

NANTICOKE LEGACY

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Samantha Mill House, 495 E. Main Street, Nanticoke, PA – 570-258-1367



FEATURE STORY: DERBY WAS ONE WILD RIDE

THOUSANDS ATTENDED THRILLING DERBY ON NANTICOKE'S WEST MAIN ST.

NEWS:

THE RENOVATION OF THE SAMANTHA MILL HOUSE

IN HONOR OF OUR MILITARY

SOCIETY LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

SOCIETY AIDS IN CIVIL WAR VETERAN PROJECT

THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS HERE TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY

MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

Volume 2, Issue 27

JUNE 2021

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION STATEMENT:

The object of this society is for educational, charitable, and literary purposes with a primary focus to research, preserve, develop and disseminate the history of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific area where these articles may be preserved, appreciated and used by the citizens of Nanticoke to enhance their heritage.

**Upcoming meeting
schedule**

**Due to the Coronavirus
Pandemic meetings are
cancelled until further
notice.**

**When meetings resume,
they will take place at 7
p.m. the last Thursday of
the month at the Samantha
Mill House located next to
the Mill Memorial Library.**

**Enter the parking lot off
Kosciuszko Street.**

**To get directions call the
society office at 570-258-
1367.**

**We Encourage All to
Attend**

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Samantha Mill House

(Next to the Mill Memorial Library)

Off Kosciuszko Street

495 East Main Street Nanticoke, PA 18634

570-258-1367

Our Web Site

www.nanticokehistoryonline.org

Email

[Office email - history@nanticokehistoryonline.org](mailto:history@nanticokehistoryonline.org)

[Newsletter email - nanticokehistory@aol.com](mailto:nanticokehistory@aol.com)

OFFICERS

President: Julianna Zarzycki

Vice-President/Treasurer: Chester Zaremba

NEWSLETTER EDITOR, STORIES AND NEWS

Judith L. Minsavage

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Individual \$20

Family \$30

Lifetime \$100.00 Individual

Please advise us of any changes in email or home mailing address

RESEARCH

**Non-member – research fee \$25 for the first hour – By Appointment.
See our website for more information.**

NEWS:

RENOVATING THE SAMANTHA MILL HOUSE

BY: Chet Zaremba, Vice-President Nanticoke Historical Society

In 2019, during the Coronavirus outbreak, Nanticoke Historical Society member, Mike Stachowiak, mentioned to me that he had heard about a Federal Covid-19 grant for non-profit organizations who were mandated, as we were, to shut down. I expressed some doubt as to whether we would be eligible for the grant and further if we would even be considered to receive it. However, I thought that there might be a chance, so I researched the grant requirements. The grant was established and funded by the federal



government to assist non-profit organizations whose operations had been curtailed by the mandatory shut down which occurred in March of 2020. When the pandemic hit and the mandatory shutdown order was given, we ceased day to day operations and closed our doors to the public. The overall result of the shutdown was catastrophic. We no longer had “walk-ins” who were usually very generous with their donations or fees for research. We were no longer able to offer those “walk-ins” an opportunity to purchase any of our books, videos, or the like. What did not stop were the bills for the rent, the light, the gas heat, the telephone, the insurance, the sewer fees, and other operating costs.

Upon reviewing the qualifications for applying, I found that we might qualify. Among those qualifications was that the applicant be a viable Pennsylvania Non-Profit Corporation, which we were. The corporation had to have Federal IRS 501(c)(3) status, and we did. We also had submitted a federal 990-N tax return for the last number of years, which filled another requirement. We had to have a Pennsylvania Department of State certificate that we are still an operational organization. We are. And finally, we had to have a bank account where any monies granted would be able to be direct deposited. All boxes were checked.

Having qualified just to be an applicant, I now turned to the actual paperwork. The 13-page application was prepared and submitted on October 26, 2020. I arrived at a figure that represented our expenses since the shutdown and respectfully requested a grant in that amount. Submission was by email through a special portal.

I received email confirmation that the application had been accepted and I was then requested to submit a voided bank check showing our bank’s routing number and our checking account number. Halloween came and went.....Thanksgiving came and went. Finally, I received an email advising us that our application would be funded. That’s all.... just that it “would be funded.” Christmas came and went as did New Years.



Our checking account statement usually arrives on or around the second week of the month and it did so in January. As usual, I began to review the statement and to reconcile checks issued with the statement. I then noted a very substantial direct deposit made by the firm whose name I recognized as the administrators of the COVID grant. Not being able to believe that the amount of the deposit was accurate, I telephoned a

county official who was involved in the grant process. He confirmed that the large amount was indeed correct. Still only having that telephonic confirmation of the amount, I emailed an official with the private company that administered the grant. I asked her for an email confirmation of the award, so as to have something in writing. She complied and sent me an email confirmation of the amount of our grant.

The Plan

At a meeting, Executive Board members, Julianna Zarzycki, Chet Zaremba, John Sherrick, Michael Passetti and Judy Minsavage, voted to pay the outstanding balance on the cost of the new furnace out of the grant funds. Then it was on to addressing the other work necessary to correct a mold problem caused by the furnace breakdown and to create a safe environment for our visitors and workers. It was agreed that the shut-down created the best opportunity to have any and all work necessary completed.

The Work

It was the decision of the board that we obtain two estimates of cost for the work that had to be done. I contacted two painting companies and requested an estimate to paint all ceilings, walls, and trim in the kitchen, the foyer, the office room, and the board room. In addition, the beautiful antique parquet floor in the board room would have to be slightly sanded and recoated with polyurethane. As there is considerable foot traffic in our building, we decided that we would have a top-grade commercial carpet installed.

Knowing that all furnishings would have to be removed from the first floor and stored off premises, I contacted a moving company. The owner came to our building at which time I explained the work that would have to be done. We discussed the rental of a “pod” to store the furniture, but he advised that he had a truck that they would load and then park in our parking lot until we were ready for the return of the furniture. It was then agreed that we would do this.

Timeline

January 30, 2021 - with the assistance of two hired laborers, Tyler, and Braden Zaremba, a break-down of our facility began. Julianna Zarzycki, our president, had obtained a large number of cardboard boxes to store our items. Walls were stripped of all pictures and wall hangings, desks were emptied, computers and printers were disconnected, and books were removed from some of the bookcases. Items were packed and moved to the second floor or placed on the counter in the kitchen. All other actions necessary in preparation for the arrival of the movers were taken. Curtains, curtain rods and shades were removed from the windows. Julianna washed the curtains. In order to maintain continuity of our operations, John Sherrick set up a temporary office in our John S. Fine room among a large number of cardboard boxes.

February 5 – The moving crew arrived with 10 young men who all looked like they just came out of the Green Bay Packers locker room. Within two hours every piece of furniture was loaded onto their truck.



All furnishings removed in advance of renovations of Society offices

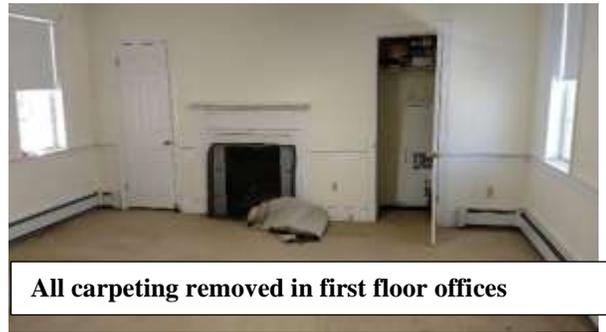
February 6 – Painters arrived and began patching holes in the walls and woodwork were necessary.

February 8 – An employee of the carpet company arrived and ripped up the old carpeting in the foyer, the office room, and the stairway and removed it from the premises.

February 16 – Carpet installers arrived and began work by removing all the staples in the floor from the prior carpet pad installation.



February 17 – Carpet installers returned early in the morning and totally completed the installation on all floors and all steps. Our work crew, consisting of Gene Danowski, Mike Passetti, John Sherrick, Braden Zaremba, and Chet Zaremba began moving the file cabinets from the board room into the office room. In addition, books and bookcases were moved into the office. The board room walls were all painted so we



All carpeting removed in first floor offices



Painting begins in February



moved the large bookcase back into its original position. Except for the Nanticoke Hospital Clock, all items were removed, and the painter now had access to the entire floor.

February 20 - Main Bookcase in board room repaired by Zaremba.

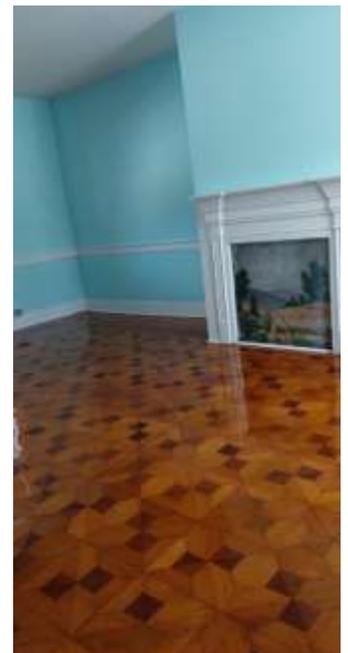
February 21 - Painting contractor sanded and applied polyurethane to the parquet floor in the board room. He advised to let it dry for two days.

February 24 - Work Day Called - Work party consisted of Gene Danowski, Mike Passetti, Chet Zaremba, Brady Zaremba. Transition strips installed between board room and office room. Two file cabinets moved into closet in office room to conserve space. Three file cabinets moved into board room. Two bookcases moved into board room. Copy machine moved back into board room. Books moved from foyer and placed on bookshelves in no particular order. Books moved from center of office room to make room for return of furniture. Electrical covers placed on all electrical outlets and switches. Debris removed to back porch to await pickup by trash hauler.

Office room and board room are now cleared for return of furniture.



Things start coming together



Polyurethane is applied to board room floor

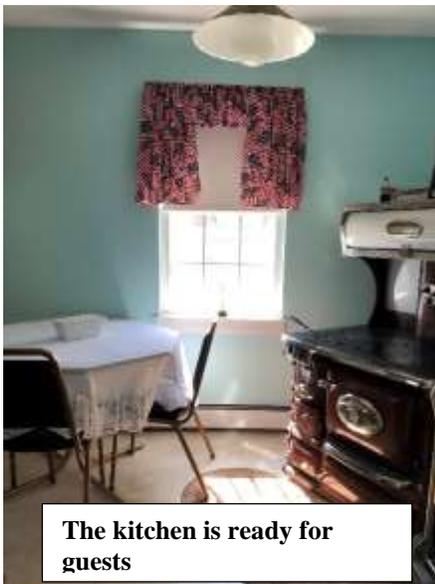
Wrapping Up

The past year has been quite a journey. We went into March of 2020, not knowing how we would be able to continue our mission with having to close our doors to those searching for their genealogical roots and eliminating the means to fundraise. Through the grant, the generosity of our members and many hours of hard work performed by our dedicated officers and volunteers, we have come through and look forward to once again serving our members and those interested in Nanticoke's long history.

The Nanticoke Historical Society's dedication is to our fair city and its residents. We will continue to hold Nanticoke's valuable past in our archives and make it available upon request. If anyone would like to volunteer, become a member, or need research performed, please contact us at 570-258-1367.



Entranceway begins to take shape



The kitchen is ready for guests



The Nanticoke Historical Society will begin receiving guests in June

Finishing touches are still being completed but by June many of the stored items will be back in place for the enjoyment of our patrons. 🇺🇸

MILL MEMORIAL LIBRARY EVENT AND SOCIETY OFFICES TOUR – JUNE 19, 2021

The Mill Memorial Library will hold a “Mill Around” outdoor event on Saturday, June 19 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. There will be a book sale, food trucks including Glen Lyon Bros., crafts by the Mill Craft Club, White Elephant Sale, and Summer reading information, music by D.J. Linda.

Along with this event there will be tours of the Nanticoke Historical Society newly renovated offices at the Samantha Mill House. While enjoying the beautiful grounds take a stroll and check out the improvements made to the society offices and peruse the many historical items, memorabilia, and books in our collections.

Bring the kids, it’s a great opportunity for youngsters to learn more about the city and its storied past with some really unique items in our collection.



In Memory of Mr. Peter J. Swantko of Sylvan Trail,

NY who died Wednesday, March 3, 2021. He was the son of the late Peter and Anne Fela Swantko. He was a graduate of Nanticoke High School Class of 1965 and grew up in the Hanover Section of Nanticoke. According to his recent obituary, he earned the nickname of “Captain Pete” as he enjoyed boating. Peter was a regional manager for Cumberland Farms for 26 years and after that was a manufacturing representative for McCormick Spices since 2010.

THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. Kathryn Hill Stanitski, Maynard, MA
Mr. Robert Keber, Savannah, GA
Ms. Susan Yuschak, Dresher, PA
Mr. Mark Leno, Rochester, NH

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Ms. Marilyn S. Hoban, St. Augustine, FL
Ann Arlene Rose and Jennifer Rose – Family Membership – Huntington, NY
Noreen Lordan, Hudson, NH
Adrienne Rysiek, Brooklyn, NY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS

Mrs. Norma Ushinski - \$100 in memory of Mr. Peter J. Swantko.



In Honor of Our Military



The Nanticoke Historical Society is honored to hold a vast amount of military information in its archives. It is our pledge to focus on those hometown heroes who sacrificed so much for our country's freedom. A new partial list of the many names of local veterans of all wars will be listed in our "In Honor of Our Military" Section of each Newsletter. The lists are long, so if a loved one's name has not appeared, please follow upcoming issues. Information obtained from the Nanticoke Historical Society archives.

CIVIL WAR

John Sorber – Marched with Sherman – POW Libby Prison
Nathaniel Sorber – Sharpshooters of Co. F 143rd PA Volunteers
Joseph Stachowiak – 52nd PA Infantry
John Szymanowski – Polish Legion 58th Regiment
John Vandermark
Nathan Walp – 9th PA Cavalry
Thomas Williams
Jonathan Womelsdorf – Co D 52 PA Volunteers

WORLD WAR I

John Draminski
Edmund Drapiewski
Matthew J. Drapiewski
Clem Drozdowski
Anthony Duda – 7th Field Artillery, KIA
John Dzuricca
Louis Dzwileski
Herman Ebert
Edward Eckerd – Battery C 3rd Field Artillery
George Eckerd – Battery C 3rd Field Artillery
Russell Edmunds
Llewellyn Edmunds Co. G Local Infantry
George Elmy – Battery C 3rd Field Artillery
Thomas Elmy – Battery C 3rd Field Artillery
Raymond England – Wounded in France
Sheldon Enke – Battery C 3rd Field Artillery
Paul Enke – Engineer Corps
William Erb – Battery C 3rd Field Artillery
John Estock
Joseph Estock

WORLD WAR II

Charles Harrison – KIA Okinawa
William Harrison – Died of wounds suffered in Germany
Drew Harter Jr. - Killed in France
Earl K. Harvey -
John Haydock – Tech 5 US Army
Francis Helme
Kenneth Herring
Lee Hetman - KIA
Philip Hillman
Harry Homyack
Wasil Homyack
Michael Horanzy Jr. - KIA Germany
Edward Howanitz
Walter Hoynowski – POW
Martin Hozlock
Stephen Huk

NOTE: These names are as listed in our Historical Society Records. If there are misspellings, we apologize. Please contact our office to correct any discrepancy. Thank you....

SEE WHAT'S IN OUR ARCHIVES

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF ALL THE RECORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS THAT ARE IN THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES, GO TO OUR WEBSITE www.nanticokehistoryonline.org you will find a full listing on our Research Page.

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHED

The Nanticoke Historical Society is pleased to announce it launched, in March of this year, a new website at www.nanticokehistoryonline.org. Over the next few months, we will be adding photos and stories along with upcoming events and meeting dates so check back with us from time to time. As before, our quarterly newsletter, Nanticoke Legacy, is posted and can be downloaded from the site. Follow the Nanticoke Historical Society on Facebook as well, there we will notify you of any updates to our website. If you would like to contact us regarding any of our posts, please call us at 570-258-1367.

570-258-1367

HOME ABOUT US STORIES PHOTOS RESEARCH CONTACT US CALENDAR MEMBERSHIP



NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
495 EAST MAIN ST. NANTICOKE, PA 18634



OUR TEAM

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT -
Julianna Zarzycki

VICE-PRESIDENT-TREASURER
Chester Zaremba

INFORMATION OFFICER
John Sherrick

NEWSLETTER EDITOR, STORIES AND
NEWS
Judith L. Minsavage



OUR HISTORY

The Nanticoke Historical Society was formed in 1996 as a number of historical sites in the city were being demolished. Notably among those were the Kosciuszko Junior High School and the State Theatre. A few life long residents of the city ranging in age from 20 to 80 realized that if certain parts of Nanticoke's history weren't preserved

[+ Show More](#)



OUR MISSION

The object of this society is for educational, charitable, and literary purposes with a primary focus to research, preserve, develop and disseminate the history of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific

[+ Show More](#)

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REQUIRED DETECTIVE WORK

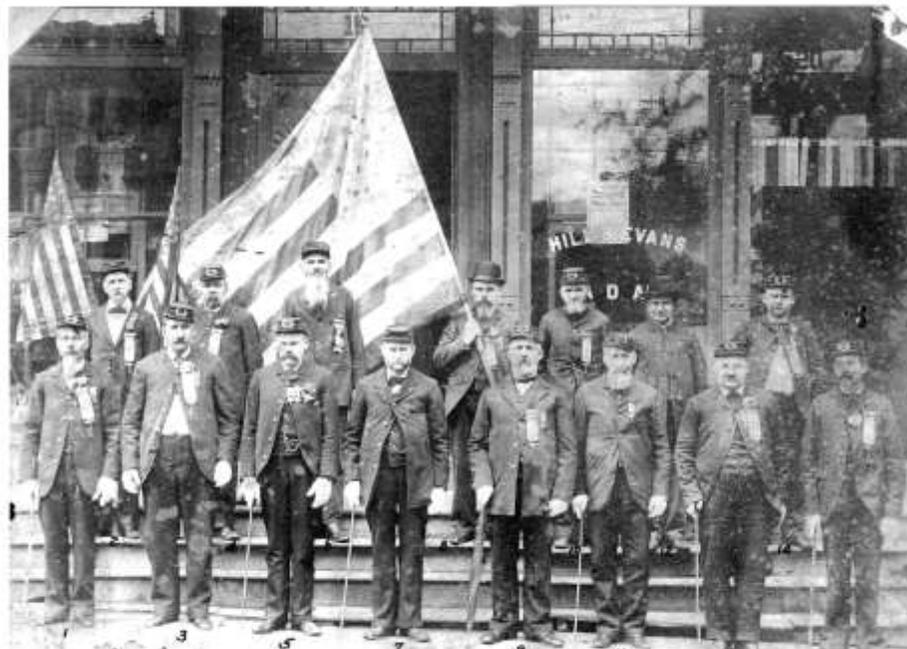
By Judy Minsavage

The Nanticoke Historical Society receives requests from all over the United States for information regarding ancestors, family friends or locations that help to piece together a genealogic search. Most recently, Society Vice-President, Chet Zaremba, addressed a research request email sent to the society from Jan Williams, Cultural and Historic Resource Specialist for Morris County, New Jersey in regard to the completion of their project to list all Morris County Civil War Veterans. Specifically, Williams was looking for information on Charles Erb, a native of Morris County who as a member of the Union Army, fought in major battles of the Civil War, and settled in Nanticoke after the end of the war.

The question Williams specifically wanted to know was the name of the Nanticoke G.A.R. Post that Erb belonged to. Zaremba uncovered in the society archives, Erb belonged to G.A.R. Lape Post #161 of Nanticoke. Williams, then asked if the society could provide any further information on Erb when he served as



Charles Erb in Civil war uniform



Civil War Vets pose in front of the Hill & Evans Hardware Store at 18-20 E. Main Street, Nanticoke 5/30/1893. Erb is second row, 2nd from left.

as Nanticoke's High Constable.

Zaremba went back to work, to further research Erb's life here in Nanticoke.

"Looking into the matter, Zaremba explained, "I found Erb was pictured in a group of Civil War Veterans who posed in front of a store on Main Street. He also appears in a picture of the Nanticoke Police Department dated 1901. In that photo he is identified as the High Constable. The police chief pictured in the photo is Pat Keating. There are several police officers in the picture, among them George Loewer. I immediately noted the

major problem here is that the police department photo is dated 1901, Erb had died in 1895.”

As anyone knows in historical research, sometimes dates, names and locations, just do not match, leaving the researcher with even bigger questions. Zaremba, however, knew that with the number of records and information in the society archives, he would find the answer.

Zaremba went on to explain, “I sent Jan Williams both pictures of Erb and a copy of his biographical file with the caveat that I believed the police department picture was misdated and that I was going to initiate an investigation to determine the actual year in which the picture was taken.

Lining up the dates

“Charles Erb , after being so elected, began service as ‘High Constable’ in 1892,” Zaremba said. “Erb served into the year of 1893 when he lost his bid for reelection. Pat Keating, also in the police department photo, began service as Police Chief in 1892 and continued to serve for a number of years. So, at this point, the photo had to have been taken in 1892 or 1893, the years both men served together.” Zaremba continued, “I then began to check into each of the police officers in the picture. I learned that Officer George Loewer was dismissed from the police department in April of 1893.” The fact that both Erb and Keating both began their respective positions of High Constable and Police Chief in 1892 and Loewer was dismissed in 1893. Zaremba knew from that information the correct date of the photo was 1892 instead of 1901. “The picture in question will be corrected to indicate the date of 1892 which I feel has a certainty of 99%.” Zaremba added.



Photo previously dated 1901 changed to 1892 due to extensive investigation

Seated: Charles Erb, High Constable ; Harry M. Williams, Burgess Lee Millington, Chief Pat Keating, George Loewer, Steve Thomas

Charles Erb will be forever remembered as an American Civil War Veteran and his past will be correctly listed in Morris County, NJ and Nanticoke for generations to come.

The Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865. According to “History of Hanover Township,” by Charles Ciesla, shortly after the fall of Ft. Sumter on April 12, 1861, 14 volunteer companies left Luzerne County. One hundred and seventy-six men from Hanover Township, which at the time included Nanticoke, served in the war. Twenty-one men died in battle or later succumbed to their wounds. 🇺🇸

Join our team

The society is looking for volunteers. Students doing in-service or school projects, retired individuals or anyone who would like to give an hour or two to index or alphabetize materials for our library. Those interested can also assist with digital records if they are so inclined. Call us at 570-258-1367.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WHILE SHOPPING AMAZON

What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization.

How do I support the Nanticoke Historical Society when shopping on AmazonSmile?

Log on to smile.amazon.com, you will be prompted to list your charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. List the Nanticoke Historical Society. Amazon will remember your selection. From then on log onto at smile.amazon.com to purchase from Amazon - every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation.



Follow the Nanticoke Historical Society on Facebook

To obtain a research request form go to www.nanticokehistoryonline.org and find our quick links at the top of our home page.

THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY - HERE TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY

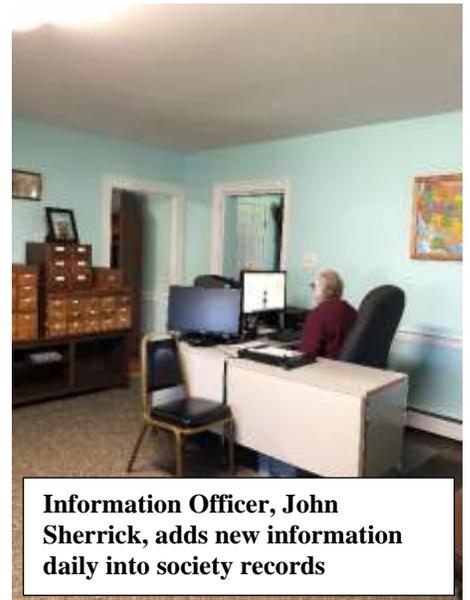
The Nanticoke Historical Society was established in 1996 and since that time has preserved an enormous amount of Nanticoke's historical records and photographs from the early 1800s to the present day. Many of these records and photographs were donated to the society over the years and meticulously catalogued in the society's database by society Information Officer, John Sherrick. More recently, after the acquisition of Past Perfect, a software used in collections archiving, Vice-President Chet Zaremba has



steadfastly entered each document, item, book and photograph to enable easy location of those items held in the society's vast file system.

Sherrick has copied and catalogued any newspaper account concerning Nanticoke and its residents from the early 1800's to the present day. He has also created a pictorial database of each property of the city as well as a database of all of the gravesites in each of the city's cemeteries. And that's only part of what has been accomplished by the society. Presently, Sherrick is working on a project that will archive all of the deeds to properties in the city.

Sherrick, over the years, has worked on the process of entering information into an accessible format, and eventually settled on an encyclopedic-type format that works very well with the type of research requests received. When asked to describe his most interesting research request, Sherrick said, "It's hard to choose a single notable one. We get them from across the United States and all around the world, including South Africa and another from Australia. One I'm particularly proud of



Information Officer, John Sherrick, adds new information daily into society records

was a request from someone seeking information about a family tragedy in the late 1920's. I was able to



Push pins on map show number of research requests received from across the country



Red push pins indicate member research requests, orange, blue and green non-member

find a detailed story about it in our files to which I added old photographs taken at the time of the incident. I added more recent photos I took of the site for a

complete pictorial scan of what occurred. The Nanticoke Historical Society is seldom at a loss when it comes to finding information and very often, we get really lucky about filing in crucial details.”

Over the years the society offices have received many visitors, not only from the city, but from all over Pennsylvania and other states as well. “Visitors to the society will get our full attention.” Sherrick

stated recently, “We will spend as much time as they need to answer their questions, some of whom have spent as many as two or three hours conversing with us about their families and their memories of Nanticoke. Because our society is located in the Samantha Mill House, anyone walking through the door will immediately feel as though they have entered someone's comfortable



Our library contains many Nanticoke family histories

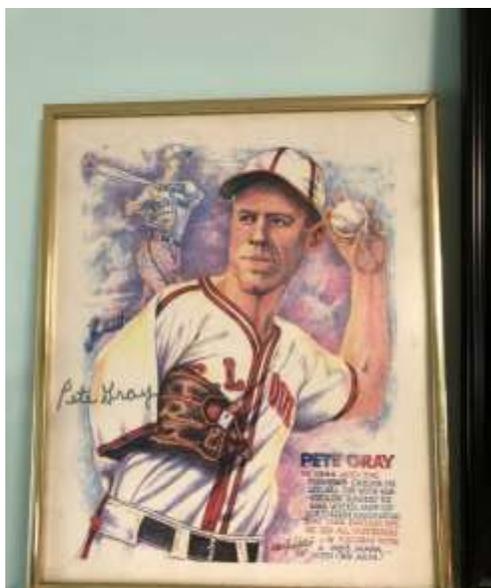


Our extensive library of DVDs and VHS tapes of various city events

home and not a business office.”

The society has an abundance of reference material and books that can be beneficial to anyone interested in a research project about Nanticoke or doing family genealogical research. Have a specific topic in mind, such as local coal operations, sports, or prominent Nanticoke residents such as Pennsylvania Governor John S. Fine or Baseball’s “One Armed Wonder” Pete Gray, we’re just a call away.

“The Nanticoke Historical Society is unique to the city,” Sherrick added, “You will find information here that cannot be found in the local library or the school system. There have been vast changes to Nanticoke over the last couple of decades. The Society is the

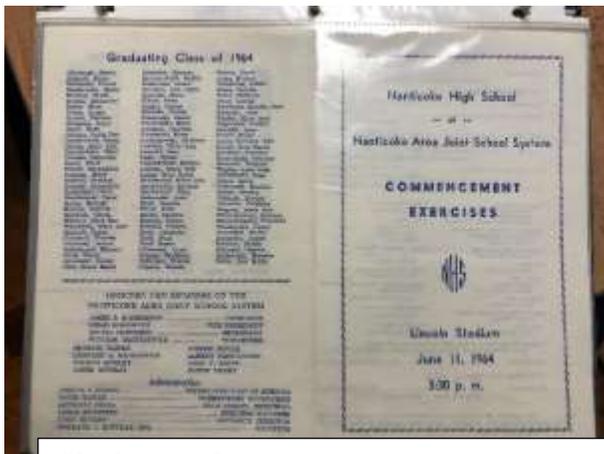


The Society holds a complete history of local Baseball legend, Pete Gray



Pennsylvania Governor John S. Fine and sons, John, Jr., Donald, and wife Helene, may have been taken in their house at 76 W. Main Street (circa 1950). The Society holds many items belonging to Governor Fine along with his extensive law library

only means at hand to link the past to the present and examine the complete pageant of its history from the founding to the 21st Century.”



Check our website
www.nanticokehistoryonline.org for a list of
yearbooks available for sale at our office

According to an article written by Jim Cheney, creator of the website uncoveringpa.com, the first historical societies in Pennsylvania began shortly after the Civil War in an attempt to preserve the various community’s history before it was “lost forever.” leading to well over 100 societies around Pennsylvania.

Today, these societies are dedicated to keeping alive not only their local factual history but the essence of times past. This offers a chance for future generations to learn about those who built their communities, what they did for fun, where they shopped, went to school, worshiped in their faith and worked to provide for their families.

Once the pandemic restrictions are lifted, the society will again open its doors to anyone who would like to ask about research. In the meantime, you can reach our office by call 570-258-1367 during our current office hours of Monday through Friday 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. 

Join our team

The society is looking for volunteers. Students doing in-service or school projects, retired individuals or anyone who would like to give an hour or two to index or alphabetize materials in our library. Those interested if they are so inclined can also assist with digital records. Call us at 570-258-1367.

ONLY SOME OF WHAT’S IN OUR ARCHIVES

17,269 - sur names of Nanticoke residents and family histories

8,723 - Nanticoke commercial entities listed

11,660 – archival photos of people and places in Nanticoke

And the list is growing every day.

DERBY WAS ONE WILD RIDE

By Judy Minsavage

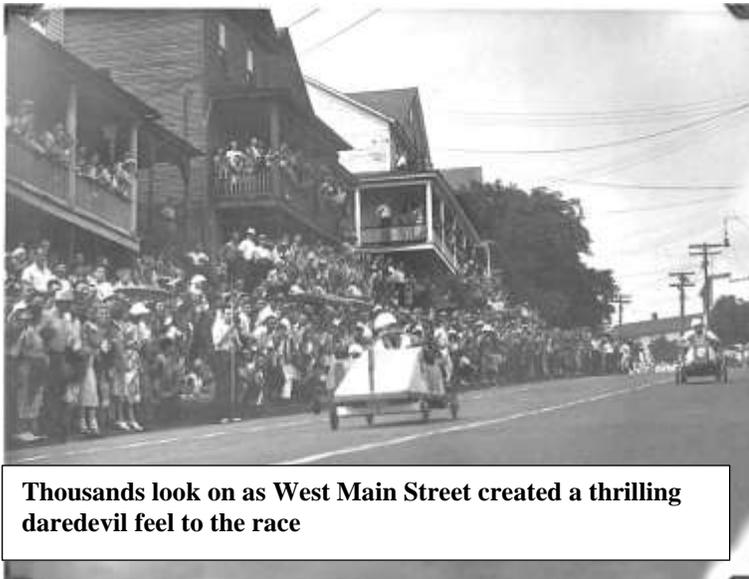
It was December of 1937, and the residents of Nanticoke were excited to learn that the Veterans of Foreign Wars Organization in cooperation with Chevrolet Motor Car Company would be sponsoring a Great American Soap Box Derby in the city sometime the following year. The challenge was for those interested to build “pushcart style” racers and other types of home-made autos to participate in the event. The VFW was tasked to find a suitable street in the city for the location of the competition. The move was fully endorsed by Nanticoke Mayor Stanley Ostroski. “It is something which will provide not only amusement to participants and spectators, but many attractive prizes to winners of the various events.” The winner of the race would then participate in the finals in Akron, Ohio. The winner of the Akron race would then receive a “four-year college scholarship with all expenses paid.” Other prizes would include toy autos, radios, sporting equipment, carpentry sets and other various gifts provided by Broadway Auto Supply, National Auto Stores, Koronkiewicz Pharmacy, Nanticoke Creamery, Carter-Bache, Knolls Shoe Store, Chick’s Auto, Cimmit’s, Reilly Furniture and Jimmy the Jeweler. An embossed watch fob provided by T. Richard Crotzer; president of the Lions Club would be presented to the winner of each heat. The youngsters would be suited with safety helmets and shoulder pads. The police were set to re-route traffic and provide security. Nanticoke stores and lumberyards were notified to have the necessary building materials on hand as wide-eyed youngsters began working on their respective auto.

The city declared a holiday as 72 boys entered to compete in Nanticoke’s first Soap Box Derby held on West Main Street on August 3, 1938. Over 7,000 people withstood the sweltering heat to watch from their front porches, steps and sidewalks lining West Main Street. Organizers and volunteers scurried about setting up the barricades and getting the youngsters ready for the competition. Benjamin Cooke Jr., 11 of Hazleton won the first heat against James Adams of Nanticoke. There were many spills as the racers sped down West Main Street to the bottom of the 900-foot course. One particularly heart breaking one was when the car entered by the St. Stanislaus



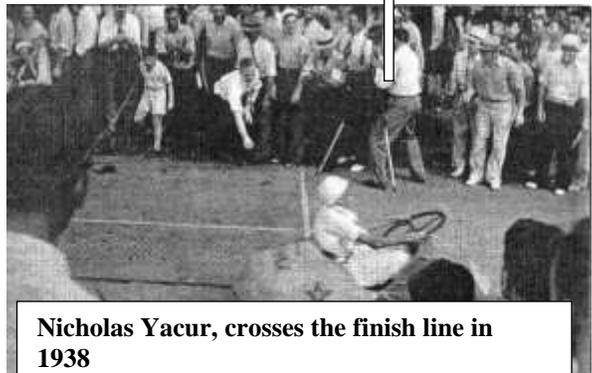
Excitement filled the air as the youngsters awaited the flag to start the race





Thousands look on as West Main Street created a thrilling daredevil feel to the race

Orphanage, driven by Nicholas Yacur, was pushed out of the contest by another racer. A collective sigh from the crowd denoted the disappointment for the youngsters of the orphanage. In a later race, though, Yacur successfully crossed the finish line.



Nicholas Yacur, crosses the finish line in 1938

The adults got into the swing of things as derby co-sponsors Richard Crotzer, president of the Lions Club, Edward Krynick, president of the Sarmatians Club and Robert Sampson, president of the Kiwanis participated in an exhibition race.

Derby Heat winners were Walter Pawlowski, Joseph Martonek, Richard Znaniecki, William Charles Jayne, James Adams, William Semmers, Martin Hazlock, Nicholas Yacur, Paul F. James, Benjamin Cooke, Albert Zabiegalski, Sylvester De Paulo.

Quarter final heat winners were Walter Pawlowski, James Adams, Nicholas Yacur and Benjamin Cooke.

Benjamin Cooke won the final heat against James Adams to receive the derby trophy and was to participate in the national races to be held in Akron on August 14, 1938.



Walter Pawlowski Jr., Class A – Second Place



James Adams – Class A – First Place

The Soap Box Derby was held again in 1939, but this time sponsored by Alden and Glen Lyon Playground Associations. That year Albert Beleski, Glen Lyon; Nicholas Yacur, Sheatown, and Edward Paczkowski, Nanticoke drove the fastest cars.

In the contest held in 1940, Edward Paczkowski was crowned Champion and lauded for what was said to be a 25-second run from the top of West Main Street to the finish line. After the event Paczkowski was placed on top of



Benjamin Cooke –Class B – First Place

a Gem Furniture pick-up truck and driven through the streets to the cheers from the crowd. Paczkowski went on to compete in the Akron Finals.

On to Akron

The Akron Soap Box Derby winner in 1938 and 1939 was Walt Cherry of Upper Merion, PA. The 1940 Race winner was Thomas Fisher of Detroit MI. The 1955 winner was Richard Rohrer, Rochester, NY

The Soap Box Derby Championship Race began in Dayton, Ohio in the early 30s, and moved to Akron, Ohio in 1935. In 1936, Akron city officials decided to build a permanent facility for the race. The event was held yearly until World War II. After the war, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal WPA program completed the Akron racetrack facility. The race has been held every year since attracting thousands of children from across the country and other nations to compete for college scholarships and other prizes.



The crowd cheer contestants at the Akron Soap Box Derby in 1938

In the past we've had mystery questions, now we have mystery photographs.

Over the years the Nanticoke Historical Society has obtained photos contained in collections from various families and events, but unfortunately do not know who are in some of the photos. We will be placing these photos in this and future newsletters. See more of these photos on our website at www.nanticokehistoryonline.org click on our PHOTOS page. If any match the ones in your collection, or perhaps you recognize a family member, please let us know by calling our office at 570-258-1367 or emailing history@nanticokehistoryonline.org . Just give us the number on the photo and the name or any information you may have, so we can add them to our records.

