



HISTORY BYTES

A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication

Vol. 8 No. 3

May – June 2025

Rick Sedlisky, Editor



Image source: memorial-day-2025.com

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

The Origins of Memorial Day

In May 1868, Union Army General John A. Logan decreed that May 30 should be a National Day of Commemoration for all soldiers killed in the Civil War. He chose May 30 because it was a date that didn't fall on the day of any Civil War battles.

He called it Decoration Day and said that on that day, Americans should place flowers and decorate the graves of soldiers. It wasn't until the country's involvement in World War I that Decoration Day included fallen Americans from all wars.

Although the day was called Memorial Day in the 1880s, it remained known as Decoration Day until it was changed to Memorial Day by federal law. The Uniform Holiday Act of 1968 moved the date from May 30 to the last Monday in May.

There are some formal traditions still in effect. On Memorial Day, the flag must be flown at half-staff and then raised to full staff at noon. In 2000, when Congress passed additional legislation, Americans are asked to pause for a National Moment of Remembrance at 3pm local time.

Upcoming

History Bytes: Memorial Day Special Edition

The Special Engineer Task Force – Unsung Heroes of D-Day

On June 6, 1944, more than 34,000 Allied troops stormed Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, in what would become a turning point in World War II. Among them were four men from Lackawanna County on a lesser-known assignment whose mission was as crucial as it was perilous: The Special Engineer Task Force (SETF).

Tasked with clearing deadly beach obstacles under relentless enemy fire, the SETF's objective was clear—but success would demand extraordinary courage, ingenuity, and sacrifice. Today, the stories of these combat engineers remain largely in the shadows of history.

In this upcoming Memorial Day Special Edition of *History Bytes*, we're honored to present an excerpt from *The Special Engineer Task Force*, a work by author and researcher John Antkowiak. After years of painstaking research, Antkowiak continues to uncover and clarify the roles these men played, even as many details remain elusive. As he writes, "The SETF mission was simple in theory—accomplishing it was anything but."

We thank John for allowing us to share this powerful story of grit, duty and the quiet heroism of a forgotten few.

700,000

AMERICANS DEAD,

missing or maimed.

World War One? No. World War Two? No. Korea? Vietnam? Desert Storm?
None of those.

More American died in the US Civil War 1861-1865 than in all wars in our History. One of those Union soldiers who gave the "last full measure of devotion" grew up in Providence (now, North Scranton) then a separate village existing before even Scranton or Lackawanna County.



Ezra Griffin joined the Union Army responding to Abraham Lincoln's call for volunteers. He fought in Gettysburg and at Petersburg, Virginia in the waning days of this national trauma. Wounds suffered there claimed his life. He was just 26.

The Sons of Union Veterans Post #8 based at the GAR Civil War Museum in the Marketplace at Steamtown Mall is named for him.

Over the years a sword belonging to Lt. Griffin separated from the Museum. NOW it has been found and the GAR Memorial Association is raising funds to return this historic and cultural artifact to its PROPER home.

We are asking for your most generous help by contributing the last few dollars needed to return this sword. You may mail a contribution of any amount you deem to



**GAR MEMORIAL ASSN.
PO Box 222
Marketplace at Steamtown
Scranton, PA 18503**



OR by the QR code above

OR Drop it off in person, 2nd floor of the Mall near Crunch fitness and visit the Museum and its artifacts. Thank you, GAR Memorial Association, a 501-3-c nonprofit

For further information if needed contact Charlie Spano at 570-6040809 or charliespano8@gmail.com

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

The Night A Ship Galloped: An Old Whitehat Remembers

As I write this, the SS United States, the United States Lines former transatlantic liner, is off the coast of Florida, proceeding under tow from Philadelphia to her final destination in the Gulf of Mexico (!) where she will be scuttled and will become a habitat for an untold variety of marine life. She was once the holder of the transatlantic speed record, and to my mind she will serve out the rest of her time in a very worthy cause.

Seeing her in the news in this way takes me back about 70 years, when as a 19-year-old US Navy Radarman E-3 (pretty low in the pecking order), I was able briefly to have a small but memorable experience of her. It was December of 1954, and I was aboard the USS Macon (CA-132), a heavy cruiser. It was about 2 AM, just in the middle of the midwatch (Midnight to 4AM). I was on radar duty with about nine other guys and two officers, way down in the hot, sweaty, dimly lit depths of CIC (Combat Information Center).

We were just west of the approaches to the English Channel, homeward bound and traveling alone, having just completed some NATO exercises in the North Atlantic and North Sea areas. We had just cleared the Channel and were beginning to relax a little bit. Navigating any channel is always challenging, especially for the radar gang, and the English Channel was one of the toughest in the world, so tensions had been pretty high all night (As some old salt once said, "A collision at sea can ruin your whole day.") But now, throttles were opening, and we were picking up speed, homeward bound in time for Christmas. There was pretty much nothing between us and Norfolk but a lot of salt water.

Shortly after I had sat down for my normal rotation on the surface search radar, someone, either on the bridge or in the radio room, informed us via squawk box that they had just been in voice radio contact with the United States, and that she was headed our way at a pretty good clip. Just minutes later, a very faint blip appeared on my scope, way out on the edge. With each sweep of the cursor, the blip got bigger, brighter, and closer. As I plotted each blip on the scope, it appeared that she was galloping along. We must have been on nearly reciprocal courses, and because of our combined relative speeds, I never before had seen anything going so fast. She was abeam of us in no time, and now passing off astern, as fast as she had approached. Just a few hours from port, no doubt at Southampton, she would have been ablaze with lights in every conceivable spot on the ship, and must have been quite a sight out there, only about six or eight miles from us.

My surface search duties involved talking with the bridge and all the lookouts by sound-powered phone, tethered to a chest set and earphones, so I heard a steady stream of (not-permitted) chatter among the lookouts as they gawked at the sight. "Wow", one of them said, "it looks like a whole city out there."

Unfortunately, I missed the actual view, not unlike today's generations who see so much of our world electronically, but in no other way. But most guys on my ship that night

never had any inkling of what they had missed. For me, it was fun to have had even that limited opportunity, and as the reader can probably tell, it was quite memorable.

So, I assume, in a few days the once-proud SS United States will be in her new home and will in some way provide education and pleasure to future generations of humans. But to my way of thinking, she will fulfill an even more noble purpose, that of helping in some small but meaningful way to provide an aquatic habitat for who knows what natural forms of life to enjoy. Rest well, Fair Lady.

Watkins, T.D.

RDSN, USNR

435-49-46



The S.S. United States in the 1950s

Image source: <https://marine-cafe.com/an-inside-look-at-the-ss-united-states-in-her-heyday/>

LHS 2025 Membership Information

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.

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Lackawanna Historical Society Membership Form

// Student	\$10	Name _____
// Individual	\$40	
// Family	\$60	Address _____
// Contributing	\$100	_____
// Sustaining	\$150	
// Silver Corporate	\$250	Telephone _____
// Gold Corporate	\$500	
// Platinum	\$1000	Email _____

For online membership payment: <http://www.lackawannahistory.org/benefits.html>

Fr. Curran Remembered

Sunday, June 1, at 2pm, at the Lackawanna County Courthouse: For the Least of Them, an original play by KK Gordan, tells the story of Fr. John Curran and his role in the Great Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902. Seating is limited and tickets are \$10. Advance tickets can be purchased online at:

<https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/lackawanna-historical-society/for-the-least-of-them>.

Lackawanna Past Times Via Zoom

Our monthly *Past Times* lecture series features famous local people and early regional history presented via Zoom. Email us at lackawannahistory@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link. Catch up on 70 past episodes on YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/y5hbsufx>

Friday, May 30 at 2pm: Scranton: America's Holy Land: A History of Scranton's Jewish Community with Seymour and Kathy Brotman. To join meeting go to:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86918719540?pwd=wfNI6NIc5s4nEt3Aaxb8LjVatto6ae.1>

Friday, June 27 at 2pm: Scranton Lace Archives Moves to the Waverly Community Center: Link will be sent during the week of the event.

Lackawanna Past Times takes July off

Friday, August 29, at 2pm: Heerman's Family with Gayle Williams. Link will be sent during the week of the event.

Save the Date

Saturday, September 20, 10am – 2pm: Local History Fair, Viewmont Mall, Details TBA

Sunday, October 12, 5:30 pm - 8:30pm: Night of Amusements, Details TBA

Thursday, October 23: LHS Annual Dinner, Details TBA

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Genealogy Forum

European Tour IN-PERSON Sessions

Register at <https://formurl.com/to/europeantour> (or call us and we will email you the link).

Saturday, June 14, 10 am to Noon: Researching Italy with Ann Marie Castelgrande at Council Chambers, Carbondale City Hall, 2nd floor

Saturday, July 12, 10 am to Noon: Researching Carpatho-Rusyn Records with Natalie Asikainen at the Albright Memorial Library, Henkelman Room

Saturday, August 9, 10 am to Noon: Researching Germany with Tom Price at the Valley Community Library

Saturday, August 16, 10am to Noon: Researching Czech Republic & Slovakia Records, with Michael Hokien at the Valley Community Library. Please visit:

Saturday, September 13, 10 am to Noon: Researching England and Wales with Tom Price at the Abington Community Library

Genealogy for Beginners

Class size limited to ten (10) people and registration is due by
Friday, September 26, 2024 at:

Register at <https://formurl.com/to/beginnersworkshop> (or call us and we will email you the link).

The Genealogy for Beginners workshop takes place at the Albright Memorial Library, 500 Vine Street in the Henkelman Room on the Second Floor on Saturdays, October 4, 11, 18, and 25 from 9:30 am to noon. Participants must commit to all four sessions. The class size is limited to 10 people. Registration closes Friday, September 26, 2024, \$25.00 for LHS Members or \$35.00 for Non-Members (non-refundable)

Required: Laptop (NOT a tablet) / 3-ring binder / Notepaper

Download That Raw DNA File!

Take Charge of Your Genetic Data

Downloading your raw DNA file from any commercial testing company—like 23andMe, AncestryDNA, or MyHeritage—is a must.

Thinking about deleting your 23andMe account? The raw DNA file provided by 23andMe contains unprocessed genetic data from your saliva sample, detailing specific genetic markers. This file is distinct from the interpreted health, ancestry, or trait reports you see on their platform. Here's why downloading it is essential:

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

- **You Own It:** You paid for the kit, the testing, and the data generated. The raw DNA file is part of what you've invested in, and downloading it ensures you retain access to your genetic information.
- **Future Use:** Raw DNA files can be uploaded to third-party platforms (e.g., GEDmatch, MyHeritage, or health-focused tools) for additional ancestry insights, health analysis, or research purposes.
- **Data Preservation:** If you delete your 23andMe kit or account, you may lose access to your results and raw data permanently. Downloading the file safeguards your information before it's gone.
- **Privacy Control:** Storing your raw DNA file offline (e.g., on a secure hard drive) gives you full control over your sensitive genetic information, especially if you're concerned about 23andMe's data storage practices.

Quick Tips for Any Testing Company

- **Locate the Download Option:** Most companies (e.g., AncestryDNA under "DNA Settings," MyHeritage under "Manage DNA Kits") offer a raw data download in your account settings. Check their help or FAQ pages for specific steps.
- **Act Before Deleting:** Always download your raw DNA file and any reports before deleting a kit or account to avoid permanent loss.
- **Verify and Store Securely:** Ensure the file (usually a .txt or .zip) downloads correctly and store it in an encrypted, offline location.
- **Check Compatibility:** Different companies may format files slightly differently, but most third-party tools accept raw data from major providers.

Disclaimer: This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal or medical advice. Always review the testing company's privacy policies and terms of service before downloading or deleting your data. For the latest instructions, visit official websites.

R.T. Kebles
DNA Genealogist

Ghostly Gallery Link

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

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Beyond the Hill House Tour Returns

On June 22, the LHS Historic House Tour returns with a trip to the Abingtons where more than 500 people will have the opportunity to visit historic residences, traverse verdant landscapes and have a look at a few hidden gems in Waverly, Clarks Summit and Clarks Green. Tours will run from 10am to 4pm.

2025 Tour Sites include: The Waverly Club, the Fitzgerald residence, the Blackledge residence, the Kaufmann property, the Stark property (garden only) and Pat Atkins property. Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 on the day of the tour and can be purchased at:

<https://www.ticketleap.events/events/lackawanna-historical-society>

Architectural Walking Tours Return!

Start your weekend off with some history! These free Friday and Saturday guided tours provide local residents and visitors with a chance to learn more about Downtown

Scranton's magnificent architecture and the stories about buildings and neighborhoods you pass every day!

Call the Society at 570-344-3841 to make a reservation.



Sat., June 7 at 11 am: Courthouse Square; meet at cor. N. Washington & Linden
Sat., June 21 at 11am: Gothic District; meet at Lackawanna College, corner N. Washington and Vine
Fri., June 27 at 6 pm: Commercial and "Red Light" District; meet at Radisson Lackawanna Station
Sat., July 12 at 11am: Lower Hill section; meet Elm Park Church, cor. Linden and Jefferson
Fri., July 25 at 6 pm: Gothic District; meet at corner of Vine & N. Washington
Sat. August 9 at 11am: Courthouse Square; meet at cor. N. Washington & Linden
Sat., August 23 at 11am: Commercial and "Red Light" District; meet at Radisson Lackawanna Station
Sat., Sept. 6 at 11 am: Lower Hill section; meet Elm Park Church, cor. Linden and Jefferson

Each tour focuses on a different thematic region of the city. Tours will spotlight the Gothic District and former "Clubhouse Row," the Lackawanna Avenue Commercial District, the lower portion of the Hill Section, as well as Courthouse Square.

The popular Architectural Walking Tours are limited to ten people. For more information, contact LHS by email at lackawannahistory@gmail.com

lackawannahistory@gmail.com



Numerous restaurants support LHS through participation in Dine Lackawanna. Enjoy an evening away from the kitchen and help support these establishments and LHS. To ensure our program's success, please consider purchasing an advertisement. For information, please contact LHS at lackawannahistory@gmail.com or 570-344-3841.

Wednesday, May 21: Rosaliano's, 209 Main St., Carbondale 570-936-2668

Wednesday, June 18: Union Craft House 601 N Main St, Taylor 570-562-6496

Wednesday, July 16: La Cucina Restaurant 600 S Blakely St., Dunmore 570-341-8747

Wednesday, August 20: Sidel's Restaurant 1202 N Main Ave., Scranton 570-343-6544

Edwardsville Pierogi Festival 2025

June 13th, 12pm to 10pm / June 14th, 10am to 10pm



Pierogies and Kielbasa

Image source: plowingthroughlife.cpm

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

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 7th from 12pm to 10pm and Saturday, June 8th from 10am to 10pm. Festivities on Friday begin at 6pm with the Pierogi Celebration followed by fireworks. The Pierogi Parade takes place on Saturday beginning at 11am and is followed at 2pm by the anticipated Annual Pierogi Cookoff.

There will be live musical entertainment on both days as well as rides and games. Approximately 30 food vendors will offer plenty of tastebud pleasers, including barbeque, tacos, potato pancakes, pizza, soft drinks and of course, pierogis. A similar number of non-food vendors will also have a variety of items available, such as wine, hard cider, 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 handicapped 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., as well as 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 edwpierogi@gmail.com



Traditional Ukrainian Pierogi
Image source: independent.co.uk



Edwardsville Hometown Committee
Image source: <https://edwpierogi.com/gallery>

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

The Running of the Saints 2025

La Corse del Ceri



Image source: discovernepa.org

St. Ubaldo Day and its La Corse del Ceri or Running of the Saints takes place in Jessup, Memorial Day Weekend, Saturday, May 24.

The tradition was brought by Italian immigrants to Jessup in 1909 from the town of Gubbio, Italy, as a way for the newly arrived people to retain a connection to Gubbio and their heritage.

Ubaldo Baldassini was born in 1084 and was appointed Bishop of Gubbio in 1128. In 1155, German Emperor Barbarossa began his invasion of the province of Umbria. Ubaldo Baldassini quietly left Gubbio to find the emperor and convince him not to attack the town.

When Baldassini was seen returning down the mountainside alive and well, the residents placed him on an H-shaped platform and raced him through Gubbio's streets in celebration. Subsequently, St. George and St. Anthony were included in the festival to represent different social classes. St. Ubaldo represents the stonemasons, St. George the merchants, and St. Anthony the farmers. Statues of the three are raced through the streets of Jessup, and St. Ubaldo, of course, always "wins" the race.

Ubaldo Baldassini was canonized by Pope Celestine III on March 4, 1192.

For details, please visit: <https://www.saintubaldosociety.org/>

Jessup Hose Company No. 2 Carnival

In addition to St. Ubaldo festivities, the Jessup Hose Company No. 2 will host its 33rd annual carnival beginning Wednesday, May 21 through Sunday, May 26. The annual six-day event includes the Firemen's Parade that takes place on Friday, May 23, culminating with fireworks on Sunday, May 26 at 10:00pm.

For details, please visit:

<https://discovernepa.com/event/jessup-hose-co-annual-carnival/2025-05-25/>

or

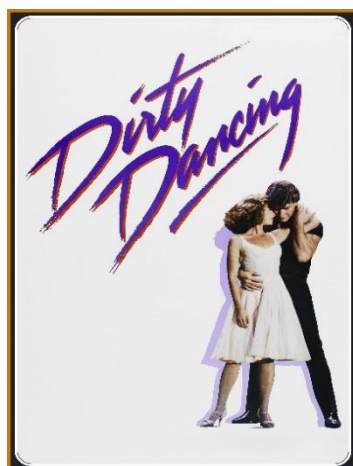
<https://www.pa-carnivals.com/2024/jessup-hose-company-carnival-2024-in-jessup-pa/>



Throwback Thursdays

at the Circle Drive-In, Scranton Carbondale Hwy.

Starts at Dusk - Call 570-344-3841 for details.



June 19

Image source:
themoviedb.org



July 24

Image source:
devianart.com



August 14

Image source:
ar.inspiredpencil.com

For tickets go to circledrive-in.com

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

How Long Have the Trains Been Gone?

Delaware & Hudson Railway Dickson City Passenger and Freight Depot October 12, 1916



Dickson City, Pa.
Oct. 12, 1916
Courtesy: Bridge Line Historical Society

Image courtesy of Joe Rudzsinski

Like so many other regions across the United States, railroads helped fuel the growth of Northeast Pennsylvania, carrying freight and passengers regionally and beyond. The Delaware & Hudson Railway's Dickson City Depot played a role in that growth.

In 1916, the date of the above photograph, many commuted from the Dickson City Depot to work and shop in downtown Scranton and downtown Wilkes-Barre. Coal miners also used the D&H to get to their mines and breakers that existed up and down the line from Carbondale south to Wilkes-Barre. Many of those operations were owned by the D&H Hudson Coal Company subsidiary.

In the year the photograph was taken (1916), there were 14 morning and evening trains that originated at Carbondale and stopped at Dickson City from as early as 6:19am to as late as 11:10pm. Roughly an equal number that departed from Wilkes-Barre to Carbondale also stopped at the depot, the latest of which was around midnight. Service continued until the early 1950s when passenger service was discontinued.

Located along Boulevard Avenue near Legends bar and eatery, the depot still stands and is easily noticeable by the red D&H caboose that occupies the adjacent siding.



Delaware & Hudson Caboose at Dickson City Depot

Image courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

Passenger service information source: Pennsylvania's Northern Anthracite Coal Field

The Heritage Express

Ride the Rails - Hike the Trails

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority in conjunction with Steamtown National Historic Site offers scenic trips along the former Delaware & Hudson Railway's mainline passing through various towns along the way.

The Archbald Excursion travels north from Scranton to Archbald where passengers can then walk or bike along the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail for about four miles to Olyphant. The Carbondale Excursion runs farther north to Carbondale where trips are in conjunction with events taking place in that city.

In addition, there is also the "Scranton Limited" yard shuttle. This train ride operates within the confines of the yard on Saturdays and Sundays and, beginning June 6, on

Fridays as well. The “Scranton Limited” offers riders the experience of riding a train pulled by a steam locomotive as you feel the ground vibrate, hear the whistle and smell hot steam and oil.

You could be introduced to a few “personalities” from decades gone by who will talk about who they are and what they’re all about. Below are photographs of three of the “personalities” you might meet.

For additional information, be sure to contact LVHA at <https://lhva.org/> or Steamtown National Historic Site at <https://www.nps.gov/stea/planyourvisit/trainrides.htm> for details and any possible schedule changes as well as other important information.



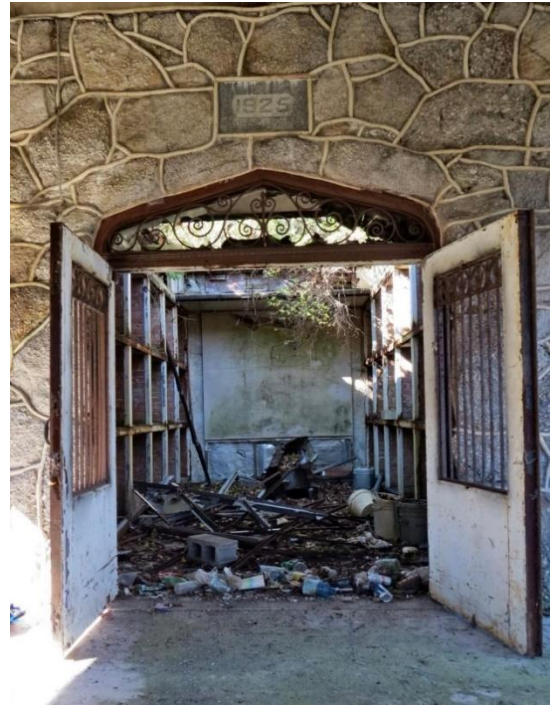
From left to right: Roger Mattes plays James Archbald, Mayor of Carbondale; Julie Esty plays Julia Vorozilchak, a miner’s wife; Meggie Roche plays Maisie Webster, a millworker.

Shady Lane Cemetery Update

For more than a year, Carol Wilkerson of the Friends of Shady Lane Cemetery has kept us informed of the progress Friends of Shady Lane has made at the once abandoned cemetery. In addition, she provided us with stories of some who were laid to rest at Shady Lane, their accomplishments and in some cases, their notoriety. Their names are now documented for posterity.

We sincerely thank Carol for all she shared with us and wish her well in her new endeavors.

Louise McDonnell has assumed Carol’s role and has provided us with the following updates: The most recent accomplishment was having a roof installed on the “receiving vault.” The work was done by students from Johnson College.



*Shady Lane Cemetery "Receiving Vault" before installation of new roof
Images courtesy of Louise McDonnell*

Please join us for this year's Memorial Day Ceremony
Sunday, May 25th at 1PM.

Friends Of



Shady Lane Cemetery

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY

Sunday May 25, 2025 • 1PM

Shady Lane Cemetery Soldier's Section

Sun, May 25 at 1PM

Memorial Day Ceremony

Shady Lane Cemetery

☆ Interested



This is the seventh in a series of edited reprints from "The Laurel Northeastern Pennsylvania's Magazine." It is planned to republish subsequent articles in their entirety as a special feature of History Bytes. All reprints will center on economic development, local history, culture, social programs and initiatives, and recreation in the Greater Scranton region.

As best as can be determined, "The Laurel" magazine had a short life. Four (4) issues, thought to be the total production, are in a private collection (Volume 1, Numbers 1-3, and Volume 2, Number 1). If anyone can supply additional issues, please contact the Lackawanna Historical Society at lackawannahistory@gmail.com

"French Azilum"

The French Azilum settlement, founded in the 1790s, was a planned settlement for refugees loyal to Louis XVI, King of France, who left their homeland to escape the horrors of the French Revolution. These persons were mostly nobility and gentry who believed it might be possible for the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, and her two children, to come to Azilum if they got out of France alive. In the plans for the settlement, a house, "*La Grande Maison*," was built for the Queen. The nobility and gentry were joined by others who fled the colony of "Santo Domingo" (Haiti) to escape the slave uprising there.

French Azilum is located on a horseshoe bend of the North Branch Susquehanna River in Bradford County, northeastern Pennsylvania, near Wysox, between Wyalusing and Towanda. The grounds of French Azilum will be the site of the 4th annual Susquehanna Summer Solstice Festival, June 16 - 22, 2025. Come celebrate the summer solstice along the Susquehanna River with multimedia art, environmental advocacy, live American music, dance presentations, a plein air art competition among 30 talented artists (with approximately \$ 4,000 in juried-awarded prizes), history-based lectures, and outdoor activities.

--Richard Fitzsimmons, Ph.D.

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Silk Stockings

A STORY OF AZILUM ON THE SUSQUHANNA

By Molly Roche



"MARIE, MARIE--come quickly !"
The flickering light of a candle broke the black gloom of the cabin. "Is that you, Elaine?" A sleepy voice replied, "Yes, yes, Annette. Go back to sleep--I was dreaming aloud. Don't put out the light, please."

A white-gowned figure rose from a bed at the far end of the room and padded across the bare floor to the direction of the dim light. Her sister handed Elaine the candle, and asked, "Is everything all right dear? Shall I talk with you awhile?" "No, thank you, Annette, go back to sleep. You'll waken the children. I

shall read a little."

Annette watched her young sister cross back to the small bed, then, with a small sigh, settled herself a little closer to her husband's sleeping form.

Elaine reached to a box beneath the bed for a book--her only book--read over and over again, until the pages were torn and ragged. Pulling the worn blanket closer, she pretended to read, until the even sound of her sister's breathing assured her that Annette was asleep. Then quietly, she reached again beneath the bed, and removed a small, carefully- wrapped package. She opened the package, and gazed lovingly at the contents-a pair of silk stockings.

How many nights she had sat alone, seeking comfort from her prized possession. Annette had given her the stockings for her sixteenth birthday, two days after they had reached America. Somehow, her sister managed to salvage this one piece of finery among the few articles brought from France. To Elaine, they were the only remaining symbol of her life in Normandy. Many nights she had sobbed quietly, as the stockings recalled memories of those beautiful days at home. But, even tears had become a luxury at Azilum, and were used sparingly. Tonight, she sat dry-eyed, as her thoughts sped to days past.

Strange, how she still awoke each night, crying aloud for Marie--beloved Marie, who had been her nursemaid as a child, and her personal maid as she grew to young womanhood. Marie had remained behind, refusing to leave France, although she knew that staying in Papa's house

meant almost certain death on the guillotine. When word had reached America that Papa had been killed, Elaine knew that Marie and those other beloveds who had stayed with him must also have met death. It was rather comforting to think of them all-safe now in the arms of the Virgin. Better, perhaps, than to be hounded by the treacherous Revolutionists. She prayed constantly that Papa and Marie and the others had not suffered too terribly. Her memory recoiled with horror from the thought of watching the two-wheeled tumbrels which had rumbled through the streets of France, carrying their noble passengers to execute on the guillotine.

When they had left France--she and Annette, and Annette's handsome husband, Phillippe— Papa had said he was sending them to a land of safety. A blessed refuge far from the horrors of the French Revolution. He had promised to join them soon in the "land of prosperity." So, confused, frightened, and very lonely, Elaine had traveled across the seas to America. They landed at Philadelphia, where they lived for a time with relatives of Phillippe's mother. It was here that Annette's first child, Andre, was born.

Phillippe, whose father and mother had both been killed early in the Revolution, now, bore the title of Duke. One day he announced with considerable excitement, that a group of French noblemen, who had escaped similarly to America, were planning to establish a colony on the Susquehanna River. They had formed a company called the "Azilum Company," and, assisted by some of the most prominent American financiers, had purchased a site on which they would erect a colony for escaped Revolutionists. Word had reached Philadelphia that the beautiful Marie Antoinette, with her daughter and the Dauphin, were planning an escape from France. They, too, would be sheltered at Azilum.

In 1793, Phillippe took Elaine, Annette, and the baby Andre, to this undeveloped "refuge." Here, they made their home in a crude, half-finished cabin. And, there, Elaine developed from the pampered daughter of a wealthy nobleman to a serious-minded, self-sufficient young woman.

At Azilum, women whose dainty fingers had once fluttered fans and held champagne glasses at court, now built wood fires and preserved vegetables and berries for their families' winter substance. Distinguished gentlemen of high nobility chopped trees, and with their own hands, built homes and shops. Elaine saw Annette, with tears on her cheeks, kiss her husband's fine hands, roughened now with cruel callouses.

Even then all lived with a high hope. There was no dissension. Each person, however, when alone, could not help turning their thoughts back to the comfort and security they had lost in their beloved France. But with others they wore a smile of encouragement, although it may have been only faintly reflected in their hearts.

'With the first fall of winter's snow, a cloak of misery enveloped the small colony. This first winter at Azilum was a wretched time, when people accustomed to the comfort of mild Normandy and Paris climates, were forced to endure the bitter cold and piercing winds, equipped with little warm clothing, and housed in drafty cabins. These people who had escaped from the violence of Revolution, now waged battle against the forces of disease and

depression. Elaine, herself nursed little Andre and Annette through a siege of pneumonia. It was in January, on a bitterly chilling night, that Elaine's second nephew, Robert, was born, and named for Robert Morris, who had aided the colonists, and was president of the Azilum Company.

Throughout this winter, Azilum was a place of great courage--of valor born from hope. The group of French people were constantly stimulated by the hope that they would soon be reunited with the loved ones left behind; hope that soon their beloved Queen would be safe in their midst. Unwavering was their belief that one day soon their King would return to his rightful throne. Then they would leave this barren place and go back to their native land, where life would resume its pattern of luxury. Each crude cabin bore treasured mementoes of those dear, former days. The mistress of every cabin hoarded at least one wooden box filled with a few articles of fine clothing, delicate vases, handpainted dishes, portraits, perfumes, books, and linens. In a few of these homes, incongruous amidst the rough, handmade furnishings, stood a delicately-carved table, or, perhaps, a tapestried chair. Almost fanatical was the refusal of these valiant Frenchmen to separate themselves from the days of past glory.

But, now it was March, and milder breezes were slowly thawing the frozen earth. With the melting of the snows, so, too, the spirit of the people was disintegrating. The winter months had brought little word from overseas. But, finally there was a little news--mostly disheartening. There was tremendous excitement among the colonists when great men such as the Duc De La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt and the three Orleans princes arrived at Azilum. More often, however, the news was of death and torture. Elaine watched the great Vicomte de Noailles weep aloud when news of the death of his wife, mother and father reached Azilum. She felt her own heart break into pieces when she learned that darling Papa, who had been both father and mother to her since birth, was dead. Almost every family in the colony received tidings of some dear one's death. Those who did not hear, lived from day to day with prayers on their lips, and in their hearts, agonized uncertainty.

The house--La Grande Maison--which had been built to house Marie Antoinette and her children, still stood empty. Lovingly, the men had constructed it after the pattern of the Queen's own villa in France, Le Petit Trianon. The women had labored endlessly over its decoration, filling it with their own treasures from home. Elaine's mother's china powder box stood on the Queen's dressing stand, and the silver mug from which both Elaine and Annette had learned to drink, sat upon the mantle in the dining-parlor of the Queen's House. But, rumors were spreading that the Queen had been captured, and was being treated as a common criminal. It was doubtful that the building would ever hold the distinguished personages for which it had been planned.

Elaine uttered a deep, reminiscent sigh, as the light of dawn crept between the cabin's cracks. A swift rush of cool air blew the flame from the candle, and she sank back upon the bed, still clutching the precious package. As the sands of sleep closed her pretty eyelids and drugged her mind into unconsciousness, the girl lapsed into a now-familiar dream. Marie was standing at the foot of the small, canopied bed in Elaine's bedroom at home. "Come, come, little sleepy-

head. You must awaken," the darling voice was saying. "Come, Elaine, sweet. You have been invited to the Queen's own party. Today, you will dance on the lawn of Le Petit Trianon, and your Papa has said you may wear your first pair of silk stockings."

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

WNET
CREDIT UNION

Anthracite Ancestry

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Remembering Twin Shaft June 28, 1896

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 would be either a wall or shaft crumble was imminent. Miners knew that the collapse of either a wall or a shaft could happen at any time. 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 apparently, they were not placed correctly. Once a portion of the wall gave way, the rest collapsed like an overloaded bookshelf. Rescue attempts 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 investigation 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 to rescuers resulting in a slowing of the rescue efforts. The committee issued safety recommendations on September 25, 1896. 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.

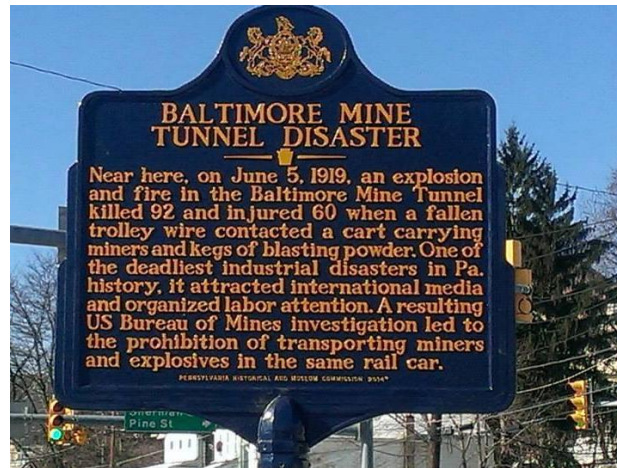
Remembering Baltimore Tunnel June 5, 1919

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 was pulled through the tunnel towards the surface drawn by the ventilation system.

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 correctly, could touch the power cable. That was ruled out because it would have to be placed deliberately. A more probable theory was either a lantern or sparks from a lit tobacco pipe ignited the powder.

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 resulted in Pennsylvania prohibiting transportation of blasting powder and miners on the same train.



Baltimore Tunnel Breaker - Image: citizensvoice.com

Beer in the Coal Cracker Culture

By Joseph Peter Klapatch

I remember the late 1960s, when I was preschool age, seeing my grandfather sitting in his chair drinking beer. He used to buy Stegmaier by the case of twenty-four sixteen-ounce returnable bottles. He opened two bottles at a time. A cold one from the refrigerator and a warm one from the case. He poured some from each bottle into the same glass. He said that was to make it the right temperature. I later heard a different reason. My grandmother thought that he drank too much and told him that he had to tell the priest in confession. One priest told him to have a cold one and a warm one. I'm only guessing the priest's rationale. Enjoy a cold beer after work. Follow it up with a warm beer. It will take longer to drink warm beer. You won't enjoy it as much, and thus you won't want to have a third beer. My grandfather circumvented the process.

Sometimes when I visited, he would pour some beer into a small glass for me. He would put it on the *drainboard*. That is what he called the kitchen counter. I would take a sip and pretend that I liked it. I remember a conversation while attending college at the Worthington Scranton Campus of Penn State University. Another student laughed that all grandfathers who worked in the mines and on the railroad gave their young grandchildren beer to taste. They felt that it was their civic duty. They all drank Stegmaier or Gibbons because they were locally brewed in Wilkes-Barre. Some grandfathers drank Bartels which was brewed in Edwardsville until 1968. The brand name was purchased by the Lion Brewery. Then, it was brewed in Wilkes-Barre. There was also the Franklin Brewing Company in Wilkes-Barre which closed in 1956.



*A case of 24, 16 oz. Stegmaier beer bottles
Photo courtesy of Joseph Peter Klapatch*

There were other local breweries that stopped doing business. On the way to visit my maternal grandmother in Simpson, Fell Township, my mother pointed out an old, dilapidated building in the area where Belmont Street becomes Main Street near the Carbondale-Simpson border, around present-day Gentex. It looked like it was at least four stories tall. She said it was the Fell Brewing Company. According to taverntrove.com the company began operations in 1901 and closed for Prohibition in 1920. It reopened in 1933 but closed for good in 1951.

The taverntrove.com website also provides some good information about some of the breweries in Scranton that closed.

- Standard Brewing Company opened in 1904 at the corner of Penn and Walnut. It closed during Prohibition. It reopened, then closed for good in 1954. Their products included Crystal Ale and Standard Tru-Age Beer.
- Consumers Beer Company opened on Nay Aug Avenue in 1899, then became the Anthracite Beer Company. They closed during Prohibition, then reemerged as the A.B. Company, but stopped doing business in 1937. Their products included Robin Hood Ale and Wurzburger Beer.
- Casey & Kelly Brewing Company opened at Remington and Locust in 1892. In 1897, they became the Pennsylvania Central Breweries Company of Scranton and operated until Prohibition. Afterward, they reopened at a new location but closed in about a year.

In addition, there was E. Robinson Brewing in Scranton. There is an artifact on display at Cooper's Seafood house.

Up until the 1970s, beverage distributors used to deliver beer and soda to homes. They delivered beer in cases of twenty-four sixteen-ounce returnable bottles, and soda in wooden cases of twelve returnable one-quart glass bottles. The deliveryman would carry the beer and soda into the customer's cellar and carry out the empty bottles. Some people kept their beer or soda in their buthka, a small unheated room on the side or back of a home, sort of like an enclosed porch or mudroom.

Two of the local soda brands I remember were Crystal Club in Scranton, and Mid-Valley Beverage in Jessup. As a kid, I liked cream soda and orange soda. I preferred local cola over the national brands. My father usually bought one orange, one cream and one Birchola (birch beer). The rest of the case was ginger ale and 50-50 (lemon lime) to have on hand when we had company. The men would drink beer, and ladies would usually have a highball made from ginger ale or 50-50 with a shot of Banker's Club whiskey. We didn't have company that often, so my sisters and I ended up drinking the ginger ale and 50-50 (minus the Banker's Club) to finish off the case.

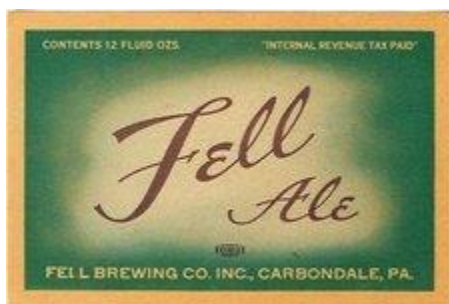
While I'm on the topic of hospitality for visitors, non-smokers like my parents used to have ashtrays on the end tables and coffee tables. A visitor would ask, "You don't mind if I smoke, do you?" My parents would say, "No, go right ahead." After the visitors left, my parents opened the windows to get rid of the smell of the smoke. It used to be my job to take the empty beer bottles and put them in the case in the cellar. I used to hate it when one lady used to put her cigarette butts in her empty beer bottle. I couldn't drink the few drops of beer that would be left in the bottle.



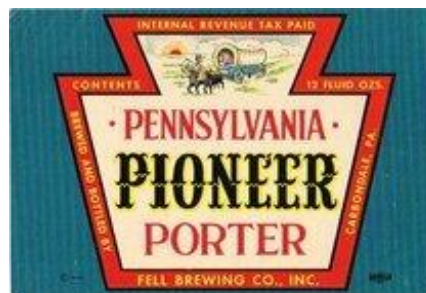
Dark Beer 1934



Extra Beer 1935



Fell Ale 1948



Pennsylvania Pioneer Porter 1936



Xmas Beer 1935



Fell Extra Beer 4+ inch coasters 1940



1936

< Match Covers >



1940

Above: Fell Brewing Company bottle and can labels, match covers and coasters

All photos courtesy of Joseph Peter Klapatch

Images source: taverntrove.com

Subscribe to History Bytes

History Bytes offers a look at our past, as well as a look at Lackawanna and Northeast Pennsylvania in the 21st century. Who are we now? How do we embrace those who came before us and those who are newly arrived?

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

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.

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

Cultural Partners

Albright Memorial Library and the Lackawanna County Library System
The Everhart Museum
Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple

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](http://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
Scott Township Historical Society: Contact Robert Vail 570-254-9536

County and Educational Partners

Lackawanna County
Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau
Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

The Lackawanna Historical Society 2023

Officers

Michael Gilmartin, President
Donald Frederickson, Jr., Esq., 1st Vice President
Laurie Cadden, 2nd Vice President
Douglas Forrer, CPA, Treasurer
Dalida Walton, Assistant Treasurer
William Conlogue, Secretary

Trustees

Joseph F. Cimini, Esq.	Christine Posly
Thomas J. Cipriano	Leni Plasky
Jeffrey R. Kiefer, Assoc. AIA	Ella S. Rayburn
Richard Leonori, AIA	William J. Rinaldi, Esq
Linda Lynett	Elaine Shepard
Mary Jane Memolo	

Staff

Mary Ann Moran Savakinus, Executive Director
Sarah Piccini, Assistant Director Olivia Bernardi, Creative Director
Gay Clifford, Caretaker

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

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.



Image courtesy of: Laura A. Sedlisky