilty of stealing sd bell & that the Sheriff take the sd Samuel Bruce & Give him twenty Five Lashes on his bare back--"

The foregoing is an excerpt from one of the 41 volumes of Order Books of the County Court which are temporarily in the custody of the County Clerk of Ohio County whose office is on the second floor of the courthouse in Wheeling. The County Court, related to but not to be confused with the present County Court consisting of the three County Commissioners of Ohio County, was a court that was organized on January 6, 1777 at Black's Cabin on the waters of Short Creek, near West Liberty, as the first entry in the order books shows. It existed for approximately one century when it was abolished and its jurisdiction divided among the Circuit Court, the County Commissioners, the County Clerk, justices of the peace, and other elements of our present judicial system.

The jurisdiction of the County Court was extraordinarily broad. It provided for common defense; it determined the location of roads and provided for their construction, requiring all tithables (tax-paying settlers) within three miles of the roads to work on the same; it naturalized immigrants; it swore in officers, military and civil, requiring the latter as a part of their oaths to suppress dueling; it registered brands for livestock before fences were built; it acknowledged deeds and handled matters relating to estates; and, of course, its main function was to hear and decide litigation, both civil and criminal.

The County Court was a court of record, meaning that it made an entry in the order books for every action that it took. The first volume of the Order Books has been typed at some point in history, but the typist, interestingly, faithfully made his lines conform to the written lines of the scribe and even typed in and crossed out the original interlineations. The clerks of the Court in the early days, rather than use a fresh page, would cross out mistakes, some of which were obviously attempts on their part to anticipate what the Court would rule. The first handwritten page is dated July 3, 1786, and it is difficult to look at that faded ink without wondering what the reporter was thinking about that day. Was the next day, July 4th, a holiday in that early period? Were Indians a menace that summer? Most likely the Clerk was more interested in one of the cases heard where the defendant was awarded the same quantity of whisky as had been attached, or if it couldn't be returned, the sum of 2 shillings 6 pence per gallon.

The 41 volumes of the County Court orders were in the second of two shipments of old Ohio County records to West Virginia University, in 1935 and 1959. The then County Clerk, Raymond J. Falland, who negotiated the exchange, should not

be blamed for his role since as late as 1959 there was a substantial lack of interest in history and since space is a problem constantly confronting county clerks whose records increase dramatically every year. Through the years, however, Edmund Lee Jones, Wheeling attorney and historian, had been calling for the return to Ohio County of these Order Books, principally because of the use of them by attorneys tracing titles, and secondarily because of the history they contain. Dr. George Parkinson, a member of the history department of the University and Curator of the West Virginia Room in the library, is of the opinion that an outright gift of these volumes had been made. Attorney Jones claims there was no such gift made because a County Clerk has no legal authority to give away county records. The writer negotiated with Dr. Parkinson, and with the help of the Board of County Commissioners and the present County Clerk, Chester W. Kloss, compromised the matter. Carefully without determining title, the agreement results in the books now being in the County Clerk's office in Wheeling, where they will remain for two years. While this is not a perfect solution, it is a workable one. We will have them over the Bicentennial Year, and they are available for anyone to use, the County Clerk's office being a public office.

Dr. Parkinson entered into the compromise reluctantly and with misgiving. The clincher probably came when he visited Wheeling this Spring to verify that this was no place for the custody of such valuable records. This writer showed him a Settlement of Estates Book, circa 1790, in the original handwriting, which had never left Ohio County. While Dr. Parkinson fondled this volume and his eyes misted over with great longing, he was bluntly informed that he would never get his hands on this book unless he cooperated on the return of the County Court Order Books.

The 41 volumes almost undoubtedly contain a wealth of history, buried among a greater quantity of inconsequential material tending to show how litigious Americans are. No historian has ever, and this should be emphasized, has ever gone through these books with the purpose of extrapolating the important historical information. This should be done, and it should be done in 1976. Can we locate the exact site of Fort Henry from these records? Do they contain important information relating to the National Road which reached Wheeling in 1818? Can we learn something about the beginning of the glass industry in this area? Is there a reference in an oblique way to the visits to Wheeling of Washington Irving and Jenny Lind? Can some additional light be shed upon the construction of the famous Suspension Bridge and the Custom House? Somebody should methodically go through these books in the next two years, or the history they contain will go into another great period of limbo.

A cursory examination of only two or three volumes produces the following facts and impressions which are not particularly noteworthy historically, but which do tend to whet the scholar's appetite. In November, 1795, the County Court authorized the payment of 15 pence each to Henry Dickinson and Walter Denney for one wolf scalp apiece. In June 1813 the price set was \$4.00 each for "old" wolf scalps and \$2.00 each for "young ones." How many wolves were there around here? This has been a subject of conjecture among naturalists for some time, and there is the possibility that an approximation can be made from these records. Genealogists will certainly be interested in the records kept relating to military appointments, and to the immigrants' oaths of allegiance which state where they had come from and when. Someone interested in prices and inflation can pick out frequent orders of the County Court setting the allowable charges of Ordinary Keepers for lodging, whisky with and without sugar, for

meals and for boarding horses. The exact year when Ohio County changed from pounds and shillings currency to dollars and cents can be determined.

The rapidity with which the settlers filled in this area after the Zane brothers first located here is reflected in the increasing business of the Court from year to year. And of particular interest is the consummate confidence, even arrogance, of the early American settlers who, beset on all sides by Indian massacres and scalplings, Simon Girty raids, a hostile forest and desperate problems in providing a living, still either ignored all this or took it in stride as normal, and devoted substantial time and interest to suing each other in court.

Back to Samuel Bruce whose bare back was lashed by the sheriff. He apparently was not very chastened by this. A few months later, an entry of the Court on March 6, 1781, shows that Bruce was again before the bench on a complaint of having "Sung Songs contemptuous to the dignity of this Court." Since singing ribald songs about the members of the Court was not a statutory offense, the only thing the Court could think of to do was ask the State's Attorney to prefer an action for libel. This matter was subsequently quietly dismissed.

BOOK REVIEW

by

Robert L. Larson

America's Sporting Heritage: 1850-1950. By John Rickards Betts (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1974, xv + 428 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography and index. \$9.95)

A history of the American people with a stress on their habits and attitudes relating to sporting and athletic activities has been a long time in coming and judging by the quality of scholarship evinced here, it has been worth the wait. The question as to why it has been so long delayed is difficult to understand unless the field of sports does not seem to connote historicity as do more conventional "historical" subjects. Yet Dr. Betts legitimately places the subject in the mainstream of social and economic history. He has annihilated, in my opinion, any necessity to be reticent about the subject. Furthermore any reader with an interest in sports should look forward in anticipation to material which has a built-in excitement and a freshness which will not wear thin for overexposure, for many years. This is a seminal work making it a mandatory source for future scholars especially if they are concerned about extending its history into the 1970's and 1980's.

This is not a mere description or catalog of sporting activities loaded with Currier and Ives prints and hence lifts it far above the level of coffee table reading. It is more solidly a history of why people thought certain sports were important at the time and how until 1900 "high society" used them as a mark of social status. Until the twentieth century the sporting interests of the elite dominated with the "sport of kings", horseracing, followed by yachting. Before that time however, the national pasttime, baseball, had gotten its professional start along with college football, and basketball, the latter for a long time being confined to YMCA gymnasiums.

Betts notes that between 1900 and World War I there was a gradual change in the taste and interests of sporting fans together with a vast increase in their number, their audiences being made up of a majority of ordinary people. These folk used their sporting heroes as escape mechanisms in their private fantasies. Economically the whole field of sport opened up an opportunity for careers to children of immigrants and people of working class families. Many people would drive many miles to a sporting contest to see a hometown boy perform and share vicariously the thrill of watching a twenty-game winner or a .400 hitter. Many smalltown Chambers of Commerce would exploit the fame of a local athlete by advertising to motorists on signs entering their town that this place was the home of a famous third basemen or wide receiver.

By 1950, the terminal date of this study, sporting activities had been fully incorporated into the fabric of America's social and economic life with political implications in the field of diplomacy for cultural exchange. Athletics has created a vast market for sporting equipment of all shapes, sizes and descriptions including those for the handicapped, making it a major industry. Public utilities have gotten a boost in selling electricity for the increasing numbers of night contests.

It seems almost petty to cavil at the few structural and editorial weaknesses which exist in a work with such range and depth, but some comment is in order. While mentioning a single sporting event more than once is certainly not an evil in itself, it is done with great frequency in the earlier sections of the book particularly with single specific dates mentioned four or five times. Editorial consolidation might have served well in several places without damage to the basic text. Listing names of important politicians and celebrities who were in the habit of attending certain sporting contests and doing so in extenso was not always necessary although this is not intended as a namedropping device. Softening this criticism still further, mentioning famous people serves the author's purpose in identifying with these people the notion that sports fulfill national values at their best. Two specific mistakes: it was Ban (not Ben) Johnson who was president of the American League until 1927, and the New York Yankees won (ONLY!) five, not six pennants during the 1930's.

Revision of Bett's scholarship is either going to be difficult or unnecessary for a long time and will serve as a prime resource for younger scholars choosing to work in the field. I anticipate with great eagerness a followup to this work by one of his close associates either as an extension of the original work or as a basis for scholarship on a specific sport. The bibliographical reference is monumental indicating that much of the research will never have to be done again. Regretfully footnotes were incorporated at the back of the book.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Wheeling Area Historical Society meets four times a year and welcomes new members. The purpose of the Society is to further the study and knowledge of local history. We encourage the collection and preservation of historic artifacts and the preservation of historic structures. Twice a year we publish a journal.

The Society invites your membership. Simply cut off the application form below and send to:

Mr. C. E. Bates, Jr., Treasurer,
106 Pine Avenue
Wheeling, West Virginia 26003

We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

Sincerely,

Barbara Holloway
President

I would like to join the Wheeling Area Historical Society. Enclosed please find my \$3.00 tax deductible annual dues.

Please send notices of meetings to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____
