



# NANTICOKE LEGACY

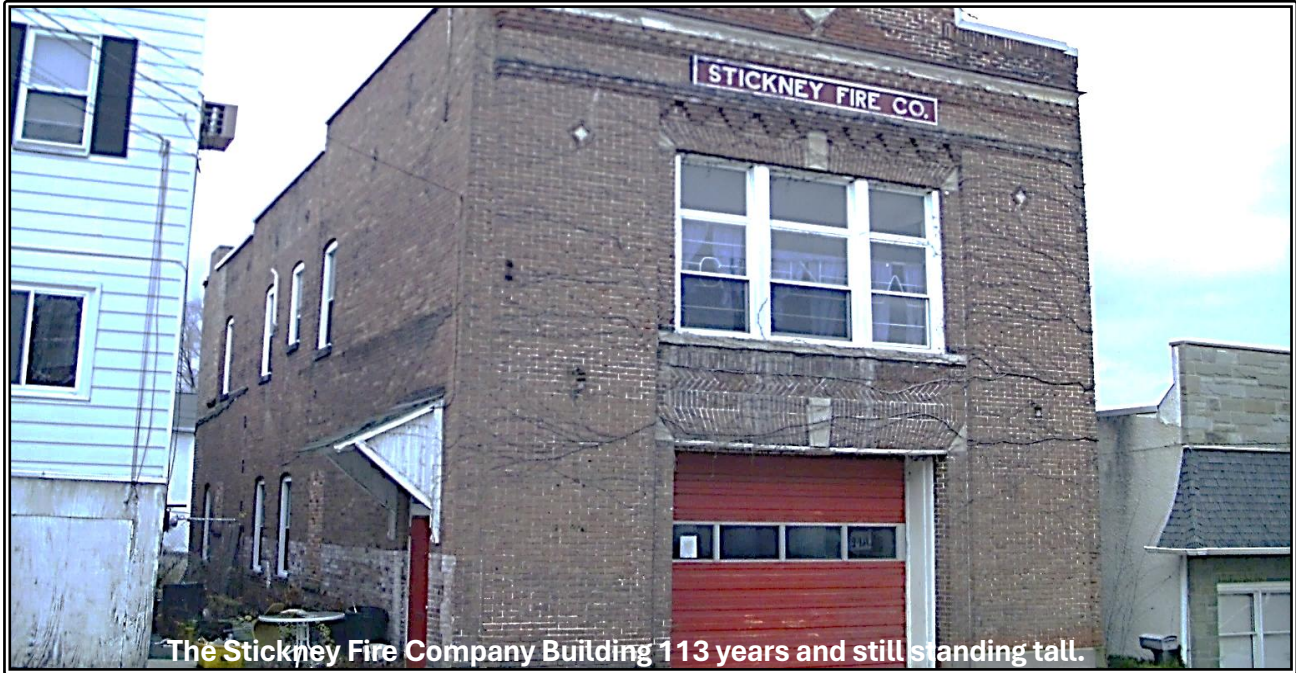
A PUBLICATION OF THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SAMANTHA MILL HOUSE - 495 EAST MAIN STREET, NANTICOKE, PA - 570-258-1367

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Volume 3, Issue 11



The Stickney Fire Company Building 113 years and still standing tall.

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by Chet Zaremba, President, Nanticoke Historical Society

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# Letter from the Editor

2025 has been a momentous year so far for the Nanticoke Historical Society, 30 years strong and counting. Our society started out with a simple idea. To collect what the initiators felt were vital facts about the city of Nanticoke and set them down for future generations to study. But it goes much deeper. Our history is important to the very core of the formation of our country. A history that began well before the Native Americans settled on the banks of the Susquehanna River, recognized as one of the oldest rivers in the world. Our heroic past is evident in those who fought for our country in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and the life-changing world conflicts that followed.



Our strength and resilience are shown in the courage of early immigrants hoping to achieve a better life working—and often dying—in the coal mines. That black carbon rock, Anthracite, will never be free of the miles and depths of water enveloping it but has made our valley, our city and our history quite unique..

John F. Kennedy's quote "Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try" is in our hearts and minds at the Society. We will continue to collect and record the history of this city and its people, and through our publication "Nanticoke Legacy" tell those stories. We thank all who have supported the Nanticoke Historical Society and this publication over the years. Now on to the next thirty.

**Judy Minsavage, Editor**

## OUR WEBSITE

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

## EMAIL

Office email – [nhs63@comcast.net](mailto:nhs63@comcast.net)

## OFFICERS and STAFF

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**Vice-President: Judith L. Minsavage**

**Secretary/Membership Coordinator: Charlotte Dudkowski**

**Event and Archive Coordinator: Tania Gronkowski**

**Archivist: John Sherrick**

**Director of Operations : John Telencho**

**Nanticoke Legacy Editor News and Stories. Website : Judith L. Minsavage**

**Building and Grounds: Mike Passetti**

**President Emerita – Julianna Zarzycki**

# Reflections On Our 30th Anniversary Event

By Chet Zaremba, President, Nanticoke Historical Society

Having been in a number of supervisory positions in the U.S. Air Force, the Pennsylvania State Police and as the Chief of Police in Nanticoke I learned to quickly “size up” people with regard to what they can do and how one can count on them to actually do it. In the thirty years of the Nanticoke Historical Society, many members have come and gone, and many valuable projects have been proposed, but no volunteers to help.




Recently I noticed a change in attitude among the members. Little projects became big projects, and a small number of hands went up agreeing to help. That small number began to grow, and I personally sensed a change in attitude. Different members proposed a number of projects. From my experience, I observed that many members were ambitious and capable of handling jobs or projects effectively. My philosophy has always been to not micro-manage people. Should someone produce a worthwhile project and is willing to do the work to bring it to fruition, then they receive the green light to go ahead.

So it was with the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event. The Board of Directors reviewed the event proposal, and the proposers were capable of executing it successfully. There were a few “spark plugs” to the whole thing and everyone knows who they are, but for the first time in 30 years, EVERYONE participated and did an excellent job.

There were times when I wondered what they were doing, but I trusted my instincts and again chose not to micro-manage. I had complete faith in the fact that I had the right people in the right places and that they would do the job.

The plan was for the organizers to set up a number of historic displays at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina, including artifacts and property from the Samantha Mill House. Upon visiting after completion, I was absolutely amazed by the museum-like setting created by our team, which highlighted the history of Nanticoke.

The idea of a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was exactly that, to celebrate 30 years of dedication and hard work preserving our history. A secondary purpose was, of course, to raise funds so that we could continue our work. Event Coordinator, Tania Gronkowski along with Sally Gorgas, and Sally Billings, sold hundreds of dollars’ worth of basket raffle tickets at bingos hosted by the West Side Club and also during the Nanticoke Conservation Club Lenten Food Sale.

After weeks of preparations for the basket raffle, exhibition, the bake sale, the historical society vendor table, the virtual tour and the proclamation from Nanticoke Mayor Kevin Coughlin naming June as Nanticoke Historical Society, the event opened on May 31 and was a resounding success. I felt that my continued instincts about who can and will do the job came true once again. The event was a success because of the hard work of the members who chose to participate. To The following members who also did an excellent job to uphold the reputation and honor of the Nanticoke Historical Society Julianna Zarzycki, Charlotte Dudkowski, Christine Thomas, John Telencho, John Sherrick, Mike Passetti, Jack Minsavage, Stan Sherman, Gene Danowski and Paul Warchal I just want to say, “ I knew you could do it ! When it comes to picking the right people for the job.....I still got it !! 

## **CONSIDER ADVERTISING WITH US**

Nanticoke Legacy is a quarterly publication, but through our website and distribution we want to promote your business or event. We are looking forward to a partnership with businesses, organizations and those promoting events. You will also be recognized on our website and Facebook page as an advertising supporter of the Nanticoke Historical Society. Give us a call 570-258-1367.

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Just call our office 570-258-1367 or go to our website and click on the Membership Tab. Fill out the form and return to our office with your check. With that membership you will receive a card and will have access to our library and an initial research request.

#### **MEMBERSHIP FEES**

Individual \$35

Family \$40

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:**

**JoAnn Grout**

**Jack McGinnis**

**Jonathan Stegura**

**The Leiby Family (David, Janice, Dave, Alex and  
Meredith)**

**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING DONERS WHO HAVE  
GIVEN SO GENEROUSLY TO SUPPORT THE NANTICOKE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.**

**We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your donations are tax-deductible.**

**Diamond  
John Tomko**

**Platinum  
Wyoming Valley Stamp Club  
John Gregorowicz  
Mike Hill  
Shelly Jones  
Andrew Sherbine**

**Silver  
Arlene Martens in memory of the Swithers Family**



**In Loving Memory of the Swithers Family**



# Nanticoke Historical Society Scholarship Program

The Nanticoke Historical Society is pleased to have presented a Greater Nanticoke High School graduate with a \$1,000 scholarship in honor of John Stephen Tomko made possible by his son, Society member, John Tomko, Jr. launched in 2024. The initiative challenges students to write an essay on the impact of Nanticoke's rich heritage. This year's recipient is GNA senior, and National Honor Society Officer, Derek Miller. As one of 159 graduating students, his winning essay describes his experiences growing up in Nanticoke and listening to his grandparents' tales of running their corner grocery store and the challenges faced by the coal miners and their families.

Miller conveys how his time growing up in Nanticoke will forever be a part of his life's journey. This scholarship not only honors the memory of John Stephen Tomko, a distinguished alumnus, but also creates a realization of the value of learning from past generations through listening to their stories and memories. The place in which we grow provides tools for life's challenges and remains with us as we face those challenges. The Nanticoke Historical Society encourages our youth to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the community in which they live. We congratulate Derek Miller and wish him the best as he starts classes at Misericordia University in the Fall.

## Honoring the Past, Investing in the Future

### Reflections on the Nanticoke Historical Society Scholarship Program

By John S. Tomko, Jr.

As the founding sponsor of the Nanticoke Historical Society Scholarship Program, I am honored to share a few thoughts on its progress and its promise.

I would be remiss not to first recognize the outstanding achievements of our first two scholarship recipients.

**Mackenzie Hall**, the 2024 recipient, and **Derek Miller**, the 2025 recipient, submitted essays that exceeded expectations. I congratulate you both. Your work embodies the spirit and purpose of this program.

The Scholarship Program is more than a financial award. It bridges Nanticoke's past and future. It invites high school students to delve into and preserve local history and to unearth forgotten stories through research and personal reflection. It fosters a deeper appreciation for Nanticoke's heritage. It inspires the next generation to become thoughtful stewards of Nanticoke's legacy.



*GNA Senior and NHS Scholarship winner Derek Miller with Chet Zaremba, president, Nanticoke Historical Society*

This writing-based scholarship promotes critical thinking, research skills, and effective communication. It challenges students to consider how the past shapes the present. It nurtures a sense of civic responsibility. These outcomes align with the program's mission and my educational values.

Beyond the individual experience, the program strengthens community bonds and reinforces a shared commitment to education, cultural enrichment, and public service. By supporting students passionate about history and learning, we invest in Nanticoke's future and the kind of citizens we hope to cultivate ones who value education, appreciate their cultural heritage, and are committed to serving their community.

The John Stephen Tomko (NHS' 37) Scholarship Award, named in honor of an immigrant of the Greatest Generation, embodies these values. It celebrates perseverance, learning, and civic pride. I hope the Nanticoke Historical Society continues to support this important effort. As for the Nanticoke Historical Society membership, your support is crucial. I urge all members and friends to consider contributing financially to ensure the longevity of this program. Your contribution will make a significant difference in the lives of our future historians, educators, and leaders.

Through this scholarship, we honor the past, empower the present, and help shape the historians, educators, and leaders of tomorrow.

## **The Winning Essay:**

# **HISTORY OF NANTICOKE**

**By: Derek Miller**

Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, is a small town with a deep connection to America's coal mining past. Once a busy center of the Anthracite coal industry, Nanticoke was home to thousands of miners who spent their days underground, fueling the energy needs of the early 20th century. While most of that industry has disappeared, the history still feels very real, especially through stories from my grandparents and the house they lived in that served as a store for local coal miners' years prior.

This house wasn't just a place to live—it was also a neighborhood store where miners and their families came to buy everyday essentials. They sold meats, cheeses, fresh bread, and candy, often for just a few pennies. The store was more than just a shop; it was a meeting place where people came together after long days of hard work. It was part of a close-knit community built around shared struggles and mutual support. Hearing stories about that time, I've come to appreciate how small businesses played a big role in people's lives.

Not far from where I live today—only about ten minutes away—are the ruins of Concrete City, an early example of company housing built in 1911 for railroad workers. At the time, it was considered modern and even a little ahead of its time, made entirely out of concrete. However, it was eventually abandoned because the buildings were too expensive maintain. Today, Concrete City stands as a ghost town. I've visited it before, and walking through the empty buildings and overgrown streets gives me a powerful sense of how

quickly life can change. It also makes me think about the people who once lived there and what their daily lives might have looked like.

When I compare that world to today, the differences are huge. Most of us don't have to do the kind of backbreaking physical labor that coal miners did. We shop in large grocery stores or order things online without giving it much thought. Technology and convenience have completely changed how we live. But at the same time, I think we've lost some of the strong community ties and appreciation for hard work that defined towns like Nanticoke during the coal mining era.

The story of Nanticoke's coal miners reminds me of how communities were built on determination, teamwork, and everyday sacrifices. The store that was in the house my grandparents bought, the fading walls of Concrete City, and the memories passed down through generations all help keep that history alive. In remembering it, I gain a greater appreciation for the past and for how much it continues to shape the present.



## A Day to Celebrate

By Judy Minsavage

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday, May 31, Kevin Coughlin, the Mayor of Nanticoke stepped up to the microphone, at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina along with him, Chet Zaremba, president of the Nanticoke Historical Society. Mayor Coughlin then read a proclamation declaring June Nanticoke Historical Society Month. A true highlight of the months of planning for the event that



*Nanticoke Mayor, Kevin Coughlin, presents Chet Zaremba, with proclamation naming June Nanticoke Historical Society Month*



*Society displays and artifacts at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina in Nanticoke*

would kick off a year of celebrating the Society's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

On that day, the Society welcomed visitors to the community venue for a basket raffle and bake sale fundraiser accompanied by an exhibit of over seventeen displays highlighting many of the Society's artifacts and records. "It was truly a wonderful experience," Zaremba stated after acceptance of the proclamation.: The day concluded with a captivating



*Native American display*

'Virtual Tour of Nanticoke,' a slideshow narrated by Zaremba and



Society archivist John Sherrick, showcasing many of Nanticoke's cherished landmarks, including its churches, schools, streets, and more.



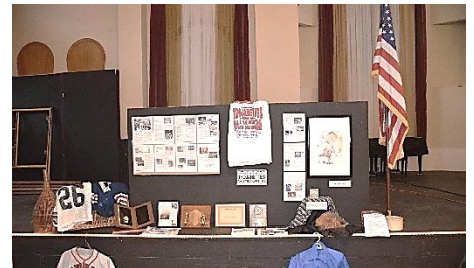
**Anthracite Mining Display**

Tania Gronkowski, the Society's Event Coordinator, managed the event with many members volunteering to assist. The exhibits varied, from arrowheads reminiscent of the Nanticoke and other Native American tribes who settled here, to items representative of the Anthracite mining era. The collection also included trophies and certificates belonging to Sylvester Bozinski, coach of the 1961 State Basketball Champions, and items from the 1990 Girls' Basketball State Championship. Additionally, there was antique kitchenware, wedding attire, and fire and police artifacts.



**Vintage Wedding Attire and Memorabilia**

The range of items spanned from a delicate cream pitcher to the large and very heavy Nanticoke High School 1970 Metal School Plaque. Displays of photos and personal items paid tribute to benefactress Samantha Mill and John S. Fine, 35<sup>th</sup> Governor of Pennsylvania. "There was so much we couldn't show at



**NHS Sports Display**

this time," Gronkowski said, "But we'll plan another exhibit in the future."

One of the most popular showcases was the Nanticoke Stores and Businesses Exhibit. Many visitors shared nostalgic stories about the places they shopped for clothes, groceries, cars, and sports equipment. Restaurants, candy and ice cream stores topped the list of favorites, along with bakeries and variety stores.



**Governor John S. Fine Collection**

At the Polish Artifacts Exhibit, Society member Accordionist Paul Warchal entertained the crowd playing polkas, military tunes and requests to the delight of everyone. Our vendor table featured t-shirts, authored books from our library, yearbooks, collectibles, and our latest items which include the Nanticoke Historical Society Christmas tree ornament, window decal and tea frogs.



**The Wernet Collection**



**Accordionist Paul Warchal played crowd favorites.**

We are extremely grateful to all who donated the delicious treats for our bake sale, as well as those who donated a basket for our fundraiser. We had over forty baskets filled with



**The Samantha Mill Collection**

items for the home, family fun, gift certificates, lottery tickets, baskets of cheer and so much more.

We thank all the individual donors as well as the following businesses:

**Al's Nut House**

**Dragons Brew**

**Jim's Restaurant**

**Joe's Pizza**

**Mama Italian Restaurant**

**Marty's Blue Room**

**Marty's Pizza**

**Mr. Chicken to Go**

**Murts Bakery**

**Nanticoke City Administration and City Council**

**Nanticoke Fitness**

**Peoples Bank**

**Picosita Tacos**

**Sno Fox Sushi**

**Strange and Unusual Coffee Shop**

**Weis Market**



*Thank you to all those who donated to our bake sale fundraiser.*



*Chris Warchall receives a basket, from Nanticoke Mayor, Kevin Coughlin, who drew the winning tickets for our fantastic basket raffle fundraiser.*

We also extend a special thank you to the **West Side Club** for allowing us to sell raffle tickets during three of their regular Bingo nights, and to the **Nanticoke Conservation Club** for their support and allowing us to sell tickets at their Lenten Food Fundraiser.

In summary, we eagerly anticipate hosting more events in the future for the enjoyment of our members and the broader community. 🍷



*Our Team from Left: Mike Passetti, Sally Gorgas, John Telencho, Chris Thomas, Charlotte Dudkowski, Gene Danowski, Tania Gronkowski, Julianna Zarzycki, Paul Warchal, Sally Billings, John Sherrick, Chet Zaremba, president; Judy Minsavage, vice president.*



# Greetings from Nanticoke – Wish You Were Here, Part 4

By Ron Breznay

During the White Border Era, Americans took over the printing of postcards from German printers. The Americans saved ink by not printing to the edge of the card, leaving a white border around the image, giving the time period its name. Although it is debatable how much ink they saved. Postcards from the White Border Era retained the divided back.

The white-border postcard in Figure 1 shows the Nanticoke State Hospital. The back of the card, in Figure 2, shows it was mailed from Nanticoke in 1924. The message is: “Will be home tomorrow.” This shows that back in the day—before cell phones and email—postcards were used for quick messages. The sender assumed the card would get to Reading the next day, which it probably did.

Next is the Linen Era, from 1930 to 1945. Beginning in the 1930s, new printing processes allowed printers to produce postcards with high rag content, which gave them a look of being printed on linen rather than paper. The most notable printer of this period was Curt Teich & Co., which printed its first linen card in 1931, and whose postcards became popular around the world. Most postcards retained the white border, though some were printed to the edge of the card. The back was divided and sometimes contained printed information about the image. The production of linen postcards eventually gave way to photochrom postcards, which first appeared in 1939. However, linen cards continued to be produced for over a decade after the advent of photochrom postcards.



Figure 1

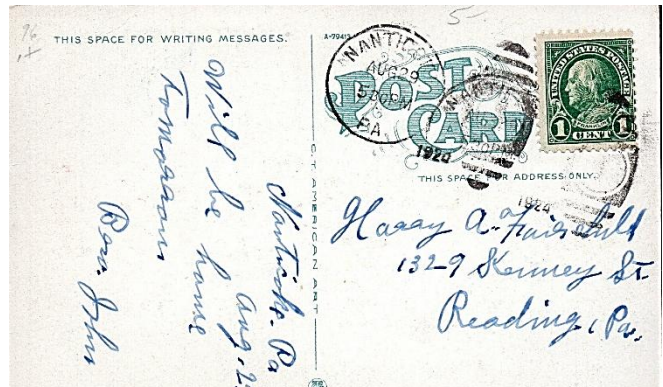


Figure 2



Figure 3

The linen postcard in Figures 3 and 4 depicts Nanticoke Park. It was mailed from Glen Lyon in 1944. The dividing line shows it was published in Wilkes-Barre.

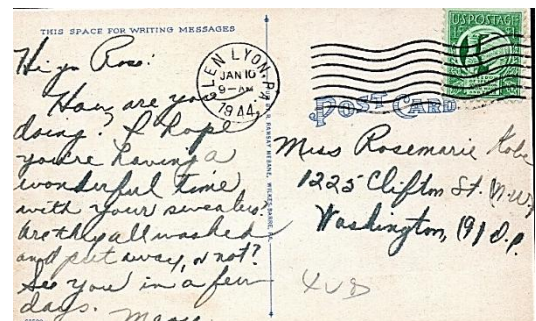


Figure 4

The Era of Photochrom (note there is no “e” on the end) postcards ran from 1939 to the present. Modern Photochrom postcards have great chrome colors and a very slick finish that looks much like a glossy color photo. They can also be in a matte finish.



Figure 5

Modern photochrom postcards first appeared in 1939 when the Union Oil Company began to carry them in their western service stations. Production of postcards slowed during World War II because of supply shortages, but after the war, they dominated the postcard market. The Union Oil postcard in Figure 5 shows Wallowa Lake in Oregon. The reverse, shown in Figure 6, has a postmark from 1955.

Photochrom postcards are in color, and their images closely resemble photographs. They are readily identified by the glossy appearance given by the paper’s coating. Photochrom postcards are the ones most familiar to us today.

The unused postcard in Figure 7 shows the Mill Memorial Library with the Samantha Mill house in the background.

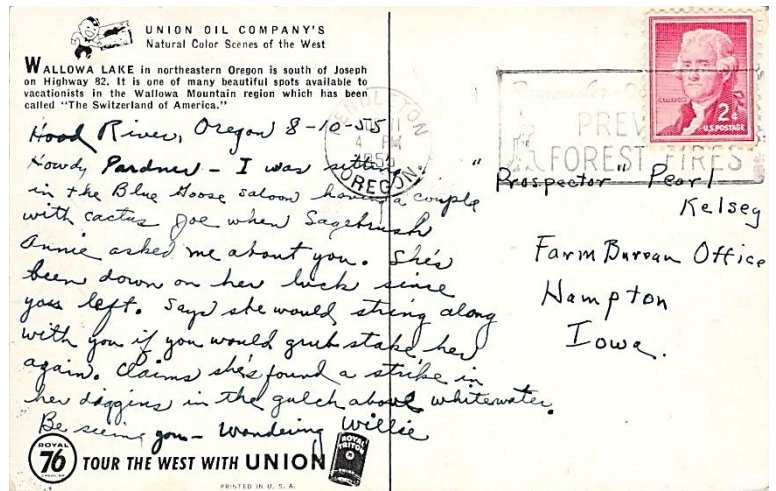


Figure 6

In the 1990s the advent of e-cards and email started the decline of the postcard’s popularity. Today, postcards are typically purchased as souvenirs, rather than a quick way to communicate. But that shouldn’t deter you from buying, mailing, and collecting postcards. And to continue to send greetings from Nanticoke.



Figure 7



# Cimmit's Sterling Variety Store

## Where coins could buy a dream

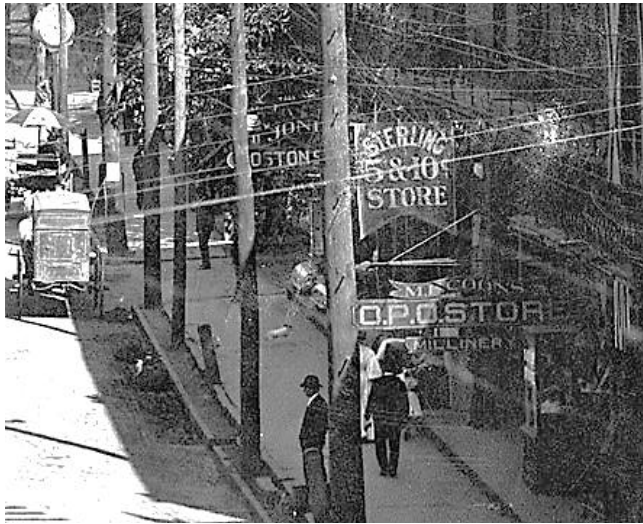
By: Judy Minsavage

The Popular 5 and 10 cent stores, also known as “variety stores,” were places where kids, carrying a few coins in their pocket could buy a small trinket or toy, a treasure that meant the world. Families could find necessary items for their everyday life, everything from thread and material to pots and pans, tools, clothes, gift items and cards. Truly a one-stop shop. Many fondly remember meandering through the isles reaching for items stacked high on shelves, or folded on counters, each store had its own smell a mix of candy and perfumed products, and of course a creaking wooden floor. Nanticoke had a few of these stores throughout the years. One that brings back fond recollections is Cimmit's Sterling Varsity Store.



*Harry Cimmit. Photo from Harvey-Smith History of Wilkes-Barre, vol. VI and reprinted in The Outlying Communities: Jewish Settlement in the Coal Towns (undated; from the Levi family archives)*

In 1909 At the age of twenty-five, Harry Cimmit came to Nanticoke with his wife Dora and children Sylvia, Isadore and Harold. Taking what he had learned working in his father's men's furnishing shop in Plymouth he opened the Sterling Variety Store on East Main Street.



*Undated photo shows Sterling 5 & 10 on Main St*

Toyland was a place where children wandered through isles overflowing with items such as small trinkets, toy trains, bikes, sand toys, dolls, games and more. Adults could purchase smoking sets, military sets, handbags, garters, lamps, and glassware for under a dollar. By 1922, Cimmit expanded his store 200 feet adding a bargain basement costing \$10,000.

Cimmit took over a location formerly owned by C.W. Tammany opening his “notions” business. It quickly expanded into a place, as a 1920 ad heralded, where one could purchase “Gifts! And Everything you could think of for your father, mother, brother and sister.” The store's



*Sterling 5 & 10 on the left*

According to the US Inflation Calculator that figure would equate to \$191,348.21 today.

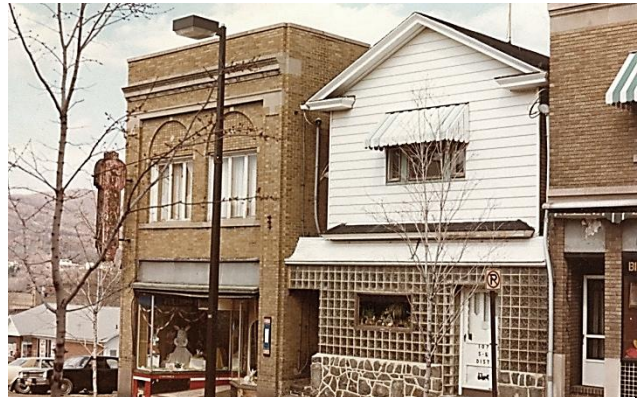
Life was good as the family enjoyed summers at their Harvey's Lake cabin and daughter Sylvia was one of five Nanticoke High School graduates named as an honor student at Bloomsburg State Normal School renamed Bloomsburg State Teachers College in 1927.

Cimmit enjoyed junkets with friends W.D. Jenkins, John L. Turner, Dr. Franklin Hill, Fred Quoos and William Crotzer. He also treated his employees, Sophia Golembieski, Victoria Ormanowski, Mary Kutsko, Esther Shipkowski, Viola Sliakowski, Helen Golembieski, Lottie Golembieski, Frances Prutnicki, Sophia Cacelski, Leonarda Kryzanski, Viola Pietrick, Harold Cimmit, John Kaczka, Edward Gajda, Isador Cimmit to outings at local parks to enjoy outdoor sports and a luncheon.

In 1934, Cimmit purchased 105 S. Market Street. where their son Harold operated a Variety Store with his wife Betty Zerensky Cimmit.



**201 State Street Harry and Dora Cimmet residence  
(1944)**

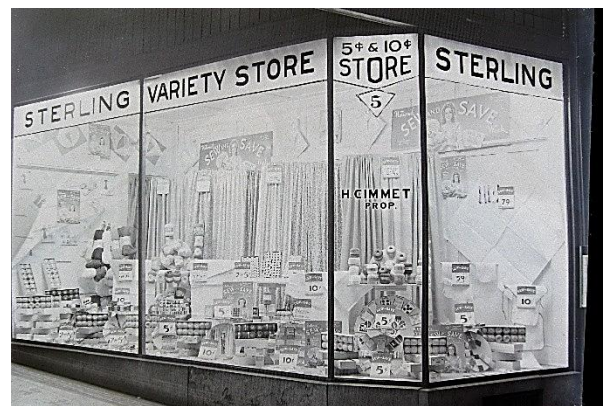


**105 S. Market – Next to a parking lot**

In 1948, the Sterling Variety Store now owned by Cimmit's Inc. continued to be the go-to store for sewing material at 4 yards for \$1 to umbrellas for \$2.77 and from Wheeling hot-dipped galvanized tubs for \$2.69 to Ladies slips for \$1.00.

# The National Needle Craft Bureau of New York

awarded Cimmitt's employee, Edward Gayda, honorable citations for his creative window displays in 1955 and 1956. Shoppers loved the store's Christmas-themed window displays, which added vibrant colors to Main Street.




***Cimmit's extensive window displays attracted shoppers to the store.***



Harold and Isadore Cimmit updated the store in 1956, which was at the time one of the oldest businesses in Nanticoke.

Throughout the 60s Cimmit's advertised great deals as it celebrated its Golden Jubilee 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Christmas specials and sidewalk sales continued throughout the 70s .

By 1977, the store closed, leaving only the sign to remember the days when the old 5 and 10 cent "variety" stores existed. The structures located between Main Street and Locust Street were taken down in 1997.

Harold Cimmit died in 1998. Son, Isadore Cimmit, passed away in 2001. A veteran of WWII, he was a prisoner of War captured in the Battle of the Bulge. Daughter Sylvia Cimmit passed away in 2003. All were laid to rest at Temple Isreal Cemetery in Swoyersville. 

THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 15, 1939

## CIMMET'S

Sterling Variety Store's

# GOLDEN JUBILEE

## 50<sup>TH</sup>

### Anniversary Sale

Yes! We are celebrating our fiftieth Year of business in the City of Nanticoke with outstanding bargains for you throughout our store.

Columbia, Mirvra	Knitting Worsteds	88¢	36" Print Flannels	3 Yds.	for \$1.00
4-Oh, Hank, Reg. \$1.29	Featherweight		80-Square Parcales	Reg. 40¢ yd. Value	
5-Oh, Hank Columbia-Mirvra	Knitting Worsteds	58¢	Ladies' Nylon Hosiery	39¢	
Men's Work Shirts	Reg. \$1.89 Heavy Blue Chambray	\$1.59	Girls' School Dresses	\$1.88	
Reg. \$1.89 Heavy Blue Chambray	12-18 and 12-20 Planted		Unshrinkable Percales & Gingham	\$1.33	
Boys' Corduroy Trousers	Size 4 to 12, Reg. \$2.99	\$2.99	Children's School Dresses	\$1.33	
Ladies' Print	Percale Dresses	\$1.88	Turkish Towels	44¢	
Formerly \$2.89	Cannon Sheets	\$1.88	"Poodle" Socks	47¢	
First Quality, 12" x 36" or 42" x 36"	Cannon Pillow Cases	88¢	Children's Field Umbrellas	77¢	
Men's Handkerchiefs	White-Button Striped	88¢	Ladies' Umbrellas	\$1.77	
Reg. 10¢ Each	Boys' Trousers	\$2.22	Water Pails, Dish Pans, and Waste Baskets	77¢	

See Our Special 50% Discount Counters  
New Items Being Added Daily!  
Come In And Celebrate Our GOLDEN JUBILEE With Us.  
YOU CAN ALWAYS DO BETTER AT

## CIMMET'S

Sterling Variety Store

5 East Main St. Nanticoke, Pa.

## Time Capsule Ceremony to be Held - At the Samantha Mill House

Proposed Date: September

Items will be gathered to place in a time capsule. More details will be given about this event. Please follow us on

Facebook and our website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org)



## Christmas Lottery:

Take A Chance and Win Cash for the upcoming Christmas Holiday. Watch the mail, we will be sending tickets to our members for our upcoming Christmas Lottery. Please return the tickets by December 1. The drawing will be held on December 15.

# In Honor and Memory

By John S. Tomko, Jr.

*IN HONOR AND MEMORY* is a feature profiling the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who lived in or around Nanticoke and who served during World War I and World War II.

## Edward Clement Mack (1900-1945)

Photo courtesy of the Nanticoke Historical Society

EDWARD CLEMENT (MACK) MACKIEWICZ was born in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, on June 15, 1900. He shares that birthday with Paul Mares, a renowned jazz trumpeter who led the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, a well-regarded band of the 1920s. Edward was the son of Joseph and Victoria (Nee Twardowski) Mackiewicz of 46 Slope Street. He was one of nine siblings.

News accounts of the day show Mack to be both well-known and well-rounded in education and athletics. He was a basketball star for Nanticoke High School from 1919-20. During World War I, Mack was a private in the Pennsylvania Reserve militia and served a year at Reserve Officers Training Camp in Westchester.

After graduation, he briefly worked for the Susquehanna Collieries Company and was a Battery A 109<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, Pennsylvania National Guard member. In April of 1921, he was appointed to the US Military Academy West Point after coming in second in the competitive examination. According to accounts, Mack's time at West Point was legendary in athletics and academics. He was ranked high among Academy scholars, played outstanding football, and was the heavyweight boxing champion in his junior and senior years. The best way to describe him is to quote the entry in *The Howitzer*, West Point Yearbook, 1925.

*Eddie is cer-tainly [sic] no exception, for he ranks in the van, not only in sports, but in the esteem of his classmates. His powerful build and native aggressiveness have made him a man to be feared, not only by Navy linemen but also in the ring. His ability in the 'line' may be attributed to some former position as a mess sergeant in the Pennsylvania National Guard. His highest fault is his singing of obligatos and folk songs between reveille and breakfast. Eddie is so devoted to his studies that, with the approval of the Academic Board he spent his entire First Class Christmas leave pouring over volumes of Elementary and Criminal Law. However, the Academic Board came out second in the contest. He leaves with us memories of a man—athlete, fighter, and friend.*

Mack graduated from West Point and was commissioned as a second lieutenant of infantry on June 12, 1925. He would attain the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in March 1931, Captain in August 1935, Major in June 1941, and Lieutenant Colonel in December 1941.

After commissioning, Mack spent three years at Camp Benning, Georgia, and was then sent to Panama, after which he was assigned to Camp Mills on Long Island, New York. Captain Mack married Nancy Hassig of Kansas City, Missouri, at Camp Mills in 1938. It is not known if Edward or Nancy had children. His home of record is listed as 339 N 17th Street, Kansas City, Missouri. Mack's next assignment was the Philippines. Things get murky



**Edward Clement (Mack) Mackiewicz**



concerning his assignments from this point forward. Some newspaper reports indicate that Mack served on General Douglas MacArthur's staff in Manila and Corregidor. These alleged statements of "fact" cannot be confirmed. The MacArthur Memorial Foundation in Norfolk, Virginia, has no record of Mack serving on MacArthur's staff, and there is no record of his being in Manila or on Corregidor at any time. It is unclear what role Mack had in the Philippines. As a major or lieutenant colonel, he could have been in command. However, his name is not on a list of US unit commanders or a staff officer at either battalion level (major) or senior staff (lieutenant colonel) in one of the two Corps headquarters in the area. Commanders and staff of US units are accounted for; Mack's name is not among them. Some local (Wilkes-Barre) reporting states that Mack participated in guerilla warfare against the Japanese in defense of Manila. This, too, cannot be confirmed. What is known is that Mack was wounded, perhaps by artillery or during aerial bombardment, in or around Manila and sent to Bataan to recuperate. At that time, Bataan was considered safe from the encroaching Japanese forces.

Mack's role at Bataan is unknown. What is known is that on April 9, 1942, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Clement Mack was one of seventy-five thousand (twelve thousand US and sixty-three thousand Philippine) troops captured by Japanese Imperial forces. He and others would suffer the indignities and cruelties that one human could visit upon another. Contrary to local newspaper reports, his "underground" activities against the Japanese while a prisoner cannot be confirmed. There is no direct eyewitness reporting regarding Mack at Bataan. However, Joseph L. Stepanski of East Ridge Street, Nanticoke, a survivor of the Death March, in an unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, mentions that he knew Mack, "a fine soldier and gentleman," for six months. Stepanski's account of the inhumane treatment by the Japanese echoes the many reports provided by others. Treatment endured by Mack during his time as a prisoner included beatings, malnutrition, the lack of sanitation and medical treatment, cramped living conditions, and overexposure to the elements, to name a few. While the Death March and subsequent incarceration at Camp O'Donnell, the Andersonville of the Pacific, were terrible, the trip to Japan on what was known as "Hell Ships" was unimaginable, especially for men who were exceedingly weak and malnourished.

**TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE**

## **Did You Know: According to a story published in the January 5, 1969, Sunday Independent**

*In 1969, Nanticoke City Mayor E. Edward Gorka, announced his belief that the area that is now Nanticoke was in fact 225 years old. His research of notes by Frank H. Hanawalt, published by Warne and Pierce, Bureau of Business Research, Penn State University, showed that Nanticoke was recognized and used as a settlement for many years prior to the Revolutionary War. In the early 1750's the Susquehanna Company came to Nanticoke with a charter or land grant given by Connecticut. Company leaders noted there were no roads leading to Nanticoke and no money in the settlement. The Susquehanna Company spent time determining the boundaries and drawing maps of the area and in 1771 an agreement with Lazarus Stewart and William Stewart granted them land to attract permanent settlers. Gorka's interest in the history of the Nanticoke area peaked in 1968 with the celebration of the city's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He believed it could easily be 225 years as the wilderness area of those days, did not have recorded land deeds.*

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# The Stickney Fire Company, Still Standing After All These Years

By Judy Minsavage

One might not notice it in passing, standing as it has for 113 years; brick darkened with age. No longer a center of activity or, for some, a home away from home. The sign overlooks Prospect Street, unnoticed, tinged by age but still readable, Stickney Fire Co.

Dipping back in time imagine you are a firefighter racing to a blaze not in the most modern of fire engines but instead pulling a four-wheel hose cart, the fire a mile away with some steep grades in your path. Well such was the case in 1885 when the Stickney Hose Company first organized. It was a daunting task, but the members stepped up to the challenge.

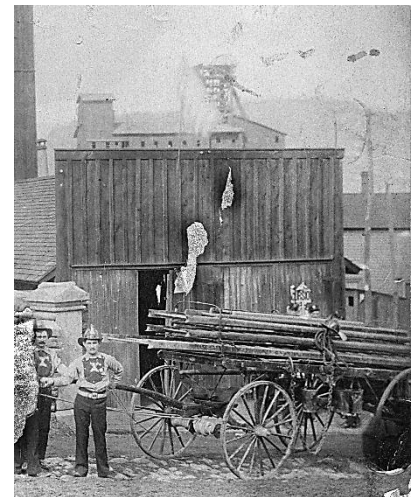
Joseph Stickney a superintendent for the Susquehanna Coal Company, organized the fire company with the following charter members: O.K. Bennett, A.A. Enke, J.S. Dietrick, Solomon Havard, Evan Pugh, Ernest Dietrick, W.H. Hedden, A.W. Rood, George Rhinard, C.S. Puckey, I.E. Leonard, A.A. Lape, A.J. Cutler, Morgan Price, A.K. Mowry. The officers were O.K. Bennett, president; J.S. Dietrick, secretary; A.A. Enke, treasurer; and A.A. Lape, fire chief.



*Stickney as a young man*



*The Stickney Fire Company Building on Prospect Street*



*The first Stickney hose cart*

Officially recognized by the Borough Council in 1889, the hose company was able to purchase horses to operate the first horse-drawn apparatus in the borough. The hose company's equipment was stored in a small wooden building behind the Susquehanna mine office at East Main and Store Alley where the popular store, Jimmy the Jeweler, stood years later.



*The Stickney Brass Band*

Giving the residents a break from everyday life, the Stickney Brass Band with John J. Morrell as bandmaster arranged fundraising concerts and picnics with rock drilling and bicycle contests. The band's immense popularity among residents led the musicians to focus on helping fund a new two-story firehouse on Spring Street. Planned events ran from June through September. During that time, the band appeared in



impressive new uniforms resembling those of the Innes Band and Seventh Regiment Band in New York.

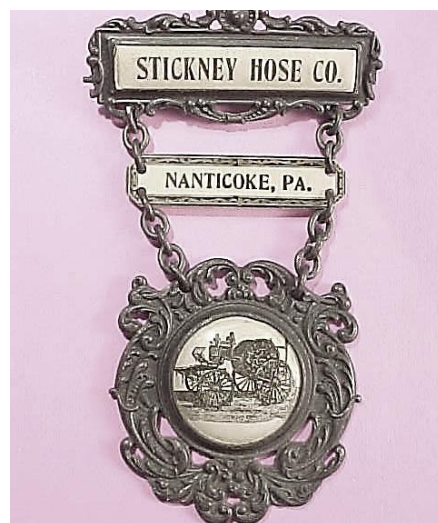
Joseph Stickney was living in New York at this time, but his love for Nanticoke and the hose company that held his name remained strong. As a gesture of respect he sent the men of the firehouse a \$100 check. an article that appeared in the Wilkes-Barre Record on March 16, 1899, stated “Stickney Hose Co. is composed of the best young men of our town, young men who by their gentlemanly conduct and bearing upon all occasions at home or away and their excellent work in fighting fires have won the hearts and respect of everybody.”

Historical records indicate that Nanticoke City Council sold the team of horses, making the transportation of the fire cart reliant once again on “human effort.”

In 1897, the company moved to a new home at the Corner of Market and Spring Street. Meeting and lounge rooms were set up at the expense of the members. It served as the company’s headquarters for 14 years.

The company prospered over the next few years but by 1909, news items announced that a meeting took place in the firehouse at the request of W.W. Bittenbender to consider changing the systems from paid fire fighters to volunteers. The company wanted to purchase horses and harnesses once again, the council agreed to convene to discuss the matter. The Stickney Brass Band disbanded, making the ability to garner funds more difficult.

Stickney weathered the storm and remained strong and by 1911, with construction underway on a new building on Prospect Street, officers thought it time to request council to purchase a Seagraves Auto Chemical Truck for \$5,792. Council agreed with the condition that the men would have to raise at least \$1,790 to go toward the purchase. Things began to look up for the company financially and by 1912 they were secure in their new building with funds for the Seagraves within reach. Many in the community were wary of the purchase of the Seagraves as the auto industry was by some accounts “experimental.” Residents felt it wouldn’t really work but after the truck was delivered, Thousands of people came to see the new engine.



*The Seagraves, Stickney's first motorized fire engine*

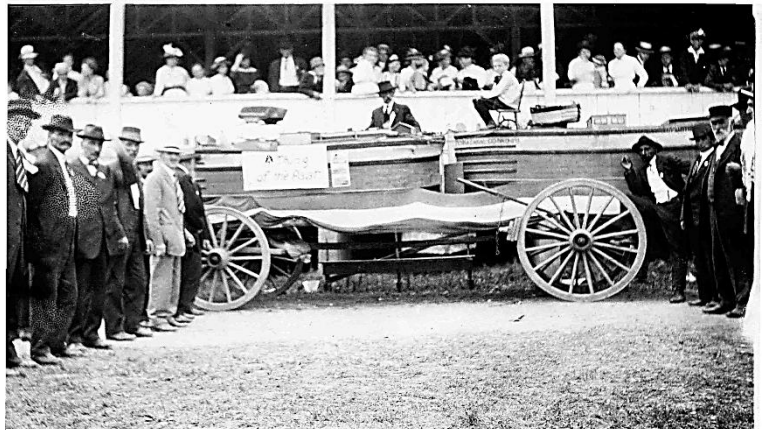
Officers in 1913 were Robert F. Waters, president; Oscar Lecher, vice-president; William Williams, recording secretary; Roland George, financial secretary; James Watkins, trustee; and George Loewer, treasurer. Even a number of prominent musicians decided to reorganize the Stickney Brass Band. Director, Robert Davison promised to devote all the time he could spare to get the band up to its former standard of perfection.



Once again the men of the Stickney were not only known for their firefighting prowess but also for their engagement with the community.

They organized picnics, quoit matches, baseball games, and a large street exposition featuring a stage and atop the Stickney Fire Station placed the largest light the city had ever seen. Many stores donated merchandise, and individuals contributed assorted items.

By 1936, Stickney was still using the Seagreaves with Theodore Thomas as the driver. A tribute to the company also honored Barry Pensyl as the first driver of the unit. C.S. Puckey and Ernest Dietrick were the two oldest members. The Number Seven Breaker fire served as the company's biggest challenge. The structure was



*The Stickney Fire Company Street Exhibition*



*Undated photo - Fire at Raphael's Store on Main Street Nanticoke*

Stickney rose to the challenge and helped to raise \$13,675, for a new American LaFrance pumper.

In 1955, former Governor John S. Fine spoke at a testimonial dinner honoring forty-year members, Thomas Witheridge, John Turner, Phillip Faust, Delbert Oplinger, Ralph Maynard and William Williams. Throughout the 50s and 60s Stickney sponsored junkets to football games, picnics, bowling teams clambakes.

In 1963, Officers were Edward Lewis, president, Thomas Hiscox, vice-president; Albert Paige, secretary; William Jonathan, treasurer; fire officers listed as: William Jonathan, assistant chief; John Barton, foreman; Albert Paige,

destroyed, but the men succeeded in saving surrounding homes. Other notable fires included the Keystone Building on North Market Street; the Broadway Hotel, Sam Wormser's Paint Shop, John Smoulter Building, No 1 Shaft fan house, Bergin's Mill, Broadway; Poland Hotel, Hanover and Broad Streets; Raphael's Store, Main Street; St. Mary's Church and the Criterion Building, Shea Street.

As the Seagreaves became the oldest existing fire truck in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties the need to replace it became evident. Once again the

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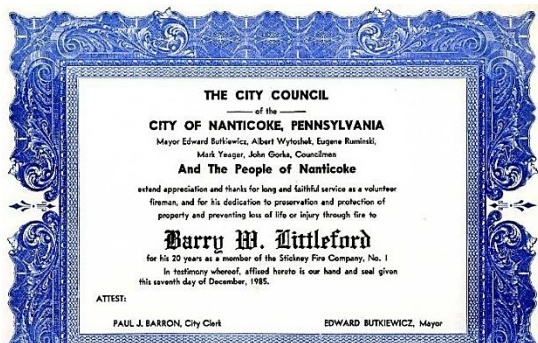
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*One of many events sponsored by the Stickney Fire Company*

first assistant foreman; Charles Sullivan, second assistant foreman. The drivers were Robert Bray, George Jones, assistant drivers Donald Jones and John Maynard. Nanticoke and Stickney prepared for the Six-County Firemen's Convention set for June of that year.

Upon celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1965, the company honored nine veteran members Thomas Witheridge, William Oplinger, John Turner, Ralph Maynard, Summers Puckey, Bert Walker, Dr. J.F. Hill, Henry Herman,



**Barry Littleford - One of the last members to be honored for years of service.**

One of the last members honored for 20 years of service was Barry M. Littleford. The Stickney celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1985 with a banquet and dinner dance. In 2006

The city council voted to close the building and move its equipment to Nanticoke Fire Department Headquarters.


The Newport Township Fire Company took possession of the Stickney fire truck. Stickney Fire Company members included Jim Kascowicz, Millard Galat, Joe Michalek, Jack Morris, Jack Morris II, Dick Uhing, Justin Kascowicz and John Barton.

As we pass by the Stickney Fire Company we must note that this brick-and-mortar building stands strong against time, still proudly holding the name of the man that organized it more than one hundred years ago. The building holds a connection to us, reflected in the bravery

and pride of those who have served and those who are presently serving the city of Nanticoke. It stands, steadfast, for the community to continue to appreciate.



**Portraits of Joseph and Carolyn Stickney**

Between 1900 and 1902 Joseph Stickney along with his partner William Lord Conyngham built the Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. It is one of the last grand hotels surviving. It has been declared a National Historic Landmark. Guests of the hotel include celebrities, presidents and notable politicians. Portraits of Joseph Stickney and his wife Carolyn have decorated the walls of the hotel for many years. 

--- OFFICERS ---

President .....	H. Robert Bray
Vice President .....	Millard P. Galat, Jr.
Secretary .....	George Jones
Treasurer .....	William D. Jenkins

VETERAN MEMBERS

Henry Herman .....	1935	Bernard Schappert .....	1958
Edward J. Lewis .....	1947	James Davenport .....	1950
Thomas Hiscox .....	1947	George Jones .....	1959
William E. Davis .....	1947	John Maynard .....	1959
John K. Evans .....	1949	William Fink .....	1962
H. Robert Bray .....	1952	William D. Jenkins .....	1963
John R. Barton .....	1954	Theodore Raski .....	1964
Albert Paige .....	1955	William Kearney .....	1964

ACTIVE MEMBERS

Barry Littleford .....	1965	Joseph Walter .....	1976
Joseph Timko .....	1968	James Smith .....	1977
Millard Galat, Jr. ....	1970	Richard Uhing .....	1978
Robert S. Bray .....	1972	Peter Ball .....	1979
Stanley Wall .....	1972	John J. Owens .....	1979
James Carey .....	1972	Thomas Wall .....	1980
Albert Brown .....	1973	Edward Brosh .....	1980
Jack Morris .....	1973	Robert Kilsh .....	1981
Joseph Chopolis .....	1973	James Kasowicz .....	1983
Eugene McDermott .....	1973	David Barton .....	1983
Paul Ushinski .....	1973	Harold Donlin .....	1983
Thomas Kmetz .....	1976	John Butsek .....	1984

**100th Anniversary booklet - 1985**



# ON SALLY'S CORNER

## A Summer Song

by Sally Gorgas

### Doll Show Held At Playground

A doll show was held yesterday afternoon at St. Mary's Playground. Judges for the doll contest were Michael Sinco, Katherine Hanish, Judith Kaczmarczyk and Rita Mackowiak.

Prizes were awarded to the following: Biggest, Sharon Shipierski; smallest, Barbara Salkiewicz; prettiest, Janette Troyan; most unusual, Sally Ann Haydock; prettiest hand made outfit, Mary Ann Standish; most natural looking, Patricia Haydock.

Consolation prizes were awarded to Alice Pollin, Joanne Cyron, Mary Ann Hvozda, Carol Popeck, Nancy Shipierski, Marlene Wilczynski, Marlene Marke, Donna Marie Baran, Lorraine Baran, Diane Ferucci and Camille Ferucci.

No more pencils, no more books! How we sang that song every year on the last day of school. Even though St. Mary's School was in my backyard, summers were a time for fun and not thinking of anything else.

The sound of kids playing filled the neighborhood, riding bikes and staying out until the streetlights came on. Then we would do it all over the next day. Hear that bell? It was the Mr. Softee ice cream truck. A nice treat at the end of a day.

Summertime was a three-month vacation; we never got bored. At the beginning of the summer, I would get my hair cut short. Before school started, I would get a perm from Marie's

beauty shop on South Street. How I hated that perm.



**Mr. Softee Ring**

Our family never went on vacation as times were tough, but we never seemed to mind. However, we did go on many day trips. Going for Sunday drives was fun. We never knew where we were going.

My dad, John Haydock, ran a taxi service from the early 1950s to the early 1960s. His dark gray car, with 'Nanticoke Taxi' boldly printed on its doors, was unmistakable as it cruised down the street. Although I often felt embarrassed riding in it, those feelings vanished when we stopped at McDonald's for a special treat. They had a walk-up window, and we enjoyed our meals in the car. Sans Souci Park was always a delightful adventure where we often met many of our friends.

Another adventure was going to the airport to watch the planes land and depart from the observation deck. How times have changed.

The kids in the neighborhood were also my classmates. I would play with Mary Ann and Lorraine all summer. The playground behind St. Mary's School was always buzzing with activities. We would have crafting sessions and competitions featuring stuffed animals and dolls. It was a sad day when the playground was closed for the season. It was neat playing around St. Mary's School with the knowledge that we didn't have to go into the building!

Alas, the summer flew by, and we were back to reading, writing and arithmetic. We had many fun times in the neighborhood. We could remember those three months while anxiously awaiting their return.



**Me beside Dad's Taxi**



**Visit to the airport.**



**Fun at Sans Souci Park**

## **Last Issue's Mystery Question**

**In 1968, What event brought attention to Nanticoke that involved a small rodent named Astro?**

In August of 1968, the Nanticoke Rocketry Club announced its plans to send a mouse named Astro, nine hundred feet into the air on a three-engine cluster rocket subjecting the small rodent to approximately ten times the force of gravity. The public was invited to attend the September event which featured the club's launch of thirty or more additional rockets.

On September 25, Astro was launched into the air reaching an astounding 1,478 feet on a rocket built by Brian Shiptoski and Stanley Gritsewicz. Everyone held their breath as the rocket descended about nine hundred feet away from the launch pad. Would Astro be retrieved in good condition? The answer was yes. Astro survived his trip and everyone celebrated the feat.

## **New Mystery Question**

**In 1906, why did Cecilia Richardson of Church Street, Nanticoke, name her twin daughters after the Delaware and Hudson Railroad?**



**We hope you enjoyed this issue of the Nanticoke Historical Society's publication of Nanticoke Legacy. Please help us to continue to bring you the Society news and stories that reflect our proud history.**

**Please let us know your thoughts, email our office [nhs63@comcast.net](mailto:nhs63@comcast.net) or contact us through our website chat button.**

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