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THE WHEELING AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY meets nine times a year every month except January, July, and August. The Society welcomes new members and invites you to attend. Information about the Society may be obtained from Dr. Kenneth R. Nodyne, Editor, 63 Oakland Avenue, Wheeling, WV 26003.

THE COVER: The Wheeling Suspension Bridge, courtesy of the Department of History and Technology, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV.
IRON, ENGINEERS AND THE WHEELING SUSPENSION BRIDGE
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INTRODUCTION

A number of currents of history find their confluence in the Wheeling Bridge, completed in 1849. It is closely associated with the industrial and commercial aspirations of Wheeling, Virginia’s second largest city in the Ante Bellum period. McKay (1) has discussed the important legal significance of the bridge with regard to interstate commerce. The history of the Wheeling Bridge is also an intensely human drama and certainly can be treated as social and local history. The Bridge was a key element in Wheeling’s enviable position as a hub of transportation. In 1852 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad reached Wheeling and the third and final piece of the transportation network was in place. Wheeling then had the National Road, which crossed the Ohio River on Ellet’s suspension bridge, navigation on the Ohio – Mississippi River system and the western terminus of America’s pioneer railroad. Our understanding of the early transportation history of America would certainly benefit from a detailed history of Wheeling, the hub of transportation.

If one views the history of the Wheeling Suspension Bridge on an international basis, then its significance is clearly in the realm of the history of technology. A number of studies (2) have been published on the history of the bridge which gives not only details of the bridge, but evaluates the bridge and its builder’s career in terms of the development of suspension bridge building in the 19th century. The purpose of this paper is to explore the interrelationship between the development of a new structural material, iron, and the response of engineers to utilizing this superior building medium in bold new ways by taking advantage of its superior physical properties and tailoring their designs to the means of production at the time. Hopefully, such a discourse, without dwelling too much on the technical aspects of the subject, will show how American engineers came to the forefront in this technology. This leadership lasted for more than a century, beginning with the Wheeling Bridge, and because of this leadership the suspension bridge displayed many of the characteristics of the 19th century American engineering and thus symbolizes a great national enterprise.

In order to understand the interplay between the iron thread which runs through our story and the men who developed its uses it is necessary to consider the production of iron first and then show how this new

structural material was used by engineers to develop novel structural forms, which in turn demanded fresh and more sophisticated design methods.

PIGS AND PUDDLING

"Where it all began in 1709," is the proud slogan of the Iron-bridge Gorge Museum and commemorates the first successful smelting of iron with coke. Although historians have chosen various dates to mark the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, 1709 has much to recommend it for this distinction. It is also appropriate for our purposes since Abraham Darby’s achievement put the production of iron on a new basis which permitted much larger quantities to be cast at one time than was possible using charcoal as the fuel. Equally important, coke is less friable than charcoal so that lofier furnaces could be operated without fear that the fuel would be pulverized and choke the furnace. These taller furnaces developed much higher temperatures when in blast and produced a molten iron which could be more easily cast in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Cast iron produced from blast furnaces has a high carbon content which results in a brittle material which has a very high compressive strength but lacks tensile strength and ductility. Wrought iron, on the other hand, is nearly free from carbon and although not as strong in compression it is a remarkable tough material and exhibits high tensile strength. Traditional wrought iron was produced in forges or small furnaces where the iron collected in a spongy mass, called a bloom, because the temperature was not high enough to melt the iron. The result was that carbon was not alloyed to the iron because it was not a liquid and the slag collected as part of the spongy mass of iron. As a result of the method of smelting wrought iron has little carbon and 3 or 4 percent slag inclusion in the wrought iron. The traditional smelting method would yield only several hundred weight of material at a time, hardly sufficient for structural purposes, except for fastenings such as nails and bolts, rivets and wedges.

In the short span of two years, 1783 & 1784, Henry Cort (1740-1800) developed the art of puddling cast iron to produce wrought iron and grooved rollers in which wrought iron bars and rods could be produced in quantity compared to forging or slitting iron plate. His success was immediate and it set the stage for the utilization of both wrought and cast iron for structural engineering purposes. The art of wire drawing using dies was well developed before the 18th century. With abundant quantities of wrought iron available as a result of Cort's work wire could be made by the mile! Thus, what had been virtually a semi-precious metal now became available in Britain in quantity and at an affordable price.
THE BRIDGE BUILDERS

Appropriately, the world's first iron bridge was erected in 1779 near Darby's blast furnace at a place since named Ironbridge. From this date until the erection of the Sunderland Bridge in 1796 over the River Wear numerous engineers, British, French, and American were proposing to use iron for long span bridges. The famous, or to some infamous, Tom Paine had an abiding interest in iron bridges and his involvement in the French Revolution was a direct result of his attempt to promote his bridge designs, first in France and then in Britain (3). Paine built a 100 ft. span model of an arch bridge using cast iron voussoir connected with wrought iron bars. This had a direct influence on the design and construction of the Sunderland Bridge (1796) with a 235 ft. span. Truly an inspiring example of the potential of iron for major bridge structures.

The American inventor Robert Fulton and the British engineers Thomas Telford and William Jessop were each involved in the utilization of iron for canal aqueducts. Telford's magnificent Pont Cyssyllte, 1794-1805, stretched more than a 1000 feet over the River Dee at a height of 125 feet. Telford, arguably, the world's most famous civil engineer, built scores of iron bridges during his long career, but the great aqueduct over the Dee he considered his masterpiece.

Because of a well developed iron industry which could produce large iron castings, British engineers, following Telford's lead, used cast iron extensively during the first half of the 19th century. Since cast iron possessed superior strength in compression and did not resist bending or direct tension well, its most efficient and safe use was in the form of an arch where the arch ring would be designed to be in compression for all loading conditions. The cast iron arch bridges became and still are a ubiquitous part of the British landscape. The French had perfected the design of arches for stone bridges before the middle of the 18th century so that later engineers had a ready means of designing arches in iron providing the material properties of the metal were known and the designs, such as the Sunderland Bridge, were essentially imitative of earlier masonry bridges. As James (4) points out a great deal of experimentation with cast and wrought iron for trusses and combinations of trusses and arches took place in Britain during the first half of the 19th century. This led to a refinement of all aspects of engineering design, analysis and construction. Iron was the catalyst that was largely responsible for the transformation of a craft-orientated technology to a modern profession based upon scientific principles.

Despite the fact that Americans were instrumental in the earliest developments of iron bridges the first cast iron bridge was not erected in America until 1837-39 at Brownsville, Pennsylvania as part of the National Road. With timber virtually free and lacking a well developed iron industry it is not surprising that timber and to a certain extent stone bridges persisted in being the dominant types until after the Civil War. There is one notable exception to this British domination of the art of bridge building which was to play a major influence on the practice of engineering in the 19th and even 20th centuries.

A THREAD OF IRON

In 1801 Judge James Finley (1756-1828) of Uniontown, Pennsylvania built the world's first modern suspension bridge using wrought iron chain for the main structural element. The cable of a suspension bridge is entirely in tension and this represents the utilization of wrought iron in its most efficient configuration. Besides the cable, which was fabricated with long links into a chain, Finley's bridge featured a level deck with stiffening trusses, towers to support the chains at a sufficient elevation above the deck and the provision of adequate anchorages. Thus, all of the features of the modern suspension bridge were present in his patented bridges.

Between 1801 and his death, Finley, or his agents, were responsible, according to Cordier (5), for more than twenty chain suspension bridges. His first bridge was north of Uniontown on the Uniontown-Greensburg Turnpike. Subsequent bridges included two bridges at Brownsville, a bridge at Cumberland, Maryland, Lehigh Gap, Pennsylvania and one across the Potomac near Washington at a place still called Chain Bridge. Altogether 13 bridges have been located which can definitely be attributed to Finley.

Because of the primitive state of the American iron industry which was characterized by small charcoal furnaces scattered in rural areas, Finley used large links, as long as ten feet, which were forged into chains by local blacksmiths. Wrought iron bars were bent and lap welded at the end of the links so that Finley had to worry both about the strength of the bar and the weld since he had no means of proof testing the chains before they were put into use. Not surprisingly a number of his bridges failed, usually under a combination of cold weather, deep snow and heavy live loads. This was certainly the case for the Brownsville Bridge, which was built in 1809 and collapsed in 1820. It was replaced by a timber bridge which served from 1821-1837 when Delafield's cast iron arch, mentioned above, was erected and which still carries traffic.

Finley's contribution was not simply the erection of the first modern suspension bridge but also in developing an ingenious empirical method for determining not only the geometry of the suspended chain but also determining the forces in the links (6). Until recently Finley's knowledge of iron bridge engineering was unknown. However, by tracing one of the tables in his Port Folio article (7) it has been shown to have been obtained from an encyclopedia published in Philadelphia in 1796. This reference not only has the identical table used by Finley in his paper but also has articles on the mathematics of the suspended wire, a lengthy article on the strength of materials and a description of primitive suspension bridges in
China and Peru. Several major questions remain, however, which require further research before they can be answered. We know Finley was born in Ireland in 1856, that he was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and a judge in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, but we have no knowledge of his early life or education. In addition, we do not know what inspired him to turn his attention to suspension bridges.

**A CIRCUITOUS PATH**

The distance from Uniontown, Pennsylvania to Wheeling, Virginia is a mere seventy-five miles and the distance in time between Finley's death in 1828 and Ellet's great Wheeling Suspension Bridge is just twenty-one years. And yet the path of development is most circuitous and complicated. Details of this development have been given elsewhere (8) so that the only survey is presented here.

Unwittingly, Thomas Pope in publishing his book on Bridge Architecture in 1811 (9) was an effective promoter of Finley's work. The book was intended to promote Pope's impractical, one might say impossible, pendant-lever design, but it also included Finley's work presumably to show that Pope's design was superior. In any case, Pope's book brought Finley's work to the attention of Sir Samuel Brown (10) and Thomas Telford, who were independently interested in long span suspension bridges. Brown patented the bar system for producing suspension bridge cables rather than the somewhat crude link chains used by Finley. Brown's patent covered several types of coupled bars, one of which became the British standard. Because of the capability of the British iron industry large wrought iron "eye" bar links could be fabricated. The resulting chains were like a giant bicycle chain with the links being ten or more feet long. Both Brown and later Telford built bridges using bar chains. These bridges set new standards for size and span length. Telford's Menai Bridge, completed in 1826, is one of the great triumphs of bridge building. He used Finley's methods and carefully proof-tested each link before it was installed. The Menai Bridge with a span of 580 feet was more than double the length of Finley's earlier bridges.

Until the Revolution of 1789 the French had been clearly the leaders in military and civil engineering. They excelled in analysis, design and in the education of engineers. With the use of iron for bridges the baton of leadership had clearly passed to Britain. In 1819 and again in 1823 the famous French mathematician and engineer Navier visited Britain to study British suspension bridges. Upon his return to France in 1823 the famous French mathematician and engineer Navier visited Britain to study British suspension bridges. Upon his return to France in 1823 he wrote what is perhaps the most famous work on suspension bridges ever published, *Mémoire Sur les Ponts Suspendus* (11).

Lacking the capability of producing large wrought iron links, the French substituted drawn iron wire, which when laid up in parallel strands could produce large diameter cables. This was a superior material in every respect except for the possibility of corrosion of the individual wires by water penetrating the cable. Bar chains were thought by the British and many others to be much more resistant to corrosion because of much less exposed surface which could be more easily inspected and painted than a wire cable.

The advantages of wire for suspension bridges were quickly apparent to the French. Wrought iron wire could be easily and very cheaply produced. In drawing the wire through a series of dies the iron was cold worked, which increased its strength and at the same time it was tested, since any flaw would result in fracture of the wire at the die. The wire was much stronger in tension than either cast iron or rolled wrought iron. In addition, individual wires could be easily erected in place by "spinning" the wires from tower to tower rather than lifting the massive weight of "eye" bar chains in a single lift.

From the pioneering work of Navier until ca. 1870 the French were to build more than 500 wire suspension bridges, the most important of which was the French designed bridge at Fribourg (1834) in Switzerland. The baton of leadership had passed to the French bridge engineers.

**CHARLES ELLET AND THE WHEELING BRIDGE**

With little formal education and really against his father's wishes Charles Ellet Jr. (1810-1862) left his family's farm north of Philadelphia and joined a surveying crew at age 17. Until 1830 he was involved in the construction of canals and appeared to be following many American engineers who received their education as an apprentice on one of the great internal improvements projects of the day. He, however, took the unprecendented step of deciding to study engineering in France. There is no evidence in Ellet's extant correspondence that, until he studied under Navier at the École des Ponts et Chaussées, he had any interest in suspension bridges. He returned to the United States in 1832 an enthusiastic promoter of the French wire suspension bridge, so much so that he discounted Finley's contribution by relegating it to an earlier primitive period. He wished it to be known that he was introducing a sophisticated new French technology based on the elegant mathematical solution presented in Navier's book.

Upon his return from France Ellet cast about for the opportunity to build a major suspension bridge which would bring him an international reputation as a civil engineer. He inspected the Niagara Gorge as a possible site and proposed to build bridges across the Potomac at Washington and an immense multi-span bridge across the Mississippi at St. Louis. His chance finally came and he completed the first major wire suspension bridge over the Schuylkill River at Fairmount Park, Philadelphia in 1842. This structure of 345 feet span was unmistakably inspired by the French but it provided a notable example of how this "new" technology
could be given a pronounced American accent since it suited the prevailing approach to technology by American engineers. British engineering works were noted for their superb workmanship, solidity and longevity, while their French counterparts were works of monumental character with carefully thought out details and architecture worthy of a nation committed to centralized planning and building in the grand manner.

Stevenson, the uncle of R. L. Stevenson, the author, and himself a well known civil engineer, commented on the utilitarian and even temporary nature of American engineering projects which seemed to be dictated as much by expediency as economy. What American engineering works lacked in fine workmanship and monumental architectural appearance they made up by a boldness of design and execution. No wonder the suspension bridge which could be quickly and cheaply built and was capable of unprecedented span lengths should become a leading technology in 19th century America.

Ellet’s Wheeling Suspension Bridge, 1849, is one of the world’s most historically significant bridges. This evaluation is based largely on its technological significance as the world’s longest bridge at the time of its construction and the design that established America’s unchallenged leadership in suspension bridge building for more than a century. Its construction was a great social enterprise for Wheeling under the leadership of Ellet and the Wheeling and Belmont Bridge Company. It was made entirely of local materials by local contractors, including the wire for the main cable and the iron rod suspenders which held the deck. It provided an optimum design for a minimum cost. Even the lack of symmetry between East and West towers and the hump in the deck to achieve the stipulated clearance over high water in the Ohio River where dictated by providing, in the face of stiff competition, a suitable design for the least cost. The world’s largest span bridge, at the time of its construction, is thus remarkable for the boldness of its conception and execution and for the fact that it was built for only $130,000.

Ellet had succeeded in using a superior new structural material, iron wire, in its most efficient configuration, i.e. direct tension. Obviously a slender tendon more than a 1000 feet between supports and composed of small diameter filaments has only negligible resistance to direct compression or bending, but has tremendous strength in tension. Test results for the wire used in its Wheeling bridge have an average strength of approximately 84,000 pounds per square inch compared to an upper limit of 50,000 pounds per square inch for the best wrought iron bars and rods. It was not until 1854 that the Trenton Iron Works rolled the first structural “I” shaped sections for a series of U.S. Custom Houses, including the Wheeling, Virginia Custom House, that American Engineers had a domestic product to use for structural framing. These rolled wrought iron beams were only 9 inches deep and quite unsuitable for a truss or cantilever bridge of sufficient size to span the Ohio. Even Robert Stevenson’s mighty Britannia Bridge (1850) with 14 feet deep tubular girders has a clear span of only 460 feet, compared to the 1008 feet span of the Wheeling Bridge. No other structural system could have produced a clear span of 1000 feet using materials and engineering skills available in 1849.

The Wheeling Suspension Bridge was a brilliant solution in the hands of an engineer of real genius. It justly deserves to be a national landmark. However, the successful use of iron in suspension bridges brought forth a new set of problems having their origin in the flexibility of the structure and not its strength. The design for strength optimized one aspect of the structure so that very light and flexible bridges were the result. Thus, it became necessary to consider deflections under traffic loads as well as the strength of the bridge if a satisfactory design was to result. Adding a stiffening truss of the deck, as suggested by Finley, provides the most satisfactory means of stiffening the bridge, but it complicated the analysis to a point that satisfactory methods were not available until the 20th century and the first empirical method was not published until the 1870s (12).

The problem of stiffness under gravity loads caused by self weight and the result of traffic was further complicated in the case of suspension bridges by a condition of instability which could arise under wind action. If the wind impinged upon the bridge at just the right velocity and frequency the deck would suffer increased lateral, vertical and torsional twisting until the structure was destroyed. Anyone who has ever pushed a child in a swing knows that the swing can be made to go higher and higher with just the right timing of the force on the seat. This is essentially an aerodynamic problem and quite beyond the understanding of engineers until our own day. Brown’s Brighton Suspension Pier, Telford’s Menai Bridge, Ellet’s Wheeling Bridge and many other suspension bridges were either destroyed or heavily damaged by wind action. The latest victim was the Tacoma Narrows Bridge which collapsed under a wind of only 42 or 43 miles per hour. This occurred in 1940 and launched an extensive investigation which solved the long-standing mystery of aerodynamic instability.

The suspension bridge was thus instrumental in requiring a much higher level of analysis for strength, stiffness and aerodynamic behavior based upon mathematics and mechanics. This led to the transformation of a craft-oriented technology to the modern practice of engineering. This modern phase effectively began shortly after the Civil War when iron and later steel were employed not only in bridges but also in buildings which resulted in the development of that unique American structure the skyscraper.

Ellet was one of the great field marshals of the Industrial Revolution during the Victorian period, ranking with such engineers as Stevenson, Brunel and Roebling. His great masterpiece the Wheeling Bridge ushered in the American dominance of suspension bridge technology which lasted for more than a century. This technology together with the skeletal framed iron skyscraper was one of the most noteworthy engineering achievements during the 19th century.
NOTES

1. A voluminous archive exists on the legal battle between the Wheeling Bridge Company and Pittsburgh interests. The upshot of this was to define the Federal Government's role in interstate commerce. The subject is introduced in Lewis's paper and further developed in a recent article by McKay.


   McKay, Douglas Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review Vol. IX (Spring-Summer, 1980) No. 2

2. The Wheeling Suspension Bridge is mentioned in many works on the history of technology and the history of architecture. For details of the bridge's history and significance the reader is referred to:

   Lewis, Clifford, "The Wheeling Suspension Bridge."

   Kemp, E. L., "Links in a Chain — The Development of Suspension Bridges 1801-70." The Structural Engineer Vol. 57A No. 1, August 1979

   Kemp, E. L., "Ellet's Contribution to the Development of Suspension Bridges," Engineering Issues American Society of Civil Engineers, July 1973


7. Finley, James, "A Description of the Patent Chain Bridge," The Port Folio 3 No. 6, 1810, p. 491

8. Kemp, E. L., "Links in a Chain"

9. Pope, Thomas, A Treatise on Bridge Architecture, New York, 1811

   The Thomas Telford collection contains a copy of Pope's book signed by Telford. In addition, Telford refers to Finley's work in connection with his study of suspension bridges. It is almost certain that Brown's inspiration for suspension bridges came from Finley, but we have no written evidence.


   This immensely influential book established the scientific approach to engineering design and was used by legends of engineers in the late 19th century.
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN WHEELING:

EARLY HISTORY TO 1850

by

Msgr. Robert F. Weiskircher

Downtown Wheeling certainly has some historic, architecturally striking churches. One of these, at the corner of Thirteenth and Eoff Streets, is the Romansque St. Joseph's Cathedral, built by Bishop John J. Swint in 1922. It was on this same spot, in 1848, that Richard Vincent Whalen, first Bishop of the Wheeling Diocese, built the second Catholic church in Wheeling, called St. James. It was later to become his Cathedral and to be called St. Joseph's. The history of the growth of the early Catholic community in Wheeling, leading to its becoming the key city of a new Diocese, is one that begins in Europe.

Early ecclesiastical jurisdiction over this territory was nominally under the Bishops of Quebec, subject to the organizational powers of the Cardinals of the Propaganda in Rome. In 1757, the Bishop of London was given jurisdiction over the English colonies of North America. In 1784, after independence, the Apostolic Prefecture of North America was set up under Father John Carroll.

Though records are inconclusive, probably the first priest to say Mass in this area was Father Joseph de Bonnecomps, the Jesuit who accompanied the Celoron de Blainville expedition of 1749. In August of 1749 they were around Wheeling and Point Pleasant. It would seem safe to assume that a mass may have been offered during their time in this area. Records indicate that it would be the last for many years, as Catholic settlers in this region were few and far between. In the 1780's, it was reported to Rome that there were only about 200 Catholics in the whole state of Virginia.

In 1789 the first Catholic diocese in the colonies was created, that of Baltimore, Maryland. Father John Carroll was made bishop and Wheeling, Virginia, came under his jurisdiction. Virginia continued to grow, and in 1820 the Diocese of Richmond was created with Bishop Patrick Kelly of Ireland as its head. However, the diocese not able to maintain itself, and in 1822 Virginia and Wheeling came back under the jurisdiction of Baltimore.

Twenty years later, in 1840, the Diocese of Richmond was again activated with Richard V. Whalen, pastor of Harper's Ferry, as its Bishop. He had six priests, three female schools, and six thousand Catholics in a state covering sixty-one thousand square miles and occupied by one-million, two-hundred-thousand people.

Many of the earliest Catholic settlers in the Virginia territory came to the Wheeling area. The city was the beneficiary of the Ohio River traffic and, later, of the National Road. In 1794, Wayne's victory over the Indians opened Ohio to settlement. Immigrants from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and eastern Virginia went through Wheeling on their way to the new territory. Some settled permanently, including a number of German Catholic immigrants in the 1820's. Yet, the number of Catholics remained small throughout these early years.

One of the earliest Catholics of which we have a record is Henry Montague, who settled on land just west of West Alexander, Pennsylvania, in 1794. His home was the original center of Catholic influence. There are records of a priest having said Mass there in both 1811 and 1814. The priest came from Pittsburgh, or were enroute to other destinations. In 1806, only two priests lived in the entire state of Virginia, and in 1816 there were only three churches in existence: Norfolk, Alexandria, and Richmond.

One of the earliest Catholics of which we have a record is Henry Montague, who settled on land just west of West Alexander, Pennsylvania, in 1794. His home was the original center of Catholic influence for the next twenty-five years. There were records of a priest having said Mass there in both 1811 and 1814. The priests probably came from Pittsburgh, or were enroute to other destinations. In 1806, only two priests lived in the entire state of Virginia, and in 1816 there were only three churches in existence: Norfolk, Alexandria, and Richmond.

When the Catholic population in Wheeling began to grow, the need for a church became evident. The first step made in Triadelphia was on about the same spot as the present Church of St. Mary of Seven Dolors. Between 1817 and 1819 work was begun for a church on land belonging to a Catholic, Josiah Thompson. He had purchased the land from Andrew Craig in 1817. In 1819 a letter from a priest in the area to the Archbishop of Baltimore states: “The Catholic Church is begun in Triadelphia.” In 1820, in another deed, negotiated by Mr. Thompson, mention was made of a Catholic church then being built, and that two acres were being deeded to Father Dufresne for the use of a religious institution. In 1824 the two acres were transferred to the Bishop of Baltimore for the sum of $1,000, and mention was again made of a church under construction. Yet, after at least five years of work on the building, the church was never completed, and the present one was built later near the original site.

In abandoning the work at Triadelphia, it may have been decided that a church in the city would better serve the greater number of people. The first Roman Catholic church in Wheeling was begun around 1822 on the southeast corner of Perry and Fourth streets, now Eleventh and Chapline streets, where the present Y.W.C.A. stands. The lot was donated by Noah Zane and his wife, Mary. The deed was recorded on July 2, 1824, in Volume 12, page 22, of the official records in the Ohio County Court House. It was made out in the name of the Rev. Charles Maguire, a Franciscan who lived in Pittsburgh and ministered to the Wheeling Congregation. However, the church was already completed at the time the deed was recorded. A letter in the Boston Historical
Collection, Detroit, Michigan, dated July 25, 1824, written by Rev.
Ant. Ganilh, states that he then resided in Wheeling, Va., “where a
beautiful church has lately been built.”

There is no picture extant of this first Catholic church in Wheeling,
named St. Mary’s. It was a small, handsome, wooden structure, forty
feet by sixty feet, with the entrance on the present Chapline Street. One
of the priests of the city, later writing in the Catholic newspaper, The Church
Calendar, in 1897, described the church as he remembered it. He said
architecturally it was not pretentious. There was no belfry and no spire.
On the front gable was a simple wooden cross. Below the cross was a slab
of stone bearing a Scripture text. On each side of the Church were four
windows with plain glass. The top of each was rounded off to appear
arched, and each had green shutters. On the Eleventh Street side, the
ground rose and this helped keep rocks and stones from going through the
windows. There was a stone porch with two flights of stairs leading up to
the front door. There were two aisles, one on either side, with seats in
the middle. The white altar stood in a niche supported by four white
columns. Above the niche, on a sky-blue ground, was inscribed in gilded
letters the text, “I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house.” In the
rear of the niche was a picture of the Good Shepherd. The tabernacle was
of deep red mahogany, and sperm candles were used on the altar. The
organ was small and old, in a gallery along the front that could barely
accommodate the choir.

The written records of the Wheeling parish begin on Nov. 9, 1828.
At that time, Rev. Francis Rolof baptized John Thomas Killan, son of
William and Mary Killan. Four others were baptized on the same day.
Rev. Rolof’s last entry was Aug. 2, 1829, and he recorded no marriages.

Apparently, there was no other priest appointed to Wheeling until
April of 1832 when the priest from Brownsville was asked to come whenever he could. Finally, in 1833, the Rev. James Hoerner became pastor.
The Catholic directories list him as ministering in Wheeling for ten years.
His last entries in the parish records are in 1843. Other priests’ names appear in the records from time to time, as they moved in and out of the city.

When Bishop Whalen was notified of Father Hoerner’s desire to leave, he was concerned about replacing him and also finding a suitable minister to the German Catholics of the city, who numbered eight hundred. He engaged Father Eugene Comerford as pastor, and he took over in 1843. Father Comerford was also able to enlist the help of the Redemptorists in Pittsburgh, who sent priests to take care of the Germans needs. They had bi-monthly trips to the city, and one, a Father Joseph Mueller, became known as “the Apostle of the Germans” in Wheeling.

During these years, the Catholic population was growing. An indicator of this can be seen in the number of baptisms recorded in the parish books: in 1828 – 12, 1829 – 6, 1833 – 26, 1838 – 64, and 1840 – 66.

Father Comerford left his Wheeling duties in November of 1846 and was replaced as pastor by the Bishop himself. He immediately set to work
to build up the Catholic community in the city. Seeing the need for a
larger place of worship, he purchased the lots and laid the cornerstone
for a new church on May 2, 1847, at the corner of Thirteenth and Eoff streets. Dedicated on November 26, 1849, the structure was of brick
trimmed with white sandstone, with a tower and spire two hundred and
ten feet to the top of the cross. It was called St. James, and in 1850
would become the Cathedral Church of a new diocese.

In 1848, Bishop Whalen opened St. Vincent’s Seminary in his own
home in order to prepare priests for the great needs of the Virginia
territory. Also in that same year, he opened St. Vincent’s School for Boys.
In describing it, Bishop Whalen wrote: “This school is under the direction
of the clergy of St. James Church, Wheeling, in which whilst the terms
are very reduced in behalf of all, none are allowed to be excluded for want
of means. The school terms are from $1.00 to $2.00 per quarter, according
to proficiency.”

The Bishop also planned for the education of young girls, and
brought nine Visitation Nuns from Baltimore in April of 1848. They
arrived by stage coach and lived on the corner of Fourteenth and Eoff Streets, the present site of Central Catholic High School. In
1849, the Visitation school, the Wheeling Female Seminary, had eighty
pupils, of whom ten were boarders.

Before these educational projects had been undertaken, the German
Catholics, urged on by a Pittsburgh priest, had opened a German school
at the corner of Fifteenth and Eoff Streets. The first teacher was Anton
Becker, who taught arithmetic, reading, writing, catechism, and Bible
history in German, and gave lessons to the more advanced students in
English spelling, reading and writing.

Bishop Whalen had intermittent help from other priests coming into the area. In 1848, his brother, Father David Whalen came to assist
in the parish, and stayed a year and a half. Also a young priest, Father
Robert Lawrence, was in Wheeling from about 1848-1850, as was a
Jesuit, Father J. Roger Dietz, who took care of the needs of the German
Catholics.

By 1850, it could be seen that to administer the whole Diocese of
Virginia, with the scope of travel and mountainous terrain, was extremely
difficult. Bishop Whalen was living in Wheeling but was needed, too, in
the Eastern section of the state. Therefore, a new diocese was created on
July 19, 1850, encompassing the western part of Virginia, and called the
Diocese of Wheeling. Bishop Whalen was appointed to head it, and
Wheeling was his center of administration. A new chapter in the history
of the Wheeling Church had begun.
NOTES


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Bishop Kelly went back to Ireland.


6. Weiskircher, p. 23. One of the priests, Father Fenwick, later became Bishop of Cincinnati.


8. Weiskircher, p. 23.

9. Ibid.


11. Weiskircher, p. 24. The Catholics were later beneficiaries of Mr. Zane's generosity. He donated land for the Fourth Street Methodist Church, the Lancastrian Academy, and the Presbyterian Church.

12. Ibid.


15. Ibid. Weiskircher, p. 25.

16. Lenhart, pp. 15-16. Father Hoerner was a German priest from Alsace, who had been in Richmond prior to Wheeling. He wished to return to Europe.

17. Lenhart, pp. 18-20. Father Mueller was from Bavaria, and died in Baltimore in 1876. He began his work in Wheeling in 1843, and urged


19. Lenhart, p. 20. The name was changed around 1875 to Saint Joseph's Cathedral. It was torn down in 1922 and replaced with the present building.

20. Lenhart, p. 18.

21. Ibid.


24. Ibid. Weiskircher, p. 98.
THE WHEELING SÄNGERFEST OF 1906

by

Edward C. Wolf

Excitement was in the air as the sun rose over Wheeling early Tuesday, August 21, 1906. Throughout the downtown area workmen were busy completing decorations, hanging bunting and flags, and erecting welcome signs in both German and English. The Stone and Thomas department store on Main Street was virtually buried in bunting draped around each floor, while colorful pennants fluttered on streamers running from the store's roof to the sidewalk curb. At the railroad stations—the first of thousands of visitors were already arriving on special trains. All Wheeling was in readiness for the opening of the tenth Central Ohio Saengerfest, which had temporarily forsaken the Buckeye State to cross the river and meet in West Virginia, where Wheeling's Arion, Beethoven, and Mozart singing societies served as hosts. This was the third and largest (in terms of participating societies) Saengerfest to be held in Wheeling. It was also the last, because in another decade World War I would forever change the status of Wheeling's large German-American community.

Before World War I German singing societies flourished both in Wheeling and throughout America. It was customary for these societies periodically to assemble in music festivals on both the regional and national levels. These assemblies or Saengerfests were grand music festivals combined with the spirit of a homecoming and reunion, since many German-American citizens traveled to these festivals to see old friends and relatives as well as to partake of the music. Only Wheeling's Beethoven Society survived World War I, and the Beethoven remained active until the increasing age of its members finally forced the society to disband in 1961. A few German singing societies still function in major American cities today; these include the Maennerchor in Columbus, Ohio, and the Teutonia in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Central Ohio Singing District was one of the strongest regional singing society associations in America. The district held its first Saengerfest in Columbus in 1878. Subsequent festivals occurred in Akron, 1889; Dayton, 1882; Springfield, 1884; Columbus, 1887; Canton, 1890; Toledo, 1894; Chillicothe, 1896; and Akron, 1904. Thus, it was a mark of distinction for Wheeling to be able to host the Central Ohio Saengerfest, and Wheeling's Arion, Beethoven, and Mozart societies spared no pains to make the event a truly memorable and gala affair.

Thanks to the fact that a 64-page program book was printed for the festival, we have a detailed account of the musical programs and participants. The front cover of this program book is printed in red, blue, and black. Its title is *Official Program Central Ohio Saengerfest Held at Wheeling W. Va., Aug. 21, 22, 23, 1906.* A large lyre flanked by the German and American flags occupies the center of the cover. On the left side of the lyre beneath the flags is a musical scroll with the title, "Star Spangled Banner," while a matching scroll on the right side of the lyre is headed, "Die Wacht am Rhein." The program book was printed by the German-American Printing Company of Wheeling. While portions of the book are in English, the bulk of the copy is in German.

Some of the most prominent members of Wheeling's German-American community served on the local committee which handled arrangements for the festival. They included Louis F. Stifel, president; Fidelis Riester, vice-president; Valentin Theye, protocol secretary; Julius C. Jung, corresponding secretary; A. A. Schramm, financial secretary; Carl Horstmann, treasurer; and C. W. Appenzeller, Jacob Korn, Eberhard Hufreuter, Martin Kuhn, assessors. Two of Wheeling's leading musicians served as music directors. They were Hermann M. Schockey, director, and Edward Blumenberg, vice-director. Schockey was born in Wheeling in 1856 and studied music in Germany at the Stuttgart Conservatory. For many years he served as organist and choirmaster at St. Paul's German Protestant Church in South Wheeling. He became music director for the Arion Society after that group was formed in 1881, and he served the Arion until the society's singing section ceased functioning during World War I. Beginning in 1888 Schockey also served as music director for the Mozart. Blumenberg was born in Wheeling in 1872 and studied music in both Berlin and Dresden. He was organist and choirmaster at St. John's German Protestant Church in South Wheeling and also taught violin at Mt. de Chantal Academy. In 1899 he became music director of the Beethoven Society, a position which he held for over fifty years. Both Schockey and Blumenberg were skilled organists, conductors, and violinists, and their names figure prominently in Wheeling's musical life.

The three Wheeling host societies were the "big three" among the eleven different German singing societies which functioned at various times in Wheeling between 1855 and 1961. The Arion was formed in 1881 from the merger of the Harmonie and Maennerchor, both of which trace their history back to 1855. The Arion was the wealthiest of all the Wheeling societies and owned a hall at Twentieth and Main Street. The building still stands, and the ground floor currently is occupied by Seymour Industrial and Auto Parts. For all practical purposes the Arion ceased functioning after World War I, though the Arion Association continued to use their building for various programs, meetings, wedding receptions, etc. until the 1930s. The Mozart Society was formed in 1882 by members of the former Liederkranz and Concordia societies. Its activities always centered on Wheeling's south side, and many Mozart members were employed by the Schmulbach Brewery. The Mozart gave its name to Mozart Park, a hilltop amusement area which once occupied what is now the Mozart section of Wheeling. Like the Arion, it became a victim of World War I. The Mozart met in a hall at Thirty-Eighth and Jacob streets. The Beethoven was founded July 4, 1869 by some dissident members from the old Harmonie and Maennerchor. Initially en-
couraged by the Wheeling Turner Society, the Beethoven met for a while at Turner Hall before moving into a hall in the old Intelligencer building, where they met until 1898. From 1898 until 1905 the Beethoven occupied the third floor of the Egerter Building at Eleventh and Market streets. Thereafter they used the Arion Hall for most of their events until they purchased their own hall at Twenty-Ninth and Moyston streets in 1915. As mentioned above, the Beethoven alone survived World War I and continued an active existence under Blumenberg's direction until the 1930s, finally disbanded in 1961.

With this basic background in mind, let us now turn our attention to the color and excitement of the 1906 Saengerfest. Fortunately the detailed program booklet coupled with extensive accounts in three Wheeling papers — the Intelligencer, Register, and Deutsche Zeitung for August 20-24, 1906 — enable us to make an accurate reconstruction of these events.

Wheeling's German citizenry arose early on the morning of Tuesday, August 21, since both the gentlemen's and ladies' reception committees met in Arion Hall at 6 a.m. to begin a busy day's work. Accompanied by the Opera House Band, the reception committees met the visiting societies as each arrived at one of the railroad stations, beginning with the train from Dayton, Springfield, and Columbus, which arrived at 7:35 a.m. The Opera House Band, the reception committees, and the visiting societies would then march through downtown Wheeling behind large German and American flags from the station to Arion Hall. At the hall the societies registered and received their official badges, neat celluloid affairs attached to patriotic ribbons and bearing the inscription, "Tenth Central Ohio Saengerfest, Wheeling, W.Va., August 21 to 23, 1906." These badges were also sold at a nominal price at both Arion Hall and the Court Theatre, which served as the festival concert hall. Following registration and a short welcoming address by Fidelis Rieter, vice-president of the Arion, the visiting societies were served lunch at the hall, after which they were escorted to their respective hotels.

By noon Tuesday nearly all the visitors had arrived, and the afternoon was devoted to rehearsals in the Court Theatre. The Cleveland Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Johann H. Beck served as the festival orchestra. Afternoon rehearsals began with the soloists and orchestra at one o'clock, the local reception chorus (i.e. the combined Arion, Beethoven, and Mozart societies) at two, and the massed chorus at three. All societies participating in a Saengerfest always received the music to be sung by the massed chorus well in advance. In addition, it was customary for the Saengerfest music directors to travel to the various societies and rehearse with them. Thus Hermann Schockey and Edward Blumenberg had been visiting societies in Ohio for several weeks before the Wheeling festival.

Saengerfests traditionally featured nationally known soloists, and this was no exception. The tenor soloist was Edward Strong of New York City, while a former Wheeling resident, Edmund Jahn, who worked as a concert artist out of Cincinnati and New York, was the featured baritone. Mrs. Alice Merritt-Cochran had been booked as the featured soprano, and her name was printed in all the programs. However, at the last minute illness prevented her from performing, and she was replaced by Miss Viola Waterhouse of New York.

Advance publicity had advertised that the massed men's chorus would number 800 voices. However, after the carpenters had completed the special platforms on the Court stage, only 700 men could fit — and that was by considerable squeezing! Nonetheless, this group undoubtedly holds the record for being the largest men's chorus ever to sing in Wheeling. The seats for the chorus were arranged in tiers running from the center of the stage back into the right and left wings, and they were covered with bunting and patriotic colors. The Cleveland Orchestra occupied the space directly behind the footlights. A large German flag hung on the center rear of the stage, and this was flanked by a display of smaller American flags. Since an August heat wave struck Wheeling during the festival, one can imagine that the chorus became quite uncomfortable. According to a Stone and Thomas advertisement in the Intelligencer August 20, all the singers were required to wear a white vest and a black bow tie. The ad stated that Stone and Thomas had vests from 98 cents to $3.00, and black bow ties "in approved shapes" were 25 cents.

Apparantly 24 societies participated in the massed chorus. Actually the program booklet lists 20 societies plus the three from Wheeling, complete with the names of the members of each society. However, a Steubenville society is mentioned in some of the newspaper accounts, but not in the program booklet, so presumably Steubenville also participated. Societies listed in the program were the Akron Liedertafel and Saengerbund; Alliance Gesangverein; Canton Arion; Chillicothe Einrichtung; Cleveland Harmonie, Newburgh Germany-Maennerchor, Schweibachers Saengerbund, Turnier Maennerchor, and Deutsch-Ungarischer Saengerbund; Columbus Liederkranz and Germania; Dayton Schweibachers Saengerbund; Lima Orion-Maennerchor; Mansfield Arion; Marion Deutscher Bund; Parkersburg (West Virginia) Germania; Sandusky Saengerbund; Springfield Schweibachers Saengerbund; Youngstown Maennerchor; and the three Wheeling societies. With from 700 to 800 participants plus several times that many visitors in Wheeling, the newspapers reported that the hotels were so full that cots had to be put in the parlors and halls.

While one might think that a chorus of 700 would be most unwieldy, a detailed account of the opening concert in the August 22 Intelligencer reads:

The first opportunity to hear the much talked of chorus of the "700," the largest song body ever heard in Wheeling, was next afforded. When Prof. Schockey [sic] dropped the baton they broke
forth in the tuneful "Sing and Forget." The volume was immense, but not to such an extent that it was rendered unpleasant, while the parts were all very evenly balanced. In fact, regardless of the other numbers, the selection of the big chorus was well worth hearing. Following the first selection they rendered the "Heath Song" by Werner. Mr. Schockey is certainly to be congratulated upon having so grand and well drilled a chorus, and the chorus in turn should be congratulated for their having so able a leader as Mr. Schockey.

Formal concerts were held in the Court Theatre on Tuesday evening, Wednesday afternoon, and Wednesday evening, August 21 and 22. The Wednesday matinee featured a 600-voice children's chorus from Wheeling directed by Miss Lucy Robinson. While the newspapers always praised the high quality of all the programs, attendance was rather disappointing in that none of the concerts sold out. This was blamed in part on the extreme heat. An advertisement in the Intelligencer for August 22 lists ticket prices at 50 cents, 75 cents, $1.00, $1.50, and $2.00 for box seats. While these were fairly high admission prices for 1906, they were not unreasonable for a festival of this type. There is no better way to describe the nature of the programs than to list the programs themselves as given in the program booklet.

TUESDAY EVENING, 21 AUGUST 1906

Reception Concert

1. "Kaisermarsch" by Wagner, played by the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra directed by Johann H. Beck. This was followed by a welcoming speech by Wheeling mayor Charles C. Schmidt, with responses by Alois Kessler, vice-president of the Central Ohio Saengerbezirk, and Louis F. Stifel, festival president.

2. "An die Kuenstler" by Mendelssohn, sung by Wheeling's combined Arion, Beethoven, and Mozart societies directed by Hermann Schockey and accompanied by the Cleveland Orchestra.


4. "Asa's Death" and "In the Hall of the Mountain King" from Grieg's "Peer Gynt Suite," played by the Cleveland Orchestra.

5. "Frisch gesungen" by Silcher and "Haiden Roeslein" by Werner, sung by the massed men's chorus of 700 voices directed by Schockey.

6. "With Verdure Clad" from Haydn's Creation, sung by Miss Viola Waterhouse, soprano, substituting for Alice Merritt-Cochran, who was indisposed.

7. "Lara," an original overture composed by the Cleveland Orchestra's director, Johann H. Beck, and conducted by him.

8. "Was hab' ich denn meinem Feinsliebchen getan" by Hamma, and "Gruss der Heimat" by Attenhofer, sung by the massed chorus directed by Edward Blumenberg.


12. "Bannerlied" by Hirsch, sung by the massed chorus directed by Schockey.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, 22 AUGUST 1906

1. Overture to Nicolai's The Merry Wives of Windsor, played by the Cleveland Orchestra directed by Beck.

2. "Old Glory," sung by the 600-voice children's chorus directed by Miss Lucy Robinson.

3. Two songs sung by Viola Waterhouse, substituting for Alice Merritt-Cochran.

4. "Blau-Auegelein" by Witt, sung by the Youngstown Maennerchor.

5. "On the Steppes of Central Asia" by Borodin, played by the Cleveland Orchestra.


9. "Traumsee" by Isenmann, sung by the Turner Maennerchor of Cleveland.
10. "Fruehling" by Grieg, played by the Cleveland Orchestra.


12. "Sonntag ist's" by Bluemel, sung by the Columbus Liederkranz.

13. A duet from act four, scene one, of Gounod's Romeo and Juliet, sung by Viola Waterhouse and Edward Strong.


15. Ballet music from Goldmark's The Queen of Sheba, played by the Cleveland Orchestra.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, 22 AUGUST 1906

1. Overture to Euryanthe by Weber, played by the Cleveland Orchestra.

2. "Das Lied" by Baldamus, sung by the massed men's chorus with Edward Strong as tenor soloist, directed by Schockey and accompanied by the Cleveland Orchestra.


4. "Kein Herz ist so enge" by Isenmann and "Der Jaeger Abschied" by Mendelssohn, sung by the massed men's chorus directed by Blumenberg.

5. "Honor and Arms" from Handel's Samson, sung by E. A. Jahn. Mr. Jahn was encored by the audience.

6. Schubert's "Symphony in B Minor" (Unfinished), played by the Cleveland Orchestra.

7. "Das einsame Roeslein" by Hermes, sung by the massed chorus.

8. "Cielo e mar" from Ponchielli's La Giaconda, sung by Edward Strong.

9. "Die Muehle" by Gillet, played by the strings of the Cleveland Orchestra.

10. "Heute scheid ich" by Isenmann and "Kehr wieder" by Lenz, sung by the massed chorus.

11. "Barcarolle" by Chaminade, sung by Viola Waterhouse and E. A. Jahn.

12. "Grand Dedication March" by Foerster, played by the Cleveland Orchestra.

13. "Schlachtgebet" by Moehring, sung by the massed men's chorus accompanied by the Cleveland Orchestra.


Apparently the finale with the German and American national songs (in 1906 the United States did not yet have an official National anthem) had its desired effect, because the Intelligencer on the following morning had a heading across five columns of the front page, "Chorus of Fifteen Hundred Sang 'Star Spangled Banner.' " Under this heading were subheadings, "Great Finale of the Concerts" and "Greatest Musical Event in History of Wheeling Ends To-Day." A line in the lengthy story reads, "It was a wonderful climax to a wonderful song festival and ended Wheeling's greatest musical affair." The Intelligencer's only regret was that the concerts were not sold out, though the heat wave again received the blame. The Register also referred to the heat and observed that from 50 to 75 men found it necessary to leave the massed chorus because of the heat during the final concert. However, "the success of the concert was not seriously interfered with."

While the events in the Court Theatre marked the artistic peaks of the Saengerfest, impromptu concerts on almost any street corner downtown were common while the festival was in progress. Wednesday evening about seven o'clock the brass band from Marietta which had accompanied the Parkersburg delegation gave a concert on Twelfth Street near the McLure House. "The band rendered several praiseworthy selections and were roundly applauded by a big audience." There was also a group known as the "Leedle German Band" which the Register reports played on downtown streets throughout the day and evening of Wednesday. Societies liked to have a band accompany them as they marched in a body from their hotels to the Court. The Register for August 22 reports that the German-Hungarian society from Cleveland did not have their own band, but they were able to employ a group after they had arrived in Wheeling, and this band subsequently served as an escort to the society. Even the Cleveland Orchestra joined in giving impromptu programs. Prior to the closing concert in the Court, the orchestra played several selections in the foyer, drawing a crowd of hundreds that almost blocked Chapline and Twelfth streets. One can also assume that impromptu programs were common at any hotel where singers were quartered, as well as at the halls of the three Wheeling societies. It is quite likely that except for the singers themselves, many of Wheeling's visitors never attended any of the formal programs at the Court, but spent the entire festival visiting old friends, attending various open houses at German homes and businesses, and con-
Thursday evening the special coaches and trains began to leave Wheeling, starting with a special train to Columbus, Dayton, and Springfield, which left at 6:10, and the exodus continued throughout the night. By Friday noon most of the visitors had gone, and Wheeling gradually returned to normal as the merchants removed all the flags and bunting, the carpenters disassembled the giant platforms which had been built on the Court stage, and both the active and passive members of Wheeling's three German singing societies caught up on some much needed rest.

From all the newspaper accounts the grand festival proceeded smoothly and in good order, and the organizing committees had tended to even the smallest details — such as clearing the pit of the Court immediately after each concert and setting up tables complete with paper and pencils so the newspaper reporters covering the festival could write their stories with ease. Obviously the Saengerfest organizers were anxious to receive a good press! The Intelligencer marveled at the smooth organization of the gigantic festival, and observed that in only one day the Court manager and a force of four men had completely torn out the huge platforms on the stage. As the paper put it in its August 24 edition, the big stand was erected and held its immense burden without an accident, and not a nail was driven into the stage floor! Likewise, the children who sang in the 600-voice chorus at the matinee concert were not overlooked. On the Tuesday following the festival all the children were invited to Arion Hall for a “thank-you party” and refreshments. It was a tribute to the organizing committees that they had planned for everything, and the festival went exactly according to plan — except for the hot weather.

Having had such success, probably no one in Wheeling in 1906 would have thought this would be the last time the city would ever host a Saengerfest and be treated to the unique sound of hundreds of trained male voices singing in concert.

But just as the Saengerfest committees could not control the weather, so they could not foresee the future course of world events. World War I broke like a devastating storm upon Wheeling's German community, and anti-German hysteria reached such heights that the Ohio County Library is alleged proudly to have burned all its German materials — including runs of Wheeling's German newspapers and other Wheeling German imprints. Wheeling tried to eliminate her German past as banks, businesses, and families changed their names to sound more “American.” Even the singing societies became “unpatriotic” in the eyes of many persons. Thus, the very societies which had played such a major role in the growth and development of Wheeling's musical, cultural, and social life for over sixty years suddenly found their influence at an end. Though the Beethoven was able to recover and resume activities after the war, never again would Wheeling experience the joy and excitement of a major Saengerfest.
FOOTNOTES

1The previous Saengerfests were held in 1860 and 1885, and were discussed by this writer in the autumn/winter issue of the Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review for 1978. Technically "Saengerfest" is a German term and might properly be treated as such. However, I shall follow the practice of American English-language newspapers and treat it as an Anglicized word whose plural is formed by adding an "s," rather than the German "e."

2A brief history of the Central Ohio Saengerbund is in the Official Program Central Ohio Saengerfest Held at Wheeling, W.Va. Aug. 21, 22, 23, 1906. William A. Hannig of Wheeling owns a copy of this program, which he kindly loaned to me so that I could make a photocopy for this study. This same program booklet also contains short histories of Wheeling's Arion, Beethoven, and Mozart societies, as well as listing all the active members of these societies in 1906.

3This information on Schockey and Blumenberg is derived from the 1906 program booklet, a scrapbook of Arion programs owned by Esther Stocker Derrow of Wheeling, and an account of Blumenberg's 50th anniversary as director of the Beethoven in the Intelligencer for August 8, 1949.

4The walls of old Turner Hall still stand as the northernmost of the buildings of the Marshall Tobacco Company on Market Street in downtown Wheeling, just off the ramps currently leading to the I-70 tunnels and the Fort Henry Bridge.

5The Opera House Band was a resident theater orchestra of 15-20 players, originally connected with the Opera House owned by the German Fire Insurance Company. The Opera House stood on the present site of the Wheeling Dollar Savings and Trust Company at Fourteenth and Market streets. The Opera House was Wheeling's leading theater until the Court Theatre opened on September 8, 1902. Do not confuse the Opera House with the Grand Opera House, which was the rebuilt Washington Hall and whose ground floor was the German Bank. Around 1911 the German Bank remodeled the Grand Opera House into an office building, which is today's Liconia Building.

6The Court Theatre originally had a much larger auditorium and stage than exists today after various remodelings which converted it into a movie house and sectioned off a portion of the old theater for commercial use. The main entrance formerly was on Chapline Street rather than at the corner of the building, as is the case today.

7Singing societies traditionally had both active members, who were the actual singers, and passive members, who did not sing, but paid their dues and participated in the society's social events and other activities. Likewise, most societies had women's auxiliaries, since society membership was technically for men only, but women were involved with many functions— even singing when their voices were required for special programs. Usually there were three or four times as many passive as active members. Thus, a society with 30 singers could easily swell to a group of 100 when they attended Saengerfest, held a dinner, etc. Consequently, some newspaper accounts indicate that Wheeling hosted as many as four or five thousand visitors during the 1906 Saengerfest.

8These accounts of the programs are from the official program booklet verified by accounts in the Register, Intelligencer, and Deutsche Zeitung for August 20 through 24. Apparently everything was performed as printed in the program booklet, except for the soprano solos for which Miss Waterhouse substituted.

9Register, August 23, 1906.

10Newspaper accounts vary somewhat, but the size of the Cleveland Orchestra was from 42 to 50 players. See the Intelligencer, August 23, 1906.

11An account of the business meeting is in the Deutsche Zeitung, August 23, 1906.

12Intelligencer, August 24, 1906.

13I have not been able to document whether the library actually did such book burning. However, I have heard the same story from several older Wheeling residents of German descent whom I interviewed while preparing this and other studies of Wheeling's German singing societies.
BOOK REVIEW


The subject of this book was a Swedish Lutheran minister who preached as well as worked with the same perspective as the hard-bitten entrepreneurs of his age (late 19c). As a college president he was pressed constantly by the strictures of a slender budget to raise money by whatever means and sources were at hand to keep afloat Bethany College, whose purpose it was to further the Kingdom of God on earth, Lutheran style. As if Swenson did not have enough problems maintaining his school, he was thoroughly involved in the development of Lindborg, Kansas into what he hoped would be a large thriving metropolis (population today about 2500), and as an important cog in the Republican party in that state. His spiritual objectives were sometimes modified in the pursuit of more mundane affairs. At times he put his Lutheran designation in the corner, even to thinking more like a politician, developer, money raiser, Chamber of Commerce advertiser than as a Christian minister. By the time of his death Rev. Swenson had become thoroughly acclimated to American values and standards-almost. He insisted to the end of his life that he was not a mere American, but most importantly, a Swedish-American, and encouraged others of his immediate ethnic community to think the same way.

This excellent cultural and intellectual history, written clearly, sometimes graphically as when Pearson discusses the penury to which Bethany of Kansas was reduced in meeting its immediate bills and interest charges. The subject comes through as a full flesh and blood Swede who tried to achieve Americanization and seemed to have attained the amount he desires. The chief strength of this work is the writer’s ability to walk a fine line between telling the story of an immigrant boy who made good and as a sociological treatise on the process of acculturation itself steeped heavily at times in the latest “in” jargon. Fortunately this species of literary confusion is kept to the introduction although there are occasional suggestions that the book would become a historical paraphrase of the cultural model of Milton Gordon, a prominent sociologist. Pearson escaped this potential intellectual straitjacket, and while using valuable sociological insights, the work essentially carries the normal baggage of historical references, biographical and personal concerns, and chronological rectitude.

Pearson has researched his material well and has written interestingly with very few dull passages. He was also blessed with that most valuable instrument of good writing (regardless of field), a first-rate editor, Ernest M. Espelie, long associated with the Augustana Historical Society, whose work is careful and painstaking.

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The late MSGR. ROBERT F. WEISKIRCHER, S.T.L., a native of Wheeling, was educated at St. Mary’s University, Baltimore, and the American College, Rome, Italy. Msgr. Weiskircher served parishes throughout West Virginia and was a priest for over fifty years. He was the chronicler of the history of the Diocese of Wheeling/Charleston. The article was prepared with the assistance of Sister Margaret Brennan.

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