



# Archives

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WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
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Ardmore wall project, along Wilkinsburg's part of the Lincoln Highway, is nearing completion.



The above left image shows the Ardmore Wall project as it appeared in mid-October. Sixteen abandoned homes have been removed over the past three years. The 1913 retaining wall has been repaired with the concrete capitals removed. The century-old railing is seen in the 2016 image on the right. That narrow sidewalk and open railing had been closed off for the past 30 years as it did not meet current safety standards. The new 925 ft railing installation is underway and the sloping hillside has been planted with 2000 low-growing shrubs. The curved brick wall in the center of the left image is a soon-to-be-completed permanent sign with the words "Welcome to Wilkinsburg".

This lovely linear park along the Lincoln Highway/Ardmore Blvd. corridor is more than a beautification project. It also is essential to improve the drainage of water from the hillside and control erosion.

At the far end of the park, the Penn Avenue intersection, is the narrow triangle of land where a statue of Abraham Lincoln has stood since 1916. That sheet copper statue had deteriorated and is too fragile to stay outdoors on the windy Penn Avenue hill. It has been relocated and displayed inside the Borough building. The Wilkinsburg Historical Society is raising funds to have a bronze statue of Mr. Lincoln made for the site. The cost is slightly over \$82,000 for the cost of the statue plus pedestal. Every contribution is important to help get this project completed. **MANY thanks to all who have given funds.** Please consider another gift if you are able to help. Donations may be made to :

**Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

or <https://www.gofundme.com/lincoln-statue-for-wilkinsburg>



## 100 years since the nation's first Election Night Radio Party, November 2, 1920



The Edgewood Club, incorporated in 1904 and originally meeting in a location on Maple Avenue, traditionally held election night parties to get results by telegraph. The tradition continued when the Club relocated in 1916 to the distinctive Spanish-Mission style library and community center on Pennwood Ave. It was designed by famed architect Edward Lee. One hundred years ago, November 2, 1920 a broadcasting milestone was made when 300 election night party attendees listened to a radio broadcast of the Presidential election returns between Warren Harding and James Cox. The results were broadcast by a team of Westinghouse employees led by Wilkinsburg's Frank Conrad. Thus, commercial broadcasting was born.



This bronze plaque adorns the wall of the ballroom of the Edgewood Club on Pennwood Avenue in Edgewood. It commemorates the very first radio party to get election results. The broadcasting was provided by Westinghouse Electric station KDKA (8XK in 1920).



**100 years since Frank Conrad pioneered KDKA and election returns November 2, 1920.**



Frank Conrad, often known as the Father of Radio Broadcasting holds an early radio microphone in 1921. Right image shows the four Westinghouse employees in East Pittsburgh during the first election night broadcast, November 2, 1920.

As assistant chief engineer at Westinghouse Electric, Frank Conrad built a 200 watt transmitter to air programming for those who had Westinghouse receivers. The KDKA call sign was assigned sequentially from a list maintained by the US-registry maritime stations. Westinghouse made arrangements with the *Pittsburgh Post* morning newspaper to acquire the 1920 election returns by telephone to the shack atop the K building. The K building was the tallest Westinghouse Electric building in East Pittsburgh. The election night broadcast was to begin at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, November 2, 1920.

Four Westinghouse employees manned that first broadcast: Leo Rosenberg - was radio's first announcer; William Thomas - Engineer; John Frazier - telephone line operator; and R.S. McClelland - a standby. Frank Conrad was standing by at his garage station 8XK as an emergency back-up if there were problems with the KDKA transmitter. Conrad's garage was at the corner of Penn Avenue and Peebles Street in Wilkinsburg. Westinghouse also sent invitations to its Pittsburgh employees to hear the results of the election from a loud speaker in the auditorium of the Edgewood community library on Nov 2, 1920. The auditorium was filled that night with 300 people listening to the first radio report of an election. The election results were relayed to many more listeners, that Warren Harding had won. Thus, the first successful KDKA election coverage,



Frank Conrad's house and garage at the corner of Penn Avenue and Peebles Street. The garage was the location of his 8XK radio station.

**Scholastic, Inc.** has graciously provided additional details about the earliest origins of the century old company. The following excerpt is from the 562-page book, *Scholastic, A Publishing Adventure*, written in 1978 by long term employee Jack K. Lippert who had served as Senior Vice President and Vice Chairman of the Board.

“After graduation from Dartmouth in June 1920, Maurice Robinson returned to his hometown, Wilksburg, near Pittsburgh, PA. He got a job, starting July 1, at the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, writing publicity and helping the editor of the Chamber’s periodical *Pittsburgh First* at \$150 per month.

Soon came a day when Robinson was assigned to do a routine story about the September opening of schools. Waiting for an interview in the office of Pittsburgh Superintendent of Schools William M. Davidson, Robinson studied some wall charts showing projected increases in high school enrollments on a local and national scale. His “gotta-be-a-publisher” temperature suddenly leaped from normal to feverish as his mind interpreted the writing on the wall to mean opportunity - now, immediately - for a high school newspaper.

Robinson later revealed his thoughts to Superintendent Davidson and received encouragement and the advice that he discuss the idea with high school principals, whose cooperation would be needed. It was only natural that Robinson turned first to the principal of his old high school, William C. Graham of Wilksburg High School. From him came further encouragement and the signal that this was something that should be brought to the attention of the principals of all 50 high schools of the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL), who, along with the athletic directors, served as league directors. The next move, suggested Graham, would be to talk with Edward Ryneerson, principal of Pittsburgh’s Fifth Avenue High School and president of the WPIAL. The spirit of helpfulness was catching on, and Ryneerson invited Robinson to attend the next meeting of the WPIAL directors to present the idea and a dummy issue.

The idea was clear, the dummy rough but good enough to win the directors’ support and their endorsement of the yet-unborn Western Pennsylvania Scholastic as the “official weekly newspaper of the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League.” The personality of this entrepreneur must have made as strong an impact on these high school principals and their athletic directors as the idea he was proposing. He had won their confidence. No signed documents were necessary, just a handshake.

Now the fat was in the fire. The first issue had to be gotten out fast and thereafter “every Friday of the school year,” as the masthead would promise. Robinson wrote urgently to his old college friends, Richard M. Pearson and Raymond F. McPartlin, to ask them to join in this publishing venture. McPartlin welcomed the opportunity to escape from his job as copywriter for the Dennison Manufacturing Company in Framingham, MA and hastened to Wilksburg. Pearson had enrolled in a graduate program at Columbia and chose not to leave.

It was the Robinson-McPartlin plan to have every issue eight pages long, but they didn’t have time to prepare that much copy for No.1, which came out on Friday, October 22, 1920, as a four-page newspaper, tabloid-size (12 1/4” x 18”) with six columns to a page. A two-column box on page 1 of No.1 promised growth.

This promise was almost fulfilled. One further issue - December 17, 1920 - came out with only four pages, explained on the editorial page as follows: **“Why Four?** The news at this season of the year did not warrant an eight-page issue this week. For that reason we are cutting our size to four pages, and charging but three cents for the issue. You may expect us back strong next month, however, with the same eight pages as always.”

**Scholastic, Inc has provided additional Robinson family photos and information.**



This 1915 image shows Maurice “Mose” Robinson his senior year at Wilkinsburg High School, along with the yearbook staff. He served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Review*, WHS’ annual yearbook.



Mose wrote, “As I look while I am working” on the back of this snapshot and sent it to his parents in 1918, from the Rock Island Arsenal Military Base in Illinois.



This circa-1914 image shows Mose with his sister Rachel (unknown location). Mose was born Christmas Eve, December 24, 1895. His sister, born December 3, 1903, was eight years younger.



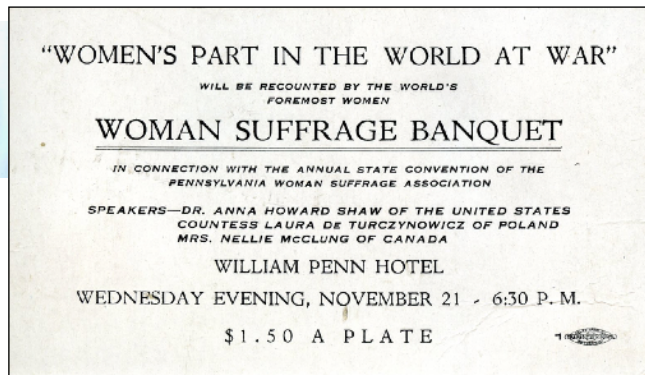
Robinson family home at 715 Wallace Avenue in Wilkinsburg was the headquarters for Scholastic during its first year. The printing took place in the second-floor sewing room, where the double window is.

The Robinsons had six children, five sons and one daughter. Their names and birth years were: Clarence (1884), Hugh (1886), William (1888), Ralph (1893), Maurice (1895) and Rachel (1903).

(Correction: October 2020 Archives incorrectly stated that there were only two Robinson children.)



**100 years since women got the right to vote!** The 19th Amendment to the Constitution (Susan B. Anthony Amendment), was officially passed in August, 1920 granting women the Right to Vote. This centennial year, 2020, remember the efforts of those who worked so hard for the chance to vote.



Wilkinsburg Historical Society has a website, to share more information about the history of Wilkinsburg. [wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com](http://wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com)

Mailing address: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

We usually meet on the third Monday of months March, June, August and November at the South Avenue United Methodist Church in Wilkinsburg. HOWEVER, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CHANGED EVERYTHING AND WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO MEET IN PERSON DURING 2020. SAFETY IS OUR UTMOST CONCERN AND NEW PROTOCOLS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED. The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is still published monthly, March through November.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society yearly dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society are:

\$20.00 INDIVIDUAL Member, \$35.00 FAMILY Membership

\$10.00 STUDENT or ASSOCIATE Members (for out of towners who usually can't attend meetings) Please keep your membership dues up to date.

**Wilkinsburg Historical Society - Membership application**  
**Help promote the valuable history of Wilkinsburg.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \$20 Individual membership

( ) \$35 Family membership

( ) \$10 Student or associate membership

( ) \$\_\_\_\_\_ Additional donation

Please make check payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**  
**PO Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

Anytime is a good time to pay your dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society. We have many preservation projects going on, plus the cost of sending out the Archives and providing displays for Wilkinsburg events. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your membership dues. Please use the address on the form, our PO box.