



## HISTORY BYTES

*A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication*

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May – June 2023

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

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### *Delaware & Hudson*



*200 Years*

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ab/Delaware\\_hudson\\_railw\\_logo.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ab/Delaware_hudson_railw_logo.png)

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**[lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)**

# *Delaware & Hudson*

*By Rick Sedlisky*

The Delaware & Hudson began its corporate life as the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company. As industry and technology progressed, the canal company would eventually become the Delaware & Hudson Railway. Extending from Wilkes-Barre to the south to Montreal, Quebec to the north, through trackage rights, D&H would eventually extend its route west to Buffalo and south to Washington, DC.

Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, William Wurtz of Philadelphia began exploring the northeastern part of Pennsylvania where he discovered outcroppings of black rock. When in 1812 he realized that the rock could be a valuable fuel, he began purchasing large tracts of land in what became known as “the coalfields.” He and his brother Maurice’s original plan was to ship the coal to their hometown, but by that time the Schuylkill Navigation Company canal was nearing completion, so Philadelphia was no longer an option. When they realized that New York City had no transportation available to receive delivery of anthracite, the brothers thought that a canal might solve the problem.

Intense lobbying for a few years resulted in the formation of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company. The company was chartered in Pennsylvania on March 13, 1823, and on April 23 of that year in New York State. To begin construction, the brothers needed investors to finance the project. They travelled to New York where in January 1826, they did a demonstration of “the stone that burns” before potential investors at a Wall Street coffeehouse. The reception was overwhelmingly positive, and the stock was oversubscribed within hours.

Construction of the 108-mile canal began on July 13, 1826, near Kingston, NY on the Hudson River, westward to Port Jervis, NY where the canal then continued northwest along the Delaware River, crossing into Pennsylvania at the Lackawaxen River and then on to Honesdale, PA.

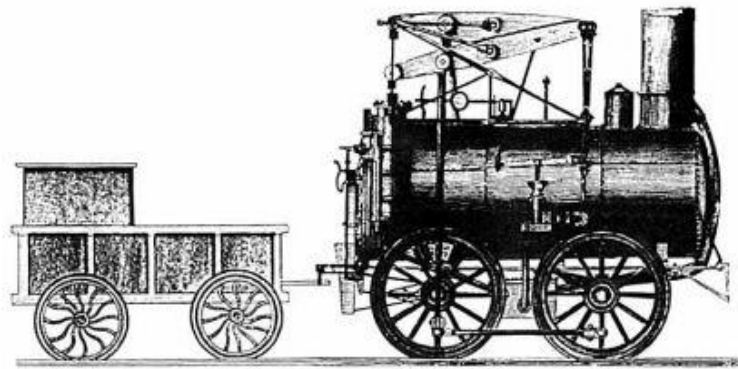
*Canal Scene: One of a series of paintings of the Delaware and Hudson Canal at Port Ben painted by Theodore Robinson in 1893.*

*Image source: Wikipedia*



Every project has growing pains. One such pain was how to get anthracite from their mines near Carbondale over the Moosic Mountains to the canal at Honesdale. The answer was to build a gravity operated railroad over the mountains. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania authorized the construction of the Delaware & Hudson Gravity Railroad on April 6, 1826, and four months later, August 8,

history was made at Honesdale when the Stourbridge Lion, the first steam locomotive to run on rails in the United States took place. Unfortunately, the locomotive proved to be too heavy for the rails and was relegated to a shed somewhere in Honesdale.



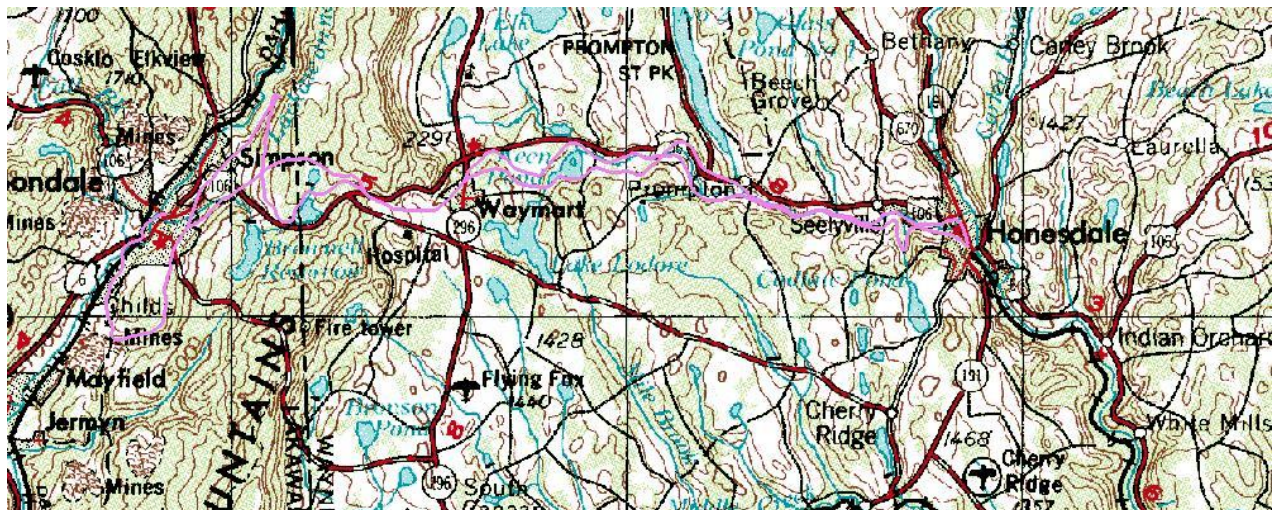
The Stourbridge Lion

<https://www.waynehistorypa.com/exhibitions/permanent/stourbridge>

In the meantime, the canal business flourished. Commodities were mainly coal and lumber. The company invested profits in canal improvements that resulted in accommodation of larger barges to handle increased traffic loads.

The D&H continued its gravity railroad operation but was slow to adopt the evolving steam technology. It would not operate another steam locomotive until 1860.

The gravity system was about 17 miles long; when operations began on October 8, 1829. It was a huge success. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the system was expanded deeper into the coalfields reaching Archbald and Olyphant in 1858. D&H continued to purchase coal lands resulting in expansion south to Wilkes-Barre.



*Gravity Railroad Route (red dots): Carbondale to Honesdale*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delaware\\_and\\_Hudson\\_Gravity\\_Railroad#/media/File:DnH-gravity.pa.track.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delaware_and_Hudson_Gravity_Railroad#/media/File:DnH-gravity.pa.track.jpg)



A few years earlier, the Pennsylvania Coal Company (PACC) built its own gravity railroad extending from Pittston, north via Dunmore to Hawley, where in the first year of operation, it delivered 300,000 tons of coal to the canal.



*Barges in Honesdale waiting for coal deliveries.  
Photographer unknown. Image source: National Canal Museum, Easton, PA*

The PACC/D&H Canal arrangement would not last. By the time a pricing dispute between PACC and D&H was settled in 1863, the Erie Railroad had already built an extension of its line to Hawley where PACC coal was transferred to Erie for shipment via rail to Port Jervis, thus eliminating dependence on the canal. Erie would eventually open its Wyoming Division and extend its steam railroad south from Hawley via Dunmore to Avoca.

By this time, however, the writing was on the wall. Although the canal remained viable through the 1870s and 80s, steam technology was proving to be the way to go. Canals were becoming obsolete as railroads could carry coal directly to New York and other markets. D&H adopted the new technology and in 1898, the canal carried its final loads from Honesdale to Kingston. With the emphasis now on rails, the company dropped "Canal" from its name and became the Delaware & Hudson Company. Another name change took place in 1930 when the Delaware & Hudson Railroad Company was organized to operate the railway and other company properties. A reorganization in 1968 changed the name to the Delaware & Hudson Railway.

*(The gravity railroad part of the story has an interesting side note. Steam locomotives would have been used in the beginning if the gravity railroad had been constructed as originally designed by John B. Jervis, the company's first chief engineer.)*

By the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, railroad construction across the country skyrocketed. Before 1871, about 45,000 miles of track were in place. By 1900, another 170,000 miles of track existed, including five transcontinental railroads that received federal assistance through land grants. While many railroads expanded west, Delaware & Hudson expanded, for the most part, north. In 1869 the Erie Railroad constructed the Jefferson Railroad from Carbondale to its mainline at Lanesboro on which trackage rights were obtained. Jefferson Railroad trackage rights proved to be important because it also allowed D&H to expand south to gain access to Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.

As with other railroads at the time, acquisitions, leases and trackage rights were the tools used to fuel D&H expansion. With the Lanesboro connection in place, Delaware & Hudson and the Albany & Susquehanna Railroad jointly built a line to Nineveh where coal from Carbondale was shipped. The leasing in 1870 and the subsequent acquisition of the Albany & Susquehanna provided Delaware & Hudson a connection from Albany to Binghamton.

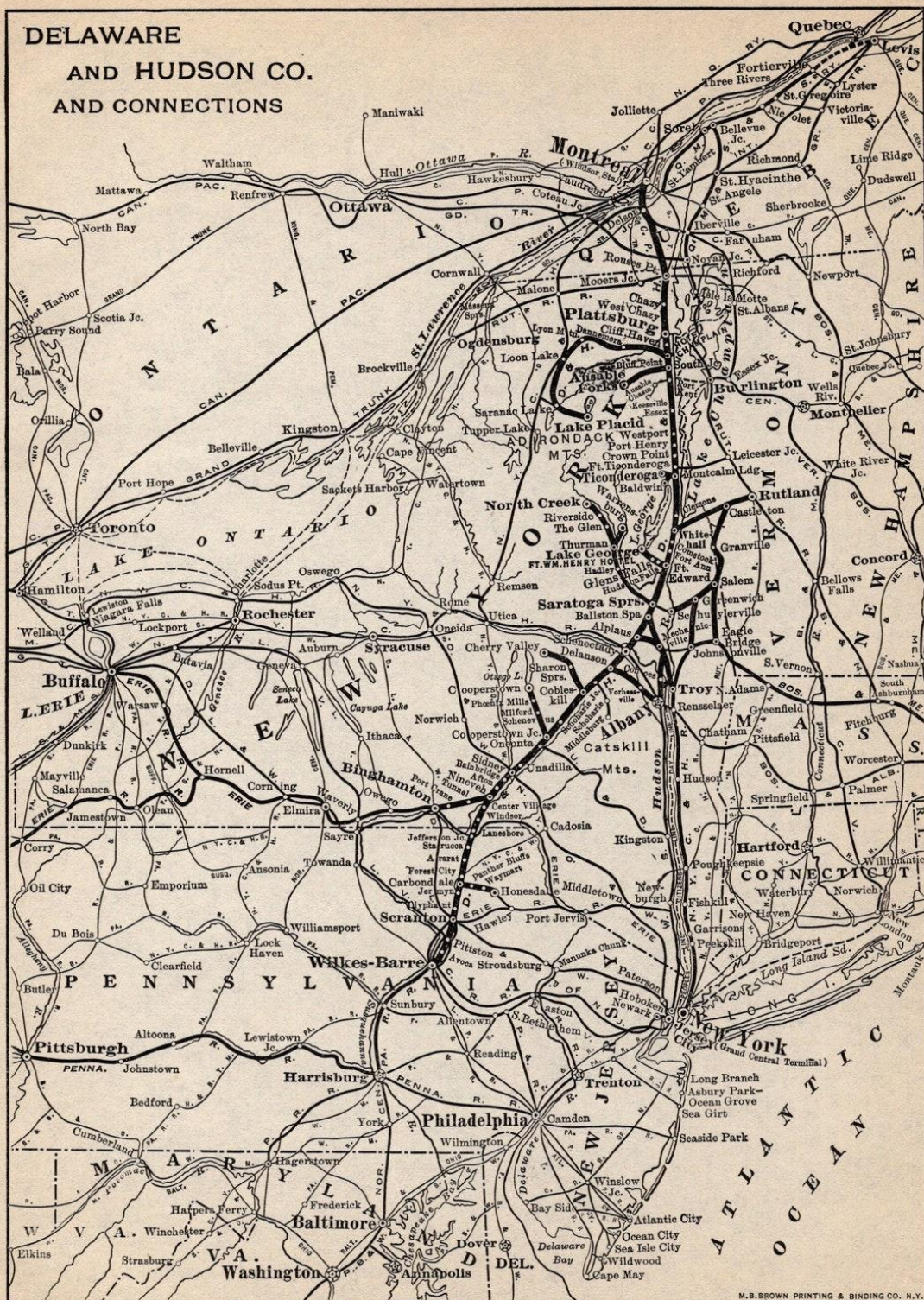
From the 1870s into the early 1900s through leases, acquisitions and trackage rights, except for the southwest extension from Scranton to Wilkes-Barre, D&H continued to expand northward reaching Schenectady then Saratoga Springs, the Adirondack Mountains and Rutland, VT. Continuing northward, D&H reached the New York-Quebec border in 1875 and via trackage rights over the Grand Trunk Railway, downtown Montreal. An acquisition in 1906 enabled D&H to reach Quebec City. One other very important trackage right arrangement was with the New York Central Railroad. This agreement enabled D&H to provide passenger service from New York City directly to Montreal.

*Next issue: Delaware & Hudson Part II: Passenger Service, The Coalfields and Commuter Operations in Northeast Pennsylvania.*



[https://westerndepot.com/product\\_info.php/products\\_id/51672](https://westerndepot.com/product_info.php/products_id/51672)





System map circa. 1926  
Image source: etsy.com



*New Life for a Former Railroad Station*



# GRAND OPENING

**Nicholson Tourism Center  
at the Historic  
DL&W Railroad Station  
July 8, 2023 at 11:00 AM  
21 Lackawanna Trail  
Nicholson, PA 18446**



[www.nicholsonheritage.org](http://www.nicholsonheritage.org)

[http://lists.railfan.net/erielackphoto.cgi?erielack-05-17-23/Grand\\_Opening\\_Flyer.jpg](http://lists.railfan.net/erielackphoto.cgi?erielack-05-17-23/Grand_Opening_Flyer.jpg)

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**[lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)**

## *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](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com) to receive the Zoom link. Catch up on past episodes on our YouTube channel.

**Friday, June 23, 2 pm:** Planning Committee members from LHS and the Greenhouse Project offer a sneak peek of ***Beyond the Hill***.

**Friday, August 25, 2 pm:** ***Voices from the Sanitorium*** author Amy Walsh discusses her research of West Mountain Sanitorium

### *In Person*

**Wednesday, June 14, 7pm: Winston Churchill.** Vince Benedetto, President of the Winston Churchill Society of Pennsylvania, offers thoughts on Winston Churchill and an overview of the Churchill Society and its activities at the Catlin House (***Membership vote on Bylaws revisions will take place before the program***).

**Sunday, August 20, 2 pm:** Meg Geffken portrays ***Eleanor Roosevelt*** at the Catlin House.

**Saturday, June 17: Wyoming Valley Ghost Tours** Investigation at Catlin House **SOLD OUT**

**Saturday, September 8: Wyoming Valley Ghost Tours** Investigation at Catlin House

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## *Beyond the Hill*

**Sunday, June 25, 10am – 4pm:** Historic House and Garden Tour of the Abingtons. LHS partners with the Greenhouse Project to present a tour of homes and gardens in Waverly, Clarks Summit and Clarks Green. Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 the day of the tour. For more details and to purchase tickets, go to: <https://lackawanna-historical-society.ticketleap.com/beyondthehill/>

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## *Genealogy Forum*

**Saturday, June 10, 10am: Finding Records in Ireland,** Community Room, North Pocono Community Library, 1315 Church St., Moscow

**Saturday, July 8, 10am: Finding Records in Italy,** Abington Community Library, 1200 West Grove St., Clarks Summit

**Saturday, August 5, 10am: Finding Records in Poland,** Taylor Community Library, 710 South Main St., Taylor

**Saturday, September 9, 10am: Finding Records in Germany,** Gino Merli Room, Valley Community Library, 739 River St., Peckville

*\*Participants should have completed genealogy research on the US side of the Atlantic and have a good idea of where to look for family members across the pond. Session planners ask anyone who registers knows the approximate place of residence for ancestors in a specific region.*

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## *Genealogy Forum for Beginners*

**Saturday, October 7, 14, 21, 28, 9:30am -12pm:** LHS will partner with Albright Memorial Library, Vine St., Scranton, to host the Fall Genealogy for Beginners in the Hinkelman Room. Registration is required. Participants must commit to all four sessions. The fee is \$25 for LHS members and \$35 for Non-members.

Registration deadline is Friday, September 29. Please either call 570-344-3841 or email LHS at [lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com) for details.

## *Ghostly Gallery Link*

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

## *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.

**(Note Change of Date): Wednesday, June 25: Harvest Seasonal Grill,** 7011 Shoppes Blvd., Moosic 570-342-3330

**Wednesday, July 26: Sidel's** 1202 North Main Ave, Scranton 570-343-6544

**Wednesday, August 26: Tiffanys,** 392 Main St., Eynon 570-876-0710

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**[lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)**

## 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 & Gtill

### 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

### Taylor

Union Craft House

## Dunmore/North Pocono

### Dunmore

3 Jacks Burgers

### Moscow

Delish on Main

### Springbrook Twp.

Olde Brook InnLa Cucina

## *Wyoming Valley Ghost Tours*

**Saturday, June 17: Wyoming Valley Ghost Tours** Investigation at Catlin House **SOLD OUT**  
**Saturday, September 8: Wyoming Valley Ghost Tours** Investigation at Catlin House



## *Downtown Walking Tours*

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*All tours are free and open to the public and limited to ten people. Learn more about your community and get some fresh air.*

**Saturday, June 17, 11 am:** Courthouse Square; meet at corner, N. Washington and Linden (tour in English and Spanish)

**Friday, July 7, 6 pm:** Commercial and “Red Light” District; meet at Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel, 700 Lackawanna Ave.

**Saturday, July 22, 11 am:** Lower Hill section; meet at Elm Park Church, corner, Linden and Jefferson

**Friday, Aug. 4, 6 pm:** Gothic District; meet at Lackawanna College, corner, N. Washington and Vine

**Saturday, Aug 19, 11 am:** Courthouse Square; meet at corner, N. Washington and Linden (tour in English and Spanish)

**Saturday Sept 9, 11 am:** Lower Hill section; meet Elm Park Church, corner, Linden and Jefferson Ave. For reservations, please call 570-344-3841

## *Throwback Thursdays at*



**Thursday, June 22: dusk, “Jaws”**

**Thursday, July 27: dusk, “Christmas Vacation”**

**Thursday, August 17, dusk: TBA:**

## *Save the Date*

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***You Live Here; You Should Know This!*** Local history game show moves to Fall. Details TBA

**Saturday, September 30:** LHS hosts the **Local History Fair** at the Viewmont Mall. Details TBA

**Thursday, September 30:** LHS presents An Evening of Amusements! Details TBA

## *Edwardsville Pierogi Festival*



*Cheddar Pierogies with Sage Butter Sauce*  
*Image source: Bite House*

The summer food festival season has arrived and with it the annual Edwardsville Pierogi Festival. The two-day event began in June 2014 and was initially held on Main Street. In 2017, the festival moved to John Hopkins Park.

This year's festival takes place on Friday, June 9 from 12pm to 10pm and Saturday, June 10 from 10am to 10pm. The Pierogi Parade takes place on Saturday beginning at 11am and is followed at 2pm by the anticipated Pierogi Cookoff.

There will be live musical entertainment on both days as well as rides and games. More than 30 food vendors will offer plenty of tastebud pleasers, including barbeque, tacos, wings, pizza, soft drinks and of course, pierogis. About 50 non-food vendors will also have a variety of items available, such as wine from at least two regional wineries, clothing, handbags, toys, wood carvings and jewelry.

Parking is available on the streets surrounding the festival. The festival committee asks drivers to be mindful of handicap parking signs and driveways. Violators will be towed. Parking is also available at the Edwardsville Municipal Parking Lot, 480 Main St., the Kingston Municipal Parking Lot, 485 Main St. and private lots.

The Edwardsville Hometown Committee is a 501 (C)(3) non-profit corporation. The committee's goal is to improve the quality of life for the residents of Edwardsville through sponsorship of family-friendly events throughout the year.

For additional information, contact the committee at either 570-239-9594 or at [Edwpierogi@gmail.com](mailto:Edwpierogi@gmail.com)





*Image source: Ciker.com*

Do you love Local History? Do you love baseball? Please consider supporting LHS this Spring when we mark the birthdays of some of our local legends! For any tickets sold, the RailRiders will donate \$5. Purchase your tickets to RailRiders games using the link below.

Scheduled games are set for:

**Thursday, July 6** (Steve O'Neill's 132<sup>nd</sup> birthday)

**Saturday, August 12** (Christy Mathewson's 143<sup>rd</sup> birthday)

<https://tinyurl.com/yc7hwr3r>



*Steve O'Neill*

*Image source: Baseball almanac.com*

# ***Unlike Your Bank***

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



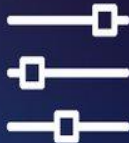
#netcares



All Local



Not for  
Profit



Diverse Products  
& Services



Personalized  
Mortgage Services



No Annual Fee  
on Credit Cards

*netcreditunion.com*



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***[lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)***



## *Lackawanna County's First Ever Nighttime Football Game*

Ninety-three years ago, on what was then called Armistice Day. November 11, 1930, the first ever nighttime sports contest in Lackawanna County was held. The event was high school football, and the participants were the Throop Owls and Olyphant Greyhounds, two of the three Mid Valley High School predecessors. The contest was held in Dickson City, the third Mid Valley predecessor, at what became Crystal Gardens. Located in the 1500 block of Main Street, the site at the time was the Driving Range Course.

A portable lighting system with three poles serving as standards for a mounted set of about 20 floodlights atop each pole was used on either side of the playing field. A white football was used, but probably not needed as fans told reporters that they had little or no trouble following the plays.

The coaches were Marty Fish (Olyphant) and Carl Ferraro (Throop). The Greyhounds went on to win, 32 – 0. The following year on November 2, 1931, Olyphant returned to face the Dickson City High School Blackhawks. The contest ended in a 6 – 6 tie.

Atty. Stanley M. Evans of Olyphant was one of the men interested in developing Crystal Gardens into a sports stadium to host football and baseball games as well as an ice skating rink in the winter. Atty. Evans, a barrister and sportsman, gave approval for the Throop-Olyphant game to be played. The idea was proposed by Prof. Joseph Kelly, Coach Pish and Ralph Needle, the OHS Greyhounds' manager.

In subsequent years, Crystal Gardens was the home for St. Thomas College (now University of Scranton) football games. It was also the Sunday ballpark for the baseball Scranton Miners, who was a powerhouse in the New York-Pennsylvania League.

We thank Ed Williams who found this piece of Lackawanna County sports history and forwarded it to History Bytes. Ed, by the way, is a graduate of Olyphant High School.

*Source: Mid-Valley News, Thursday, November 5, 1992*



## *Anthracite Ancestry*



shutterstock.com · 1805470309

*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. If your ancestors left behind anthracite stories of any kind, please contact us at [lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com) and include *Anthracite* in the subject matter.

### *Forgotten Patch Town Settlements: Gypsy Grove*

Patch town settlements were common at many anthracite mining operations up and down the Lackawanna and Wyoming valleys. Some have been well documented while others have little or no documentation or are virtually forgotten. One that fell into the latter categories is the tiny settlement that existed at the Pennsylvania Coal Company's Gypsy Grove operation in Dunmore.

An email sent by Jack Spangler, formerly of Dunmore, to Tony Ranella Jr. of Dunmore, documents the existence of a settlement of about a half dozen houses that were located at Gypsy Grove.

For those familiar with the area, Jack Spangler said that the settlement was located on the east side of today's Interstate 81 where the road turns towards North Blakely St. Further research indicates that the houses were beyond the end of Jessup Ave. and may have been on an extension of Field St. More than likely, the settlement was on an old road located between the end of North Apple St. and the No. 1 Colliery. Proof of the settlement's existence can be found online at the Library of Congress/Panoramic Maps of Dunmore, Pa., 1892.

Jack also said that "Gypsy Grove Road" was mentioned in obituaries from 1933. The road may be listed on Pennsylvania Coal Company maps. To date, no maps showing the road's existence have been located. If anyone finds a map showing Gypsy Grove Road, please contact History Bytes at [lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com) and place Gypsy Grove in the subject matter.

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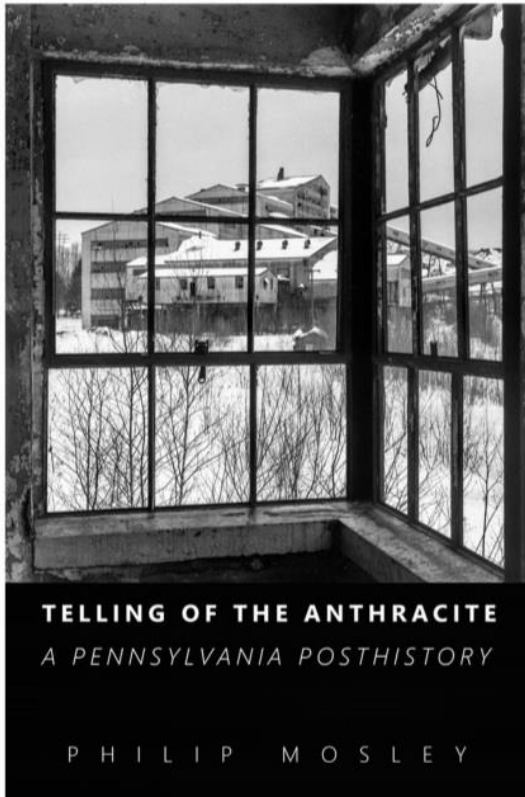
**[lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)**



# NEW RELEASE

## TELLING OF THE ANTHRACITE *A PENNSYLVANIA POSTHISTORY*

BY PHILIP MOSLEY



This is the first book about how we tell the Pennsylvania anthracite story in the postindustrial age, and it places this discourse in the broader context of environmental and socioeconomic change. It is a work of regional history that is scholarly in tone yet written in a style accessible to the general reader. It explores the various ways in which anthracite history has been represented and remembered since 1960.

A native of England, who came to the USA in 1988, Philip Mosley is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Penn State University. Author of a number of books on literature and cinema, including *Anthracite!* (2006) and most recently *Resuming Maurice* (2019), he is also a translator of works by Belgian francophone authors and was awarded the Prix de la Traduction in 2008.

### SUMMER / FALL BOOK SIGNINGS

Bethlehem: Moravian Book Shop, 428 Main St., Saturday, June 24, 2023, 1-3 pm.

Lansford: Coal Miners Heritage Festival, No. 9 Mine & Museum, Sunday, July 9, 2023, 10 am-5 pm.

Scranton: Page to Stage (Diva Theater), Olde Brick Theatre, 126 W. Market St., Saturday, August 19, 2023, 8 pm.

Scranton: 17th Interdependence Hexagon Project Exhibition, ArtWorks Gallery & Studio,  
236 Penn Ave., Sunday, September 17, 2023, 1-2.30 pm.

Paperback, 250 pages, \$19.95  
Publish Date: January 3, 2023  
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SOCIAL SCIENCE / Popular Culture

  
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[lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)



## ***Remembering Twin Shaft June 28, 1896***



*Image source: [usminedisasters.miningquiz.com](http://usminedisasters.miningquiz.com)*

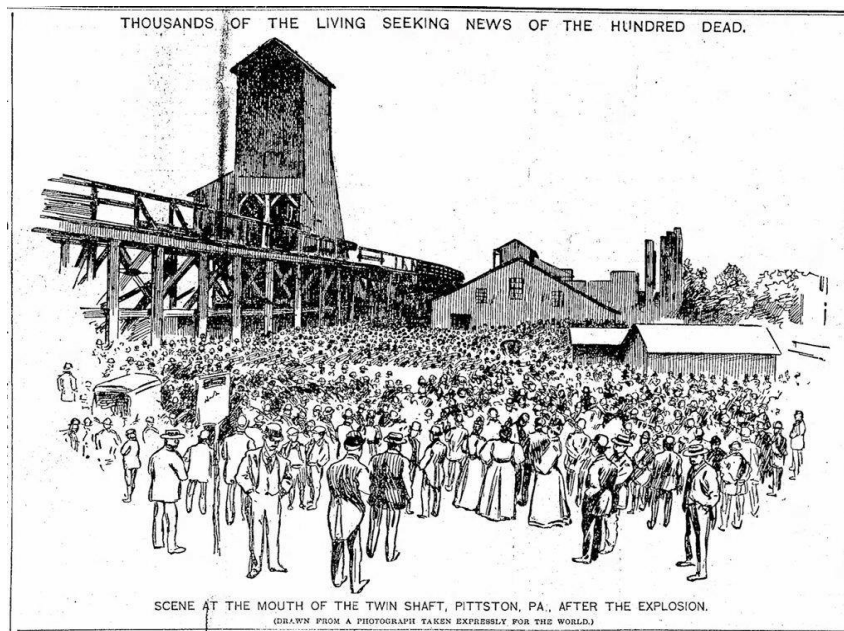
Ninety men and boys were working the Red Ash Vein of the Newton Coal Company's Twin Shaft Mine in Pittston on Sunday, June 28, 1896. Fifty-eight would never again see the light of day. Most of the 58 were either Lithuanian or Irish immigrants.

For about two weeks before the fatal roof cave-in at 3am that Sunday, miners reported hearing a squeezing sound. That sound was a sign of the coal pillars being squeezed, the result of which means either a wall or a shaft crumble was imminent. Miners knew the squeezing sound, and one miner, Edward Hughes, left early because as he said, "the crackling grew worse."

Extra props had been put in place for additional support, but they were apparently not placed correctly. Once a portion of the wall gave way, the rest collapsed like an overloaded bookshelf. Rescue efforts were attempted through two tunnels, but because about 200 acres had caved in, rescuers' progress was sometimes limited to just 20 feet per day. At that pace, hope of finding the victims alive quickly faded. Bodies of the 58 men and boys would remain entombed 434 feet below the surface.

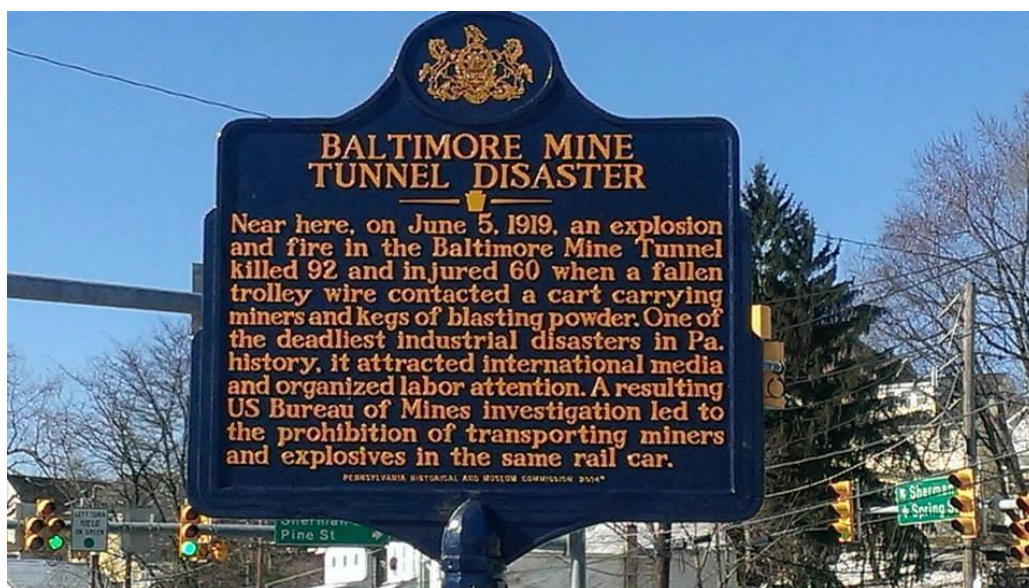
An investigating committee was formed by then Governor Hastings to determine the cause of the disaster. The committee *suggested* that coal pillars should not be "robbed" of their coal and left standing for safety reasons. The committee also suggested that maps of mine workings and air tunnels be made available to mine inspectors. Such maps were not provided, resulting in a slowing of the rescue efforts. The committee

issued safety recommendations on September 25, 1896, and although the recommendations would often be ignored by company management, the Twin Shaft disaster would play a major role in unionization efforts led by John Mitchell.



*Twin Shaft Site After News of Explosion  
Image source: Greater Pittston Progress*

## **Remembering Baltimore Tunnel June 5, 1919**



*Baltimore Tunnel Breaker  
Image source: citizensvoice.com*

On the morning of June 5, 1919, an explosion occurred inside the entrance to the Delaware & Hudson Coal Company's Baltimore Mine No. 2 Tunnel in Wilkes-Barre. Within minutes, a raging fire drawn by the ventilation system was pulled through the tunnel towards the surface. The human toll was 92 dead with 44 injured. In terms of number of fatalities, Baltimore Tunnel was Northeast Pennsylvania's second worst mining disaster following Avondale in Plymouth (110 dead). Most of those killed suffered from severe burns and smoke inhalation, with some burned beyond recognition. Some were able to think quickly enough to jump into pools of water adjacent to the tracks to douse the flames.

The formal investigation proposed three possibilities for what might have caused the blasting powder to ignite. One was either a drill or crowbar touching a live power cable. This was ruled out because no drills or crowbars were found in the debris and there were no signs of arcing from electricity. Arcing happens when electricity jumps from one connection to another. Another possibility was that a can of powder might have been placed at the edge of a mine car where if placed incorrectly could touch the power cable. That possibility was ruled out because it would have had to be placed deliberately. A more probable theory was either a lantern or sparks from a tobacco pipe caused the powder to ignite.

The exact cause of the disaster was never determined; however, it was most likely caused by a shorted electrical wire contacting blasting powder that was on the miners' train. As with some other disasters it did result in commonwealth legislation, in this case legislation prohibiting transporting blasting powder and miners on the same train.



*Baltimore Tunnel Breaker  
Image source: citizensvoice.com*





*1919 Baltimore Tunnel Mine Explosion  
Image source: citizensvoice.com*

***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. January 1943***

JAN. 1. Cold. Was to the movies with Tom and Dave.

JAN. 2. Cold. Stayed at home Nellie was to town.

JAN. 3. Rain. Sunday stayed home.

JAN. 4. Cold. 7 am. 1 place 7 cars coal. Easy shift. Received special delivery.

JAN. 5. Cold. Stud broke. Water overflow. Mailed puzzles.

JAN. 6. Cold. Leg broke Breakman and laborer each. Mailed remaining puzzles. Russian Christmas Eve.

JAN.7. Cold. Russian Christmas. Joe K. 105 off.

JAN 8. Warmer. Motor to go East every morning.

JAN 9. Was in East, Changed first tire. Brought Helen home.

JAN 10. Cold. Sunday stayed home. Drove Helen back to M.T. Hospital.

JAN 11. Cold. 3 pm. Day shift road broke at tunnel. Cars were slow.

JAN 12. Cold. Was in East for coal. Everybody working OK. Worked extra hour. Sent for driver's license \$1.

JAN 13. Darn good and cold. New miner 107. Sonny got pictures from Joe.

JAN 14. Due bills tonight. Helen home for a visit, went back in evening. Everything OK. Blackout in Pittston.

JAN 15. Warm. Pay Day. Riders paid. Was in Franks. 78 hrs, \$77.09. Deductions \$10.23.

JAN 16. All miners working. Easy shift. Was in Franks. Note: 5 steady work days, 6<sup>th</sup> day time and ½ overtime.

JAN 17. Rain. Sunday stayed home.

JAN 18. Rain. 7 am. Strike Called, meeting at No 6. No work.

JAN 19. Cold. Stayed home today.

JAN 20. Cold. New Fire Boss. Sterling Conkey Fired. Full coal. Done 1:30.

JAN 21. Snowing. Bob was in early. Conkey in Red Ash. A4 gas coupons to use. Done 11:30.

JAN 22. Cold. Bob in Back Branch. Drove for Helen.

JAN 23. Cold. 107 quit took stooks out. Drove Helen back. Mrs. Chuppy was here. Done 11:30.

JAN 24. Warm. Sunday stayed home. Nellie and Della went to movies.

JAN 25. Warm. 3 pm. 105 loaded 9 coal. 107 and 103 on rock. Joe, my first nipper is drafted for the Army.

JAN 26. Cold. Shaker motor burned out in East. Roosevelt and Churchill met at Casablanca. Done 7:30.

JAN 27. Cold. Empties were slow. Helen came home for a visit. Done 8:30.

JAN 28. Tool box form East to Shoe Stall. Heavy snow storm, 8 inches snow. Helen returned to M.T.H. by bus.

JAN 29. Warm. CAVE all along Heading Road bend.

JAN 30. Snowing. Pulled all coal. Pay Day. Riders paid. Was in Franks. + time and ½.

JAN 31. Cloudy. Sunday. Hrs 63-14=7. Pay \$72.24, deductions \$7.78.

***Volpe Coal Co, No. 6 Colliery, No. 11 Shaft. February 1943***

FEB 1. Rain 7 am. 103 Simon not in. Everything OK. Was to Moses Taylor Caring Red. A. Knopich died.

FEB 2. Cold. 118 Box went outside. Nellie and I to Old Forge. Tried to mate Jack Marley's dog with mine.

FEB 3. Warm. All men rode back and forth. All men working. Was to Marley's, took his dog back. Done 12:30.

FEB 4. Rain. Rain froze overnight. Bad driving. Helen wrote home. Tom has sore throat. Done 12:45.

FEB 5. Warm. Charlie 104 blew rock. Simon, bill & 105 on rock. Was to town for Helen. Done 12:30.

FEB 6. Rain. Was in East with rails. Met Joe Garret. Sat. Drove Helen to Moses Taylor. Done 1:30. Time & ½.

FEB 7. Storm. Sunday. Was to Puzios Johns home.

FEB 8. Storm. 3 pm. Jack Marley not working. Was to town to file Income Tax. Done 6:30.

FEB 9. Warm. Man hurt in High Marcy. Tony Grow in Red Ash. Jack Emershaw is our Boss. Helen came home.

FEB 10. Jack Marley in today. Babylon 104 miner on my road. Motorman's disision( ?) in basket. Helen back to town.

FEB 11. Sleet. Raining and snowing. All miners working. Up 10 am. Done 8 pm.

FEB 12. Cold. Waited for Marley. Everybody in. Done 8 pm.

FEB 13. Snow. Saturday, everybody working. Full coal. Done 7:30. Time & ½.

FEB 14. Cold. Sunday. Stayed home.

FEB 15. Below Zero. Pay Day. Car Stalled at No 6. Hrs 77=14, \$84.28, deductions \$9.82.

\*\*\*=14 means 14 hrs O.T.\*\*

FEB 16. Cold. Was to Minooka Ration Board. Was to town. Got car moving. Stayed home.



FEB 17. Cold. Everybody in. Was to Board for 6 B Stamps. Done 11:30.

FEB 18. Frosty. 2 places in East. Dan Connelly was in Red Ash. Jonnie was stalled.

FEB 19. Warmer. Leonard not in. 117 topper. Joe Weiss not working. Was to Shareks.

FEB 20. Unloaded flats in Back Branch. Hiram, Tom and George in Back Branch. Nell and Helen shopping for coat.

FEB 21. Sunday stayed home.

FEB 22. Warm. 2 places. 117 went day shift. received more puzzles.

FEB 23. Warm. Everybody in. Nice shift. Motor off in East. Was on Leo's, 3 beers.

FEB 24. Cold. Empties slow. Jack Hurray in Big Vein. Helen was home on visit.

FEB 25. Cold. Everybody working. Home early. Marley and Monk rode with us to town.

J. Hum. Fired.

FEB 26. Snow. Done 8:30. Was to Franks. Mailed puzzle solutions to All American.

FEB 27. Cold. Saturday. Cleaned hill. 1 place. Pay Day. Done 8 pm. Time & ½.

FEB 28. Sunday. Was to Union Meeting. Drove Joe home. Was in Oregon Sec. Sports Club.

Hrs 63-7=70, \$68.37, deductions \$7.18. Desition (?) rendered for motormen for oiling repairing motors.

***Volpe Coal Co., No. 6 Colliery, No. 11 Shaft. March 1943***

MAR 1. New branch in East. 105 car in (Court House) 1,100 lb rock. 3 days off. New Fire Boss.

MAR 2. Cold. 3 places done early. Joe brought a wine for his birthday, 36. Blood Drive in Old Forge.

MAR 3. V. Cold. Was to Franks with Joe, 1 beer. Was to barber \$.50 haircut.

MAR 4. John L. Lewis Tri-district Conv. In Masonic Temple. Scranton.

MAR 5. New curve in 216. 105 miner off. 2 places in Back Branch. Moved sand box. Helen wrote.

MAR 6. Cold. Pulled coal on H Road all afternoon. Was for Helen. Bad driving all day. Time & 1/2.

MAR 7. Cold. Sunday. Was in old Forge. Drove Helen to Hospital.

MAR 8. Cold 3 pm. Waiting for empties. Rumor Volpe to sell out.

MAR 9. Warmer. Pulled empties to Red Ash, 1 hr extra. Was to Minooka. Done 10 pm.

MAR 10. Warm. Pulled empties to Red Ash. + 1 hr. Was in sisters home with radio.

MAR 11. Rain. Pulled empties to Red Ash. +1 hr. Camellia typed my essay.

MAR 12. Warm. Pulled 30 empties down to Red Ash. + 1 hr.

MAR 13. Snow. Saturday. Pay Day. Riders paid. Rain & Sleet. Time & ½.

MAR 14. Sunday stayed home.

MAR 15. Warmer. Was in Old Forge. Sent for toys. Joe K. not in. Hrs 81-14=95.

MAR 16. \*\*\* Last entry for March \*\*\*

**Notes-** It's 1943 and World War II is in full force. January 25 Thomas writes, "Joe, my first nipper is drafted for the Army." On January 26 he says that Roosevelt and Churchill met at Casablanca.

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

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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>

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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, at 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.*