

## **HISTORY OF 4301 BIGELOW BOULEVARD**

William Langkamp commissioned construction of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard in 1912. Langkamp had the house built at a cost of \$20,000, on an irregularly shaped lot that he had purchased for \$21,250 the same year. The house's design was influenced by the Colonial Revival style. The house was constructed by East End building contractor John H. Elder. The house was constructed in accordance with covenants that specified building materials, cost, siting, and use, as were other homes in Schenley Farms.

Available records do not confirm that William Langkamp and his wife, Sarah, ever lived at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard. In early 1913, the Langkamps conveyed ownership of the house to Clara E. Elder, the wife of John H. Elder. The Elders never lived in the house, and in 1914 sold it to paint manufacturer Victor H. Ehrhart.

In 1914, Victor H. Ehrhart was the president of the Jamestown Paint & Varnish Company, which he had purchased in 1886. Ehrhart had lived near the company's plant in Jamestown, Mercer County, Pennsylvania, for a number of years before he and his family moved to 4301 Bigelow Boulevard.

Victor H. Ehrhart and his wife and children lived year-round at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard for several years after Ehrhart purchased the house. The family subsequently spent much of their time in Miami Beach, which Victor H. Ehrhart helped to develop.

Victor H. and Ethel B. Ehrhart owned 4301 Bigelow Boulevard until their deaths in the early 1940's. Their former home has now had a total of five owners.

Detailed information on the history of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard is contained in the following report.

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## OWNERSHIP

### Pre-construction

May 3, 1905 (Allegheny County Deed Book 1388: 94): Frank F. and Margaret L.C. Nicola of the city of Pittsburgh conveyed property that included the present site of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard to the Schenley Farms Company for \$2,500,000. This deed conveyed two adjoining large tracts of land in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh. The property that was conveyed was bounded by Fifth Avenue, Boquet Street, Allequippa Street, Centre Avenue, Bellefield Avenue, and Bayard Street. Andrew Carnegie, Denny Brereton and John William Herron, trustees under the will of Mary Schenley, had conveyed the property to Frank F. Nicola on April 15, 1905.

February 25, 1907 (Allegheny County Deed Book 1522: 408): The Schenley Farms Company conveyed the lot on which 4301 Bigelow Boulevard now stands to Sarah Elizabeth West, wife of E.M. West of Pittsburgh, for \$19,000. The lot that was conveyed was located at the northeastern corner of Bigelow Boulevard (then Grant Boulevard) and Tennyson Avenue, and was described as running northwest along Tennyson Avenue 130'; northeast along the rear lot line 125'; northwest 28'; northeast 45'; southeast 38'; southwest 90'; southeast 120 along the eastern lot line 120' to Bigelow Boulevard; and southwest along Bigelow Boulevard 80' to the place of beginning.

This deed included extensive covenants as to the use and maintenance of the property. The deed required that any structure built on the property be a single-family residence of brick, stone or cement (allowing for shingles above the first floor), with a construction cost not less than \$22,000. Any structure built was to be parallel with Bigelow Boulevard and set back at least 35' from Bigelow Boulevard and Tennyson Avenue, excluding bay windows, and at least 5' from the eastern lot line. No stable was to be built within 120' of Bigelow Boulevard or within 50' of Tennyson Avenue. No wooden fence was to be built within 35' of Bigelow Boulevard or Tennyson Avenue. The Schenley Farms Company retained the right to maintain infrastructure in the Schenley Farms area, including sidewalks and underground utilities, and to plant trees.

February 1, 1912 (Deed Book 1730: 552): E.M. and Sarah Elizabeth West of Pittsburgh conveyed the lot on which 4301 Bigelow Boulevard now stands to William Langkamp of Pittsburgh for \$21,250.

### Post-Construction

February 10, 1913 (Deed Book 1714: 662): William and Sarah Langkamp of Pittsburgh conveyed 4301 Bigelow Boulevard to Clara E. Elder of Pittsburgh for \$1 and other considerations.

March 31, 1914 (Deed Book 1815: 264): Clara E. and John H. Elder of Pittsburgh conveyed 4301 Bigelow Boulevard to Victor H. Ehrhart of Jamestown, Mercer County, Pennsylvania for \$1 and other considerations.

August 5, 1935 (Deed Book 2511: 399): Victor H. and Ethel Belle Ehrhart of Miami Beach, Florida conveyed 4301 Bigelow Boulevard to James M. Houston of Pittsburgh for \$1.

August 5, 1935 (Deed Book 2511: 400): James M. Houston of Pittsburgh conveyed 4311 Bigelow Boulevard to Victor H. and Ethel Belle Ehrhart of Miami Beach, Florida for \$1. This deed and the preceding deed were made only to place title to 4301 Bigelow Boulevard in the names of both Victor H. and Ethel Belle Ehrhart.

Ethel Belle Ehrhart died on August 8, 1942. She was survived by Victor H. Ehrhart, who died on October 8, 1943.

August 22, 1945 (Deed Book 2846: 392): The heirs of Victor H. Ehrhart (Lila E. and F. Lowry Wall of Miami Beach, John P. and Frances H. Ehrhart of Jamestown, Pennsylvania, and Wilbur W. and Eleanor H. Ehrhart of Miami Beach) conveyed 4301 Bigelow Boulevard to Agostino and Angelina Sunseri of Millvale for \$1 and other good and valuable considerations (tax stamps suggest a price of \$13,000).

Agostino Sunseri died on May 13, 1948. He was survived by Angelina Sunseri, who died on July 28, 1974.

*Loren and Sally Siegel purchased 4301 Bigelow Boulevard from the estate of Angelina Sunseri on September 14, 1976 (Deed Book 5681: 333).*

## **AGE OF 4301 BIGELOW BOULEVARD**

### Construction

William Langkamp commissioned construction of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard in 1912.

Sarah Elizabeth West purchased the irregularly shaped lot on which 4301 Bigelow Boulevard now stands from the Schenley Farms Company on February 25, 1907. West paid \$19,000 for the lot, which had frontage of 80' along Bigelow Boulevard and 130' along Tennyson Avenue. This purchase was comparable to prices paid for other undeveloped lots in Schenley Farms at the time, and indicates that 4301 Bigelow Boulevard had not yet been built.

Sarah Elizabeth West and her husband, E.M. West, conveyed the lot on which 4301 Bigelow Boulevard now stands to William Langkamp for \$21,250 on February 1, 1912.

City of Pittsburgh building permit dockets show that on March 25, 1912, William Langkamp received a permit for construction of a stone dwelling on Grant (Bigelow) Boulevard near Tennyson Avenue. The house was to stand two stories tall with a finished attic, measure 50' wide by 58' deep, contain 14 rooms, and have a tile roof. The construction cost was \$20,000.

A 1914 plat map confirms that 4301 Bigelow Boulevard had been built.

### The contractor: John H. Elder

William Langkamp hired John H. Elder to construct 4301 Bigelow Boulevard. Elder was a building contractor whose home and business were located at 6849 Penn Avenue in Point Breeze.

Other work by John H. Elder included construction of:

- 5525 and 5529 Dunmoyle Street, Squirrel Hill, 1900
- 5539 Ellsworth Avenue, Shadyside, 1898-99
- 582-586 South Aiken Avenue, Shadyside
- 159 and 161 Morewood Avenue, Bloomfield, with William Kennelly, 1895

### Architectural style

4301 Bigelow Boulevard was designed with the influence of the Colonial Revival style.

Colonial Revival homes, built in the Pittsburgh area between the late 1890's and the 1930's, used features common to Georgian, Adam, and Dutch Colonial houses built in the American colonies and United States until the

1840's. Colonial Revival features of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard include the house's form, arranged as a center hall dwelling with hipped roof and dormers, and its quoins and bay windows. Although not a literal interpretation of the Colonial Revival style, like the adjacent home at 4303 Bigelow Boulevard, the style's influence on 4301 Bigelow Boulevard is apparent.

The Colonial Revival style became popular partly as a reaction against what was perceived as the excessive ornamentation of the Queen Anne style. The latter was the most common architectural style for middle-class homes built in western Pennsylvania between about 1885 and 1895. The Colonial Revival style came to be perceived as more desirable because it drew from historical precedent, while the Queen Anne style was more a product of late 19th century stylistic innovations.

The wide roof overhang at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard is typical of many homes built in the Mission and Prairie styles, both popular during the 1910's. It should be noted, however, that the house's roof is much steeper than the low roofs that were typical of both of those styles.

Available records do not identify an architect who is credited with design of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard.

#### Garage construction

Pittsburgh building permit records also show that Victor H. Ehrhart received a permit for construction of a two-story brick garage and apartment at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard on August 24, 1914. The building was to measure 28' wide by 35' deep and have a slate roof. The estimated construction cost was \$5000.

Victor H. Ehrhart hired Harry L. Kreusler to construct the garage at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard. Kreusler was a building contractor who was active in Pittsburgh's eastern neighborhoods between the 1880's and the 1910's. In 1914, Kreusler's construction firm was located at 3301 Penn Avenue in Lawrenceville. He lived at 128 South Negley Avenue in Friendship.

Other work by Harry L. Kreusler included construction of:

- a commercial and residential building at 4023 Butler Street, Lawrenceville, 1887
- the Fulton Elementary School, Hampton and St. Clair Streets, Highland Park, 1900
- a bottling house for the Pittsburgh Brewing Company, 1901
- the Ward-Mackey Company bakery, Liberty Ave near 31st Street, Strip District, 1902
- a commercial building at 6204 Penn Avenue, East Liberty, 1904
- an apartment building at 531 Collins Avenue, East Liberty, 1904
- a commercial and residential building at 3409 Butler Street, Lawrenceville, 1905

### Ownership, 1912-1914

Available records do not indicate that William Langkamp, who commissioned construction of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard in 1912, ever lived in the house. Langkamp was listed in the 1912 Pittsburgh city directory as living at 1516 William Pitt Boulevard (now Beechwood Boulevard), and with no occupation. He was not listed in the 1913 directory.

In 1913, William Langkamp and his wife, Sarah, conveyed 4301 Bigelow Boulevard to Clara E. Elder, the wife of building contractor John H. Elder. The Elders lived at 6849 Penn Avenue in Point Breeze during the 13 months that they owned the house. In 1914, the Elders sold 4301 Bigelow Boulevard to Victor H. Ehrhart.

## VICTOR H. AND ETHEL B. EHRHART

Pittsburgh city directories, U.S. census records, and an obituary provide information on Victor H. and Ethel B. Ehrhart.

Victor Hugo Ehrhart was born in Pennsylvania, possibly in the Pittsburgh area, in June 1860. He was a son of Dr. and Mrs. Lorenzo Ehrhart, both born in Germany. Although an obituary stated that Ehrhart was born in Pittsburgh, federal censuses taken in 1860 and 1870 did not enumerate him or his parents in the Pittsburgh area.

Ehrhart graduated from the Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh) in about 1880. He was first listed in the Pittsburgh directory in that year, as secretary and treasurer of the Pittsburgh Iron Paint Company, located on South Canal Street near the present H.J. Heinz plant on Pittsburgh's North Side. Ehrhart boarded nearby on Chestnut Street.

In the early 1880's, Ehrhart and his brother, Alfred W., became partners in Ehrhart Brothers, which operated the Clinton Paint & Varnish Works near the Allegheny Valley Railroad in Sharpsburg. Ehrhart Brothers' office was located in the Lewis Block at Sixth Avenue and Smithfield Street, Downtown. Ehrhart lived at 173 Third Avenue, Downtown, by 1883. He moved to a house on Buena Vista Street in the Mexican War Streets in 1884, the year that he married Ethel Belle Phillips. Ethel B. Phillips Ehrhart was born in Pennsylvania in December 1863; her parents were also born in Pennsylvania.

Victor H. and Ethel B. Ehrhart had five children: Lila M. in 1885, John P. in 1887, Victor H. in 1889, Wilbur W. in 1897, and another child who died while young.

The Ehrhart family moved to a house on Southern Avenue, Mount Washington, in 1884 or 1885. The Ehrharts left Pittsburgh in 1885 or 1886. The family moved to Jamestown, a borough in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, where Victor H. Ehrhart purchased and began operating the Jamestown Paint and Varnish Company.

Records of the 1890 manuscript census, which would provide information on the Ehrhart family in that year, were destroyed in a warehouse fire following the completion of the census.

The 1900 census of population enumerated the Ehrhart family in their home in Jamestown. Victor H. Ehrhart, 39, was enumerated as the president and superintendent of a paint works. Ethel B. Ehrhart, 36, had no occupation. Their children were Lila M., 15, John P., 12, Victor H., 10, and Wilbur W., two. The family employed a servant, James Ewing, who lived in their home. Ewing was 40 and a Pennsylvania native.

Records of the 1900 census also show that the Ehrharts owned their home without a mortgage.

The Ehrhart family was not enumerated in Pennsylvania in the 1910 census.

The Ehrhart family lived in Jamestown until 1914, when Victor H. Ehrhart purchased 4301 Bigelow Boulevard. The family moved to Pittsburgh soon enough to be listed in the 1914 Pittsburgh directory. Victor H. Ehrhart continued to serve as president of the Jamestown Paint & Varnish Company after he moved to Schenley Farms, working in an office in room 1201 of the Hartje Building, 244 Boulevard of the Allies.

Although listed in directories published in and around 1920 at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard, the Ehrharts were not enumerated in their home in the 1920 census, taken in Pittsburgh in January of that year. As obituaries state that the Ehrharts began spending much of their time in Miami Beach in 1922, it is possible that the family was out of town when the 1920 census was taken. The 1920 census is the most recent census that would provide detailed information on the Ehrhart family and any other occupants of 4301 Bigelow Boulevard. Manuscript census records are withheld from the public for 72 years, to protect the privacy of persons enumerated.

Ehrhart's obituaries stated that he retired in 1916, turning over operation of the Jamestown Paint & Varnish Company to his sons. Pittsburgh directories, however, indicate that Ehrhart maintained a role in the operation of the company through about 1925. By that time, Ehrhart had taken an active role in the development of Miami Beach with a friend and partner, Carl Fisher.

After Victor H. Ehrhart retired, he and his wife lived at their residences at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard, Miami Beach, and Conneaut Lake. The Ehrharts reportedly entertained business and political figures regularly in Miami Beach.

Ethel B. Ehrhart died on August 7, 1942, at age 78. She was survived by Victor H. Ehrhart, who died at 83 on October 8, 1943.



## AGOSTINO AND ANGELINA SUNSERI

Agostino Sunseri was born in Trabia, Sicily, in 1887. He came to the United States in 1894 (according to records of the 1930 census) or in 1901-1902 (according to an obituary), possibly around the time that his brothers Salvatore and Michelino immigrated. Known records do not make clear when Agostino Sunseri settled in Pittsburgh, or his occupation or residence at that time. Sunseri, like many other recent immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, was omitted from Pittsburgh city directories and was apparently not enumerated in censuses taken before 1930.

In 1902, Agostino, Salvatore, and Michelino Sunseri founded the Pennsylvania Macaroni Company, a small business that manufactured pasta on Penn Avenue near 20th Street in the Strip District. At the time Americans who were not of Italian origin did not typically eat pasta, and Pennsylvania Macaroni appears likely to have sold its products primarily, if not exclusively, to Italian immigrants.

The initial location of Pennsylvania Macaroni is not known. The firm was located at 2018 Penn Avenue, close to its present site at 2010-12 Penn Avenue, by about 1910. The lower Strip District was already home to a number of food distributors, and some small food manufacturers like Pennsylvania Macaroni. In the Strip, Pennsylvania Macaroni was near distributors of flour, eggs, and other ingredients, and near clusters of Italian immigrants in that neighborhood, the lower Hill District, Bloomfield, and East Liberty.

Pittsburgh city directories began listing Agostino Sunseri in the early 1910s, when he lived at on Webster Avenue just above Grant Street in the lower Hill District. Sunseri, who was still single, lived at 1304 Liverpool Street in Manchester and on Wynhurst Street in Brighton Heights during the next few years. He served in Italy during World War I.

In 1920, Agostino Sunseri, 32, married Angelina Guarino, 20. Angelina Guarino was one of at least seven children of Anthony Guarino, a produce merchant, and Josephine Guarino. The Guarinos had immigrated from Italy in 1890, and lived in New York State when Angelina was born in 1900.

Agostino and Angelina Sunseri had at least six children: Marie, born in 1922-1923, Josephine in 1923-1924, Geraldine in 1926-1927, Salvatore in 1928-1929, and Anthony and Salvatore, born in or after 1930.

After marrying, Agostino and Angelina Sunseri lived initially with the Guarino family at 316 South Pacific Avenue in Friendship. The Sunseris moved in about 1923 to 322 South Evaline Street in the same neighborhood. The family joined Immaculate Conception church, an Italian parish nearby in Bloomfield. The family lived at 113 South Graham Street in Friendship in 1928, and in about 1929 moved to a house they owned at 237 Gross Street. All of the

houses in which the Sunseri family resided in the 1920s were close to Penn Avenue, and an easy commute to Pennsylvania Macaroni in the Strip District.

The 1930 population census recorded Agostino Sunseri, 42, as a grocery merchant. Angelina Sunseri, 30, had no occupation. The couple's children were Marie, seven, Josephine, six, Geraldine, three, and Salvatore, one. Census records show that the Sunseri house at 237 Gross Street was worth an estimated \$16,000, probably three to four times the average value of Italian immigrant families' houses in Pittsburgh.

By the early 1930s, Pennsylvania Macaroni assumed a more formal business structure. Salvatore Sunseri served as president, Michelino Sunseri was secretary, and Agostino Sunseri was treasurer. The company continued to manufacture pasta, and was also a wholesale grocery distributor.

In about 1936, the Sunseri family moved from 237 Gross Street to Hawthorne Road in Millvale. The family lived on Hawthorne Road until 1945, when Agostino and Angelina Sunseri purchased the house at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard. Agostino Sunseri had become president of Pennsylvania Macaroni in 1942, and it is possible that his new position made possible the purchase of the house in Schenley Farms.

Agostino Sunseri lived at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard for less than three years before he died in 1948, at age 61.

Pittsburgh directories indicate that after Agostino Sunseri's death, Angelina Sunseri succeeded her husband as president of Pennsylvania Macaroni. Directories listed her as president of the firm between 1949 and the early 1970s. The Pennsylvania Macaroni website indicates that her sons Robert and Salvatore "took the reins" in the late 1940s. Directories suggest that the sons assumed positions of responsibility in the business in the 1960s. Salvatore Sunseri became president in the early 1970s, and Robert Sunseri became secretary and Angelina Sunseri became vice-president around the same time.

Angelina Sunseri was vice-president of Pennsylvania Macaroni and lived at 4301 Bigelow Boulevard until she died in 1974, at age 74.

## **LOREN AND SALLY SIEGEL**

Loren and Sally Siegel purchased 4301 Bigelow Boulevard from the estate of Angelina Sunseri in 1976. During the next 20 or more years, the Siegels worked to restore the house, which had apparently suffered from deferred maintenance prior to their purchase. Sally Siegel, a Pittsburgh native, worked in a number of positions, including as a writer, a professor of writing, and a personnel director. In the 1990s, she and Loren Siegel began selling real estate together, first for Howard Hanna and then for Coldwell Banker.

In the late 1990s, the Siegels sought permission to use 4301 Bigelow Boulevard as a bed-and-breakfast. The couple's intentions were not carried out, as a result of city zoning ordinances, bolstered by the opposition of some neighbors. In 2003, the Zoning Board of Adjustment denied a religious group's appeal to use the house as a home for unrelated persons.

Sally Siegel died in 2002, at age 58. Loren Siegel owned 4301 Bigelow Boulevard until 2005, when he lost the house at sheriff's sale.

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The following materials accompany this report:

- Copies of plat maps of the area around 4301 Bigelow Boulevard, published in 1904, 1914, and 1923
- The death notice of Ethel B. Ehrhart, from the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, August 9, 1942
- The obituary of Victor H. Ehrhart, from the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, October 10, 1943
- The obituary of Agostino Sunseri, from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 15, 1948
- The obituary of Angelina Sunseri, from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 31, 1974