



HISTORY BYTES

A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication

Vol. 6 No. 2

March - April 2023

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

History Bytes Celebrates



For those of us who've been involved with History Bytes since its inception, it's hard to believe that five years have passed. The first issue appeared in March 2018 with information about the Society's day-to-day operations, including news and events that took place during March and April of that year.

Stories offered in the first issue covered a range of topics. We began with the recognition of the beginning of the farmers' market season, with an article about the Scranton Co-Operative Farmers Market, written by Mike Kashmer.

Also included were stories such as the People's Street Railway by Tony Ranella, Jr., Incident at Sterrick Creek where the body of a woman was found at the bottom of the Sterrick Creek mine shaft in the Peckville section of Blakely in June 1910, and the beginning of our "Remembering" series about mine disasters that took place when coal was king. The first "Editor's Book Review" was a review of "The Old School" by Joseph Peter Klapatch. The book discusses the consolidation of school districts across the commonwealth with a focus on Joe's home district of Olyphant that was joined with those of Throop and Dickson City to form today's Mid Valley.

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

We sincerely thank all who have contributed to History Bytes during the last five years. You who wrote and continue to write stories, offer photographs that show who and what we were and are, authors whose books we've reviewed, personal family recollections that we've been able to document for posterity, and especially you who have emailed us simply saying, "I have a suggestion for an article."

You are the ones who created the identity of History Bytes and continue to keep it moving forward and successful. As a television show host used to say, "Keep those cards and letters coming in, folks!"

--Rick Sedlisky, Editor

It Must Be Spring!



Image source: Ciker.com

Do you love Local History? Do you love baseball?
Then please consider supporting LHS this Spring when we mark
the birthdays of some of our local legends!

Purchase your tickets to RailRiders games using the link below.

For any tickets sold, the RailRiders will donate \$5.

Scheduled games are set for:

Sunday, April 2 (Hughie Jennings' 154th birthday)

Thursday, May 11 (Nestor Chylak's 101st birthday)

Thursday, July 6 (Steve O'Neill's 132nd birthday)

Saturday, August 12 (Christy Mathewson's 143rd birthday)

<https://tinyurl.com/yc7hwr3r>

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Susquehanna River North Branch Pennsylvania's 2023 River of the Year



*Susquehanna River North Branch in Bradford County
Image source: Wikipedia*

Representatives of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Organization of Waterways and Rivers announced that the Susquehanna River North Branch was voted as Pennsylvania's 2023 River of the Year. Of the 11,438 votes cast, the Susquehanna River North Branch received 4,098, Perkiomen Creek 3,110, Conestoga River 2,490, and Schuylkill River 1,740.

The river winds its way from New York State's Southern Tier through Bradford, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Montour, Northumberland, Susquehanna and Wyoming counties in Northeast Pennsylvania to Sunbury where it meets the Susquehanna River West Branch.

As "River of the Year," public awareness of the waterway will be enhanced. That will assist major initiatives such as economic redevelopment of communities along the river, better access to the river, not to mention additional water and land-based activities for residents and visitors.

Numerous natural and historic offerings along the river provide exploration opportunities for experienced boaters, as well as those who enjoy wildlife. The river also attracts people who enjoy fishing. In 2009, its historic offerings earned the Susquehanna River North Branch the title of “water trail,” which is a “National Recreation Trail” designation given by the National Park Service as a part of the Captain John Smith National Historic Trail system.



The Susquehanna River North Branch is also known for its calm, Class 1 waters that are ideal for canoeists and kayakers, as well as new paddlers who are interested in developing their paddling skills. For additional information and details about the seven available day paddling trips, including Tunkhannock and West Nanticoke, and difficulty levels, please visit <https://susquehannagreenway.org/branches/north-branch/>

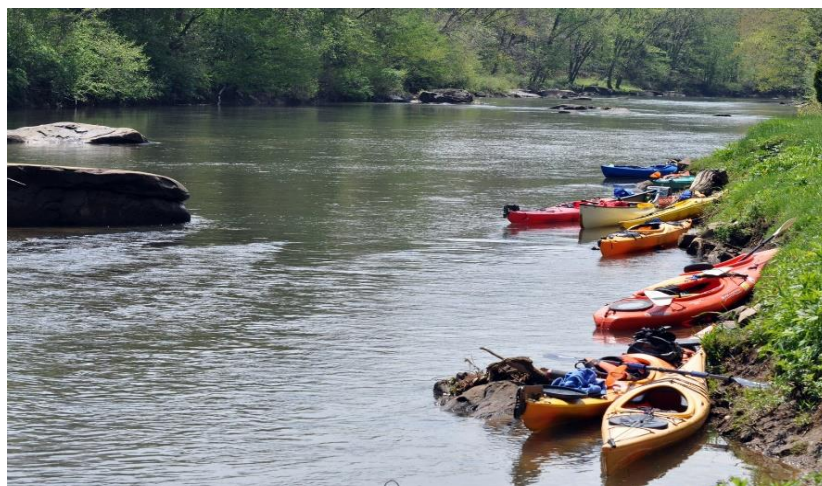


Image source: American Trails NRT Database



Image source: Susquehanna Greenway Partnership

LHS 2023 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 to renew your membership or give to a friend who is interested in joining. Please return it to: Lackawanna Historical Society, 232 Monroe Ave., Scranton, PA 18510.

Lackawanna Historical Society Membership Form

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

Following is a link for membership payment:

<http://www.lackawannahistory.org/benefits.html>

Lackawanna Past Times Upcoming Events & Meetings

On Zoom

Our monthly Zoom and In-Person lecture series features famous local people and early regional history. Email us at lackawannahistory@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link. Catch up on past episodes on our YouTube channel.

Friday, April 28, 2 pm Gary Ryman discusses **Giford Pinchot**.

Friday, May 26, 2 pm: Ron Moskalczak presents **Scranton's Automotive Heritage**

In Person

Sunday, April 23, 2 pm: Joyce Hatala presents **"Recycling"** at the Catlin House

Saturday, April 29, 6 pm: **The Grand Civil War Ball**, Waverly Community House

Sunday, April 30: Ragtime Brunch, Radisson Lackawanna Station, 570-342-8300.

For additional details please visit: lackawannahistory.org/cwball.html

Two Places of Worship Tours. Sunday, May 7 & Saturday, May 13. Details TBA

Ghostly Gallery Link

<http://www.lackawannahistory.org/ghostlygallery.html>

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Dine Lackawanna

Numerous restaurants support LHS through participation in Dine Lackawanna. Enjoy an evening away from the kitchen and help support these establishments and LHS.

Wednesday, April 19: AV Restaurant, 320 Penn Ave., Scranton 570-457-5800

Wednesday, May 17: Union Craft House, 601 N. Main St., Taylor 570-562-6496

Abingtons

Clarks Summit

Camelot The New Cafe
Formosa State Street Grill

Dalton B&B

Chinchilla

Armetta's Restaurant & Pizza

Upvalley

Carbondale

KOL Steakhouse
Pat's Pizza & Hoagies

Jermyn

JW's Bar & Grill

Eynon

Pasquale's Pizzeria and Family Restaurant
Tiffany's Tap & Grill

Simpson

Frank's Place

Mid Valley

Dickson City

Texas Roundhouse
Colarusso's Coal Fired Pizza

Olyphant

OTown Bar & Grill

Jessup

Café Colarusso

Scranton

Ale Mary's at the Bittenbender
AV Scranton
Back Yard Ale House
Cafe Classico
Carmen's 2.0 Restaurant
Chef Von & Mom
POSH at the Scranton Club

Market Street Bar & Grill
Pizza by Pappas
Sidel's Restaurant
Stirna's Restaueant
La Cucina
Mansour's Market Café & Eatery
Villa Maria Lola's Cabana

Downvalley

Old Forge

Cusumano Dooley's Pub & Eatery

Dunmore/North Pocono

Dunmore

3 Jacks Burgers
La Cucina

Moscow

Delish on Main

Springbrook Twp.

Olde Brook Inn

Scranton Wholesale Block Documentary Premier

The Scranton Wholesale Block documentary premiere, set for Friday, April 21, 6 pm at 518 Lackawanna Avenue in Scranton is SOLD OUT!

A promotional graphic for NET Credit Union. The background is a gradient of orange, red, and blue with abstract geometric shapes like circles and squares. The main headline "Unlike Your Bank" is in large, bold, white letters. Below it, a sub-headline reads "If you're a member of the Lackawanna Historical Society, then you can Bank on NET!". There are six icons arranged in a 2x3 grid, each with a label below it: a heart for "#netcares", a location pin for "All Local", two people for "Not for Profit", a slider for "Diverse Products & Services", a house for "Personalized Mortgage Services", and a credit card with a slash for "No Annual Fee on Credit Cards". The website "netcreditunion.com" is centered below the icons. The NET Credit Union logo is in the bottom right corner.

Unlike Your Bank

If you're a member of the Lackawanna Historical Society, then you can Bank on NET!

- #netcares
- All Local
- Not for Profit
- Diverse Products & Services
- Personalized Mortgage Services
- No Annual Fee on Credit Cards

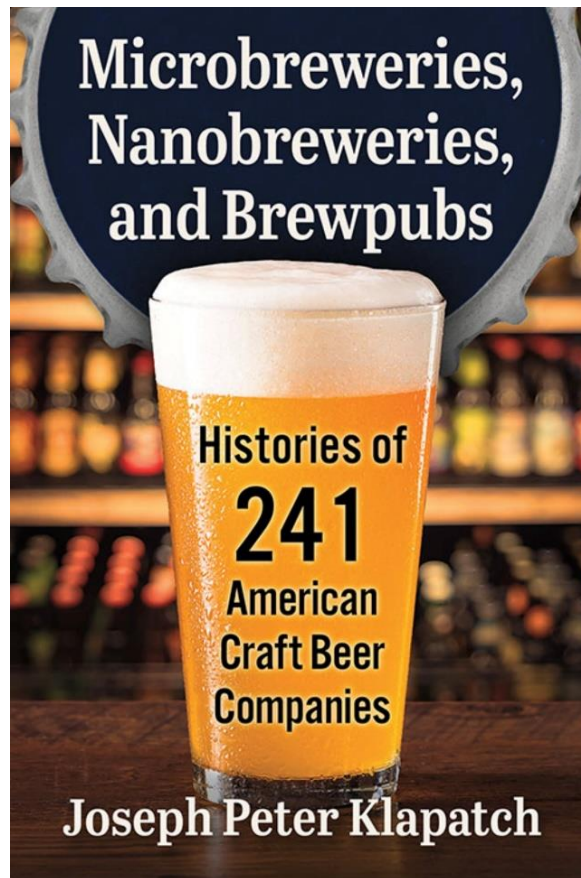
netcreditunion.com

NET
CREDIT UNION

Card Exchange Event: Wednesday, May 3 at 4pm, NET Credit Union will host a card exchange at the Catlin House.

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

New Book Release



Editor's Note- In the last issue of History Bytes, we incorrectly stated that copies of the book would be available beginning April 13, 2013. We apologize for the error.

Author and Olyphant native, Joseph Peter Klapatch, recently announced his new book, *Microbreweries, Nanobreweries, and Brewpubs: Histories of 241 American Craft Beer Companies*, McFarland, publisher, (ISBN: 978-1-4766-9085-8). Release date by McFarland has yet to be scheduled, but the tentative release date at Amazon is June 6.

The book looks at microbreweries—prime examples of American enterprise and innovation—from an industry outsider's perspective. The author explores a select number of small breweries from around the United States, covering their signature brews, histories, and what it took for them to claim their niches in the marketplace.

Other works by Joe include *The Old School* thebp.site57084.com. His beer website is lager57.weebly.com. Follow Joe on Facebook at www.facebook.com/strippens

How Long Have the Trains Been Gone?

By Rick Sedlisky

The Old Woman:

The New York, Ontario & Western Railway

March 21, 1957



Although the New York, Ontario & Western Railway was not a human being, the road was affectionately known as “The Old Woman.”

Legend says that the Old Woman travelled from nowhere to nowhere, meandering through small towns from Weehawken, NJ to Oswego, NY on Lake Ontario. Later in life, the lure of black diamonds took her to Scranton.

During her time, the Old Woman believed that she could help small towns in upstate New York that provided milk and other items by bringing their products to market. She believed that she could bring visitors to the Catskills to enjoy summer away from the big city. She did both. She renovated one of her trains and called it, “The Mountaineer.”



The Mountaineer

Photo courtesy of the Jeff Otto Collection

When she learned about anthracite in the Lackawanna and Wyoming valleys and although she was a late comer, she established herself with a direct route from the main line at Cadosia, NY to Scranton. She shared the passenger terminal on the west side of the Lackawanna River with terminal owner, Central Railroad of New Jersey.

The Old Woman never had it easy. It was always tough for her even with her desire and determination to build long trestles, place her rails around mountainsides and provide service to towns that had none. Many towns in upstate New York trusted and invested in her dream because it was their dream as well. The dream was prosperity for all.

She went broke more than once but survived particularly because of the need for anthracite. It was the black diamonds that turned a profit for her and kept her going through WWII and beyond.

When the Old Woman entered the coalfields, she was met with strong opposition from the city of Carbondale that was deeply invested in the Delaware & Hudson Railway, a competitor that offered employment to many miners, machinists and others.

While she wasn't allowed to enter Carbondale via ground level, the Old Woman was not to be deterred. She built above and across Carbondale and just as D&H, she provided passenger service to miners and others from Carbondale to Scranton and points in between. She also built a major yard at Mayfield. The Old Woman would not be denied her place.



*NYO&W Carbondale Station
Photo courtesy of the Jeff Otto Collection*

Her career ended on March 21, 1957, when the federal government ruled that her assets would be sold at auction. The Old Woman was bankrupt for the final time.

The New York, Ontario & Western Railway was the first Class 1 railroad to not have the chance to either reorganize or become a part of other railroads. Much of the Old Woman remains in Northeast Pennsylvania. Below are a few shots of what exists.



*New York, Ontario & Western Railway Peckville, PA depot
Now Mid Valley Plumbing Supply Company. Extension on left occupies O&W right-of-way.
Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky*



*New York, Ontario & Western Railway Tunnel
Location: N. Keyser Ave. off ramp, North Scranton (McDade) Expressway
Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky*

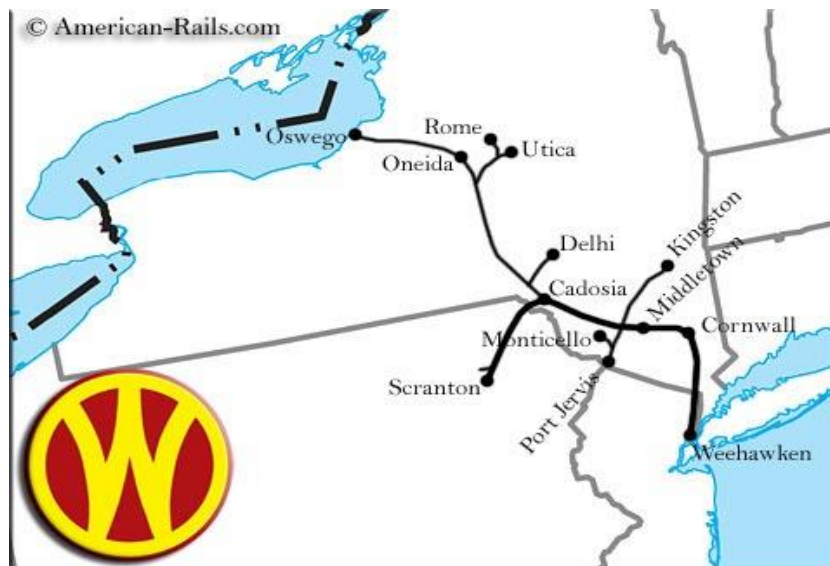
For additional information about the New York, Ontario & Western Railway, please visit the Ontario & Western Railway Historical Society Inc. website: <https://www.nyow.org/>



*NYO&W diesel freight train
Photo courtesy of the Jeff Otto Collection*

The Ontario & Western Railway Historical Society's webpage also provides news about the restoration of an O&W diesel at Steamtown National Historic Site, Scranton.

<http://nyow.org/site/>



Route map source: American-Rails.com

All Aboard!
Central Railroad of New Jersey
Final Departure from Pennsylvania March 31, 1972



Image source: Pinterest

The 1960s and 70s were not kind to the railroad industry, particularly in the Northeast. The Central Railroad of New Jersey, also known as the Jersey Central or CNJ, was no exception. Between its tax-burdened commuter operations, coupled with decreased patronage in New Jersey, decreasing freight handling and virtually no anthracite revenue, Jersey Central found itself in dire straits with few options.

Jersey Central began life in 1831 as the Elizabethtown & Somerville Railroad. Through a series of acquisitions and expansions, the railroad reached Phillipsburg on the Delaware River across from Easton, PA, in 1852 and Jersey City on the eastern end of the route in 1864.

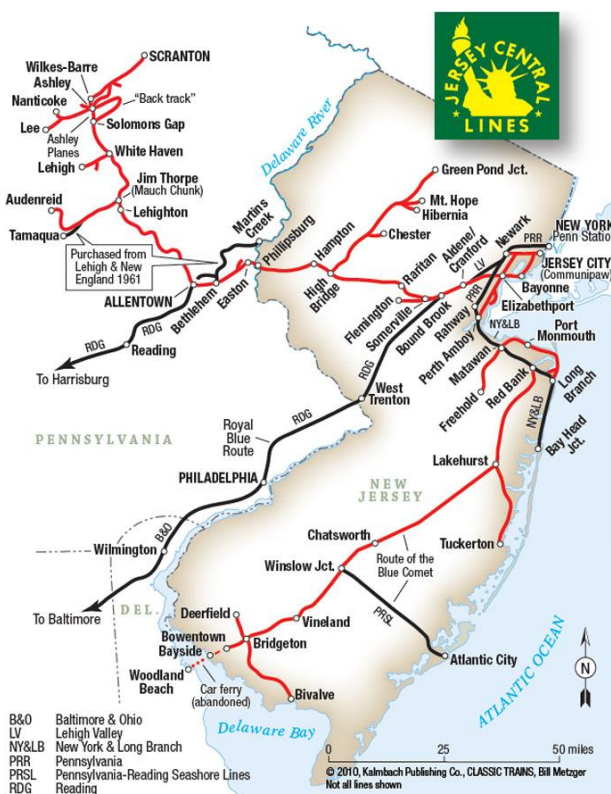
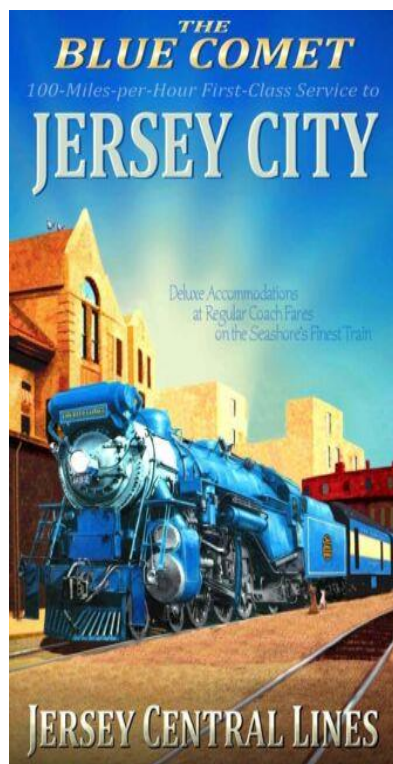
Although its route miles totaled 700 at its peak, the distance between Jersey City and Scranton via CNJ is only 191 miles, making it a relatively small railroad, but not small in traffic density. Its roughly 35-mile-long commuter corridor extending from Jersey City transported 300 daily commuter trains carrying 35,000 people, as well as intercity passenger and freight trains and local freights.

Entry into Northeast Pennsylvania allowed Jersey Central to compete for the anthracite traffic with Lehigh Valley and Delaware, Lackawanna & Western. Both had developed separate routes to New York City, thus bypassing Jersey Central. Previously, the two transferred anthracite to CNJ connections on the Delaware River.

The railroad's Pennsylvania lines were originally constructed by the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company and operated as the Lehigh & Susquehanna Railroad. The main line between Phillipsburg and Wilkes-Barre was completed in 1866. A subsidiary, the Wilkes-Barre & Scranton, extended the line to Scranton in 1868.

Built in 1837 by the Lehigh & Susquehanna Railroad, the Ashley Planes were a system of three planes used to transport anthracite from the Wyoming Valley via steam-powered cable over the mountain divide to connect the two parts of the railroad between Ashley and Solomon's Gap that were at different elevations. A 12 ½-mile "Back track" supplemented the planes by carrying passengers and freight between the aforesaid locations. The Ashley Planes carried anthracite from operations served by CNJ, including Wanamie (Nanticoke), Lee (Newport Twp.), Audenreid (Wilkes-Barre) and Huber (Ashley).

In addition to New Jersey commuter trains, the railroad had a fair number of intercity passenger trains, most notably the *Blue Comet* that operated between Jersey City and Atlantic City on what is now New Jersey Transit's North Jersey Coastline route. The *Bullet* served Wilkes-Barre via Allentown and the *Mermaid* connected Scranton to Sandy Hook on the Jersey Shore. Interestingly, virtually all trains originated in Jersey City except for the Scranton – Sandy Hook train.



Following the end of WWII, the traffic base in the Northeast United States shrank. This was due to, among other things, an expanding system of highways that took away short-haul freight revenue, and a regional manufacturing base that moved to other parts of the country. The reality was that by the 1960s there were just too many railroads and not enough business to go around. Those that counted anthracite as a major source of revenue were particularly hard hit. Adding to the misery, mail contracts were cancelled in 1965, resulting in Jersey Central discontinuing all 18 passenger trains.

In 1967, Jersey Central entered bankruptcy for the final time. In an effort to reduce the flow of red ink on the income statement, CNJ curtailed its Pennsylvania operations on March 31, 1972. The lines continued under Lehigh Valley supervision.

The last-ditch effort didn't work. On April 1, 1976, Jersey Central (bankrupt in 1967), Penn Central (1973), Ann Arbor Railroad (1973), Erie Lackawanna Railway (1972), Lehigh Valley Railroad (1970), Reading Company (1971), and Lehigh and Hudson River Railway (1972) were combined to form Consolidated Rail Corp., better known as Conrail. The era of the railroad with the Lady Liberty logo was over.



Jersey Central Freight Station, Scranton
Image source: LandmarkHunter.com



Jersey Central Station, Wilkes-Barre
Image source: Alamy

It may appear that the passing of so many of the independent railroads that served Northeast Pennsylvania has left the region with rail service that might be considered lacking. This is not the case. The region's rail infrastructure is alive and well.

Smaller railroads such as Delaware Lackawanna Railroad and Reading & Northern Railroad are two cases in point, as is the Class 1 carrier, Norfolk Southern Railroad.

But what about passenger service? It's been roughly 50 years since regularly scheduled passenger trains served the region. Attempts to reinstate service from Scranton to New York have been off and on for decades only to be delayed for one reason or another. That may be changing. Following is the most recent available information.



The restoration of passenger trains between Scranton and New York City's Penn Station just might become a reality. Amtrak's Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Gardner, thinks so as do more than 10,000 people who recently signed a petition in favor of service restoration.

In a news release by Amtrak, Gardner said, "Restoring and expanding this corridor with daily multi-frequency service would dramatically boost mobility and economic development for residents of Scranton and Northeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and the broader Northeast region.

Findings of a two-year study by Amtrak "reveal strong potential for ridership, economic benefits and existing line suitability for passenger rail." Some of those benefits are an estimated \$84 million in economic activity through increased tourism and local economic activity, \$20 million in passenger benefits (such as having the ability to work while on the train, unlike buses) and \$7 million in what are called society benefits. Examples of those are diverting traffic from roadways such as Interstate 80, resulting in environmental improvements through reduction of air pollution and different forms of traffic congestion.

Proposed service would entail upgrading 60 route miles of existing track between Scranton and Delaware Water Gap and restoring 20 miles of track on the Lackawanna Cutoff between Delaware Water Gap and Andover, NJ where New Jersey Transit is adding another four miles of track and rehabilitating the Roseville Tunnel.

The estimated cost of track improvements on the Pennsylvania side is between \$100 million and \$175 million. Acquisition of trains is estimated between \$70 million and \$90 million. These combined costs represent between 30% and 45% of the total project.

Additional design work will offer an estimate of the total cost of reestablishing the rail corridor. The work includes fully restoring the Lackawanna Cutoff, constructing stations, and creating an equipment service facility that would be in Scranton. Completion of the Federal Corridor ID application would release federal funds that would fund about 80% of the project. The balance would be funded by Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Service could begin within five years, pending completion of design work and construction by participating transportation agencies (PennDOT, NJ Transit and Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Rail Authority) and federal funding. In its first year of operation (2028), ridership is estimated by Amtrak at 302,100, increasing to 473,500 within two years. There would be three daily round trips between Scranton and New York, making stops at Mt. Pocono, East Stroudsburg, Delaware Water Gap, Blirstown, Dover, Morristown, Montclair and Newark.

Travel time, which is estimated at a little under three hours is competitive with buses and cars. Bus travel usually takes between two and a half and three hours, depending on traffic congestion. The railroad says it's competitive because it makes seven stops in roughly the same amount of time, whereas buses do not. In addition to more leg room and the ability to walk around, Amtrak trains can travel at speeds up to 110 miles per hour on the straight, 28-mile Lackawanna Cutoff. Fares have not yet been determined, but New Jersey and Pennsylvania will have to assist in covering operating costs.

The Scranton Rail Restoration Coalition has to date gathered more than 10,000 signatures in favor of the restoration of passenger rail service. For updates on the project, as well as information on the coalition, visit <https://scrantonrail.com/>

The report, *Amtrak Study Examines Scranton – New York Corridor* is available at: <https://media.amtrak.com/2023/03/amtrak-study-examines-scranton-new-york-corridor/>

Analysis of Options for Scranton – New York Amtrak Service, a 30-page report that covers all aspects of the planned service, including potential train schedules, station information and other pertinent details, is available at:

<https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/corporate/reports/Analysis-of-Options-Scranton-New-York-Amtrak-Passenger-Rail-Service.pdf>



Map source: Amtrak

Anthracite Ancestry



Anthracite Ancestry covers various aspects of Northeast Pennsylvania's coal legacy, including coal companies, coal barons, labor and labor unions, individuals, families, immigrant groups, disasters, subsidence and railroads.

Does anthracite tie into your family history? Did one or more of your ancestors “work the mines” as they used to say? If your ancestors left behind anthracite stories of any kind, please contact us at lackawannahistory@gmail.com and include *Anthracite* in the subject matter.

In The Mines *The Daily Diaries of Thomas J. Goblick* *By Carl Orechovsky*

Thomas J. Goblick worked in the mines as a motorman. A motorman operates an electric or battery-powered mine motorcar to haul trips (trains) of cars, loaded with timbers, rails, explosives and other supplies, into a mine.

Mr. Goblick lived in the Austin Heights section of Old Forge. A friend was removing items from Mr. Goblick'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, which are smaller sized, spiral bound notebooks. They were scanned and enlarged, and subsequently donated to the Old Forge Historical Society. Most entries pertain to Old Forge, and I have permission to share the contents.

Volpe Coal Co, No 6 Colliery, No. 11 Shaft, October 1942

October 1. Don't forget, we can't leave the mines till 10:30. Waiting for empties. Was to see Helen in town. Done 1:45.

October 2. Warm. Big Squeeze in Back End, Done 1:45.

October 3. Warm. Was to the movies, Tom & I. Helen came home from Hospital. Done 1:30.

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October 4. Rain. Sunday. Stayed home. Taken Helen to Moses Taylor Hospital.

October 5. Rain. 117 Water in place. Was to Francis for beer. Done 8:30. Home 12 pm.

October 6. Rain. Miner hurt in Dumpy Road. Man hurt in No. 11 Shaft. Done 9:30.

October 7. Nice. Swamp full of water. Mailed my puzzles. Wrote to Helen. Nells order came. Done 9 Pm.

October 8. Warm. Jack Marley was off tonight. Put in 1 post. New shoes. Done 8:45.

October 9. Marley off. 117 place armature in shaker. Done 8;30. Home 10:45.

October 10. Warm. Day shift working only. Brought Rudy's junker in the yard. Was hot Helen.

October 11. Cool. Sunday. Drove Helen to Moses Taylor Hospital.

October 12. Rain. 4-foot water. Cars slow. Changed motors, my motor went to pump road. Done 2:30.

October 13. Cool. Full coal. Water high. Reader's digest arrived. Tested car battery.

October 14. Rain. Steve, Tom, Fred measuring. Nell was to the movies with Della. Done 12 am.

October 15. 4 places. Full coal. Lggy went to Army test. Done 1:30. Paid + 2 ½ hrs over time. 84 hrs. \$ 73.10.

October 16. Rain. Moved shaker. 105 Con. Work. Steve Mensik was in Back Branch. Done 2 pm.

October 17. Pay Day. Bad cold in chest. Done 2 pm.

October 18. Sunday. Drove Helen to Moses Taylor.

October 19. 3 places. 109-day shift. Was to Old Forge mailed money order. Bad cold yet. Done 9 pm.

October 20. Warm. Water stopped some. Place in bad shape in Back End. Done 9;15.

October 21. Rain. 105 miner Elmer not working. Eddie Mucha went home early. Done 8:15.

October 22. Nice. 117 gangway pillars 2 cars. Elmer sore back. Full coal, 13 cars. Done 8:15.

October 23. Cool. 2 places, 9 cars coal. 105 bad. Joe K. off. Was in Franks, Joe and I. Done 8:55.

October 24. Cool. Day shift working only. Helen was home. Helen went back. Done 7:30.

October 25. Cloudy. Sunday. Stayed home. Neighbor Filimon died.

October 26. Rain. Freddie Jones in Back Branch. Jno Spitko died. 4 places, 19 cars coal. Done 1:30.

October 27. Cold. First Snow. Made fire in the boiler. Pump was down. Done 1:30.

October 28. Cold. 18 cars coal. Was to see Helen at Moses Taylor, Nell took shoes. Done 1:45.

October 29. Cold. Mitchell Day. Helen was over for costume. Spitko Funeral. Colliery Idle.

October 30. Friddie and Tom measuring. Joe Volpe was in Back Branch. Back Branch pump down. 14 coal. Done 2:10.

October 31. Pay Day. Marley was working. 4 places on coal. Was to movies me and Tom. Done 1:30. 89 hrs \$73.10

***** (Thomas: O.K. means everything in order, everybody all right.) *****

Volpe Coal Co, No. 6 Colliery, No. 11 Shaft, November 1942

November 1. All Saints Day. Helen came home. She went back with Krenitisky. Mr. Soltisick died. Signed for Community Chest.

November 2. Rain. 3 pm. 2 places 15 cars coal, full of water. Done 6:30.

November 3. Cold. Everybody on coal. Was in Pesiola's had 2 beers. Done 7:30.

November 4. Frosty. Joe Komyaski off. Was to Pittston with Tony Volpe (with petition). Done 8:30.

November 5. Warm. Tom has bad coal. Was to Franks. Done 8:30.

November 6. Cool. 3 places full coal. Was to a wake. Done 8:30.

November 7. All Colliery Idle. Raked leaves all day. Helen came home.

November 8. Sunday stayed home. Drove Helen to Moses Taylor Hospital.

November 9. Frosty. 7 am water high. 3 places full coal. Saw Chester at office. Got stove bricks. Done 1:30.

November 10. Rain. 117 in Straight. Joe K. working. Big Chester working in 140. Done 12:30. Salvage collected.

November 11. Armistice Day. Sam & Mike went to S. Babylon. Simon star in Tetlocks. Done 1:30. Made fire in boiler.

November 12. Cold. Jno. Busilli 116 on pillars. Freddie was measuring. Mailed 2 letters. Done 1:30.

November 13. Cold. Full coal. 20 cars coal. Everybody working. Done 12 pm.

November 14. Cold. Union voted No Work. Pay Day. Went for Helen.

November 15. Sunday. Drove Helen to Moses Taylor Hospital. 70 hrs, \$60.20. New Federal Law, all time ½ after 35 hrs.

November 16. 3 pm. Witoski, Muchia, Yanoski off. Searching for matches at the foot of the Shaft. Done 8:30. Paid bills.

November 17. Goe. went with J. Vicks. District 25 Pins. Della went to Duryea. Done 8 pm.

November 18. Rain. Full coal. Tire ration slip came. Helen passed exam. Done 8 pm.

November 19. Was to Franks, 3 beers. Was hurt Dellas props. Mailed letter to Inst. Of Science. Done 8:30.

November 20. Everything OK. Coal delivered by Red. Mells order came. Done 8:30.

November 21. Rain. Deadline for more than 5 usable tires. Was for Helen. Taken Vacation Day.

November 22. Cold. Sunday. Stayed home. Was to Helen's and Jonnies in evening. Was to see Dell.

November 23. Cold 7 am. 103 Simon not in. 105 crew got 2 days for bad coal. Made fire in boiler. Done 1:00.

November 24. Rain. Broke stud on motor. Bought a Duck. Done 12 am.

November 25. Rain. Motor OK. Farmer Jones in Back Branch. Helen came home. Done 12 am.

November 26. Cloudy. Thanksgiving Day. Colliery Idle. Drove Helen back. Had 3 beers.

November 27. 105 working. Volpe was in Back Branch. Received Blue Coloring Book. Done 2 am. Made fire in boiler.

November 28. Cold. Pay Day. Riders paid. Was for Helen. Done 12 am.

November 29. Snow. Sunday stayed home. Drove Helen to Hospital.

November 30. Cold. 3 pm. 116 crew not in. 105 on rock. Was to town. Done 8:30. 77hrs, \$66.22.

Volpe Coal Co, No. 6 Colliery, No. 11 Shaft, December 1942

December 1. 3 pm. 116 not in. Andy goy hurt. Received price list on fingerprints. Done 7:30.

December 2. Rain. 116 not in. 105 has GAS in face. Empties were slow. Pulled 2 rails. Done 8:30.

December 3. Cold. 116 moved tools behind engine. Put seat on motor. Was in Francis. Done 8:20.

December 4. Cold. 18 coal, 3 places. Road broke. Was in Franks. Done 8:30.

December 5. Cold. Jonnie P. was to town with my car. Nellie was for Helen in Town shopping. Colliery Idle.

December 6. Cold. Sunday stayed at home.

December 7. Cold. 7 am. Joe Ruzzo had leg hurt. Beek Bocker had leg hurt. Big Cave in Pittston. Done 1:30.

December 8. Cold. Simon has 1 laborer. 116 has gone behind engine. Done 1:30.

December 9. Warmer. Everything OK. Nice day to work. Done 12:30.

December 10. Foggy. Full coal. Joe was off the track near the air tank. Done 12:30.

December 11. Warmer. Helen came home by bus.

December 12. Cold. Deadline for tires. Men Idle.

December 13. Snow. Sunday. Drove Helen to Hospital. Stayed home.

December 14. 3 pm. Cold. Full coal, 3 places. Was to Franks.

December 15. Snowing. Elmer not in. 77 hrs, \$66.22

December 16. 3 pm. Elmer not in. Simon working inside. East Road completed, brand new road. A No 1. Done 8:30.

December 17. Snowing. Was to M.E. Coxe. Came 1:30. Done 8:30.

December 18. Snowing. 1 place 105, 7 cars coal. Sam Smart started to work. Helen came Home. Done 8:30.

December 19. Below Zero. Drove Helen to M.T. Hosp. 7:30 pm. Stayed home evening. Colliery Idle.

December 20. Below Zero. Sunday. Stayed home. Very cold day and night.

December 21. Below Zero. 7 am. Deadline for rubber tires. A lot of cars frozen.

December 22. Cold. Was to town Nell and Tom. Done 1:30.

December 23. Warmer. Was to O. F. Barber haircut \$.50. Sone 1:30.

December 24. Warm. CHRISTMAS EVE. Drove for Helen. We had supper home.

December 25. Warm. CHRISTMAS DAY. Stayed at home.

December 26. Cool. Was to movies, Tom and I. Bought papers. Stayed home.

December 27. Rain. Sunday. Drove Helen back to M.T. Hosp. Stayed home.

December 28. 3 pm. 105 on rock. 103 -3 men and 117- 4 men 7 cars coal. Done 6 pm, home 10:30.

December 29. Rain. 13 cars coal. 103 on pillars 2 cars. Mary Bedrswns Vickie was to see us. Done 9 pm.

December 30. Rain. Rain & more rain. Was in Franks. Due bills today. Done 7:30.

December 31. Cold Pay Day. Riders paid me. Drove Helen to Hospital. Colliery Idle. 70 hrs, \$60.20.

Remembering Pancoast

April 7, 1911

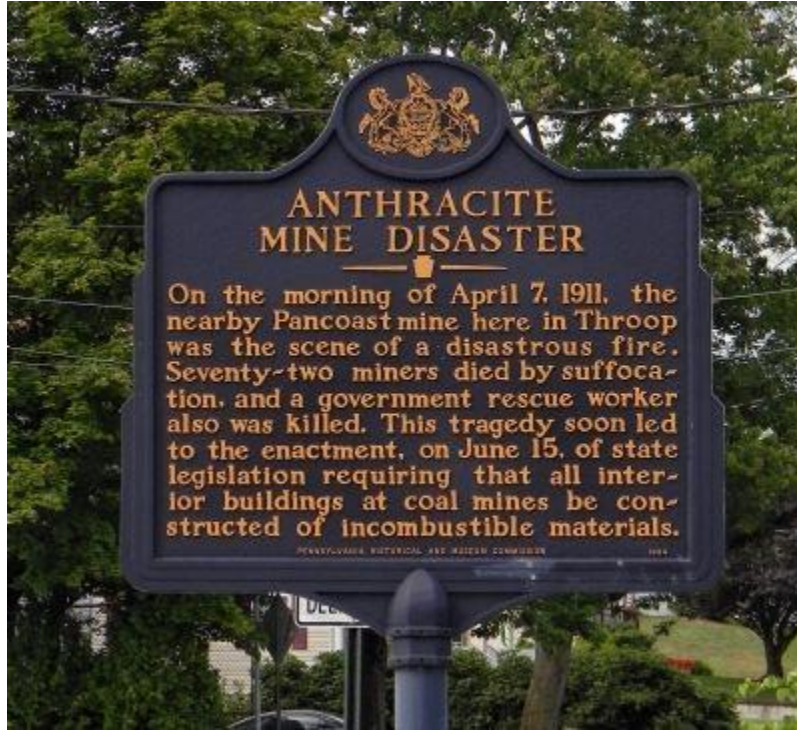


Image source: HMdb.org

Around 8:30 am on April 7, 1911, in Throop, a fire began in the Pancoast Mine's engine house that was not constructed of non-combustible materials, but of wood supported by a flooring made of yellow pine plank. The fire was initially considered to be a nuisance and it wasn't until two hours later that the men were told to evacuate. It was too late as the fire took the lives of 72 immigrant miners and one government rescue worker.

The Pancoast Mine, also known as Price-Pancoast, was Northeast Pennsylvania's third major anthracite mining disaster in terms of lives lost (1911; 73 dead) that took its place with Avondale (1869; 110) and Baltimore Tunnel (1919; 92). The operation was served by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, the New York, Ontario & Western Railway and the Delaware & Hudson Railway.

A visual remembrance of Pancoast is a Commonwealth road sign (see above), located on Olyphant Avenue near Sanderson Street, not far from the mine site. Although it was one of the region's smaller operations, Pancoast takes its place in Northeast Pennsylvania's anthracite legacy. Those who worked Pancoast and those who lost loved ones and friends are recognized as all are remembered in 2023.



*Resting places of seven killed at Pancoast
Photo courtesy of Joe Rudzinski*

The lunar landscape that existed across much of Lackawanna and Luzerne for decades is quickly becoming non-existent. The land on which pyramid-like culm dumps, tall breakers and other mine-related structures once stood is now occupied by shopping centers, industrial parks, distribution warehouses, upscale housing developments and schools. Trees now cover much of the currently reclaimed, unused mine sites.



*Pancoast Breaker
John Stellwagen Collection
Photo courtesy of Frank P. Adams*

The former Pancoast Mine site is one that is, as of now, still unused. Located between Oleckna and Pancoast streets in Throop, the mine operated from 1881 to 1936. In 1972, a large tract of that land was acquired by real estate developer, Anthony J. Rinaldi. The property has remained untouched for decades.

The Gypsy Grove Breaker Blaze

About two weeks after the deadly Pancoast Mine Disaster in Throop that occurred on April 7, 1911, and claimed the lives of 73 men, the dreaded alarm was heard again only this time it was at the Gypsy Grove Breaker in neighboring Dunmore.

The Gypsy Grove operation was located between Throop and the Sport Hill section of Dunmore, which was about a half mile north of the end of the Drinker Street trolley line and the beginning of the Moosic Lake Railroad. It was about two miles from the Pancoast Mine.

The Pennsylvania Coal Company-owned breaker was one of the few remaining that were located above the mouth of the shaft. It was constructed in 1867, about two years before the tragic Avondale disaster in which 110 men and boys lost their lives. Avondale resulted in legislature banning construction of breakers over a shaft.

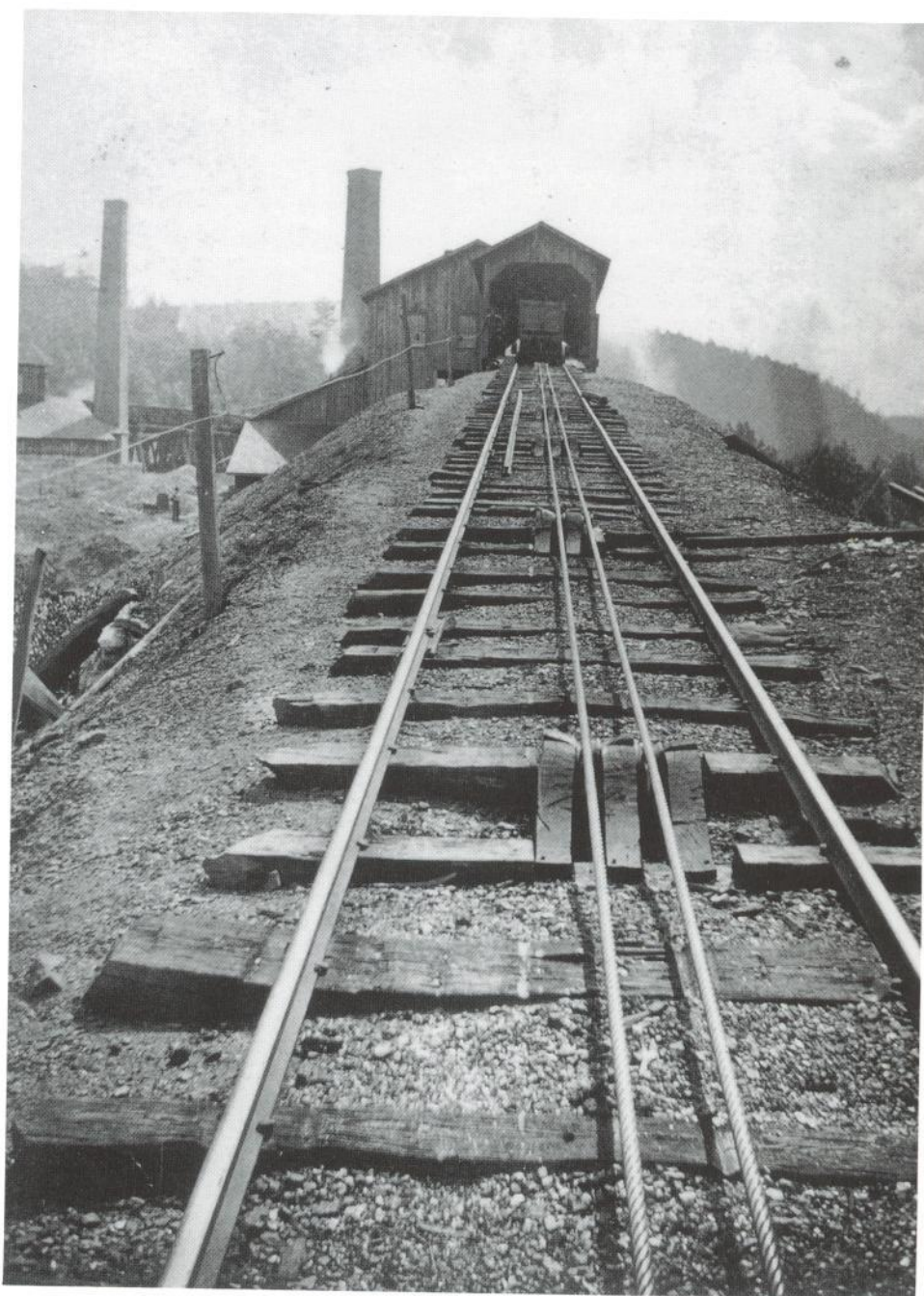
The fire started at 4:20pm and was said to be caused by a spark from a passing Erie Railroad locomotive. Sparks from locomotives that started small fires were a frequent occurrence and usually easily extinguished.

Because it was one of the oldest breakers in the northern anthracite field, the structure was a tinder box. The wood was dry and, in many places, rotted and oil soaked. The tar-papared roof was covered with coal dust. Once the fire gained a foothold, the breaker resembled burning oil. The blaze spread so quickly that it was virtually impossible for surface workers to reach fire-fighting apparatus that was quickly consumed by the flames. All buildings near the breaker, including blacksmith and carpenter shops, boiler room, offices and wooden shanties were destroyed. Flames also started about a half dozen fires at the nearby culm dump.

In terms of numbers, any casualty is one too many. In the Gypsy Grove case, casualties totaled two dead and five injured, all of whom were from Dunmore. The dead were listed as John Early, weighman, and Antonio Batiste, head tender. The injured were Michael Walsh, boss headman, Peter Clapp, headman, John Dykes, 24 years old, company weighman, and Harry Stevens, oiler and Antonio Mecca, truck boy, ages 16 and 18, respectively. On a positive note, fire drills were conducted monthly and credited with the 50 breaker boys escaping without injury.

Firefighting equipment from Dunmore and Scranton was sent to the scene. A connection with an Erie Railroad tank provided water for the thousands of feet of hose used to extinguish the blaze.

Several escape routes were used. The deceased worked at the top of the structure. Four of the eight others working there jumped 35 feet to safety and sustained injuries. Three others escaped by running through the fire at the base of the breaker. One other, John Dykes, grabbed the mine cage cable and slid through the fire 160 feet to safety within the mine.



Photographer Louis Hensel of Hawley pointed his camera up Plane 7 of the Pennsylvania Coal Company's Gravity for this picture taken before 1886. The smokestack on the left is attached to the engine house of a plane leading up from the Gypsy Grove Colliery.

Photo courtesy of Tony Ranella Jr.

Note: In the distance, the Moosic Mountains slope to the right to meet Roaring Brook below. The base of the slope is where today, interstates 380 and 84 join to meet Interstate 81.

The 24-year-old Dykes led some of the 400 miners to safety through an abandoned air shaft about a mile away. They escaped by driving nails and spikes into the shaft timbers to replace escape ladders that were broken and rotted. Most of the 400 men escaped through four openings that were easier to access. The majority were hoisted to the surface using cages at the No. 1 Colliery located about 200 yards to the west.

Captain W. A. May, general manager of the company, stated that for several years the company operated under the advisability of abandoning the Gypsy Grove Breaker. He added that the breaker was scheduled to be inspected the following month with the goal of breaker abandonment in mind. May also said that everything about the property had been safeguarded as much as possible and that workers were told at all times, coal dust and any debris were to be collected and removed. Contrary to that statement, had an inspection taken place prior to the fire, inspectors would have found, among other things in the Middle vein, escape ladders broken and rotted.

Superintendent Ingles said that because of the Pancoast disaster, signs had been ordered for Gypsy Grove and other PACC mines. The signs were scheduled to arrive within a few days and were to be placed throughout the workings with directions on how to evacuate in case of fire or other emergencies.

Property loss was estimated at \$50,000 (\$1.6 million in 2023 dollars). Buildings were insured for \$40,000 (\$1.3 million). The company decided that the breaker would not be rebuilt. Officials wasted no time in announcing that the 450 men and boys working would access Gypsy Grove coal through the veins of the nearby No. 1 workings. Officials added that very few would lose their jobs as a result of the fire.

Information sources:

<https://www.northernfield.info/Collieries/Gypsy%20Grove/D%201911%20News%20Compilation%20of%20Fire.pdf>

<https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1910?amount=50000>

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Steamtown National Historic Site
Anthracite Museum and Iron Furnaces
Electric City Trolley Museum
Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour

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

Anthracite Research

Pennsylvania's Northern Anthracite Coal Field <http://www.northernfield.info/>
The North-East United States Historical Geographical Information System (NEHGIS)
<http://www.nehgis.org>

Historical Societies

Carbondale Historical Society
Plymouth Historical Society www.plymouthhistoricalsocietyluzernecopa.org
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
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Address: The Catlin House, 232 Monroe Ave., Scranton, PA 18510
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Founded in 1886 as the Lackawanna Institute of History and Science, the Lackawanna Historical Society provides the community with a record of local history through its museum and library collections, exhibits and programs. In 1942, from the bequest of George H. Catlin, the Society established its permanent home at Catlin's 1912 residence, located at 232 Monroe Avenue in Scranton, Pennsylvania. In 1965, it was designated as the official county historical society by Lackawanna County and continues to serve the county as a center for local history resources. The Society, a 501 ©3 nonprofit organization, is supported in part by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Catlin Memorial Trust, Lackawanna County and memberships.