



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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WONDERING WHAT TO DO WITH OLD PHOTOS AND MEMORABILIA?

Our loved ones have a history. Their life stories are deeply rooted in their community as residents, veterans, business owners, teachers, members of organizations and so much more. The Nanticoke Historical Society realizes and respects how important each person's story is to their relatives and friends as well as the community in which they lived. That is why the Society respectfully asks those who have lost a loved one to consider the historical society when taking stock of memorabilia and photos.

The Society may already have pieces of a family's history in its vast database to which pictures of an old homestead, business, rare family photos or writings can be added completing a genealogical picture in tribute to those who have passed.

We sometimes find ourselves with memorabilia or photos passed down through generations. Certain photographs may depict historical scenes of Nanticoke, including streets or buildings that have since been demolished or altered. Society archivists will scan and, if requested, return items to families. We may decline items we cannot use or store; however, we can help families sort through old photos or memorabilia that could hold historical value for the city.

For more information or to donate items Contact the Historical Society at 570-258-1367 or email: nhs63@comcast.net 

Trim your tree with tradition! This holiday season, bring a sparkle of Nanticoke's history into your home with the Nanticoke Historical Society's exclusive Christmas Ornament.

Each ornament is more than decoration—it's a keepsake of our shared story. Every purchase supports the Society's mission to preserve and celebrate our community's heritage. Perfect for your own tree or as a heartfelt gift for family and friends.

Available now at the Society office, 495 E. Main Street (next to the Mill Memorial Library). \$5.00 plus shipping. For more information, call 570-258-1367.

Let your holiday shine with heritage—purchase your ornament today and help history sparkle for generations to come

WE CAN HELP

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, CLUBS, ASSOCIATIONS, BUSINESSES, AND MORE? WE ARE YOUR GO TO PLACE TO RESEARCH NANTICOKE'S PAST.

OUR OFFICE HOURS ARE MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY 9 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

OR CALL US AT 570-258-1367

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



OUR WEBSITE

www.nanticokehistoryonline.org

EMAIL

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Looking for a Christmas gift for Family or Friends – Consider a Nanticoke Historical Society Membership

Call our office at 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 have access to our library and an initial research request.



Membership Fees

Individual \$35

Family \$40



**Honoring the Legacy of Society Member
Charles Petrillo**

**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

Stephanie Shern

Andrew Sherbine

Mike Hill

Peoples Security Bank and Trust Company

Platinum

John Gregorowicz

Shelly Jones

Silver

Tom and Donna Perch

David Hill

Leslie Hoffman

Michele Jones

Heidi and Paul Jarecki

Joyce Hulslander

Cynthia Guffey

Martin Zola

Barbara Leggins

Mary Louise Hill

Cinda Hartman

THANK YOU !!

The President's Corner

By Chet Zaremba

In previous Nanticoke Legacy publications, I wrote about the newfound tremendous cooperation of the members of the Society in making our 30th Anniversary Celebration such a resounding success. Well, as Yogi Berra would say, "It's déjà vu all over again."



We are in the midst of our annual "Holiday Raffle" and it is now obvious that it will be a super success. Although our home crew did a tremendous job on our side, the real stars of the show are you, the rank-and-file members of this tremendous organization. The returns are coming in on a daily basis. Not only are you buying or selling tickets that were sent to you, but many have also asked for more. In addition to the ticket returns many have also sent in a donation. Others have noted that if they should win, the Society should keep the winnings. The members of the Nanticoke Historical Society are simply – great people and I am proud to be in the position that I am as I get to interact with you on a daily basis. To all of our 100 plus members, you are the Nanticoke Historical Society, and you are the reason why after 30 years, it still works.

Additional Scholarships To Be Awarded

George E. Shern and I grew up together in the Dewey Park area of Nanticoke. When the property where the Samantha Mill House stands was nothing more than wild growing underbrush, we carved tunnels and played "war" (Note: The Mill Memorial Library itself was not built until 1958). We had fun on these very grounds. George became a life member of the Nanticoke Historical Society although he lived in New Jersey. He was very generous toward all of our events and activities.

Upon his untimely passing in 2021, his wife, Stephanie, also a Society life member, donated \$5,000 to us for whatever purpose we would see fit. It was decided that we needed a professional sign indicating our location. The donation was then used to procure and establish the sign we have today, noting that it was erected in his memory.

Stephanie and I have kept in touch over the years and has likewise been a supporter to the extent that she has become a diamond member.

Stephanie recently contacted me with an offer to sponsor a Historical Society Scholarship in remembrance of her husband George for a Greater Nanticoke Area High School graduating senior. She has provided us with \$2,000 of scholarship money to administer in the way we find most appropriate.

Our Board of Directors, along with the input of Dr. Ronald Grevera, Superintendent of the GNA school district, will be working together on this project and will keep the membership advised of progress.

This effort is in addition to the scholarship first initiated in 2024 by Society member John S. Tomko in honor of his late father John Stanley Tomko Sr. We thank them both for their generosity. 🙏

In 1795, the Governor of Massachusetts, Samuel Adams and famous night rider, Paul Revere decided that the time in which they lived would always be a source of interest and wonder. So they put together a time capsule. In it they stored coins, newspapers and historical documents. Discovered in 1855 when repairs were done to the Massachusetts State House, it became known as the first “modern time capsule.” It was opened once again in 2015 at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Undoubtedly much was learned from the contents about the men and about the time.



Officers and Society members gathered for Time Capsule Event in October

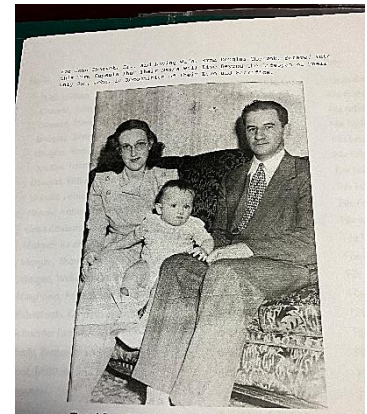
It's About Time.....

As the Nanticoke Historical Society approached the close of its 30th year anniversary, we reflected on how best to commemorate the remarkable achievements of the Society. Events Coordinator, Tania Gronkowski,



Only some of the many items chosen for the time capsule

proposed that the best way to honor this legacy was to fill a time capsule with memories and stories reaching back to the 1800s. The opening is set for 2076 the year of our nation's tricentennial.



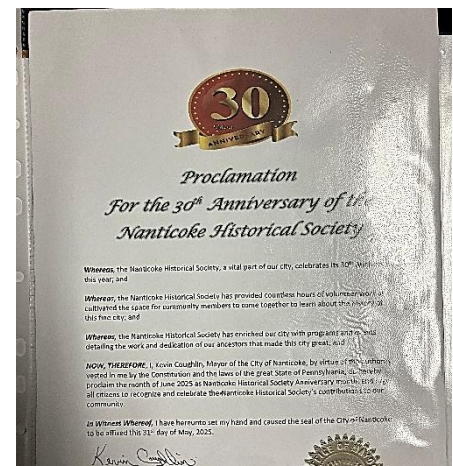
Family biographies and photos included

In recent months, members and volunteers were asked to submit photographs, personal histories, and records documenting life in

Nanticoke reflecting how their experiences have influenced the community. We carefully chose historical documents, books, records and artifacts in our archives as well as selecting everyday items that represent today's grocery and gas prices, popular music, movies, and the lifestyles of our residents. Included are items that may puzzle or amuse those who open the capsule. Technology is advancing at such a rate these items will be deemed ancient. We are



Society member, Gary Gronkowski prepares time capsule burial site on grounds of Society Offices at the Samantha Mill House



Items were sheathed in protective packaging



Society Members inspect the items to be included in the time capsule from left, Stan Sherman, Chris Warchal, Paul Warchal, John Tomko, Sally Gorgas, Jeff Warchal.



Nanticoke Mayor, Kevin Coughlin, enjoyed the day with Society members and friends.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Society member John S. Tomko Jr. for his generous donation, which made this project possible. We also thank all our volunteers, and contributors whose memories, photos, and stories have helped us create a time capsule that truly reflects the spirit and history of Nanticoke.



Event sponsor, John Tomko, ceremoniously lowers the time capsule

hardships faced, and that we were proud to say we lived in Nanticoke. May these memories inspire future generations to cherish their own stories and continue building the legacy of Nanticoke. Thanks, again, to all who contributed; together we've built a bridge across generations. 📸

confident that when the capsule is opened, it will be treasured and will inspire new stories for generations to come.

On Sunday, October 26, items were carefully placed into the container and sealed during a special ceremony. The following day, after meticulous site preparation by Society member Gary Gronkowski on the grounds of the Samantha Mill House, the time capsule was lowered into its resting place. The exact location of the time capsule has been carefully measured and recorded, and a plaque will be attached to our Nanticoke Historical Society sign to mark the location and memorialize the event.



Gary Gronkowski makes sure the site is complete and ready for the time capsule



Society President, Chet Zaremba reads a statement commemorating the event as his wife Henrietta and Society Director of Operations, John Telencho, look on.



ceremonial shovel of dirt is tossed

Society Granted Tour of Retreat State Correctional Facility

By Tania Gronkowski

Recently the Society was fortunate to tour the SCI Retreat facility in Hunlock Creek. Permission from the Department of Corrections had to be obtained through a number of steps: completing forms, numerous emails and phone calls. We were escorted by security and had to remain together on the same floor at all times. Our guide was informative and had wonderful anecdotes to share from his time working at the facility. His memories helped bring Retreat to life.

We took photos and toured the powerhouse, administration building and housing unit C. These buildings contained many rooms which took most of the day to photograph. There was no wasted space in this facility, and we were impressed by how unusually shaped areas were utilized.

One of the surprising finds was the artwork done by the inmates. They truly brightened up the areas and gave life to the uniform hallways. The inmates were not allowed to sign their work, so the artists remain anonymous.

We were able to step inside the cells and see the little amount of comfort provided. It made us appreciate privacy, soft seating, comfortable mattresses and the freedom to go when and where we choose to. We all agreed that we would not survive being incarcerated.

The number of offices was vast, and it must have been quite the bustling hive of activity. It is a sad reality that every door had to be solid with a sturdy lock. The number of cells and guard stations made it clear that this was a challenging workplace. The great number of lockers helped us to imagine just how many workers were employed at the facility.

The family visitation room was adorned with murals to appear more cheerful, but the visitor screening room made it clear this was still a prison. There were play areas for children, reading nooks and a photography area to make the visit more comfortable.

We will be returning to Retreat in the Spring as there are still many more buildings to document and photograph. There was something unnerving about driving over the grated bridge to get to the facility, but it was even better driving over it to leave. The view of the Susquehanna River is beautiful, and the facility is nestled between picturesque mountains. It has the feeling of a place out of the flow of time. It was not hard to picture the poor farm that once stood on the same property.

We are grateful for the opportunity to tour this remarkable facility and to record its history through photos and stories. We look forward to going back. Thank you to our guide and to those in charge who made this possible. **BE SURE TO READ MORE STORIES AND SEE MORE PHOTOS IN OUR NEXT ISSUE OF NANTICOKE LEGACY!!**



Aerial view of SCI Retreat



Photos of old Nanticoke Adorn New Bank Location

Shortly after Peoples Security Bank and Trust Company relocated from 194 South Market Street, the Society was honored to receive a thoughtful request from Branch Manager Nicole Nevel. The bank expressed a genuine desire to highlight the rich history and spirit of Nanticoke by displaying photographs of the city from years past in their new location. Recognizing the significance of this gesture, Society president Chet Zaremba eagerly delved into our extensive digital library, carefully selecting images that would beautifully and respectfully represent our beloved city.

Today, these photographs proudly adorn the lobby, conference room, and offices of Peoples Bank 75 North Market Street branch, serving as a tribute to Nanticoke's enduring legacy. We deeply appreciate Peoples Security Bank for their commitment to honoring our community's heritage and for their generous donation to the Society. Their support not only enriches the bank's environment but also strengthens our shared mission to preserve and celebrate the history of Nanticoke. 📸



1885 Mine Accident Remembered

December 18, 2025, is the anniversary of one of the deadliest mine accidents to occur in Nanticoke. One hundred and forty years ago workers were arriving in the early morning hours for their shift at the Ross Vein #1 Slope Mine in Honey Pot. It would be a day that 27 of those men and boys, would not return home. Workers stationed a thousand feet away from the exit shaft quickly became trapped after a cave-in occurred. However, the situation grew even more dire when a thick blend of water and culm poured in, immobilizing the miners in a sludge resembling quicksand, making escape impossible. Today the site remains untouched. The foundation of an old motor house is still visible with pieces of coal heaped in what is a makeshift memorial. There have been efforts to erect a sign memorializing the tragedy. The entire story plus the known names of the miners lost can be found on our website **EVENTS AND STORIES PAGE** www.nanticokehistoryonline.org and in "Under the Witness Tree" A book available on our website, published by the Society in 2022, 📖

The Clock, the Company, and the Man

In July, Peoples Security Bank and Trust Company prepared to relocate from the historic Miners Trust Building at the corner of Market and Broad Streets to their new address at 75 North Market Street. During a meeting with Branch Manager Nicole Nevel, Chet Zaremba—President of the Nanticoke Historical Society—noticed an antique clock mounted on the wall behind Nevel’s desk and asked about its origins.



The Miners Bank and Trust Company Clock now on display at Society offices



Intricate wiring and connections in the base of the clock cabinet

Nevel explained that the clock, manufactured by O.B. McClintock, was more than a timepiece. In the 1920s, it served as a security timing device for the Miners Trust Company. This practice was common in banking history, where specialized clocks were integrated into vault mechanisms to ensure safes could only be opened during preset hours—offering customers a greater sense of security.

Nevel provided service records documenting the clock’s maintenance over the years. Shortly thereafter, she generously offered the clock to the Historical Society for display—an offer Zaremba gladly accepted.

Legacy in Time

O.B. McClintock was known for founding the American Bank Protection Company in 1908, specializing in security systems. He later partnered with Freeman Loomis to form the McClintock-Loomis Clock Company. Their clocks were marketed with exclusivity and prestige, often bearing the tagline: “*We sell to but one bank in each city or town.*”



Brass plate showing O.B. McClintock as manufacturer




Connectors and switches at the top of the clock cabinet



*Clock at the corner of the Miners
Trust Building*

Although little has been recorded about McClintock as there is no known biography or memoir, his legacy endures through these mechanical marvels, leaving his clocks to speak on his behalf. They were not only functional but symbolic, projecting an image of trust and sophistication to the communities they served.

An clock, costing over \$4,000, was installed on the outside corner of the Miners Trust Building. Based on photographic evidence from the late 1920s or early 1930s, its design strongly suggests McClintock's craftsmanship. After many years of service, in 1944 the clock was removed when it could no longer be repaired. Its whereabouts never documented.

We at the Nanticoke Historical Society would like to thank Ms. Nevel and Peoples Security Bank for allowing us to be the stewards of this priceless wall clock. It presently holds a special place in the foyer of the Samantha Mill House. We invite you to come and enjoy a piece of Nanticoke History, reminiscent of a time when ingenuity and design signified assurance and trust. 

Add a hard copy of "Nanticoke Legacy" to Your Library or Collection!

Are you passionate about preserving local history?

A subscription to Nanticoke Legacy will ensure that you receive a hard copy of this quality full color magazine directly to your mailbox. It is the perfect way to enrich your library, personal collection or to share stories, photographs, and insights from Nanticoke's vibrant past with family and friends. Each issue offers a unique window into the lives, businesses, and events that shaped our community.

We are offering two types of subscription

\$12 per issue which includes mailing

\$48 for the next four publications, includes mailing

To subscribe, please send a check in the preferred amount payable along with your name and address, to the Nanticoke Historical Society, and mail it to our offices – 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke, PA 18634. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to bringing you more engaging and informative content.

Tale of Two Banks

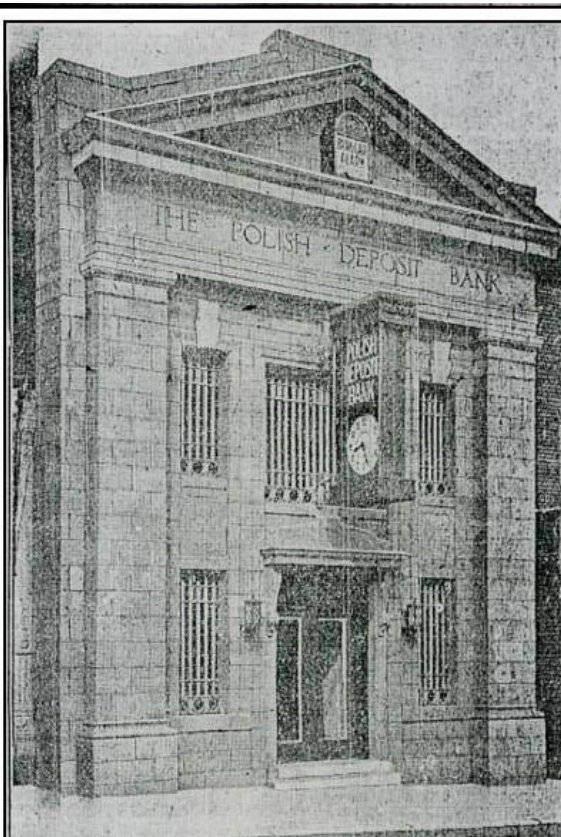
By Judy Minsavage

Still looking as impressive as it did on its opening day in 1924, the Miners Trust Building has stood empty only a few times in its long history. Its previous vacancies were brief, but this time, the duration is uncertain. The history of the building is closely connected to another former bank in Nanticoke, creating a rich and compelling story.



Miners Trust Bank Building

The history of Miners National Bank runs deep. As research shows the US Treasury Department approved an application to organize in 1902, but a mining strike forced the organizers to postpone the opening. According to our records once it opened, it operated out of what was known then as the Mill Building.



Polish Deposit Bank

During the same period of time, The Polish Deposit Bank was operating on South Market Street the site of Mikes Meat market. At the helm, Attorney J.P. Lord. officers Stanley Budzinski, treasurer; Michael Cannon, secretary; John Karboski, vice-president and Emil Malinowski, president. Organizers constructed a building on Market Street with ultra-modern offices and opened to thousands of visitors. By all accounts the bank was financially healthy

longer reflected their original vision as a “people’s bank.” The controversy eventually subsided

In 1923, The Hill Drug Store was demolished to build the new Miners Trust Company at the corner of Market and West Broad Streets.

In 1922, Miners Savings and Trust Company encountered internal problems as five original board members became dissatisfied with the bank’s management. They publicly announced in the Wilkes-Barre Record that they had “severed their connections with the bank,” citing that it no



Hill Drug Store

Banks Merge

In June 1924, the histories of these two banks converged. Records indicate that the Polish Deposit Bank and the Miners Trust Bank unified, with the officers of the Polish Deposit Bank assuming leadership of Miners Trust.

The Polish Bank Building was demolished, and a new building designed by Austin L. Reilly was

planned. The building was intended to be a showcase of model workmanship with Miners Trust Bank prominently engraved into the front and side of the structure ensuring a lasting presence in the city. It featured a granite base, white limestone walls, marble floors, wainscoting, and murals. The building opened on John Mitchell Day in October 1929, with Emil Malinowski as president, John Karboski as vice president, Michael J. Cannon as secretary, and Bernard Malinowski as cashier.



Opening day deposits totaled \$360,000, or \$6,820,547.37 in today's dollars. According to a 2015 Citizens Voice article by William C. Kashatus, under the National Bank Act, more than 10,000 banks across the country printed their own bank notes. Both Glen Lyon and Miners Bank were permitted to issue currency backed by U.S. Treasury bonds. By its sixth anniversary celebration, Miners Trust Bank had become a leader not only in Nanticoke but the Wyoming Valley.

In 1928, O.B. McClintock received a contract to install a night depository vault that featured "electrical protection." Security measures, including wiring and a burglar alarm, safeguarded the entire depository, effectively preventing unauthorized entry. The bank's board of directors appointed Dr. J. Franklin Hill as director, son of Dr. J.F. Hill, one of the founders of the Polish Deposit Bank.

On January 30, 1931, the United States Treasurer issued a charter authorizing Miners Trust Bank to operate under federal law as a national bank. In 1933, John Malinowski became president of the institution that his father, Emil Malinowski, had established.

In 1949, the bank took on the role of treasurer for the school district and received a yearly salary of one dollar.

Throughout the 1950s, the Miners Trust prospered by offering auto, personal, and home repair loans. Christmas Clubs that became popular after the Great Depression were still popular among its customers. In 1952, stockholders of the First National Bank on East Main voted to merge with Miners Bank, offering



Sixth anniversary souvenir

valuable prizes and corsages for the ladies. Historical records show the Miners National Bank in Nanticoke merged with the Miners National Bank of Wilkes-Barre. After the merger, the original Miners National Bank of Nanticoke no longer operated independently or under its own charter.

In 1962, residents flocked to the Market Street office to witness a “face-lift.” The bank launched additional services and updated its facilities, with the interior featuring “soft green walls highlighted by darker green accents,” new teller counters, low glass dividers, stylish bronze chandeliers, and refreshed boardrooms and offices. President John Malinowski greeted visitors, joined by advisory board members including:

- Arnold Biscontini
- Frank Borguszewski
- Isadore Cimmet
- Dr. Franklin Hill
- Chester Jacoby
- Delbert Oplinger
- Stanley Warakowski
- Edward Creter
- Alphonse Edmundowicz
- John Evans
- The Honorable John S. Fine
- Albert Fink
- Gerald Mangan
- Peter Mayock
- William Samuel
- Charles Wasilewski
- George Yatsko

In 1968, Chester Jacoby, vice-president of the Miners National Bank of Wilkes-Barre welcomed new office staff members, From left Marcia Alles, Linda Siko, and Theresa Butz. Also joining the staff were Anna Mae Jones and Madeline Veronick, (not pictured)

Over the years, the Miners Trust Company Building has changed hands several times:

- United Penn Bank (1978–mid 1980s)
- Mellon Bank (mid 1980s–vacated circa 1990)
- Cornerstone Technologies/Nanticoke Micro Technologies (1991–2000)

OFFICERS and STAFF

The Officers, Staff and Advisory Committee of
The Nanticoke Market Street Branch
 THE MINERS NATIONAL BANK OF WILKES-BARRE

extend an invitation to all of you to attend the
 formal celebration of our new affiliation

Tomorrow, December 3
 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

These members of the Advisory Committee will be
 here to greet you and extend a sincere welcome

JOHN MALINOWSKI Chairman
 STANLEY W. WARAKOWSKI
 H. S. TWAROWSKI
 ALBERT REES
 DR. J. FRANKLIN HILL
 FRANK S. BORGUSZEWSKI

And there will be...

- Valuable Prizes
- Holiday Corsages for the Ladies
- A Program of Organ Music

Please plan to drop in
 some time tomorrow
 and help us celebrate!

1952 Officers and Staff, John Malinowski, H.S. Twarnowski, Wyrewood Flowers, Robert Twarnowski, Thomas Jones, Margaret Estock, Geraldine Appleby, Victoria Mierzwa, Helen Krutulla, Henry Schwartz, Helen Ormanowski, Dorothy Bawinski, Harold Brislin Anna Dalmas



- First National Community Bank (2002–2024)
- Peoples Security Bank & Trust (December 2024–2025)

Throughout its history, the building has remained a prominent fixture in Nanticoke, adapting to the needs of the community and reflecting the city's changing economic landscape. Its enduring presence stands as a testament to the resilience and evolution of both the local banking industry and the community it serves. We can only hope that the building will continue as a location for a banking institution or repurposed so that future generations can be reminded of its long history. 🏠

Chair Once Belonging to Samantha Mill is Back Home

A family reunion of sorts, no hugs and kisses at this one though. Just sister chairs reunited and sitting side by side after decades of being apart. At the beginning of the year, the Wassell family contacted the Society, relating the story of how their family came to possess one chair from a set belonging to the late Samantha Mill. Aware of its early beginnings, they offered it to the Society for display. Of course, there was a resounding yes from Society President Chet Zaremba.



The family stated that while the chair had been reupholstered, its original structure and design remained unchanged. Research reveals the chairs are of Victorian design blended with Rococo and Baroque influences, a style that is reminiscent of Victorian Revival. A popular design manufactured in the mid-20th century.

Looking absolutely fabulous, definitely a beautiful addition to the Mill House, the chair will hold a place of honor as its sister chairs have done for many years at the society office. We are grateful to the Wassell family for their donation to the Society and for bringing a piece of history back to its original home for everyone to enjoy.

DID YOU KNOW

In July 1990 the Greater Nanticoke Area Trojan Band participated in the Endless Mountain Festival competing with bands from New York and Pennsylvania. The band took first place honors in Group Two as well as special awards for best percussion and best band front. The Trojan band was awarded the Maurice D. Taylor Band of Excellence Award.

IN HONOR AND MEMORY

By John S. Tomko, Jr.

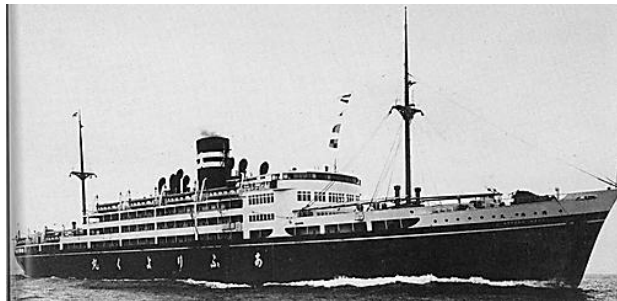
IN HONOR AND MEMORY is a feature profiling the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who lived in or around Nanticoke and who served during World War I and World War II.

Edward Clement Mack (1900-1945)

Part 2

It is estimated that the Japanese moved approximately 126,000 allied and civilian prisoners out of the combat zones to Japan, Korea, and China to serve as slave labor and punishment or to be used as subjects for experimentation. Of these, about 1,540 died of violence aboard the hell ships and the conditions in the holds. An additional 19,000 prisoner deaths are attributed to Allied air and submarine attacks on the unmarked vessels.

Mack was one of 1,607 prisoners evacuated from the Philippines on December 13, 1944, on the hell ship *Oryoku Maru*, a former luxury liner requisitioned for its new role, for the forty-seven-day trip to Japan. Approximately twenty-five feet below the main deck, the hold had double-tiered bays measuring seven by eight feet. The men sat crouched, jammed one man behind the other in four rows of five men. When the bays



Oryoku Maru

were filled, the remaining prisoners were forced to stand in the remaining space one against the other. Air circulation was non-existent, and the heat rose precipitously, causing heat exhaustion and suffocation. Bathed in sweat, men began to pass out with some hallucinating and acting violently.

Early the following day, the *Oryoku Maru* and its convoy were targeted by carrier-based planes from the USS *Hornet* (CV-12) and the USS *Cabot* (CVL-28) on the east coast of Luzon. From morning to afternoon, bombers attacked every half hour, finally making a large attack late in the afternoon. To say that there is panic among the prisoners is an understatement. Prisoners tried in vain to escape the hold and seek safety and fresh air, only to be indiscriminately shot for their attempt. The 2,000 Japanese passengers fared no better, but at least they were topside.

The night of December 14-15 was pure hell on top of the basic hell the prisoners were thrown into. Men began going mad and rioting, with the temperature reaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The sick were crushed underfoot by men slipping and falling.

On the morning of December 15, surviving Japanese passengers boarded launches headed for nearby Philippine beaches. Shortly after, *Hornet*'s planes returned to administer the *coup de*




Edward Clement Mack



Planes from the USS Hornet and USS Cabot attack the Oryoku Maru

grâce. By the time they were finished dropping 500-pound bombs and strafing the deck, the ship was listing heavily due to a severely damaged bow, buckling girders, and its upper decks aflame. As prisoners climbed out of the holds, they were cut down by rifle fire from the sentries. A little more than a thousand prisoners made it to shore, Mack among them, only to be rounded up and herded to a tennis court to stand in the hot sun without food or water. They waited for the *Enoura Maru* and the *Brazil Maru* for transport to Formosa (present day Taiwan). Both ships arrived in Formosa on January 1, 1945. On January 6, a small group of prisoners transferred from the *Enoura Maru* to the *Brazil Maru*. On January 9, the *Enoura Maru* was disabled by aircraft from the USS *Hornet*.

The *Brazil Maru* delivered Mack and the last surviving prisoners to Moji, Japan, on January 29, 1945. The wasted condition of the POWs shocked the Japanese medics. One hundred ten severe cases were taken to a military hospital in Kokura. Seventy-three died within a month. The remaining POWs were divided into four groups and sent to one of four camps (1,3,4 and 17). Mack went to Camp #3. There were 549 men alive when the ship docked at Moji. Only 372 survived the war. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Mack of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, was not one of them. He died one thousand and ninety-five days after his capture at Bataan on April 9, 1945. Cause of death, acute enteritis, an intestinal inflammation probably caused by contaminated food or water. He was cremated following a short Shinto ceremony, as were most POWs in Japan, and his ashes were stored in a warehouse until repatriated. Edward is buried at the military cemetery at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. 



Military Cemetery at Fort Leavenworth

PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING TO OUR SOCIETY

At the Nanticoke Historical Society, we believe that our past is the foundation upon which we build our future. Every artifact, story, and piece of history we preserve tells the tale of who we are and where we come from. But maintaining these treasures requires more than just passion; it needs your support.

By donating to our cause, you help us protect and celebrate the rich tapestry of our community's heritage. People from across the globe have taken advantage of our services. We stand ready to accommodate those who want to connect with their past. Your tax-deductible contribution will fund our various restoration projects, stewardship of the historic Samantha Mill House and exhibitions for everyone to enjoy focusing on the history of Nanticoke and its people. Together, we can ensure that the stories of our past continue to inspire and educate.

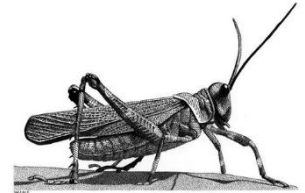
Think of this section as your backstage pass to the quirky, surprising, and downright entertaining stories from our city's past. These tales are guaranteed to make you laugh, scratch your head in wonder, and maybe even question reality (just a little).

From mysterious happenings to laughable moments, each story is handpicked to keep you guessing and grinning. So, buckle up and prepare to be entertained—because history isn't just about dates and facts; sometimes, it's about the stories you never saw coming.

We hope you'll enjoy this new feature as much as we enjoyed digging up these forgotten gems.

Forgotten Tales of Nanticoke.

By Tania Gronkowski



The Grasshopper War

We go back in time to the 1740's, twenty years before the first white settlers were here. The Delaware Indian tribe was camped on the East side of the Susquehanna river. A number of women and children were gathering wild fruits along the Eastern bank, about 2 miles below their village at the Nanticoke flats. Some Shawnee women and children had crossed the river in canoes for the same purpose.

A Shawnee child found a large grasshopper, and a quarrel began among the children for possession of the grasshopper. It is not clear if it was taken away from the child or if the child wouldn't share the grasshopper, but it escalated to the point that the women became involved.

The Delaware felt that since the East side was theirs, the grasshopper belonged to them. The conflict escalated with some deaths occurring until the Shawnee were chased back to the west side. The men of the tribes didn't know what the fight was about, only that their people were attacked by another tribe. This expulsion enraged the Shawnee men leading to a declaration of war against the Delawares.

The Shawnee men attempted to cross back over to the east side in canoes but were met by the Delawares and denied a foothold on the bank. The Shawnee warriors were finally able to land, and a bloody conflict ensued at the great bend immediately above the present-day railroad bridge. Half of the Shawnee warriors were killed and were driven back across the river.

The war didn't amount to much, but the Indians told it with contempt and were ashamed that there was fighting among men for such a cause.

Henry Blackman Plumb of Sugar Notch heard the story from his grandfather Col. Wright and published it in his book History of Hanover Township and Wyoming Valley. Upon researching the story, we find that it is a folk tale. Other sources claim that the event happened in Bucks County, Juniata County, the Nockamixon flats and New Jersey. Quite a mystery!

This tale is unique because it became an oral tradition of the white community. It has not, however, survived among the Indian oral traditions. It is thought to have been an explanation for the number of artifacts found along the Nanticoke flats. The Indians left the area shortly before the massacre of July 3, 1778. 🏠

Bavitz Recreation Center

Strike up the Good Times

By: Judy Minsavage

Anyone who has enjoyed time with family and friends at the local bowling alley will remember the sound of the pins clacking loudly as the ball plows through for a strike, the feel of the ball in your hands, and the team members crowded around as scores are added.

The sights, smells and sounds, and memories are all part of the story of Bavitz Recreation Center which began on East Broad Street, where Adam Bavitz and his wife Jennie turned their dream into reality in the early 1930s. By 1938, their establishment, advertised in the

Sunday Independent as "The Academy Bowling and Billiards," quickly became a popular gathering spot for locals. By 1943, the center had adopted the name Bavitz Recreation Center and expanded its offerings to include open alleys for parties, beginners, and free instruction.

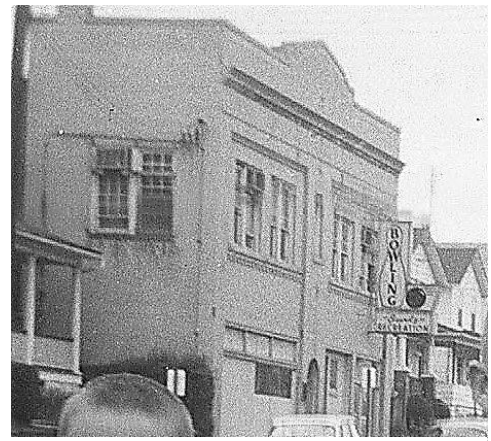
As the years passed, the center's reputation grew, and by 1960, bowling

had become a beloved pastime in Nanticoke. The center hosted social events, recreational activities, and organized tournaments, providing

opportunities for women's teams and

church leagues for all ages. In 1955, the introduction of the Saturday Night Traveling League attracted bowling enthusiasts from across the region, soon becoming an annual highlight. The center also provided employment opportunities for local youth, who worked as pin setters after school. Youngsters scrambled to leap out of the small space where they stood ready to place the pins in holders to be dropped back onto the alley.

By 1956, Bavitz Recreation Center distinguished itself as the only bowling alley in Wyoming Valley equipped with semi-automatic pin setters and six newly reconditioned alleys. Although league competitions



Bavitz Recreation on the 2nd Floor of 216 East Broad Street



Family stands across from Bavitz Recreation Center on East Broad Street



occasionally limited open bowling, the center remained committed to serving its patrons, even installing a bright new sign on East Broad Street to make evening visits safer and more convenient.

The Bavitz family's dedication to the sport was further exemplified by their son Bob, who represented Luzerne County at the BPAA Singles Tournament and later qualified for Pennsylvania's state team. Bob's talent took him to national competitions, where he placed 18th in the National All-Star Singles in Minneapolis, 29th in the All-Star Doubles in New Jersey, and competed in the renowned Peterson Classic in Chicago.

In January of 1960, Bob Bavitz, left for Omaha, Nebraska to compete in the National All-Star Tournament representing the state of Pennsylvania. He was awarded the Lenowitz Bowling Trophy sponsored by the Scranton Times League for excellence in the sport.

As redevelopment plans for the area emerged, concerns about parking and noise in residential areas threatened the future of Bavitz Recreation Center. Discussions about relocating the business to Lower Broadway, led by Hank Bavitz, were ultimately unsuccessful, as the proposed site had already been designated for a shopping center. Despite these challenges, the legacy of Bavitz Recreation Center remains a cherished chapter in Nanticoke's history.

JOYOUS



A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year from the bowlers and Management of Bavitz Rec. to the following Sponsors:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| ● ADAMS NOVELTY | ● KNOREKS INSURANCE |
| ● AMERICAN LEGION | ● LEVENTHAL CLOTHIERS |
| ● BAKE-RITE BAKERY | ● MACKS STYLISTS |
| ● BAVITZ SERVICE STATION | ● MARCINKOWSKI GAS |
| ● BELL TELEPHONE | ● MONTS JEWELERS |
| ● BERMAN JEWELERS | ● NANTICOKE BAR EQUIP. |
| ● BEST ELECTRIC | ● OLSHEFSKI SERVICE STATION |
| ● BEVAN SHOPPING CENTER | ● PEOPLES BOSTONIAN SHOES |
| ● BLUE BIRD RESTAURANT | ● PEOPLES FOOD STORE |
| ● BOROFSKI PHOTO SUPPLIES | ● POLISH R. C. UNION |
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| ● DUPLAN SILK CORP. | ● RUTH'S BAR-B-Q |
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| ● FRISCHMAN'S SPORTS | ● SPIEVUS CAFE |
| ● GALLI SEA FOOD | ● SPOTANSKI PURE DRUGS |
| ● GAYSONS RESTAURANT | ● SPICK & SPAN CLEANERS |
| ● GOLDEN QUALITY ICE CREAM | ● STAN-LEE CLOTHES |
| ● HECHT'S HARDWARE | ● SUPERIOR MOTORS |
| ● HOLY TRINITY | ● SWANEY'S RESTAURANT |
| ● ITALIAN AM. CITIZENS CLUB | ● V. F. W. |
| ● JOSEPHS FURNITURE | ● ZIG'S BURIAL |
| | ● Catholic Churches Bowling in the Knights of Columbus League |

BAVITZ RECREATION CENTER

Bowling League Sponsors

MILL MEMORIAL LIBRARY OPENS IN SEPTEMBER OF 1958

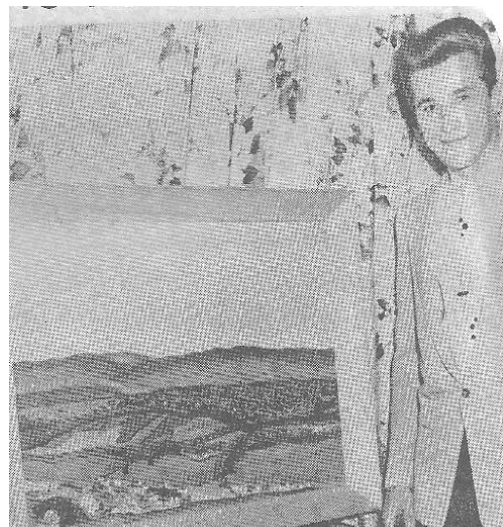
With over six thousand square feet of floor space and 25,000 books, The Mill Memorial Library was "turned over to the people of Nanticoke" at a dedication ceremony held on September 7, 1958. The building was designed by Lacy, Atherton and Davis and erected by Somerville Construction Company. The cornerstone of the building contains a copy of Samantha Mill's will, newspapers of the time, and historical data. The entire program was broadcast by WNAK as Nanticoke Mayor Frank Kielar accepted the library for the people of Nanticoke and William Davis, city park superintendent, accepted Mill Memorial Park.



In Search of “Stumpy’s Paintings”

By Judy Minsavage

In 1962, Stanley Stempien—affectionally known to many as “Stumpy”—completed his studies at Nanticoke High School while residing with his parents at 403 East Ridge Street. He was a personable young man with a lifelong passion for painting—a talent that remained largely unrecognized for years. According to a 1962 Times Leader focus article by Lou Rauscher, Stanley had dreamed of becoming an artist from the age of four.



Stanley “Stumpy” Stempien and his Nanticoke masterpiece

During the 1950s and 60s, aspiring artists were often labeled as “struggling,” and it was widely believed that their talents would not provide a sustainable living. Stanley’s sister Elaine recognized his dedication and enlisted her boss and family friend, Max Gale of the American Furniture Company, for his help. At Christmas they gifted Stanley with the art supplies he needed.

Stanley’s determination shone through. On New Year’s Day, he hiked to Tilbury Terrace and began his first painting, a detailed view of the city of Nanticoke. After finishing his job as a milkman each day, he devoted hours to his masterpiece, supported by local residents who during cold weather offered sandwiches, coffee, and the warmth of their sun parlors.

A year later, Stanley unveiled his painting titled “Nanticoke.” He meticulously included every building and home within sight. The piece was so well received that Senator A.J. Sordoni offered to purchase it for permanent display at the Hotel Sterling. However, Stanley’s mother insisted the painting remain with the family as a cherished heirloom.

Among his other works is a detailed depiction of the Loomis Colliery.



Stan the Pool Man

Whether Stanley went on to complete more works is unknown, but over time, his nickname “Stumpy” was replaced by “Stan the Pool Man” becoming the owner of X-Pert Pool Service in Exeter for 30 years. He and his wife, Tina Moreck Stempien, had two sons, Stanley and Kevin, who now manage the business. Stanley’s sister and mentor Elaine moved to Florida. Stanley passed away in June of 2008. We thank Stanley for his talent and for creating a time-stamped replica of Nanticoke in 1960. If anyone knows the whereabouts of his paintings or the family, the Nanticoke Historical Society would love a photo for our archives to honor Stanley, “Stumpy” “Stan the Pool Man” Stempien. 📷

ON SALLY'S CORNER

My Christmas Memories

By Sally Gorgas

At St. Mary's School, we learned many Polish Christmas songs. The children formed a choir, and we sang together during the holidays. The church was packed for midnight mass. It was difficult



to stay awake! I remember my friend Gregory falling asleep in the pew. A lot of

time and effort went into a Christmas play, at the school, directed by the nuns. Walking into St. Mary's Church was a sight to behold. In the front on the left side were Christmas trees. Underneath was a manger with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. They were surrounded by shepherds and animals. Also, the three kings. It was a beautiful scene and very emotional, thinking of the time past when Jesus was born.

I don't remember making up a Christmas gift list. One year I received a baby doll and another a large fashion doll. I still have these. My mom knew I liked dolls. As I got older, my mom still knew what I wanted.

My sisters and I and some of my friends would walk downtown to shop and Woolworth's for Christmas gifts. We had a very limited budget. The store had everything you could want to look at and gifts to buy. A policeman stationed outside of the store would help people across the street.



Woolworth's on Main Street

Every year my dad would buy the "best" Christmas tree ever. One time, Santa made an unannounced pre-Christmas visit to our house. I remember once my sister Rosemary and I were fighting and guess who was at the kitchen door? Santa! We were sure we wouldn't get any presents, but we did. We always got Play-Doh and our stockings always had popcorn balls and tangerine at the bottom. My mom would use liquid furniture polish to stencil scenes on the windows.



Of Christmas Past

In the early to mid-1900s, Nanticoke bustled as Christmas approached. Services were held in Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Christian Missionary, Roman, Polish, Slovak, and Polish National Catholic churches throughout the city. Community choirs and the Anthracite Male Chorus performed in the Nanticoke High School auditorium, while the city readied Central Park for ornate Christmas displays erected by local organizations and businesses. Children eagerly awaited the arrival of Santa, as snowflakes fell on busy sidewalks filled with shoppers, Christmas lights shone, and stores



remained open until 9 p.m.



Christmas Displays Sponsored by Organizations and Businesses illuminated Central Park, Now Patriot Square

By 1934, city businesses were enjoying the best Christmas buying season since the Depression. High school students distributed food baskets to those in need, and the police and fire departments reported the town quiet and calm, with no calls for emergency services. In those days, Santa arrived by train, greeted by hundreds of children and adults. A festive Central Park featured Christmas displays from community groups and businesses, with performances by the high school band and church choirs. The McKinley, Washington, Pulaski and State Street Schools engaged the

students in various plays and choral sing-a-longs.

The city was ablaze with Christmas lights and decorations as the Service Clubs Council Parade marched from East Main Street to Central Park. Nanticoke Businessmen's Association planned to add more lighting to the already extensive strings of lights along Main Street, Market and around the four sides of Central Park.



Residents Competed for best lighting displays

In 1953, an unexpected challenge arose: there was a real possibility that Santa Claus would not make an appearance in Nanticoke. The local office of the State Employment Service tried to fill the role by offering the job to community members who had been out of work for months following the closure of the Glen Alden Mining operation. Despite offering 75 cents per hour, amounting to about \$35 per week—the service was unsuccessful in finding someone to play the jolly old elf. Fortunately, a member of the city police force stepped in, donning Santa's red suit and bringing holiday cheer to excited Nanticoke youngsters.

The many celebratory Christmas festivals, parades and church services filled with worshippers continued over the years.

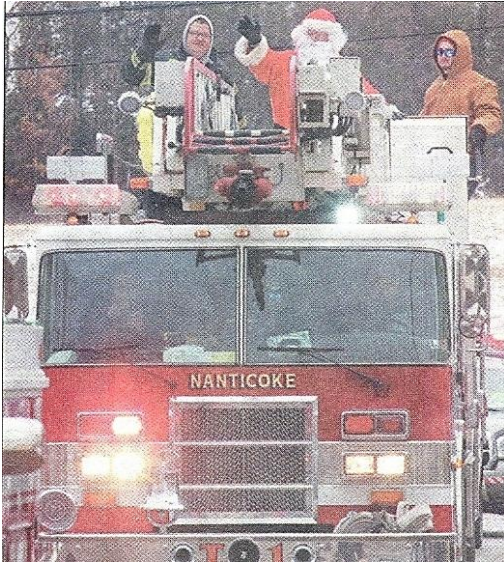


Main Street Parade - 1982

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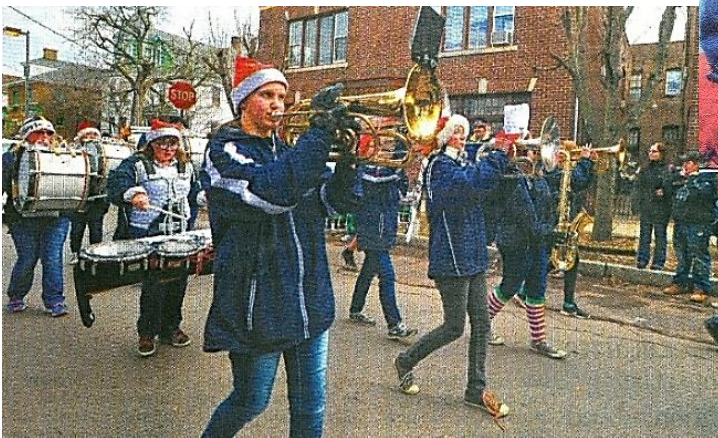
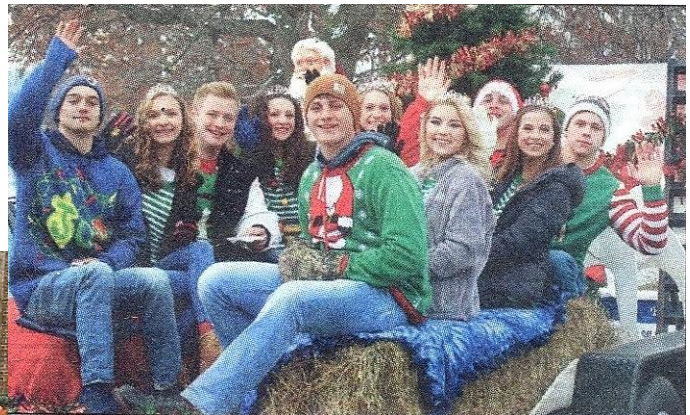
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Over time, many of the city's service clubs, businesses, and some churches have closed. But the spirit of Christmas still lingers as the city of Nanticoke is celebrating its annual Christmas parade and tree lighting event in Patriot Park on December 6, at 3 p.m..



Images of Christmas Past

The Nanticoke Historical Society cherishes the many treasured memories of Christmases past and looks forward to creating many more in the years ahead. We extend a very hearty Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our members, and to everyone—near and far—who enjoy this publication and the beautiful memories of Christmas in Nanticoke.



Letter from the Editor

Wrapping it up

We're wrapping up our 30th anniversary year, and it has truly been a tremendous one. Beginning in May with our Anniversary event at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina and continuing through the burial of the Society time capsule in October, each month was filled with celebration, fun get-togethers, and, yes, plenty of hard work. One can only imagine the daily efforts involved in documenting records, photographs, and memorabilia, as well as categorizing and numbering each piece so that items can be easily located in our vast collection. Work sessions are now shifting from every other month to weekly in 2026, as we prepare items to be entered into our museum-quality software, Past Perfect. Through this process, participants gain valuable insight into how the Nanticoke Historical Society operates. It's an amazingly technical and continuous job that requires a great deal of dedication. We are so fortunate to have officers and members who not only find value in documenting the history of Nanticoke and its people but also enjoy the work itself. Let's continue this momentum and hope that our Society will surge toward the future, so that our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will find the history of their families and loved ones preserved.



We also hope that you have enjoyed Nanticoke Legacy over the years. We are dedicated to bringing you Society news and stories of the past. Nanticoke Legacy the brainchild of our president, Chet Zaremba, started in 2013. It's hard to believe it's been 12 years since starting this project. Over those years we have tried to improve each issue through stories, design and interesting content. I want to thank the members who have supported this effort.

To read our very first issue of our original newsletter what was to become Nanticoke Legacy go to our website www.nanticokehistoryonline.org and click on EVENTS AND STORIES page.

I also want to thank Sally Gorgas, Ron Breznay, John S. Tomko and Tania Gronkowski as well as our President, Chet Zaremba for contributing their talents and experiences in writing articles for this publication in 2025. We will endeavor to keep bringing you information and honoring the people, places and things that remind us so much of the city we love.

Wishing all of our members, our readers, and our Facebook and website followers a Very Merry Christmas and a Safe and Happy New Year. See you in 2026!

Judy Minsavage

Last Issue's Mystery Question

In 1855, why did Cecilia Richardson of Church Street, Nanticoke, name her twin daughters after the Delaware and Hudson Railroad?

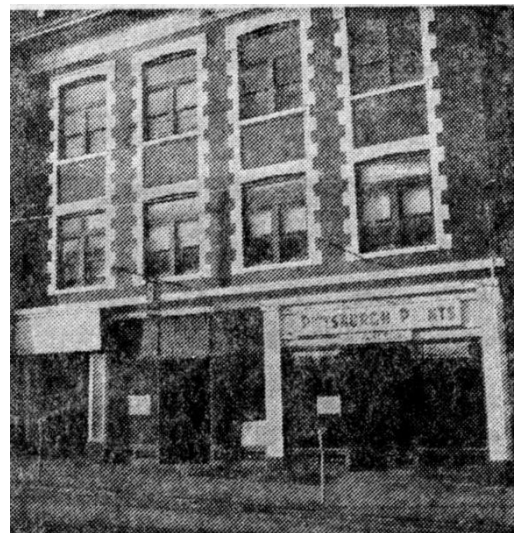


MRS. ABRAM RICHARDS.

Mrs. Cecelia Richards and her husband Abram were expecting their first child. On Christmas Day, in 1855, Cecelia boarded a D&H train in Scranton. She began to have contractions. With the help of those on board and much to everyone's delight she delivered twin daughters. The little ones were named Dinah Delaware and Catherine Hudson Richards. In recognition, the railroad company provided Cecilia with free travel on their trains for the rest of her life.

Last Mystery Question of 2025 – see you in 2026!

Do you recognize this building? In 1911, Something in it that was enjoyed by the community brought Gov. Robert B. Glenn, ex-Governor of N. Carolina, to the location to deliver an address on "Our Country's Need for Sterling Men." It was the first time in the history of Nanticoke that a governor had visited the city.





We hope you enjoyed this issue of the Nanticoke Historical Society's publication of Nanticoke Legacy. Please let us know your thoughts, email us nhs63@comcast.net or call our office 570-258-1367.