

SIGNALS

LII No. 6

March 2025

Thurs., March 27, 2025 @ 7pm @ The Lindsay Theater

“Lights, Camera, History!”

EXPLORING HISTORY THROUGH FILM WITH THE SEWICKLEY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE LINDSAY THEATER

FEATURING: A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN
(1992)

DATE: THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

NO. 2



80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II (1939 - 1945)

Join SVHS at the Lindsay Theater for the second screening in our new series of programming -- “Lights, Camera, History!” where we join the Lindsay Theater in exploring history as it is portrayed and preserved through film.

The second film in the series will be presented just in time for Women’s History Month and MLB’s Opening Day, and celebrating the women on the homefront during the 80th anniversary year of the end of WWII, the 1992 film *A League of Their Own*.

After the film, stay for a presentation by Anne Madarasz, Chief Curator and Director of the Western PA Sports Museum, who will share a bit of history of the AAGPBL and the 16 women from western Pennsylvania who played in the famous league.

This winter/spring 2025 series will feature films centered on an American war commemorating a major anniversary year in 2025 and will serve as lead-up to our May 2025 exhibit exploring the history of the Sewickley Valley in times of war as preserved in the Collections at SVHS, “Valor in the Valley.”

Each viewing will include a brief introduction by Executive Director, Amanda Schaffer, and will be followed by a 20 - 30 minute presentation by an expert on the film’s subject matter.

This series will take place at the Lindsay Theater and will require tickets through the Lindsay box office or website. Tickets are priced using their regular ticketing -- \$11 for general admission; \$8.75 for all discounted tickets including seniors 65 and over, children 10 and under, groups of 10 or more, and students and military with proper ID.

Scan the QR code to be taken to the SVHS website to learn more about the event and to find a link to purchase your tickets through the Lindsay online box office.



BATTER UP!

What is the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) and how accurate is its portrayal in "A League of Their Own?"

The next feature film for "Lights, Camera, History" *A League of Their Own* is centered around the formation and first season of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.

Founded in 1943, the AAGPBL was the brainchild of Philip K. Wrigley, the chewing-gum mogul who had inherited the Chicago Cubs franchise from his father. Wrigley and other baseball club owners were facing a possible decline in attendance by the fall of 1942 as their players were drafted into the armed forces after the US entered WWII.

Wrigley's initial hope was that the women-filled teams would play across the country, filling Major League Baseball stadiums when the men's teams were away, or unable to field a team due to draft numbers. He met opposition to that plan from the other league owners in that first year and decided to start by establishing four teams in smaller, non-Major League towns. The towns were within 100 miles of the League's Chicago headquarters and close to each other. They were Racine, Kenosha, Rockford, and South Bend.



Peaches



Belles



Blue Sox



Comets

Those teams would consist of 15 players each, playing a game that was a unique blend of softball and baseball. Women were recruited from across the United States and Canada. The 60 talented women selected out of hundreds to fill those first teams played their opening day game on May 30, 1943.

Though initially formed as war-time entertainment and an alternative revenue source, the league continued after the war, expanding and contracting along the way. At its height in the late 1940s, the league fielded 10 teams and attracted over 900,000 fans in a season. A decline in interest in the AAGPBL by the mid-1950s -- due in part to the men returning from war, the introduction of televised MLB games, and a shift in what was considered appropriate work for women in the post-war period -- spelled the end of the AAGPBL and its last season was played in 1954.

Movies centered around historical figures or topics are often amazing gateways through which to discover history, but they are first and foremost meant to entertain, and as such liberties are often taken with accuracy.

A League of Their Own is one that balances its accuracies and liberties fairly well.

It captures the energy of the league -- a space where women could, for the first time, play a sport they loved and excelled at on a professional level, often marking the first time they left home to make a substantial paycheck on their own. It accurately portrays the feminine expectations had for the 60 women that made the cut; players were in fact required to attend Helena Rubenstein's beauty salon and evening charm school classes during spring training.

A League of Their Own takes the most creative license in its characters; many of them are composite characters of real people or players involved with the league, or baseball in general.

Actress Geena Davis' main character Dottie Hinson, for instance, is based on Dorothy "Dottie/Kammie" Kamenshek. Like the film's "Queen of Diamonds" Hinson, Kamenshek was considered not only one of the best players in the AAGPBL but one of the best players in baseball of all time. But, unlike Dottie Hinson, Kamenshek was a first baseman for the Peaches, not a catcher, and played in the league for ten seasons. Tom Hanks' Jimmy Dugan, coach of the Peaches, was based loosely on Jimmie Foxx, a retired MLB player who coached in the AAGPBL for one year in 1952.

Another liberty taken is the record of the Peaches in that inaugural season. The climax of the movie has the Rockford Peaches battling the Racine Belles in the 1943 Championship, but in reality, the Peaches had the worst record in the league and would not win a championship until 1945.

No matter the differences between the factual and fictional accounts, the one thing that the film and the real league proved with certainty -- that girls could play baseball, and play it well.



A DEEPER DIVE FOR CLARIFICATION

At the screening of *Shenandoah*, a stat was shared that prompted questions from the audience and that our Civil War historian Rich Condon felt seemed a bit high.

The stat came from an article entitled "Sewickley Boys in '61: Brief Sketch of the Sewickley Rifles" published in *The Sewickley Valley*, vol. 1, no. 9, May 30, 1895, under editor Gilbert A. Hays, son of the famed Civil War General Alexander Hays. It asserted that:

"At the outbreak of the Civil War, the young men of Sewickley formed a military company, calling it The Sewickley Rifles. With but few exceptions, every able-bodied young man in the valley enlisted in the company..."

The company of 98 men left Sewickley for Philadelphia on July 6, 1861, where they joined the 28th Pennsylvania Regiment under Col. John W. Geary.

The article noted that the "company participated in nearly all of the engagements in the southwest, accompanied Sherman in his grand march to the sea, and took part in the closing engagements of the war, which resulted in the surrender of the rebel armies in Virginia. It also took part in the grand review at Washington city and was mustered out of service July 18th, 1865. **Of the original number who went forth to battle only eight or ten returned to Sewickley at the close of the contest.**"

It was the last line that was shared and drew questions as an only 10% survival rate seemed extreme.

A deeper dive into the muster roles of the 28th Pennsylvania for the fates of the Sewickley men clarifies the claim. The short of it is that only eight to ten men returned **first, as part of the 28th/Sewickley Rifles, and second, in July 1865**. Not including the clarification of being mustered out from the 28th and specifically in July 1865 is what led to a misleadingly high stat. The Sewickley Rifles saw the deaths of at least 11 of its men, another 22 were discharged on Surgeons' Certificates throughout the war, a number of men transferred regiments and units, and many were simply discharged or mustered out prior to July 1865. A few were listed as deserters or status unknown.

It is important to note that those stats reflect only the men who originally left with the Rifles and not those who left with different regiments and at different times. Still, if only considering the stats of the just the Rifles -- with the 1860 population of Sewickley being under 1600, and under half of that total being male, and probably half of that of age and capacity to fight, 98 men leaving and nearly 40 returning wounded or not at all would have been felt deeply by the community, even if not at the high rate recently inferred.

Notes from the Postmaster's Office

By: Amanda Schaffer, Executive Director, SVHS

"We're the members of the All-American League, we come from cities near and far..."

And I have gone to and from cities near and far to learn and celebrate the incredible ladies of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL).

A League of Their Own (1992) is one of my favorite movies. It does what the best history movies do -- it entertains while giving you just the right amount of history to go after and learn more.

Chasing its history has long been a part of my love of the subject and how it is shared as public history. When I was in seventh grade my family and I traveled to Cooperstown, NY to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame. My family is a baseball family, we were going to the mecca of baseball history for that reason, but for me, my aim was to see the AAGPBL exhibit that was on display at the end of the 1992 film. We saved it for last in our tour of the renowned museum, knowing how much time I would want to spend amongst its collections -- I even saved most of the film on my disposable camera for the moment, to capture every bit of it. You can imagine my complete disappointment when we found that the large exhibit in the movie was reduced to a hallway. You see, an exhibit to the scale of the one in the movie did once exist, but it was temporary, the permanent exhibit was reduced to only two display cases.

Since then, I have been to the original homefield of the Rockford Peaches in Rockford, Illinois where all that remains is the ticketing booth. Last summer I attended a game at the Milwaukee Brewers' American Family field, where they have seemingly misplaced the memorial dedicated to the AAGPBL players; I walked around the entire park and asked multiple staff members where to find it to no avail.

And that is perhaps the biggest history lesson to take away from chasing the history portrayed in *A League of Their Own* -- that history not kept and cared for will disappear.

The exhibit that I so badly wanted to see at Cooperstown opened in November of 1988. To make it happen the Baseball Hall of Fame had to solicit donations of materials because they had only a few pamphlets and baseball cards from the League. It took an article and a connection to the head of the AAGPBL alumni association for enough of the history to be collected and preserved to create the exhibit. Prior to that, the museum of baseball history simply did not have the AAGPBL represented in the hundreds of thousands of objects and memorabilia already in its care.

Our speaker following the Lindsay screening of *A League of Their Own*, Anne Madarasz, Chief Curator and Director of the Western PA Sports Museum, will share a bit of history of the AAGPBL and the 16 women from western Pennsylvania who played in the famous league. But of those 16 women, there is one whose story she will not be able to share -- because they haven't been able to find it. They know her name was Alma Winkler and that she was the catcher for the Muskegon Lassies in 1949, but beyond that, they have been unable to establish additional biographical information. In less than 80 years, a story has already been lost.

So whether a movie inspires you, or it's your own story you preserve for the generations that follow you, I hope that you will chase the historical narratives that mean something to you and record them, because while **there may be no cryin' in baseball, there is in history lost.**



Above: A photo of the sports section of the "A Woman's Place" exhibit at the Heinz History Center when I visited in March 2024. Inset is a page from the supplemental book on the 16 women from Western PA who played in the AAGPBL and is the empty page for Alma Winkler.

Patrons, Benefactors, Friends, Sponsors

Many Thanks to the following who since our last newsletter have supported SVHS with gifts in addition to dues.

- John and Mary Hotchkiss
- Brian and Kate Jeffe
- John and Kathryn Moyer
- Charles Murdock
- Marty O'Brien and Lisa Gordon
- Sewickley Heights History Center
- Michael Tomana
- Helge and Erika Wehmeier
- Jay West
- Joe Zemba

Special Contributions

- Sally McVeigh, in honor of Peggy Standish
- Marty O'Brien Charitable Trust

Designated Digital and Oral History Fund Contributions:

- Marty O'Brien Charitable Trust

Business Memberships



Welcome New Members!

- Elizabeth Alvarado
- Jay West
- John Zimmerman



REMEMBER to SHARE YOUR EMAIL with SVHS!

Having an active email address on file at SVHS is important -- it is how we share news and information in-between meetings and newsletters. If you are not currently receiving emails from SVHS please reach out to make sure we have your correct address in our database!



RENEW ONLINE!
USE THIS QR CODE
TO BE TAKEN DIRECTLY
TO THE PAGE

History Love in February

SVHS was able to share its love of history in many ways this past February. Here is a brief photographic recap of February 2025!

Winter Tea 2025

Our 2nd Annual Winter Tea was held on Saturday, February 1, 2025. Below are Program Committee Chair Verna Corey's introductory remarks for our Speaker Eliza Smith Brown. They were so lovely and timely that permission was given to share them here in the newsletter:

We are so pleased to see so many of you on this sunny February 1 afternoon. Hopefully, a harbinger of spring soon to come.

Now that you are replete with tasty G&C food, you can sit back and listen to a wonderful story by a wonderful storyteller who comes from a family full of women full of moxie.

I would guess that a number of you also come from families with stories that should be shared. Be sure that your children and grandchildren know these stories. Even better since winter is not over yet, start a journal and get these stories down on paper or on your computer. Do not let these family stories disappear.

Also, remember that history is not just the past. Happily, Eliza's foremothers knew this and made sure that their activities were documented and kept.

Start doing the same...change is occurring fast and at increasing speed...politically, legally, with the climate, and now with G.I. What you write about today will amaze your progeny in 50 or 100 years or beyond.

Today is tomorrow's history.

Thank heavens the story of Eliza Smith Brown's "She Devils" was recorded so we could hear it today!



Collections in the Community: Display Case Exhibit at SPL

In a new partnership with the Sewickley Public Library (SPL), SVHS will have the opportunity to share pieces of the Collections at SVHS twice a year in two display cases at the library. February was our first and was a preview of the upcoming "Valor in the Valley" exhibition.

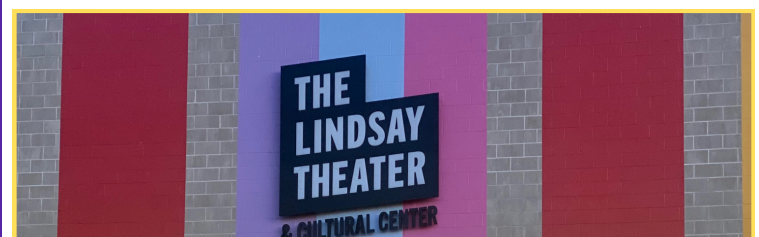


"Lights, Camera, History!" No. 1 - "Shenandoah"

SVHS had a fantastic time at the first screening of its new film series partnership with The Lindsay Theater on February 27. Jimmy Stewart on the big screen in Shenandoah, followed by an excellent presentation and Q&A with Civil War Pittsburgh's Rich Condon was the best way to kick off the new partnership.



Civil War Historian, Rich Condon calling into the theater from Gettysburg.



SVHS Nominating Committee

The following members were named to the SVHS Nominating Committee for 2024-2025:

Marty McDaniel, Chair
Susan Holton
John Poister
Rob Thomas
Joe Zemba

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society Nominating Committee (listed above) proposes the following members as officers and directors, to be elected at the Annual Meeting, Wednesday, May 21, 2025. At that time, nominations may be made from the floor, provided the person nominated has agreed to serve if elected.

Officer for a second two-year term:

Marty O'Brien, President

Current directors moving to an officer position in year two of their first-year term:

Robin Bolea, Secretary
Sean Rollman, Treasurer

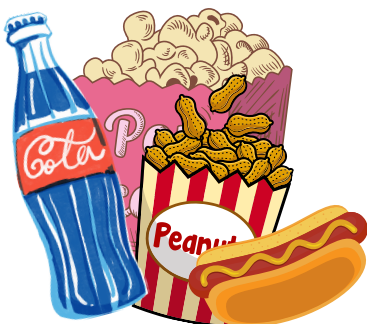
Directors for a first two-year term:

Alison Conte
Chris Driscoll
Rob Dunbar
Palmira Gerlach
Dana Merenda
Wayne Murphy
Jay West

The election for Officers and Directors of the 2025-2026 SVHS Board will be held at the Annual Meeting.

"Lights, Camera, History!"

EXPLORING HISTORY THROUGH FILM WITH THE SEWICKLEY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE LINDSAY THEATER

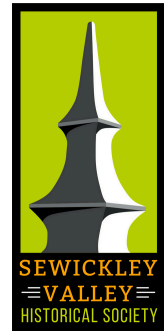


As an exclusive perk for SVHS members, SVHS is offering \$1 off concessions per member for those who attend the viewing of "A League of Their Own" on Thursday, March 27. Please only one coupon per member -- two are offered here for each member included on a family membership.

Please cut out and present to cashier at time of payment.

SEWICKLEY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
200 BROAD STREET
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COMING SOON

DON'T FORGET TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS WITH THESE UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sewickley Valley Historical Society

President
Marty O'Brien

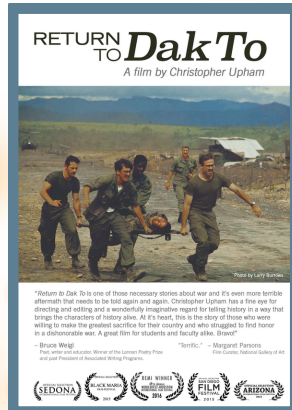
Vice-President
George Berry, III

Secretary
Janet Oellig

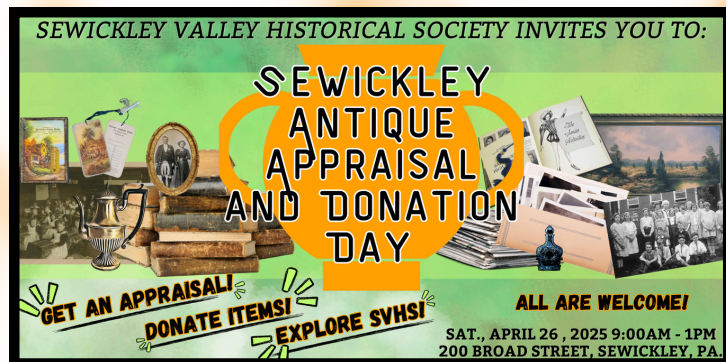
Treasurer
Ivan Hofmann

Directors
Heather Blaine
Robin Bolea
Michael Cevarr
Teresa Duff
Will Long
James Mohn
Shelley Murray
Robert Patterson, Jr.
Sean Rollman
Shelley Wygant

Executive Director
Amanda Schaffer



FILM NO. 3: RETURN TO DAK TO
THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025
7:00 PM
@ THE LINDSAY THEATER,
418 WALNUT ST.
SEWICKLEY, PA 15143



**2nd Annual
Antique
Appraisal
and
Donation
Day**

**Saturday,
April 26,
2025
9am - 1pm**

SAT., APRIL 26, 2025 9:00AM - 1PM
200 BROAD STREET, SEWICKLEY, PA.

Joint Lecture

with Avonworth, Moon Twp., and Sewickley Valley Historical Societies

Thursday, May 8, 2025 | Sheraton on Thorn Run Road

The Moon Township Historical Society will be hosting the 2025 Joint Lecture. Be on the lookout for invitations via mail with additional details.

SVHS Committee Chairs

Archives: John Kroeck

Architecture: Teresa Duff

Development: Robin Bolea

Finance: Ivan Hofmann

Membership: Shelley Murray

Program: Verna Corey

*All committees are looking for active and engaged members.
If you are interested in joining an SVHS committee, please reach out to the SVHS office.*

Signals is written, designed, and edited by SVHS Executive Director, Amanda Schaffer.
Visit our website, www.sewickleyhistory.org | e-mail us at info@sewickleyhistory.org | or call us at 412-741-5315.
SVHS offices are open 10am - 2pm Monday - Friday.
Appointments are encouraged.