



HISTORY BYTES

A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication

Vol. 4 No. 1

January – February 2021

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

Dear Members,

As we kick off the New Year, we're delighted to announce the WINNERS of our Holiday Emporium Raffle! Thank you to everyone who helped support us by purchasing tickets, and to our partners for their generous donations!

Explore Scranton Package: Susie McCabe

Family Adventure Package: Roseann Kebles

Local Indulgence Package: Joyce Hatala

A Night at the Movies: Susie Gelfand

Railriders Home Run: Susie Gelfand

Thriller: Tanya Fox

Winter Getaway: Roseann Kebles

Thanks also to everyone who supported the Society in any way in 2020. The year was a challenging one but because of our members and supporters, the society was able to continue to inspire the exploration of Lackawanna County history! We look forward to continuing our work and have already planned several exciting virtual activities. Please email LHS at lackawannahistory@gmail.com for the Zoom link to virtual activities.

Mary Ann

Remembering Knox January 22, 1959

Samuel Altieri	Joseph Baloga	Benjamin Boyar	Francis Burns
Charles Featherman	Joseph Gizenski	Dominic Kaveliski	Frank Orlowski
Eugene Ostrowski	William Sinclair	Daniel Stefanides	Herman Zelonis

Listed above are the names of the 12 men who gave their lives on January 22, 1959 when the Susquehanna River broke through the roof of the Knox Mine.

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Family Life of Frank O'Brien

By Monica Tapper

As mentioned in the last issue of History Bytes, this is the first installment of the life of Frank O'Brien, Irish immigrant, Scrantonian, Civil War veteran, and small-town Alabama mayor. Hopefully someone reading this will recognize some of the names mentioned and can provide information to fill in the gaps. If you are related to anyone here, please let us know!

In 1848, Michael and Mary O'Brien and their three small children left Ireland for a better life in America. Ireland was still in the depths of the Irish Potato Famine, and this small family represented only a drop in the ocean of the Irish immigration wave that crashed on America's shores that year. Luckily for the O'Briens, Michael was well educated and able to find good employment in Pennsylvania. Not only had Michael been trained for the priesthood in Ireland, he had also been employed as a teacher. Additionally, Michael had worked with "The Nation," a nationalist Irish newspaper based in Dublin, and as its name would imply, endeavored to make Ireland a "nation," separate from England. Obviously, the British did not care for this particular goal, and "The Nation" played a major role in the Irish Rebellion of 1848 (sometimes called the Famine Rebellion), the same year that the O'Brien family immigrated to America.

The O'Briens first settled in Honesdale, where Michael supported his growing family by teaching and boating with two boats he had purchased. However, within three years the family moved to Scranton, where Michael worked as superintendent of the Diamond Mine. The couple would have at least seven children, a few of whom remained in Scranton their entire lives. Frank O'Brien, the first son and second eldest child, ran away at the age of 15. Family legend says that Frank was unhappy that his father had punished him unfairly for what Frank had felt was a minor misdeed. Whether that is true or not, it's clear that Frank was born with a high degree of wanderlust, and coupled with his inability to sit still, it was inevitable that he could not remain at home in Scranton. Always described as "restless," over the course of his remarkable life, Frank saw more of the world and experienced more than the ordinary person might in three lifetimes. Up until the month he died, he never sat still. But even though he did not remain in Scranton, it's clear he had happy memories of his childhood and his family.

One of his childhood memories was certainly unforgettable. At the tender age of six years old, Frank was an eye-witness to the Irish War of 1850. As this incident was not recorded in the newspapers when it happened, his and the few other eye-witness accounts of this incident are especially valuable. His father had taken him on a business trip, and on their return, Michael and Frank accidentally stumbled onto the battlefield, and Frank saw the first of many battles in his life.

At this time, the Lackawanna Railroad was under construction, as a railroad was needed for Pennsylvania coal to be easily transported. Most of the labor for the railroad was from German and Irish immigrants, who did not get along with each other. However, the Irish were even more hostile among themselves, as they did not see themselves as a homogenous Irish group, but as separate, distinct societies designated

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by which part of Ireland they had immigrated from. The Corkonians, the Fardowns, the Farups, and the Connaught Men (names they called each other), may have all immigrated from Ireland, but they brought sectional tensions to the New World.

The close working quarters at the railroad had compounded the old rivalries. The pressure exploded on May 28, 1850 when approximately 150 Corkonians (southern Irish Catholics), and Fardowns (Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants) found themselves working together at Clark's Summit. Each group tried to push the other off the road, using any and every kind of weapon they could find, including guns, pistols, stones, sticks, even an iron candle stick, and a buck-saw fastened to a shovel-handle. There were three deaths, but almost every man was wounded.

Years later, Frank could still remember this scene vividly. Interestingly, Frank mostly remembered fearing for his father's safety more than for his own. He remembered hearing the screams for the "Connaught Rangers," and although Michael was simply taking his son home from a business meeting, he was, in fact, a southerner. The Connaught Rangers, nicknamed the "Devil's Own," had been Irish soldiers in the British army back in Ireland, and even six-year-old Frank knew what that meant. How much of the troubles Frank saw or remembered as a small boy in Ireland is uncertain, but Michael and Mary filled in any missing gaps. In her reminiscences, Frank's daughter Bossie would recall visiting her Irish grandmother and hearing tales of the proud Irish and their noble fight against the British. Irish pride ran strong in this family.

Two days after the battle, the Fardowns advanced upon the Corkonians and there was another major battle. This might have carried on indefinitely, but soon the peace was restored by separating the groups, a novel yet simple idea by Mr. George Scranton himself.

After the Irish War, life carried on. Frank went to school and church and played with his friends from Hyde Park. His family continued to grow, and for the most part, the O'Brien siblings can be tracked through census records and newspapers. This is especially true for Frank and the two youngest siblings. Except for Frank, most of the O'Brien children stayed in Pennsylvania or moved to Westfield, Massachusetts. However, even if they moved to Westfield, they were generally buried in the Cathedral Cemetery in Scranton.

- Mary O'Brien (eldest child, born around 1841). Mary married Italian immigrant Daniel Miglionico, and had at least one son, Xavier. Mary lived in Carbondale until she was 60 years old and died of chronic bronchitis.
- Patrick Frank O'Brien (born in 1844). Frank left home at age 15, but more on this in the next installment.
- Anne O'Brien (born around 1846). Ann never married and is not mentioned in census records after her childhood. She lived to be at least 53, as she was mentioned in her mother's obituary.
- Michael (born around 1847). Michael died young and is buried in Scranton.
- Catherine O'Brien (born around 1849). Catherine married Michael Oliver, and had at least one child, Nathan. The couple lived on Luzerne Street in Scranton.

- Ellen Bridget O'Brien (born around 1851). Nicknamed Nellie, she is the most difficult to track through the census records because she moved around quite a bit and never married. She lived with Frank for a time in Alabama, and later she lived with big sister Mary in Massachusetts, where she worked as a corset-ribber.
- John O'Brien (born in 1853). John married Nora Hayes Cornelius in 1898, in what appears to have been a second marriage for both of them. In his earlier years, John worked as a tinsmith, but in his later years he earned his living as a cornice maker. He moved to Westfield, Massachusetts and took care of his mother there until her death in 1899.
- Julia O'Brien (last child, born in 1858). Julia married George Gray. The couple lived in Westfield, Massachusetts and had at least two sons, Norman and Herbert.

After Frank left home, he worked as an apprentice to Peter Schmidt painting frescoes. This brought him to Alabama, where he eventually raised a family. But first, he joined the Confederate Army and fought in the Civil War. More on this in the next installment.

Upcoming LHS Events

Anthracite Mining Heritage Month Presentation: Richard Healey, Ph.D.

On January 27 at 2pm: **Richard Healey, Ph.D.**, Professor of Geography, School of the Environment, Geography, and Geosciences, University of Portsmouth, UK, discusses *The Miners of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad Coal Department during the Civil War Era: Some Recent Findings*.

For an invitation with program link, please email lackawannahistory@gmail.com

A complete list of Anthracite Mining Heritage Month presentations begins on Page 15.

Lackawanna Past Times Zoom Meetings Bi-Monthly Presentations, Fridays at 2 pm

January 29: Roaring Brook Township: North Pocono Boy Scout Corey Kowalski will present what he learned while working on his Citizenship in Community merit badge in the Society library

February 12: The Underground Railroad in Waverly: EJ Murphy, Educator & Destination Freedom Project Coordinator at the Waverly Community House will discuss *Destination Freedom: The Underground Railroad Walking Tour of Waverly* and the Waverly Community House, and the program's development since its creation in 2017.

February 26: Meet Mrs. Thomas Jefferson with historian Marie Aleo-Gordon.

For an invitation with program link, please email lackawannahistory@gmail.com

If you miss any of our lectures, or want to see previous programs, videos can be found on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/lackawannahistory/videos>.

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The Catlin House continues to be open by appointment only, Tuesday - Friday, 11 a.m.- 4 p.m. Contact us to schedule a tour of our historic house, an appointment to do research on family genealogy and local history, or a visit to purchase something from our Bookstore!

Genealogy Forum Monthly, Wednesdays via Zoom

Local genealogists are invited to share ideas, research tips, and local resources. Please call or email to register.

February 10, 1pm, Evie Rafalko McNulty: What and How to Research Records at the Lackawanna County Recorder of Deeds Office

March 10, 1pm, Barbara Spellman Shuta/Tom Price: The U.S. Census: What to Know & What to Look For

To register, please email lackawannahistory@gmail.com or call 570-344-3841.

Ghostly Gallery Link: <http://www.lackawannahistory.org/aghostlygallery.html>

Dine Lackawanna

Please continue to support local restaurants by ordering take out or dining in if permitted, especially these Dine Lackawanna venues who have supported LHS.

Abingtons

Chinchilla

Armetta's Restaurant & Pizza, 329 Northern Blvd. 570-586-5492

Clarks Summit

Camelot Restaurant and Inn, 17 Johnson Rd. 570-585-1430

Formosa, 727 S State St. 570-585-1902

State Street Grill, 114 S State St. 570-585-5590

The New Cafe at Greystone Gardens, 829 Old State Rd. 570-319-9111

Upvalley

Carbondale

Kol Steakhouse at Hotel Anthracite, 25 S Main St. 570-536-6020

Jermyn

JW's Pub & Eatery, Heart Lake Rd. 570-254-9419

Simpson

Frank's Place, 57 Jefferson St. 570-282-0159

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Mid Valley

Dickson City

Texas Roundhouse, 1255 Commerce Blvd. 570-383-5358

Eynon

Pasquale's Pizzeria and Family Restaurant, 485 Main St. 570-521-4671

Tiffany's Tap & Grill, 291 Main St. 570-876-0710

Jessup

Café Colarusso, 233 Bridge St. 570-489-2456

Scranton

Ale Mary's at the Bittenbender, 126 Franklin Ave. 570-955-0176

AV Restaurant, 320 Penn Ave. 570-457-5800

Back Yard Ale House, 523 Linden St. 570-955-0192

Cafe Classico, 1416 Mulberry St. 570-346-9306

Carmen's 2.0, Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel (Trax Bar/Kitchen) 570-558-3929

Mansour's Market, 969 Prescott Ave. 570-341-6673

Market Street Bar & Grill, 223 W Market St. 570-507-9560

Pizza by Pappas, 303 N Washington Ave. 570-346-2290

Posh at the Scranton Club, 404 N Washington Ave. 570-955-5890

Sidel's Restaurant, 1202 N Main Ave. 570-343-6544

Stirna's Restaurant, 120 W Market St. 570-343-5742

Downvalley

Moosic

Harvest Seasonal Bar and Grill at Montage, 7011 Shoppes Blvd. 570-342-3330

Old Forge

Dooley's Pub & Eatery, 120 Oak St. 570-457-7922

Dunmore/North Pocono

Dunmore

3 Jacks Burger Bar, 233 E Drinker St. 570-955-5137

La Cucina, 600 S Blakely St. 570-341-8747

Spring Brook

Olde Brook Inn, 1035 PA-307 570-843-6548

Corporate Obligations in the Energy Industry A Historical Case Study of Mine Subsidence in Scranton, PA

By Stephanie Adams

In 1831, William and Maurice Wurts, founders of the Delaware and Hudson Company, opened the first anthracite coal mine in Carbondale, PA, just north of Scranton. For the next 100 years, the anthracite reserves under Northeastern Pennsylvania would fuel the American Industrial Revolution. Because the Delaware and Hudson was a New York company, the Pennsylvania Legislature chartered local companies to mine coal in and around Scranton. In the 1840s, these companies combined to become the Pennsylvania Coal Company. Additionally, Scranton's Lackawanna Iron & Coal Company, wanting to capitalize on its hometown anthracite bonanza, used two existing state charters to form the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western (DL&W) Railroad Company (and the subsidiary Coal Department) in the 1850s. There were also hundreds of smaller companies that leased less profitable operations or performed work in which larger coal companies were not interested. During the Industrial Revolution, the need for fossil fuels allowed coal companies to have a dominating leverage over what happened in Scranton, frequently to their own benefit.

In the 19th century corporations were “artificial persons” created by a state law called a charter. Prior to the Civil War, they were widely viewed as un-American on religious and political grounds so their charters specified *in considerable detail* what the company was allowed to do. After the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution required large amounts of capital which only corporations could provide, so they were tolerated as long as they promoted the public interest. However, the corporate officers understood their fiduciary duty; keeping their stockholders happy was more important than anything else.

Anthracite mining was labor intensive. Formally trained miners from Wales were recruited to open or start operations. Later as the mining industry progressed, unskilled immigrants from eastern and southern Europe would constitute the bulk of the labor force. Naturally, the miners and their families required someplace to live. Although Scranton recorded a population of 35,000 in 1856, the year it officially became a city, most of the land was still owned by the coal companies. The coal companies knew they could make a lot of money selling the land above their mines. So, while retaining the mineral rights, they sold off their surface land, partly to provide home sites for their workers and partly to make a profit off the fast-growing city. The Lackawanna Iron & Coal Company was the largest landowner in Scranton and they recognized subsidence would be an issue if you built a city on top of active coal mines. To account for this, they added a legal clause to land deeds limiting their liability that would later be called the “cut-throat” provision.

“Excepting and reserving, however, unto said company, their successors and assigns, all coal and minerals beneath the surface of the belonging to said lot

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with the sole right and privilege to mine and remove the same by any subterranean process incident to the business of mining without thereby incurring in any event whatever any liability of injury caused or damage done to the surface of said lot, or to the building or improvements which now are or hereby may be put thereon.”¹

Every other coal company selling surface land also added this provision to their deeds. When the land was first purchased, there was no real danger since the coal mines underneath the city were still relatively full of coal and activity being mined. During the initial coal mining process, large chunks of coal, called pillars, were left in place throughout the mine to maintain the underground workings structural integrity. In most cases this meant that more than half of the available coal was being used just to hold up the mine! The problems started when the coal veins began to run out.

By the early 1900s many of the coal mines under the now booming city were moving into the final stages of the mining process where the support pillars would be removed. With the initial expense of opening the mine and the continual cost of operating pumps to keep the mines dry, how could the company justify leaving more than half of the coal just sitting underground? The process is called retreat mining or pillar extraction/recovery, but it was known to the public as only one thing: “pillar robbing.” Removing the support pillars was obviously a dangerous job and the large corporations would generally employ smaller mining companies to limit their liability to both the miners and surface owners above the workings. A coal company’s first duty was to its stockholders so when it came time to “rob the pillars,” they distanced themselves from any legal issues. Removing the pillars not only compromised the structural integrity of the mine, but also the surface above it. When the mine chambers collapsed, the city above started to subside.

By the time the mines started to collapse, the people living above were generations removed from the original landowners who had signed the deeds with the “cut-throat” provision. Although the liability clauses were passed down to subsequent owners in their deeds, because little subsidence had yet happened, they did not anticipate the clauses would have any serious impact on them. The coal companies had the right to mine out the pillars of valuable coal, and the law stood behind them to keep the large corporations thriving. The public was outraged at the devastation caused by removing the pillars and began to fight back.

In 1911, the Pennsylvania Mine-Cave Commission secured an agreement from the coal companies that held them accountable for the protection of all highways, streets, and any damages up to \$5,000. In addition, when there was imminent danger to a dwelling worth more than \$5,000, the coal company would sell the surface owner as much pillar coal under their property as they wanted for protection, at a third of the cost. This was the large corporations’ attempt at keeping the public at arm’s length with a slightly, but not so helpful solution. In 1913, The Scranton Surface Protective Association was formed. They pushed for the protection of schools after a schoolhouse

¹ Mattes, Philip. *Tales of Scranton*. Scranton, self-published, pp.15-28. 1973.

in West Scranton was severely damaged by subsidence, collapsing into the ground. A smaller coal company, the Peoples Coal Company, had been performing the pillar removal at this time, but little to no legal action was taken against them.

“These decisions originated in the days of the ‘Robber Barons’, when all society, including courts and office holders, was dominated by corporate interests and the sanctity of contracts must, at all costs, be sustained.” ²

For example, in the 1907 case of Noonan v. Pardee, 200 Pa. 474, the plaintiff brought an action of trespass for surface damages caused by defendant's removal of coal underlying the plaintiff's land (9). After six years, the court held an amendment alleging that the plaintiff's damages were caused by defendant's removal of lateral support in an adjacent mine introduced a new cause of action which was barred by the Statute of Limitations (9). The defendant was able to use the court system for their advantage and avoid any consequences for their actions. This use of a legal “loophole” showcases that courts were on the corporation's side and ordinary citizens did not stand a chance in these cases.

On February 3, 1919, without warning, a major subsidence occurred in Hyde Park, Scranton. “Whole rows of buildings in the heart of Hyde Park collapsed; sidewalks were upended; sewer, gas, and water lines burst,” ³ according to Professor Fischel. Peoples Coal Company was again found to be the culprit and in violation of a court injunction. According to Professor Fischel, “the Peoples Coal Company was responsible for most of the major subsidence damage. It was truly a rogue company. Not only did Peoples violate the informal agreements; it also violated the law by taking coal that was specifically reserved for support.” ⁴ Due in large part to the actions of Peoples Coal Company, the Kohler Act was passed on May 27, 1921. The act made it a penal offense to cave in any structure occupied by human beings without securing advanced approval from the Mine-Cave Commission, with the exception of the structures owned by the coal company doing the mining. The Kohler Act was appealed to the Supreme Court as coal companies continued to push for their right to remove all the coal they owned.

In 1922 in regard to Pennsylvania Coal Company v. Mahon, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that although the Kohler Act was a “legitimate exercise of police power” it was in the end unconstitutional under the “takings clause” of the Fifth Amendment. In the majority ruling Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. expanded the takings clause from outright government seizure of property and established the doctrine of regulatory taking. When the government limits the use of private property by regulation it is depriving the property owners (in this case the Pennsylvania Coal Co.) of the value of their property (the coal pillars). Pennsylvania could protect its citizens homes from mine subsidence but it would have to compensate the coal companies for

² Ibid.

³ Grayek, Gary. “Legal Fallout from PA's Collapsing Mines: Pennsylvania Center for the Book.” Edited by Matthew R. Hengeveld, The Pennsylvania State University, 2019.

⁴ Ibid.

leaving some of their coal pillars in the mines for structural support. This ruling on the mine subsidence issues is what still stands to this day.

In the 1960s, to stabilize the Scranton underground, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania instituted a number of Public Health & Safety projects. The federal government also provided funding called the Appalachia Subsidence Projects. Together these efforts hydraulically “flushed” material from the ubiquitous culm banks⁵ into the mine voids. Because of inaccuracies in old mining maps, a large number of 6 to 9-inch boreholes were required in a systematic pattern. This method was called blind flushing and used a central plant to crush the culm to half-inch size. When the borehole backpressure reached a predetermined value, the mine void was full and the operation would move to the next borehole. Later when the US Government’s Office of Surface Mining Reclamation assumed responsibility, they used a method called “controlled flushing.” This involved reopening some mines or alternatively drilling a large 42” ventilated borehole so workers could reenter the old workings and run pipes to direct the mixture of culm and water. Although this was time consuming, labor intensive, and dangerous, it did allow a visual confirmation that the mine voids were properly and completely filled.

The reclamation projects have largely stabilized Scranton, and today mine subsidence is rare, but not forgotten. This past summer, on July 6, 2020 a contractor working on drainage at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport uncovered a 6-foot-wide, 4-foot-deep void. Fortunately, it was more than 250 feet away from the taxiway and no danger to planes. The airport was constructed on the location of the Katydid Colliery which operated from 1886-1908, so mine subsidence remains a continuing problem from the former anthracite coal mining industry. Today residents are encouraged to purchase government subsidized mine subsidence insurance if their home is at risk.

While the mine subsidence’s lead to the establishment of the legal doctrine of regulatory taking, it also includes a warning (with an eye to the hydraulic fracking industry) that when corporations are confronted with a choice between acting in the public interest or satisfying their stockholders, they choose the latter. This was dramatically described in 1956 when Pennsylvania Governor George M. Leader said of the coal companies:

“There is something about the extractive industries that, somehow, exploitation seems to be the only word that applies. They don’t seem to care about the hospitals or the churches or the community buildings or even the infrastructure unless it directly affects them. They just never did anything to help the community. They just got in and they took their money and they did absolutely as little as they could do to protect their workers from dust, from cave-ins, from

⁵ Culm banks are large piles of fine coal mixed with rock left over from processing or “breaking” anthracite coal into usable sizes. Culm banks were more than unsightly surface scars, they were also hazardous. Coal in the piles inevitably caught fire through spontaneous combustion. The burning black mountains produced noxious foul-smelling gasses and eerie blue flames visible at night. Rainwater that leached through the piles became highly acidic and contaminated the watershed for many years.

anything. They just did the minimum. That's what it was all about. Get in. Get out. Get their money and get out!"⁶

Clearly, if we want these corporate "artificial persons" to become responsible stewards of our natural resources, there is more work to be done balancing profit obligations to their stockholders with the greater, multigenerational public interest.

⁶Wolensky, Robert P. The Knox Mine Disaster, Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, pp.129-130. 1999.

Stephanie Adams is a sophomore at Colorado School of Mines, Golden, CO. She is a member of the Iota Zeta chapter of the Alpha Phi sorority, the Society of Women Engineers, and the American Society of Civil Engineers. She is the daughter of Scranton native, Frank Adams. Stephanie plans to pursue a career in civil engineering.

In The Mines

The Daily Diaries of Thomas J. Gobllick

Anthracite Coal Mine Motorman

By Carl Orechovsky

Mr. Gobllick lived in the Austin Heights section of Old Forge. A friend was removing items from Mr. Gobllick's house and came upon his work diaries that cover six years, extending from 1938 to 1944. The owner of the house didn't want the diaries.

As one who documents Old Forge history, I accepted the diaries that are smaller sized, spiral bound notebooks. After enlarging the notebooks through scanning, they were re-typed. The correct spellings of names included in the entries can now be confirmed by descendants of the miners who live in Austin Heights.

The enlargements were assembled into standard sized notebooks. The originals and standard sized notebooks were subsequently donated to the Old Forge Historical Society. Most entries pertain to Old Forge and I have permission to share the contents.

October 1939

Jermyn & Russell Mining Co., Sibley Colliery, Old Forge, Kelmars Section. *

October 1. Sunday.

October 2. 7 hours worked. Rain. Tough night.

October 3. 7 hours worked. Rain. Got 3 rolls tape.

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October 4. 7 hours worked.

October 5. 7 Norman Smiles died, stricken in the mines.

October 6. 7 hours worked.

October 7. Colliery Idle. Nice day.

October 8. Sunday.

October 9. 7 hours worked. Good start.

October 10. 7 hours worked. Fair night. Made motor seat.

October 11. 7 hour worked. Good night to work.

October 12. 7 hours worked. Columbus Day.

October 13. 7 hours worked.

October 14. Colliery Idle.

October 15. Sunday.

October 16. 7 hours worked. Adam 238. Transferred to Slope Road.

October 17. 7 hours worked.

October 18. 7 hours worked. Joe Jerry finished place.

October 19. 7 hours worked. Barber .25. Tommy .20 cents

October 20. 7 hours worked. Nice day at work.

October 21. Colliery Idle.

October 22. Sunday.

October 23. 7 hours worked. 231 laborer done home sick. Miners changed across shift.

October 24. 7 hours worked. Made fire in boiler. 260 Harrys & 231 Mike, laborers off.

October 25. 7 hours worked. Rain. Good night at work.

October 26. 7 hours worked. Old Forge Police Ball.

October 27. 7 hours worked. Rain.

October 28. Colliery Idle.

October 29. Sunday.

October 30. Colliery Idle. Mitchell Day.

October 31. 7 hours worked. 2 track drivers hurt, helper dead in area near 402 breaker dump. Edmer Baby Girl!

Notes

October 30: Mitchell Day. "Mitchell Day," set apart as a day of celebration by the anthracite miners of Pennsylvania in honor of John Mitchell, President of the United Mine Workers of America, was generally observed throughout the hard coal region.

- From the New York Times article, October 30, 1904: *OBSERVE JOHN MITCHELL DAY.; President Tells Miners to Prepare for New Demands in 1906.*

November 1939

Russell Mining Co. Old Forge, 1939: Kelmars Section.

November 1. Colliery Idle. All Saints Day.

November 2. 7 hours worked. Mr. Soha died, Mayes brakeman.

November 3. 7 hours worked. John off, cold.

November 4. Colliery Idle.

November 5. Sunday.

November 6. 7 hours worked. Bought Sheik's Ford \$95.00.

November 7. Colliery Idle. Election Day.

November 8. 7 hours worked. Very cold. 5 places working.

November 9. Colliery Idle. No empty cars, went home.

November 10. 53 cars coal.

November 11. Colliery Idle. Armistice Day.

November 12. Sunday.

November 13. 7 hours worked. Car tags came by mail.

November 14. 7 hours worked. Took car to work.

November 15. Colliery Idle. Pay Day.

November 16. 7 hours worked. 231 laborer not in.

November 17. 7 hours worked. Heavy frost.

November 18. Colliery Idle.

November 19. Sunday.

November 20. 3 places working, 15 cars coal, signed R. Cross.

November 21. 4 places, short of empties, done at 3am.

November 22. 3 places, short of empties, done at 2:30 am.

November 23. Thanksgiving Day. Colliery Idle.
November 24. Cave on No 1 Road. Colliery Idle.
November 25. Colliery Idle.
November 26. Sunday.
November 27. 6 places working.
November 28. 7 places working. Done 2:30, no empties.
November 29. Colliery Idle. Joe's dog lost in Bald Mts.
November 30. Colliery Idle. No empties. New mine cars.

*** Most days Thomas did not list his hours worked***

Notes

November 11: Armistice Day. Now known as Veterans Day.

December 1939

The Volpe Coal Co., Sibley Colliery, Old Forge, Jermyn Section:

*** Russell Mining Co., Kelmars Section.***

December 1. 7 hours worked. 4 places working. Trip to Eynon for skates.
December 2. Colliery Idle.
December 3. Sunday.
December 4 – 9. Colliery Idle. On December 8, Thomas wrote that he went in town to "Register", which was most likely for unemployment, as noted in previous years.
December 10. Sunday.
December 11. 7 days worked. Very Cold.
December 12. 7 hours worked.
December 13. 7 hours worked. First snow storm. No 232 F. Chickey.
December 14. Colliery Idle.
December 15. 7 hours worked. Pay Day. 2 Places.
December 16. Colliery Idle.
December 17. Sunday.
December 18. 7 hours worked. John Biggar died.
December 19. 7 hours worked. Frank Chickey with 242.

December 20. Colliery Idle. Rain.
December 21. 7 hours worked.
December 22. Big John with 242.
December 23. 7 hours worked. Holy Supper.
December 24. Sunday, Christmas Eve.
December 25. Christmas Day.
December 26. Colliery Idle.
December. 27. 7 hours worked. Polis car covered with coal.
December 28. 7 hours worked. Warm.
December 29. Cool, snowing.
December 30. 7 hours worked. 3 places working; done at 1 am.
December 31. Sunday

Notes

December 1: Trip to Eynon for skates. Originally known as the Eynon Drug Store, the business was located in a small, multi-story structure that in effect, offered one-stop shopping decades before megastores such as Wal-Mart and Target. The store offered everything from clothes to appliances and had a strategically placed ice cream counter at the store's exit that offered "real" vanilla ice cream that was yellow in color.

The store eventually moved to a one-story building on nearby Business Rte. 6 (Scranton-Carbondale Hwy.) and was renamed Sugarman's. The structure is now home to a Rite-Aid drug store.

Carl Orechovsky, in addition to being treasurer of the Old Forge Historical Society, scans information for the Society's archives and conducted video interviews for the "Old Forge, Our Town Project".

During the winter season, Mr. Orechovsky works with the No. 9 Coal Mine Tour in Landsford, PA as a track man. Mr. Orechovsky is also responsible for maintaining the Tri-Boro Soccer Association's playing field

Anthracite Mining Heritage Month 2021

By Bob Wolensky

A regional observance of **Anthracite Mining Heritage Month** takes place during January 2021. The annual event focuses on the history and culture of Northeastern Pennsylvania's anthracite region. Because of health concerns this year, all events will be conducted online via ZOOM. The connecting ZOOM information for each event is listed below. (Note: Most of the programs will be recorded and saved for future viewing. Please contact the

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

organizing group for information about the recordings).

The events are sponsored by the Anthracite Heritage Museum, the Anthracite Heritage Foundation, King's College, WVIA Public Broadcasting, the Lackawanna Historical Society, the Luzerne County Historical Society, the Knox Mine Disaster Memorial Committee, the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration—The Pennsylvania Anthracite Section, and the National Museum of Industrial History in Bethlehem, PA.

Schedule of Events:

Throughout the Month of January 2021, WVIA, Public Radio & Television in Northeastern and Central Pennsylvania, will organize a special series of programs:

1. **Chris Norton** of WVIA has initiated a special website link (www.via.org/mining) containing information about the following programming:
2. WVIA will post links to video and audio features dealing with regional history; interested persons can watch/listen to these programs at their convenience.
3. WVIA will broadcast The Knox Mine Disaster documentary, written and narrated by Erika Funke in 1984, as part of the station's afternoon "Learning at Home" schedule, and will promote the film to teachers as a local history lesson.
4. **Erika Funke** will post several anthracite-related interviews and other features on ArtScene and The Keystone Edition.

Sunday, Jan. 17 The Annual Knox Mine Disaster Memorial Mass: St. John The Evangelist Catholic Church, 35 William Street, Pittston, 9 am (**NOTE:** There will be no annual public commemoration at the Knox Disaster's PHMC marker following the mass, nor will the annual walk to the disaster site be held this year); The mass can also be seen at:
<https://stjohnspittston.com>.

Tuesday, Jan. 19 National Industrial History Museum (Bethlehem, PA), Public Program;
Speaker: **Dane Rhys**, International Center of Photography, New York; Topic:
Anthracite Today: A Photographic Narrative; Time: 7 pm; To join the ZOOM meeting:
<https://www.nmih.org/event/anthracite-today/>

Thursday, Jan. 21 King's College and the Anthracite Heritage Foundation, Public Program:
The Annual Msgr. John J. Curran Lecture, Speaker: **Paul Shackel**, Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland; Topic: *Remembering The Lattimer Massacre of 1897*; Time: 7 pm; Moderator: **Thomas Mackaman**, Department of History, King's College; To join the ZOOM meeting: <https://kings.zoom.us/j/91903750024>

Friday, Jan. 22 Luzerne County Historical Society, Public Program: *Family Life in the Coal Region*; Speakers and Topics: **Mark Riccetti**, Director of Operations & Programs, LCHS, *Women and Children, The Other Side of Anthracite Life*; **Tristin Millazzo**, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA, *The Lives of Mining Wives*; **Nicole Kolessar**, Department of History, University of Delaware, *Ellen Webster Palmer and the Breaker Boys*; Time: 7 p.m.; To Join ZOOM Meeting, Click Here

Saturday, Jan. 23 **Anthracite Heritage Museum, Public Program:** *The Annual Knox Mine Disaster Commemoration*; Speaker: **Bode Morin**, Historic Site Administrator, Anthracite Heritage Museum; Topic: *After Knox: Remediation, Heritage, and Regeneration Values on the Anthracite Landscape*; plus anthracite music by **Jay Smar**; and a tribute to the late William A. Hastie Sr. (persons can sign up in advance to say a few words about Bill Hastie); Moderator: **Bob Wolensky**, Department of History, King's College; Time: 2:00 p.m.; For registration to join the ZOOM meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_C1hKvQluRf6fuyJwrrG-FA

Monday, Jan. 25 **American Institute of Mining Engineers—Anthracite Division, Public Program;** Speaker: **Michael Korb**, AIME-Anthracite Division Past President; Topic: *The Carnegie Hero Medal in Northeastern Pennsylvania Mining*; Time: 7 p.m. Contact person: **Mike Korb** mikekorb@tetrattech.com; To join the ZOOM meeting:
<https://zoom.us/j/4502134358?pwd=OUJNM3p2MjhNNGhTRUp6V29mT05wZz09>
ID 450 213; ZOOM Meeting ID 450 213 4358

Wednesday, Jan. 27 **Lackawanna Historical Society, Public Program;** Speaker: **Richard G. Healey**, Professor of Geography, School of the Environment, Geography, and Geosciences, University of Portsmouth, UK; Topic: *The Miners of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad Coal Department during the Civil War Era: Some Recent Findings*; Time: 2 p.m.; Moderator: **Mary Ann Savakinas**, Executive Director, LHS; To get the ZOOM meeting link please email lackawannahistory@gmail.com in advance of the program.

Saturday, Jan. 30 **Anthracite Heritage Museum, Public Information Program;** Topic: *An Industrial History Tour of Scotland, England, and Wales, June 25 – July 7, 2021*; for anyone interested in next summer's industrial history tour of the UK, sponsored by the Anthracite Heritage Museum; Speakers: **Beth Landmesser, Bode Morin, Robert Wolensky**, tour leaders; Plus a person from our travel agency in Cardiff, Wales; Time: 2 pm; for advanced information about the tour please call: 570-963-4804; To join the Zoom program:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84150554092?pwd=alc4RnJKNmpvd20zOUJBOUtoeGxUQT09>

Contact: Prof. Bob Wolensky: 715-252-6742; email: rwolensk@gmail.com

Person of Interest Louise Tanner Brown

By Rick Sedlisky



Louise Tanner Brown

**Photograph featured in the *Journal of Negro Life*, 1930
Image source: blackscranton.org**

Louise Tanner was born in 1883 in Beaver, PA, about 30 miles northwest of Pittsburgh. She was the daughter of Nancy and the Rev. Andrew T. Tanner, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Beaver. She was educated in Pittsburgh where she attended elementary and high school. It was while studying the arts in high school that she developed a love for poetry.

Like many women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Louise was trained to work in cottage industries. The term, cottage industries, mainly refers to types of home-based businesses such as laundry, cleaning, sewing, beauty care and hairdressing. She worked as a hairdresser and operated a beauty shop in Beaver for six years. Later in life her business acumen would take her in a very different direction.

It is unclear why she moved to Scranton, but it was in the Electric City where Louise met and married George W. Brown (1856 – 1923). In 1882, George had established George W. Brown Drayman Inc., a business that hauled various types of goods and equipment using a dray, which was a low, flatbed wagon without sides, drawn by either horses or mules. A dray is considered to be the forerunner of the moving truck.

Beginning with one man, a dray and one team of horses, in March 1912, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the nation's leading African American newspaper, stated that George W. Brown owned and operated a "big business" (a term commonly used at the time to denote

success) with a monthly payroll of \$3,000 (\$81,000 in 2021 dollars, adjusted for inflation) and was moving his company headquarters to a five-story building in Scranton's business district on West Lackawanna Ave. By 1914, he had successfully transformed his business from simple haulage into a regional trucking and transportation company.

Following their marriage, Louise and George became involved in the community. George participated in civic activities and as a member of the Bethel AME Church, he assisted the pastor in financial matters, including fundraising. He was also a member of various clubs, including the church's Harmony Club, as well as the Oriental Lodge and the Knights of Pythias.

Louise was also involved in church affairs. She retained membership in the Women's Mite Missionary Society and taught Sunday school. Her community activities included holding the office of President of the Fidelis Club of the YWCA, as well as membership in other groups such as the Progressive Recreation and Social Service Association, and the Community Center for Negroes. Her love of the arts and especially poetry as a high schooler evolved into public speaking engagements, dramatic readings and of course, poetry recitals.

Louise Tanner Brown's exposure to public life through speaking and offering readings saw her become active in public discussions regarding racism and discrimination of African Americans. Her words were frequently published in local newspapers. In one interview she was quoted as simply stating, "Colored people want only the rights to which they are entitled." She often said that racial prejudice against Black people could be diminished if the media wouldn't place emphasis on the word, "Negro", when reporting crimes involving Black people.

From the end of the 19th Century and into the 20th Century, Black women from across the country were organizing political clubs. In an effort to achieve change and reform.



**Image source: Black Scranton Project
blackscranton.wordpress.com**

Scranton would not be left out of the effort. A column caption in the September 29, 1920 issue of the Scranton Republican read, "Colored Women Form Political League."

"Colored women of voting age met at 117 Penn Ave. and organized a political league. Another meeting will be held in Odd Fellows Hall, Pine St. Wednesday night when a decision will be made as to which party it will become affiliated."

Officers elected were: president Mrs. George W. Brown; first vice-president Mrs. F. A. Crump; second vice-president Mrs. Walter Robinson; secretary Miss Effie Tinker; treasurer Mrs. F. L. Brown."

In 1923, Louise's life took an unexpected turn when George died from heart disease at age 67. Alone and left with George's trucking company, what was she to do? The company was profitable, successful and well-known. When she began receiving offers to purchase the company, her entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen led to her to a decision that many considered questionable to say the least. She kept the company. Explaining her decision, Louise said, "I found so many people who were anxious to buy my business that I decided if it was of value to them it must certainly be of value to me, and so I decided to keep it."

Under Louise's stewardship, the shiny red trucks would continue to be familiar sights on Scranton's streets and regional roads, but before that could happen, there was one major issue to be resolved. Company drivers, both African American and white, were reluctant to work for a female boss.

Their reluctance was overcome by Louise's common-sense business approach and her belief in fairness. Her solution was simple: Equal pay for an equal day's work and compensation that was competitive with what others in the industry paid their drivers. She offered union scale pay and when the union contract agreement was presented to her, she signed without hesitation. Her actions were met by employees with both trust and loyalty.

Advertised as the largest and most complete warehouse in eastern Pennsylvania, by 1930, the company had grown to 14 trucks, 22 employees and \$72,000 in gross revenue (\$1.1 million). A contract with the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. (operator of A&P grocery stores) saw the company transport 30,000 tons of food and equipment annually in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.

In 1940, Louise was named one of Scranton's ten outstanding women. She was also the director of the Scranton Red Cross and the Progressive Association. The company continued to grow and by 1946, the fleet had eight trucks, eight tractors, ten trailers, and 31 employees. Gross revenues totaled \$150,000 (\$2.1 million).

Louise married her second husband, Rev. P. A. Scott, in 1946. She later left Scranton to live with her niece, Mabel Askew, in Dayton, OH where Ms. Askew was the Dean of Women at Wilberforce University. She spent her remaining years in Dayton where she passed away on November 18, 1955 at age 72. Louise was laid to rest in Scranton.

"For me, business has been a most pleasant experience," she told the Scranton Republican, "and never once in all of the fourteen years have I encountered anything to make me change that idea."

— Louise Tanner Brown Scranton Republican May 12, 1936

A Documentary Emerges From A Cemetery Tour

For more than two years, Luz Cabrales, the head of Scranton Films, and her team quietly went about their business attaching mics to performers, recording the scenes, arranging aerial shots, and editing footage. The end result is a documentary entitled *The Dunmore Cemetery Tour with The Dearly Departed Players*.

Ms. Cabrales, entered the documentary in the *Vesuvius International Monthly Film Festival* where the film and other entries were seen by a live audience at the festival's monthly viewing event in Campania, Italy. The festival's website states that their mission is to introduce new names from all over the world to their audience. *The Dunmore Cemetery Tour with The Dearly Departed Players* bested the competition and won as Best Documentary for December 2020. The film will compete with other monthly entries for the title of best documentary for 2020. To learn more about the festival, please visit <https://filmfreeway.com/Vesuviusinternationalmonthlyfilmfest>

The documentary runs for about an hour and successfully combines the components that make the annual tour a reality. The viewer is offered a personal look at the Dearly Departed Players and tour director, Julie Esty, and how their efforts result in the successful endeavor the tour has been for more than 20 years.

From people entering the cemetery and depositing food items in barrels to assist the Feed-A-Friend project, to the tour group winding its way to visit the departed who return to tell their stories, not to mention cast opening performance jitters, all aspects of the tour are covered in detail. Ms. Cabrales' use of aerial shots captures the autumn beauty of the cemetery and surrounding area.

The viewer is also privy to the Zoom meeting during which the cast faced the reality of the coronavirus pandemic, how it affected the 2020 tour, whether or not to conduct the tour, and how they came to a successful solution.

Scranton Films is an organization consisting of area filmmakers involved with making movies and TV shows, all of which feature local talent. On the website, Luz Cabrales explains, "We believe that this area is full of talented artists and beautiful landscapes that can be featured in many creative projects. Our goal is to bring film to the area and to build a filmmaking community by fostering and highlighting the work of talent artists, local businesses and our beautiful community."

For information on Scranton Films, please visit <https://www.scrantonfilms.com/>. If you would like to be a part of Scranton Films' network or collaborate on a project, contact Luz Cabrales at scrantonfilms@gmail.com

NEPA Notables

The election of Scranton native, Joe Biden in November 2020, as the 46th President of the United States prompted us to research other Northeast Pennsylvanians who have become known for their contributions to American culture.

In this issue, the list includes an additional 14 names. Our thanks to Tom Costello and Philip Mosley for the contribution of names noted below with either * or **. Dr. Judi Hollis, Louise Tanner Brown, and John Willard Raught were added by the editor.

Sarah Farley Allan *

Commercial illustrator (Scranton)

Rosalie Allen **

Country music singer (Old Forge)

Walter Bobbie

Stage director/Choreographer (Scranton)

P J Carlesimo

NBA coach (Scranton)

Patrick (PW) Costello *

Designer, Illustrator, Engrosser (Scranton)

Patty Costello *

Hall of Fame Pro Bowler (Scranton)

Pat Crowley

Actress (Olyphant)

Emile De Antonio **

Radical filmmaker (Scranton)

Cy Endfield

Film director/Inventor/Magician (Scranton)

Ham Fisher

Cartoonist (Wilkes-Barre)

Howard Gardner **

Developmental psychologist (Scranton)

Joe Gill

Comic book author (Scranton)

Dr. Judi Hollis (Scranton)

Author, therapist, motivational speaker

Jane Jacobs

Journalist (Scranton)

Gloria Jean (Scranton; born Buffalo, NY)

Actress/singer **

Russell Johnson

Actor (Ashley)

James Karen

Actor (Wilkes-Barre)

William Kotzwinkle **

Fantasy novelist. (Scranton)

Mary McDonnell

Actress (Wilkes-Barre)

Matt McGloin

NFL player (Scranton)

W.S. Merwin **

Poet (Scranton; born New York, NY)

Jason Miller

Playwright/Actor (Scranton)

Mike Munchak

NFL coach (Scranton)

Jerry Orbach

Actor/Singer (Wilkes-Barre)

Jack Palance

Actor (Hazle Township)

Jay Parini **

Writer/academic (Pittston)

John Willard Raught

Landscape/impressionist painter (Dunmore)

Adam Rippon

Olympic figure skater (Clarks Summit)

Lizabeth Scott

Actress, film noir/Singer (Scranton)

Jonathan Slavin

Actor/Activist (Wilkes-Barre)

Louise Tanner Brown

Businesswoman (Scranton, born Beaver, PA)

Ned Washington **

Lyricist (Scranton)

* Submitted by Tom Costello. ** Submitted by Philip Mosley

If you know of any Northeast Pennsylvania notables not included on our list, please contact us at lackawannahistory@gmail.com and place **Notables** in the subject matter. Their names will be included in the next issue of History Bytes.

LHS 2021 Membership Information

About Membership: Membership privileges include unlimited access to the Society library, 10% discount in our bookstore, advance notice, special discounts and invitations to all Society activities, members-only programs, the quarterly newsletter and the bi-monthly e-newsletter.

Attached is a membership form you can use to renew your membership or give to a friend who is interested in joining. Please return it to:

The Lackawanna Historical Society, 232 Monroe Ave., Scranton, PA 18510.

Lackawanna Historical Society Membership Form

// Student	\$10	Name _____
// Individual	\$35	Name _____
// Family	\$45	Address _____
// Contributing	\$75	_____
// Sustaining	\$150	
// Silver Corporate	\$250	Telephone _____
// Gold Corporate	\$500	Email _____

Following is a link to complete for membership payment if you chose to use it.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSep8tRxXJUut7McTh4g4StczVjC4HRJAXMDE-ztxEDCzLncvA/viewform>

Subscribe to History Bytes

A subscription to History Bytes is free. If you would like to receive future issues of our bi-monthly e-newsletter, please contact the Lackawanna Historical Society at lackawannahistory@gmail.com and place History Bytes in the subject matter.

Share Your NEPA Stories with History Bytes

If you have any Northeast Pennsylvania-related stories to include in History Bytes, please contact the Society at the above email address. Please include your name, email address and a brief description of your story.

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Internet Links

Historical Attractions

- [Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority](#)
- [Steamtown National Historic Site](#)
- [Anthracite Museum and Iron Furnaces](#)
- [Electric City Trolley Museum](#)
- [Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour](#)
- G.A.R. Memorial Association Museum: Contact Joseph Long, Jr. 570-457-8438

Cultural Partners

- [Albright Memorial Library](#) and the Lackawanna County Library System
- [The Everhart Museum](#)
- [Scranton Cultural Center](#) at the Masonic Temple
- Scranton's Annual [Civil War Weekend](#) Events
- Scranton Times-Tribune's [Pages from the Past](#)
- [Pocono Arts: Where Culture Builds Community](#)

Anthracite Research

- [Pennsylvania's Northern Anthracite Coal Field](http://www.northernfield.info/) <http://www.northernfield.info/>

Historical Societies

- [Carbondale Historical Society](#)
- [Dunmore Historical Society](#)
- [Luzerne County Historical Society](#)
- [Wayne County Historical Society](#)
- [Susquehanna County Historical Society](#)
- [Monroe County Historical Society](#)
- [Wyoming County Historical Society](#)
- Archbald Historical Society: Contact Ed Casey (570) 614-3628
- Scott Township Historical Society: Contact Robert Vail (570) 254-9536
- Taylor Historical Society: Contact Christine Schaefer (570) 562-1225

County and Educational Partners

- [Lackawanna County](#)
- [Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#)
- [Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit](#)

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Business Hours

Tuesday – Friday, 10am – 5pm Saturday, 12pm – 3pm
Address: The Catlin House, 232 Monroe Ave., Scranton, PA 18510
Phone: 570-344-3841 e-mail: lackawannahistory@gmail.com

The Lackawanna Historical Society is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization, which is dedicated to keeping vital the history of Lackawanna County. The society is supported in part by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Catlin House Memorial Trust, Lackawanna County and membership dues.

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