# THE JOSEPH M. COHEN FAMILY COLLECTION

JOHN AND JAKE

In 1948, John and Jake, two apprentice rakes,
Swam the yellow Monongahela,
From McKeesport to Duquesne and back again.

It was the season of reckless risks,
When nascent young men took their baptismal swim,
They had no tryst with mermaid daughters
Pacing the fetid waters,
Side by side with their unseen fathers.

These twin Huck Finns kicked and stroked until they ached,
And left one another in each other's wake.
Exuberant, buoyed by their strength,
They flowed as water through water,
And caressed the waves with soft splashing sounds,
Sure that they would never drown.

Halfway there and with a surge of courage,
They raced to see who would place first.
Glistening in the summer sun, these dauphins flew like dolphins;
Neither won.

Then spent, the triumphant pair waded ashore,
Wearing laurel wreaths wet and braided in their hair.
They never said what they had done to anyone,
Until today when John told me that good old Jake
Had passed away.

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