THE HOMEWOOD

The Homewood Cemetery Historical Fund
1599 South Dallas Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15217-1499
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

HOURS OF OPERATION

Office	
Monday - Friday	8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday	8:30 am - 3:00 pm
Sunday	Closed
Gates	
May-October	8:00 am - 8:00 pm
November-April	8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Public Mausoleums	
Open Daily	8:30 am - 3:00 pm
Quiet Reflections	8:00 am - 4:00 pm

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YESTERDAY'S NEWS

Yesterday's News will be an occasional feature where we share, word for word, historic newspaper articles pertaining to The Homewood Cemetery or the people therein.

From The Cincinnati Post, March 21, 1972

PIE TRAYNOR BURIED



Harold J. "Pie" Traynor, 1925, photo by G.G. Bain (Section 20, Lot 16E, Grave 1)

PITTSBURGH: Harold J. "Pie" Traynor, former Pittsburgh Pirate great regarded by many as baseball's best third baseman, was buried Monday in Homewood Cemetery, only three miles from the site of Forbes Field, the scene of his baseball exploits.

Traynor died Thursday at the age of 72.

Friends from all walks of life were on hand to pay their respects at the graveside service.

His widow, Eve, plucked three red roses from a floral tribute to drop on his grave.

"For third base," she said, "And we were married on the third."



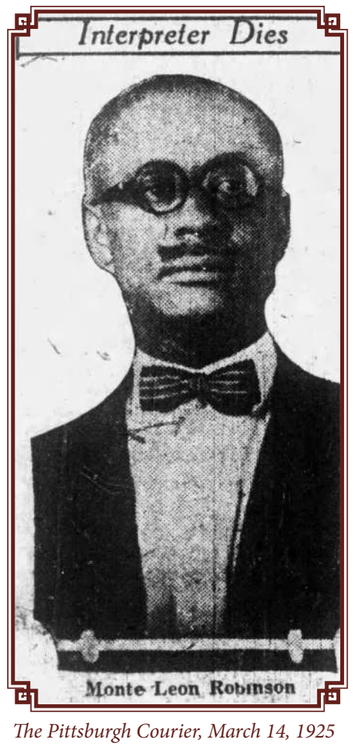
Harold J. "Pie" and Eve Traynor, 1931

THE HOMEWOOD

Volume XX, Number 1 — A chronicle of the Homewood Cemetery Historical Fund — Fall 2025

MONTE LEON ROBINSON

AMID THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN MILITARY VETERANS at rest within The Homewood Cemetery is a veteran of the French Foreign Legion.



The Pittsburgh Courier, March 14, 1925

Monte Leon Robinson was born in Washington D.C. on May 11, 1878. Educated in the public schools of the nation's capital, Robinson secured a job at the French Embassy at the age of 20. While employed at the embassy, he was befriended by General DeGomprey, a military attaché. DeGomprey became Robinson's mentor, taking him back with him to France where he oversaw his young friend's education. Within a year of relocating to France, Robinson joined the Légion Étrangère [LE], better known as the French Foreign Legion.

A ***Pittsburgh Press*** article from 1915, entitled "Soldier of the Foreign Legion Now Works Here," gave July 28, 1900 as the date of Robinson's enlistment with the LE. "He was sent to China with his regiment August 10 of the same year and served in the China campaign until October of 1902. He was discharged from the Army November 17, 1902… He has the 'Medal of China,' given to every French soldier who served more than one year in the China campaign." [***Pittsburgh Press***, June 22, 1915.] "The China campaign" referred to the LE's involvement in the Tonkin Campaign to subdue northern Vietnam (1883-1886) and the ensuing Sino-French War (1884-1885). Robinson's enlistment came well after the Sino-French War, and after the 1887 establishment of French Indochina, suggesting he did not see military action. It should be noted that Legionnaires of the time considered deployment to "Indochina" as a reward for exemplary service or an indication of status. While no other records have been found pertaining to Robinson's time in the LE, his deployment to French Indochina—now Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—suggests he made a favorable impression. Upon his honorable discharge in 1902, Robinson returned to the United States but left again to travel in Austria, Switzerland and Italy. He came back for good in 1903, settling in Pittsburgh.

Robinson used his fluency in French and Italian to earn a living as a translator. He also worked a variety of other jobs,

"FROM A SOLDIER IN THE FAMOUS FOREIGN LEGION OF FRANCE TO PROSAIC WORK IN THE WESTINGHOUSE AIRBRAKE PLANT IN THE PITTSBURG DISTRICT, IS A TREMENDOUS CHANGE IN THE LIFE OF A MAN, BUT IT IS ONE WHICH HAS OCCURRED TO MONTE LEON ROBINSON, COLORED, OF 3 ½ SHETLAND AVENUE." PITTSBURGH PRESS, JUNE 22, 1915

including teaching French at the Wilmerding YMCA and serving as a messenger for the Westinghouse Airbrake Company. In 1919 he ran for and won the position of Tipstaff for the Allegheny County Criminal Court where he also served, when necessary, as a translator. Robinson was the first African American person to serve as Tipstaff within Allegheny County and had been endorsed

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The Homewood Cemetery Historical Fund is a Section 501(c)(3) charitable organization established July 11, 1989 promoting the appreciation and preservation of the cultural, historical and natural resources of The Homewood Cemetery. Contributions made by individuals, corporations, or foundations to the Fund are tax deductible according to law.

The Homewood Cemetery Historical Fund
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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

Please allow us to take this time to express our deep gratitude to you for your generous and vital support of The Homewood Cemetery Historical Fund. Throughout the years of our history, we have been able to prosper through the wonderful generosity of our friends, neighbors, and local charitable foundations.

Because of your substantial support we were able to accomplish numerous repairs and improvements throughout the year, including the weatherproofing and interior repair to our administration building and necessary tree removals. The almost 200 acres of cemetery property, established in 1878, require a consistently dedicated preservation effort to maintain the historic buildings, monuments and roadways for future generations to enjoy.

Our mission at The Homewood Cemetery is to provide a beautiful, respectful resting place for those entrusted to our care, while serving as a living tribute where their families and loved ones can remember them, as well as an outdoor museum of the history of previous generations. The Homewood Cemetery Historical Fund is a 501 (c)(3) certified organization that was specifically developed to support the preservation, conservation and restoration of our historical buildings, grounds and monuments. We kindly thank you for your enduring commitment and generosity that enables us to continue these wonderful preservation efforts.

Sincerely,

Mary M. Unkovic

Mary M. Unkovic
November 2025

Monte Robinson, continued from page 1

in his bid by The Men and Women's Political Organization of Allegheny County.

Robinson died from pneumonia in 1925 at the age of 46, leaving behind a wife and two children. Obituaries for him appeared in a variety of newspapers both in and outside of Pittsburgh. Unlike the ***Pittsburgh Press*** article, which was written while he was alive, many of these obituaries credited Robinson with fighting as a Legionnaire in Northern China during The Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901). The Boxer Rebellion, referred to in China as the Yihetuan Movement, coincides with Robinson's time in the LE. However, the LE were not among the French forces that took part in what became an international alliance that eventually defeated the Boxer rebels.

Monte Leon Robinson is at rest in Section 12, Division 8, Grave 14, of The Homewood Cemetery.



The French Foreign Legion's Medal of China



Gravesite of Monte Leon Robinson, Section 12, Division 8, Grave 14

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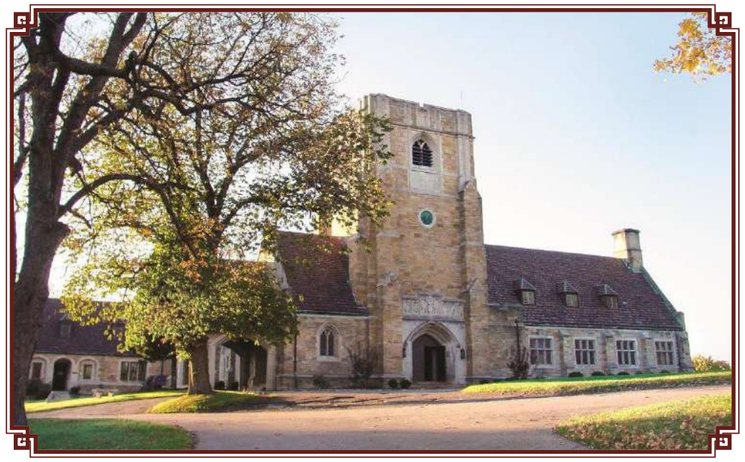
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THE ELEGANT CHAPEL AT HOMEWOOD CEMETERY



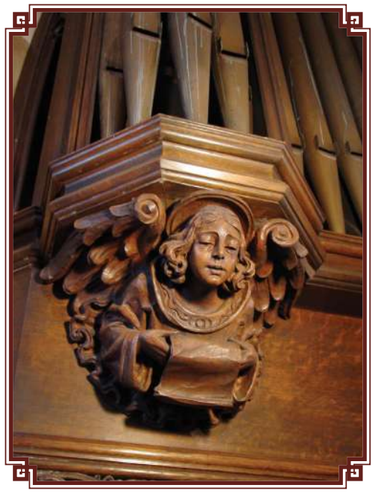
THE HOMEWOOD CEMETERY CHAPEL is part of the complex inside the Dallas Avenue gate which also houses the office.

The complex was completed in 1923 under the direction of James Ross Mellon, President of the Board of Directors and second son of Judge Thomas Mellon. At the dedication services held under the direction of the Board of Managers, the same hymns were sung as those used at the dedication of the cemetery in August of 1878, and Mr. Mellon delivered the dedicatory address. The buildings, of English-Tudor architecture, are constructed of Beaver Valley stone, with Indiana limestone trimmings.

The chapel, of elegant and simple charm, has a dark timbered ceiling, stained plaster walls, archways, and a gallery over the vestibules which is reached by a winding stone stairway. A large stained glass window by George Greene features a geometric and interlacing early Gothic pattern in rich reds, purples, greens, blues, and orange-yellows on a field of silver-grey.

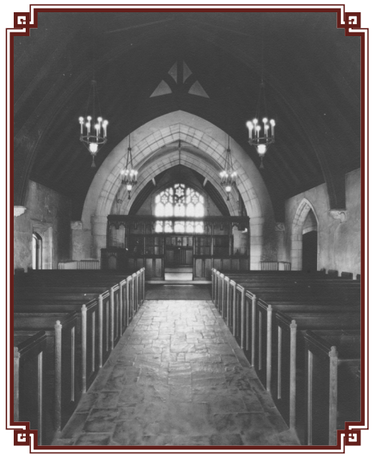
For those desiring complete funeral services in one setting, The Homewood Cemetery Chapel provides a comfortable and convenient facility. It is also available for committal and memorial services. Although 200 people may be seated comfortably, it is practical for more intimate groups.

The chapel, which is rented on an hourly basis, is centrally located for the eastern suburban communities and is easily accessible from any part of the city. It is equipped with a two-manual Allen organ. Although it presents a church-like setting, the chapel is non-denominational and suitable for any needs. Many people feel that having services in the chapel is less of an emotional strain than services at the grave side, and they appreciate the comfort of being out of the elements in inclement weather.



Detail of the chapel's Allen organ

Arrangements for use of the chapel may be made through the cemetery office or your funeral director.



Interior view of the chapel



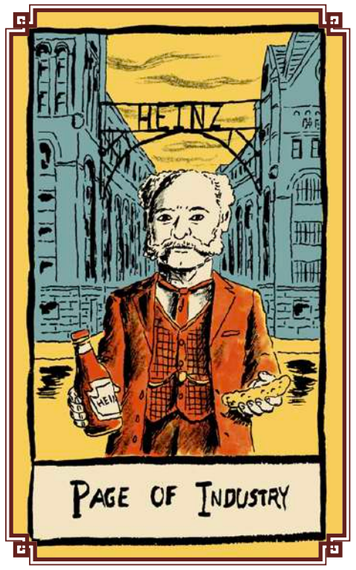
Detail of the chapel's stained glass window

A SINGULAR SPOTLIGHT ON A HOMEWOOD ANGEL



Schoonmaker Angel, Sec. 14, Lot 83

THE ICONIC BEAUX ARTS ANGEL who graces the Schoonmaker family lot in Section 14 has been chosen to represent The Homewood Cemetery in a new, Pittsburgh-themed Tarot deck.



H.J. Heinz as the "Page of Industry" from the Pittsburgh Tarot Deck

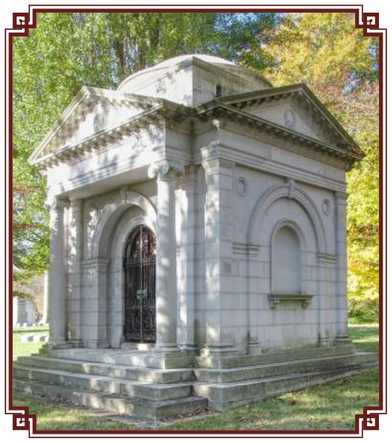
The Pittsburgh Tarot: A Gilded Age Deck is the brainchild of Ed Simon, editor at *The Pittsburgh Review of Books* and special faculty at Carnegie Mellon University. Working with Philadelphia based artist Ed Teare, Simon chose a wide range of people and places from Pittsburgh's multifaceted past to illustrate the deck's 78 cards. Neither Simon nor Teare began the project with a Gilded Age angle; Simon explained, "Much of the history we focused on was naturally [from the] nineteenth century." This is due in part to Simon's early decision not to utilize Terrible Towels, Primanti Sandwiches, and other well-loved but modern Pittsburgh tropes. The resulting Tarot Deck includes Mrs. Soffel and Ed Biddle, Bessemer Furnaces, Martin Delany, Mary Schenley, H.J. Heinz, the Kennywood Carousel, Gertrude Stein, and the Kaufmann Clock.

The angel, created by Swiss American sculptor J. Otto Schweizer, is a rare figural sculpture within a Cemetery that was founded in 1878 when memorial statuary was falling out of fashion. Her incongruity helps to make her memorable. "Most of the images throughout the deck were things that were personally important to me," Simon said, "and growing up in Point Breeze and exploring The Homewood Cemetery when I was a kid, the Schoonmaker angel was a memorial that really stuck with me."



"Nature" card, based on the Schoonmaker grave angel statue, from the Pittsburgh Tarot Deck

The Pittsburgh Tarot: A Gilded Age Deck is published by Microcosm Publishing and is available through their website and at several local shops.



Heinz Mausoleum, Section 14, Lot 61

A DIRECT INFLUENCE ON THE ART LIFE OF THE CITY:

ARTIST AND TEACHER, JEAN THOBURN

"One is tempted to go on indefinitely in setting down the merits of Jean Thoburn. Her concentration in teaching practically precludes the possibility of her being able to accomplish work for herself. Her results through the young people, however, make her rank high as a direct influence on the art life of the city. She wastes not her time in talk but directs her intelligence towards the growth of a coming generations of artists." --***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***, June 26, 1925



Jean Thoburn, senior photo, ***Donnybrook Fair****, Goucher College, 1910*

Jean Thoburn was born to Methodist missionary parents in Calcutta, India, in 1887. Her father, Rev. James M. Thoburn, Jr., was appointed pastor of the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church in 1900, bringing his family to Pittsburgh when Jean was 12 years old. She graduated from the Women's College of Baltimore (now Goucher College) in 1909 and was hired by the Pittsburgh Board of Education as a drawing instructor in 1910. In this capacity, she became a founding instructor at Peabody High School when it opened in 1911.



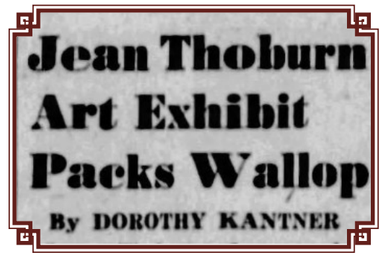
"Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Early Morning", artist Jean Thoburn, ***Friends of Art*** *Catalog*

Peabody High School was a large, modern, urban high school, built to meet Pittsburgh's growing demand for public education at the secondary level. In the 100 years of its operation, Peabody fostered an impressive number of significant writers, musicians, and artists. Romare Bearden, Billy Eckstine, Zelda Rubenstein, Lorin Maazel, Malcolm Cowley, John Edgar Wideman, Frank Gorshin and Gene Kelly all attended Peabody during Thoburn's tenure.

Jean Thoburn was an innovative educator whose modern teaching methods captured the imagination of her students. One of her class assignments in the 1920s was for students to create a painting while listening to Chopin. In the 1930s her students used magazine photos as references to draw modern sports such as football and tennis in the distinctive style of decoration painted on ancient Grecian urns. Within her first year at Peabody, she started a Brush and Palette Art Club to provide an extra-curricular outlet for students that wanted more art projects and instruction beyond their normal curriculum.

As Thoburn attributed her initial interest in art to Allegheny Preparatory School art instructor, Cara L. Stebbins, so many of her students credited her with their success as artists. Upon receiving first prize in the Western Pennsylvania Scholastic Art Exhibit in 1945, Mozelle Thompson Jr. told the ***New Pittsburgh Courier***, "Too much credit cannot be given to my art teacher, Miss Jean Thoburn." [***New Pittsburgh Courier***, February 17, 1945.] Thompson would go on to have an award-winning career as an illustrator and is best known today as an early master of record album cover art. A review of works by artist Gerald O. Schoonover in the ***Asheville-Citizen Times*** ascribed Schoonover's love for painting to Jean Thoburn. "That's no wonder," the reviewer, Erik Fris, went on to say, "because this reviewer had the same experience from Jean Thoburn in Peabody High school in Pittsburgh, and she is truly a great teacher and a wonderful woman." [***Asheville Citizen-Times***, August 12, 1962.]

After having introduced an estimated 5,000 Pittsburgh public school students to the creation and appreciation of art, Thoburn retired from Peabody High School in 1952. In 1953, The Arts and Crafts Center of Pittsburgh recognized her many successful years as a watercolorist, naming her their Artist of the Year. In 1962, Thoburn was cited as an example in a ***Pittsburgh Press*** article entitled, "Teachers are Busiest After Retirement." "She began teaching night classes at the Arts and Crafts Center in Shadyside in 1946. And she's been teaching there ever since…She paints for enjoyment—and profit, too. Her watercolors often bring $75 to $100 a piece." [***Pittsburgh Press***, March 25, 1962.]



Jean Thoburn Art Exhibit Packs Wallop

By DOROTHY KANTNER

Review of Jean Thoburn exhibit, The Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph, Jan 13, 1952



Photo by Charles "Teenie" Harris, (1908-1998) shows Edith Belfour Dunn presenting prize to Mozelle Thompson for his artwork, art teacher Jean Thoburn standing between them (November 1944)

When Jean Thoburn died at age 67 on March 19, 1975, local papers identified her first and foremost as a teacher despite the fact she had retired over 20 years earlier. Proof of her lasting impact on "the art life of the city," came in 1990 from 85-year-old Pittsburgh artist Mary Shaw, Peabody Class of 1923. In a 1990 interview about her own life in art, Shaw vividly remembered Thoburn, calling her Peabody's "most important teacher." ["The Artful Life of Mary Shaw," ***Pittsburgh History***, Fall 1990.] Jean Thoburn is at rest with her family in Section 19, Lot 10 of The Homewood Cemetery.



Untitled watercolor by Jean Thoburn, c. 1955