



NANTICOKE LEGACY

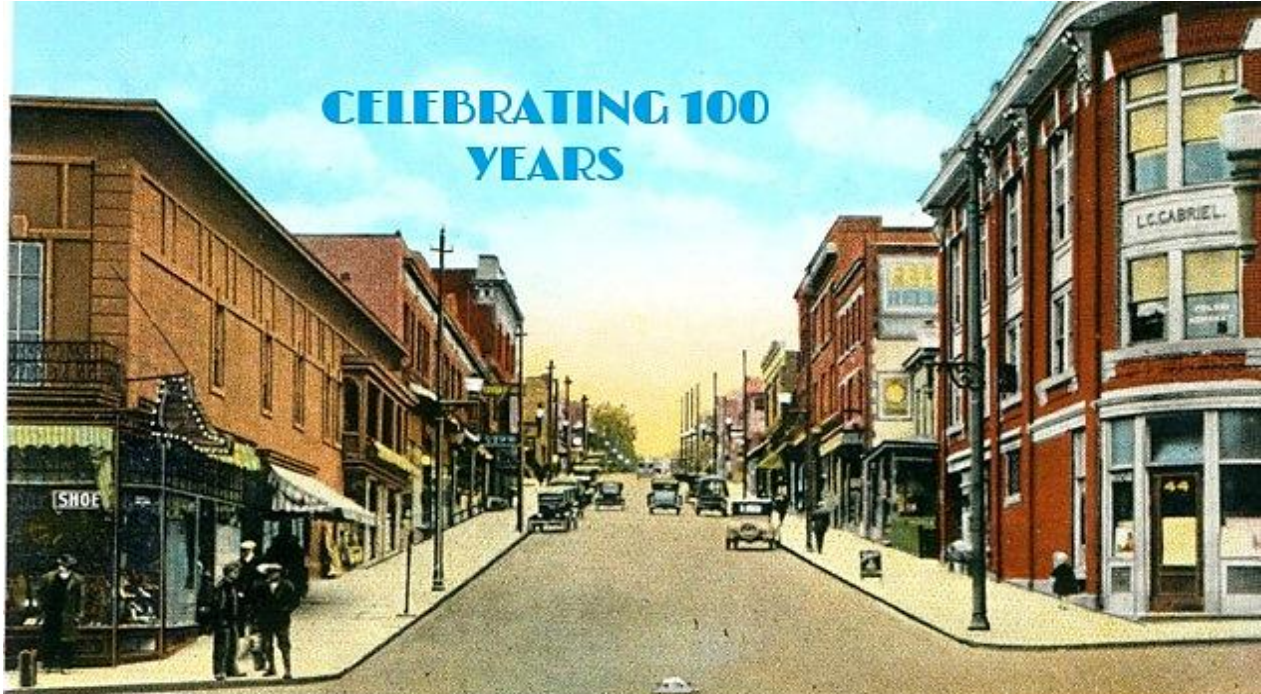
A PUBLICATION OF THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

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THE CITY OF NANTICOKE 1926 - 2026 100 YEARS

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OUR WEBSITE

www.nanticokehistoryonline.org

EMAIL

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OFFICERS and STAFF

President/Treasurer: Chester Zaremba

Vice-President: Judith L. Minsavage

Secretary/Membership Coordinator: Charlotte Dudkowski

Director of Events and Activities: 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

With heartfelt gratitude, we thank our supporters whose gifts of time, effort, and monetary support helped to make our basket raffle fundraiser such a wonderful success. We also thank the following for their generosity.

Antonio's Pizza

Austie's Restaurant

Brickhouse Pizza

City of Nanticoke

Crown Fried Chicken

Earth Conservancy of Ashley

Marty's Pizza

Morris Family Restaurant

Murt's Desserts and Bakery

Nanticoke Fitness Center

Nanticoke Conservation Club

People's Security Bank

R Bar

Tarnowski's Kielbasa

Quality Times

Weis Market

Paul and Heidi Jarecki

And All the Individual Doners who Made This Event Possible

Your generous donations to the Nanticoke Historical Society enable us to preserve and maintain the Samantha Mill House, home to our offices, valuable archival documents, and historical artifacts as well as funding dedicated to the Nanticoke Historical Society Scholarship Program. Your support ensures that the legacy and history of our community remain accessible for generations to come.

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

Diamond

**John Tomko
Stephanie Shern
Philip Shern**

Silver

Wyoming Valley Stamp Club

THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

We extend our thanks to all of our members who have renewed their memberships. Your continued support helps the Nanticoke Historical Society preserve our local history, serve our members, and remain a meaningful resource for the entire community. We are proud of our city. Because of your commitment, we can continue sharing the stories, heritage, and traditions that make Nanticoke so special.

Welcome New Members

**Mike Sowa
John and Theresa Clark
Robert Biscontinini**

GET YOUR TICKETS - Pysanky Egg Decorating Workshop

Artist Stephanie Jennings leads this hands-on program at West Side Park, 389 W. Grand Street, Nanticoke. Fee: \$40 per person; tickets are available at our office 495 E. Main Street, Nanticoke and online at nanticokehistoryonline.org (a \$2.00 online processing fee will be charged.)



UPCOMING EVENTS

June 27 – City of Nanticoke Big Bang: 250th Anniversary Celebration

The Society will join the city's parade as Nanticoke celebrates its 100th anniversary and the nation marks its 250th birthday. We will also have a booth at the city's Big Bang Event held at Luzerne County Community College.

July 4 – Wyoming Massacre Memorial Event, Wyoming Monument, Wyoming Avenue, Forty Fort

The Society will take part in this meaningful historic commemoration by placing a wreath at the monument.

August 15 – Pysanky Egg Decorating Workshop

Artist Stephanie Jennings leads this hands-on program at West Side Park, 389 W. Grand Street, Nanticoke. Create two eggs (one guided and one of your own), enjoy a brief history of pysanky, and browse pysanky available for purchase. Fee: \$40 per person; tickets are available online at www.nanticokehistoryonline.org. (with \$2.00 online processing fee) Extras: Pysanky books available.

September – Annual Society Potluck Picnic

Join us at the Samantha Mill House, 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke, for our annual potluck picnic. Date: To be announced. Bring a dish to share and enjoy tasty food, baked goods, and fellowship, fun and plenty of memories.

October 24 – Tea Leaf Reading Workshop

Join Dr. Genel Gronkowski at the Samantha Mill House, 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke, for an engaging workshop on tea leaf reading. Learn the basics of tasseography, explore its history, and try reading your own leaves in a group setting. Fee: \$40 per person; tickets available online at www.nanticokehistoryonline.org. (with \$2.00 online processing fee)

December – Christmas Party –details to be announced.

For More Events and Details - Follow us on Facebook and our Website nanticokehistoryonline.org.



With All My Love, Doc

Former Greater Nanticoke Area and Wilkes-University graduate Debbie Hynoski Burnetti announced her new book release, “With All My Love Doc” on Amazon KDP (paperback and Kindle). Burnetti penned the story of her parents from photos and letters they exchanged when her father was stationed in New Guinea during WWII. The book also explains why Joe Hynoski, owner of Joe’s Pizza on Market Street, has been making pizza on the same corner for 62 years. Debbie and her husband Jim now reside in Washington D.C.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers:

NANTICOKE - 100 YEARS (1926–2026)

Congratulations to the City of Nanticoke on the passing of hundred years when on January 1 of 1926 the title of “city” became more than a word and started becoming a way of life.

We also at this time honor the families who traveled here with little more than a suitcase and hope for a better life. They brought their languages, recipes, songs, religious beliefs, and determination to work. They built homes, raised children, and left us a history of Nanticoke that we have to share and to pass on to future generations thanks to the efforts of the Nanticoke Historical Society.

The city has changed over the years. The rise and fall of coal industry, neighborhoods changing, decisions to be made on an ever-changing landscape. We have experienced and continue to remember the fortitude of city leaders who gave time and effort to face the challenges and make those tough decisions.

May Nanticoke’s city centennial be more than a milestone; may it be a homecoming. We at the Nanticoke Historical Society serve not only our local residents but those across this country and across the sea supplying information on all those who came before us. May the next hundred years be filled with the same strength that founded this city, the same warmth that welcomed newcomers, and the same hope that has carried Nanticoke through every changing season. Here’s to the future.

Judy Minsavage, Editor



IN MEMORY OF:

Nanticoke Historical Society member - Phillip John Shern who passed on May 9, 2026, at the age of eighty-four, having been born on November 18, 1941, and residing in Centreville, Virginia. May he rest in peace.

The President's Corner

By Chet Zaremba

As I sit in the President's corner I can look out at the present state of the Historical Society and when I activate my "way back machine" (hope you remember that), I can also look back and see what the society was then.

Way back machine activated, I see some people in the basement of the city building with an idea of creating an organization to remember the history of Nanticoke. I see myself telling them, "I'll help you get this started but I don't have time to be involved." I see them meeting in the Chamber of Commerce office on Market Street. I hear one of the men in attendance saying, "This will last six months." The calendar on the wall shows 1995.

Turning the dial ahead a few years I see that they have bought a computer and now rent a single room in the Manse of the First Presbyterian Church. They have begun collecting items and artifacts of Nanticoke.

They have moved to the second floor of the Samantha Mill House and now have two rooms and their collection is growing. A year or two later, they took over the whole building with all the old and varied furniture left behind by another tenant. I see that the organization has grown and is quickly becoming a staple in the community.

Way back machine has shut down and now I only have a view of the present from my corner. What I see is a number of people scurrying around, each with their own job or interest.

One man is entering another obituary to go with the twenty-two thousand others he has entered. Someone is writing checks and keeping all the bills paid so the lights stay on. Another is working on a major project to bring money into the organization so that those checks can be written. There is a copy of what appears to be a magazine called "Nanticoke Legacy." I see a number of others doing those jobs that have to be done to keep the organization viable. On another day I see everyone working together doing whatever they have to do to benefit the Society.

I also notice the condition of their surroundings, walls recently painted, and top notch carpeting throughout. I see new matching furniture and custom-made bookcases. There appears to be three computers, scanners, and printers. Looks like these people really got it all together. I see a wonderful group of people who have brought this organization to where it is today. 📷

I sit in my corner and think, "what a wonderful group of people" and what a wonderful view I have.



*Chet Zaremba, Nanticoke Historical Society
President*

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Congratulations to our Friends at the Nanticoke Conservation Club Celebrating their 75th Anniversary

By Tania Gronkowski

The Nanticoke Conservation Club was incorporated on April 4, 1951. It had originally been called Camp 272 of Nanticoke, Penna., and then the Nanticoke Rod & Gun Club. It had a membership of over one hundred members and dues were \$1 per year. The original incorporators were Joseph Vargo, Wilkes-Barre; Edward Sklaney, Alden; Alfred J. Skuzinski, Charles Krol and Eugene Tuzinski all of Nanticoke.



For 75 years, the club has been an active organization for hunters, fishermen and outdoor enthusiasts.



Some Proud Members - Nanticoke Conservation Club

Its goal remains to protect, preserve and manage our area wildlife and natural resources, to protect local watersheds, improve wildlife habitat, and to offer outdoor programs for area youth.

The club provides countless hours of volunteer work such as the Nanticoke City Wide Earth Day Clean Up, the spring and fall clean-up of Harvey's Creek in West Nanticoke, along with all of the other littered roadsides in the area. Other activities include constructing fish habitats for local lakes, stocking trout, planting trees on mine reclamation areas, establishing an American Chestnut tree grove, caring for the Susquehanna Warrior Trail and Search Cemetery in Shickshinny, and distributing damaged warehouse products to over forty organizations.

They created and currently maintain a public park along the river in Plymouth, offering families a place to picnic and to fish in a large pond.

Throughout the year the club offers ice fishing lessons, hosts a kids trout fishing day, sponsors a bass fishing tournament on the Susquehanna River, participates in Heritage Days at Frances Slocum, distributes candy at Halloween in the Park, offers a turkey shoot with a youth division, purchases gifts for families in need during the holidays, and participates in the City of Nanticoke Christmas Parade.



Fishing Day - Sponsored by the Nanticoke Conservation Club.

The club supports the area youth by partnering with local scouts to assist them in attaining their Eagle Scout or Gold Awards, judging projects at the Luzerne County 4-H Review, and by presenting the Greater Nanticoke Area Environmental Award to a student who has made an impact in the environmental field.

With well over one hundred members in the club, they are proud that one fourth of the membership has achieved Honorary Level. This distinction goes to an individual with 25 years of service. The Nanticoke Historical Society would like to congratulate the Nanticoke Conservation Club on 75 years of outstanding work. Thank you to all of the officers and members, both past and present, for making a positive impact on our community. 🇺🇸

Basket Raffle and Exhibition Marked Two Celebrations

Event celebrated Nanticoke City's 100th Birthday and the Nation's Upcoming 250th Birthday

By Judy Minsavage

On Saturday, May 23 we celebrated Nanticoke's 100th anniversary as a city and the upcoming 250th birthday of our nation. It also offered a look into the past through a virtual trolley ride that recalled the days when electric streetcars carried passengers through the city and surrounding area.



City memorabilia and artifacts from the Nanticoke Historical Society collections were on display, several of the items had never been exhibited before.



Visitors had fun getting their picture taken on the Nanticoke & Newport Trolley.

Tania Gronkowski, Director of Events and Activities, created an engaging theme that guided visitors past the many stores and businesses that once lined Nanticoke's streets. Photos and memorabilia brought that era to life. Gronkowski presented the history of the



Trolley Conductor Tania Gronkowski sells tickets to hopeful winners.

Nanticoke trolley system, which was convenient and affordable, though as history shows through stories and video was at times dangerous.



Visitors enjoyed our Baked and Food Sale items.

Although the rain fell steadily, visitors continued to come through the doors of the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina at 38 West Church Street. Many hoped to win one of the more than fifty baskets on display or enjoy a dish of haluski, Porchetta Sandwiches, or one of the many other



People enjoyed the NHS videos of trolleys traveling through Nanticoke and the surrounding area.

entrees offered by our food coordinator, Sally Billings. The bake sale, managed by Sally Gorgas, featured a wide variety of treats, including chocolate cupcakes with peanut butter icing, cream cheese tarts, Tandy cake, and pistachio cake. Our "Miss Charlotte" Dudkowski, Society Membership Coordinator, signed in and welcomed new members to the society. Visitors enjoyed a video set to cheerful background music that showed trolleys traveling up and down the



Celebrating the upcoming 250th birthday of our nation with a display from the NHS Archives.

streets. Some sat and shared stories, recalling the sights, sounds, and sensation of the ever-rocking floor beneath their feet.

One of our main focuses was to celebrate our country as it approaches its 250th birthday on July 4. The occasion gave us time to reflect on our freedoms and the flag under which we are fortunate to live. We also paid tribute to



Our Volunteers

Nanticoke's distant past with a collection of Paleo-Indian artifacts, memorabilia, and other items that told the story of Nanticoke before it became a settlement and eventually a city.



Paleo-Indian Artifacts on temporary loan from the collection of Roy T. Brown.

We were honored to welcome Mayor Kevin Coughlin of Nanticoke and City Manager Donna Wall and her husband former Nanticoke City Police Chief, Tom Wall as our guests. They also helped draw the basket raffle winners. We thank them, along with everyone who contributed to the success of this event.



Nanticoke Mayor, Kevin Coughlin, and Donna Wall, City Manager, picked the winning numbers for our basket raffle.

We are especially grateful to the businesses and organizations listed on page 2 for their basket donations. We also thank the City of Nanticoke for their basket full of summer fun, the late Phil Shern for his Penn State tickets donation, Paul and Heidi Jarecki for the Weis Market



Our Special Baskets were definitely favorites.

Gift Certificate and those who donated to our basket of cheer and lottery board. We also appreciate the many individual monetary donations and baskets that made our fundraiser a success.

The Society is proud of its achievement over the last 30 years. We pledge to continue to bring the stories of Nanticoke and its people to the forefront so all generations can learn the history of our city. We will continue to provide events that educate as well and

entertain. Happy 100th Anniversary Nanticoke!!! 🇺🇸



This early 1900's day-dress has never been displayed due to its delicate condition.



We celebrated our city's 100th anniversary with a brief history of its journey from Nanticoke village to a city.



The walls of the Cultural Centre were filled with the history of the trolley system as well as most of the fine stores and businesses that once lined the streets of Nanticoke.

Nanticoke Historical Society Presents Scholarships

By Judy Minsavage

Thanks to generous contributions to our scholarship fund, the Nanticoke Historical Society was able to award two \$1,000 scholarships to Greater Nanticoke Area seniors in recognition of outstanding academic and career and technical achievement on Greater Nanticoke Area High School Class Day, held on June 5.

John S. Tomko Sr. Academic Award

This honorary award, funded through a scholarship donation made by John S. Tomko Jr., was presented to **Alexandra Skillens**.

George E. Shern Career-Technical Award

This honorary award, funded through a scholarship donation made by Mrs. Stephanie Shern, was presented to **Chak Watt**.

Greater Nanticoke Area
Class of 2026



CLASS DAY
June 5, 2026



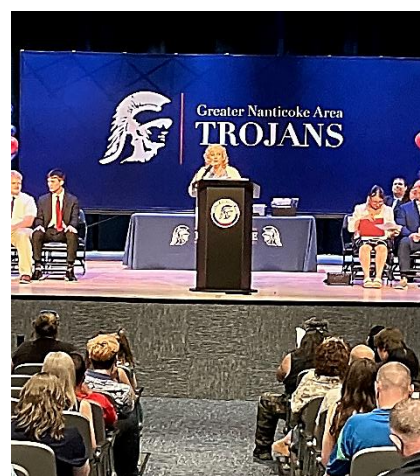
NHS was honored to present the John S. Tomko Sr. Academic award to GNA senior Alexandra Skillens.

In the newly renovated auditorium, Greater Nanticoke Area seniors were called to receive awards in sixty-five scholarship categories, each recognizing excellence and achievement during the 2025–2026 academic year.

With the auditorium filled with mothers, fathers, grandparents, family members, and friends of the graduates the evening began with an invocation by Class Vice President Joshua Guszak, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Class Treasurer Caleigh Reilly welcomed those in attendance, while Class Secretary, Alexandra Skillens, addressed the audience with an inspirational message. Class Valedictorian Robert Miller inspired

his fellow graduates with words of encouragement. Dr. Ronald Grevera, Superintendent of Schools, then took the podium and, after congratulating the Class of 2026 for its hard work and dedication, presented the Greater Nanticoke Area Honors with Distinction Award, sponsored by Pepsi, along with the Ronald J. Grevera Sr. Scholarship Award honoring his late father.

Throughout the evening, students approached the stage to accept their well-deserved awards. Then it was time for the Nanticoke Historical Society. It was our privilege to present two scholarships this year: the




Tania Gronkowski, NHS Director of Events and Activities announced GNA senior Chak Watt as the George E. Shern Career-Technical Award.

John S. Tomko Sr. Academic Scholarship Award to Alexandra Skillens and the George E. Shern Memorial Vocational Scholarship Award to Chak Watt, a Career and Technical Center student.

Skillens will attend Washington University in St. Louis, where she plans to pursue a double major in public health and neuroscience. Her parents, Joseph and Donna, were extremely proud of her achievements throughout the year.

Watt, who was unable to attend that evening, excelled in the Career and Technical Center welding program and will enroll in the mechanical engineering program at King's College this fall.

We hope to continue honoring outstanding Greater Nanticoke Area students while also serving our community by preserving and sharing the history of the people, places, and events that have shaped our corner of the Wyoming Valley. Knowing the history of the place in which we live, or where we were born, helps deepen our sense of identity, connection, and pride. Historical societies play a vital role in that mission by keeping local stories alive, protecting community heritage, and ensuring that future generations understand the roots of the place they call home. We invite our community to support our efforts and stay connected through upcoming events by visiting nanticokehistoryonline.org. 



Alexandra with parents Joseph and Donna after the awards ceremony.

Buried but Never Forgotten

As reported in the December 2025 issue of *Nanticoke Legacy*, officers and members of the Nanticoke Historical Society oversaw the burial of the Society's time capsule on the grounds of the historic Samantha Mill House in October of 2025.

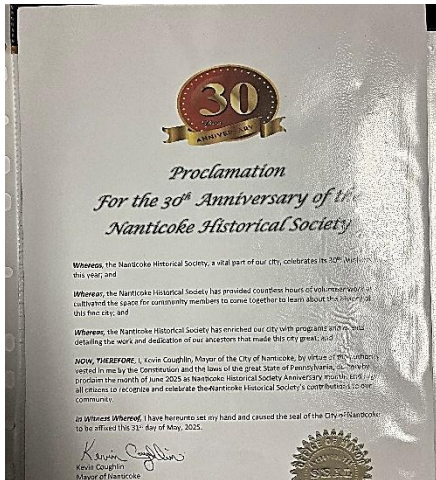


Just a small sampling of the items buried in the NHS time capsule.



NHS Officers and volunteers

The project proposed by Tania Gronkowski, Director of Events and Activities, involved months of collecting articles, memorabilia, books, photos and written histories to be sealed and buried. The capsule is scheduled to be opened on July 4, 2076, the 300th anniversary of our nation.



Proclamation – Marking Nanticoke Historical Society’s 30th anniversary.

In early spring, an 18 x 18 bronze plaque was ordered from the International Bronze Plaque Company in Fort Myers, Florida. A few weeks later, it arrived at our offices. Gary Gronkowski, President of the Nanticoke Conservation Club, then expertly managed the installation.

This project was made possible through the generous support of our Diamond Sponsor, John S. Tomko Jr.

With the support of our members, we will continue to make preserving the history of Nanticoke and its legacy our priority.



Beautiful bronze plaque clearly marks location of NHS time capsule for future generations.



Plaque installed facing the Samantha Mill House and burial site of NHS time capsule.

GET YOUR TICKETS - Tea Leaf Reading Workshop

Join Dr. Genel Gronkowski at the Samantha Mill House, 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke, for an engaging workshop on tea leaf reading. Learn the basics of tasseography, explore its history, and try reading your own leaves in a group setting. Fee: \$40 per person; tickets are available at our office, 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke or online at nanticokehistoryonline.org A (\$2.00 online processing fee will be charged.)



Before the Town: The Land that Would Become Nanticoke

By: John S. Tomko, Jr.

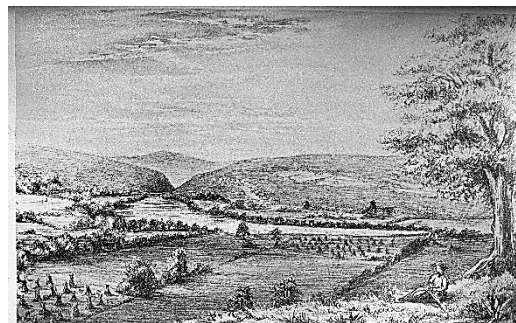
*Thomas Moran's **The Valley of Wyoming** (c. 1865) presents a romanticized view of the Susquehanna Valley landscape as might have appeared before large-scale industrial development. Though created after the Civil War, the painting reflects enduring geographic features—river, valley floor, and surrounding ridges—that defined the land long before Nanticoke emerged as a town. Oil painting (interpretive landscape). Not a literal pre-1800 depiction. Smithsonian American Art Museum.*



Nanticoke Started as Land Not a City

Before there were streets, deeds, or even agreements about ownership, this part of the Wyoming Valley was formed by a few lasting features: a river that guided movement, land that attracted people, and old pathways. To really understand Nanticoke, you have to start at that point—before names, borders, or the idea of a city.

The Susquehanna River was far more than close by; it shaped everything. Long before surveyors came, the river decided how people traveled through the valley, where they settled, and which land was important. Its wide floodplain supplied rich soil, and the river's bends and crossings made natural entry points. Smaller streams like Nanticoke Creek marked areas where people lived and worked. There were no towns yet, yet there was a sense of order. People understood the land by how they used it, not by who owned it.



Nanticoke from Inman's Hill, Hanover Township; sketch by G.W Leach, Jr.

The name "Nanticoke" did not start here. It was brought by the Nanticoke people, who were originally from the Chesapeake area and moved north over time. By the eighteenth century, the name was given first to a creek, then to a place, and only later to a city. This order is important. The land had a name before it had a settlement. Its identity came before its development.

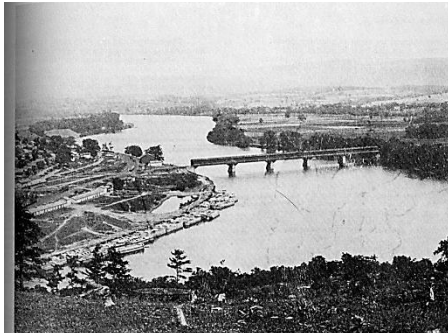
After the river, paths appeared—first informally, then more established. Indigenous trails linked the valley to bigger networks across what is now Pennsylvania and beyond. These were not roads as we know them, but they were dependable and well-used. When European settlers came, they didn't create new ways through the valley; they followed the existing ones. There were no property lines, but there were clear patterns. People were already making sense of the land.

The first real change didn't come with buildings, but with paperwork. In the late eighteenth century, separate groups claimed the Wyoming Valley, so surveyors arrived. Pennsylvania made its own claims, giving out warrants and patents that often overlapped with the Connecticut system. For a while, both sets of claims existed. The same land could be described, owned, and defended twice. The conflict that occurred was not just an idea—it was real, local, and left the land unsettled in many ways.

When settlers came back and stayed—after the conflict and the American Revolutionary War—they didn't build a town at Nanticoke. Instead, they settled along the river. Farms came first, with narrow strips of land running from higher ground down to the flood plain. Houses were built where it made sense for water, soil, and travel. The land itself decided where things went; there was no central plan. Nearby places like Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, and Plymouth developed clear centers earlier. The area that would become Nanticoke did not. It stayed as it was—a group of land parcels, not yet a real place.

This is the key point. Nothing about this land made a town necessary. There was no natural crossroads, no early government center, and no main ferry or market. The things that usually create a town—like people gathering, need, and trade—were found elsewhere in the valley, but not here in a strong enough way. So the land waited. People used it, owned it, and worked it. But it still wasn't Nanticoke.

By the early nineteenth century, the basics were set: the land had a name linked to its older identity, a grid of surveys over the natural landscape, a patchwork of farms along the river, and ownership that was recorded and stable.



Early view of the Susquehanna River

Everything needed for a town was there—except the reason to have one. That reason would come later, from underground. And, the Susquehanna Coal Company would lay out a grid of townships, lots, and boundaries on land that had never been divided like that before.

Today, it's easy to think of Nanticoke as a city with clear borders and a common identity. But if you look back at the land, through old maps, deeds, and the river's path, you see something different. There is a feeling of continuity. The streets follow patterns that existed before they had names.

Property lines reflect older divisions. Even the lack of a perfect center shows how the land was settled, bit by bit, without one big plan. The city didn't erase the landscape; it built up on top of it.

Saying “before the city” doesn't mean the land was empty. It means there was a different kind of presence formed by movement, not borders, and by use, not ownership. Names came before the people who would later claim them. Nanticoke didn't come from nothing. It grew from land that already had its own structure, meaning, and memory—long before anyone called it a city. 🗺️

*This article is adapted from the author's forthcoming book **NANTICOKE: How We Came to Be**. More details to come.*

Consider becoming a member and join us for some great memories and conversations...

The Road to Becoming a City

By: Judy Minsavage

What is a Third Class City:

A third-class city in Pennsylvania is defined as any municipality that adopts a city form of government with a population below 250,000 people that have not adopted a second-class ordinance. These cities are characterized by their smaller size and the variety of organizational models they may adopt, such as the commission form, mayor-council form, council-manager form, and weak mayor-council form. The classification of cities in Pennsylvania is based on population, with first-class cities having a population of at least 1,000,000 inhabitants; second-class cities having a population of at least 250,000 but less than 1,000,000 inhabitants; second-class A cities having a population of at least 80,000 but less than 250,000 inhabitants; and third-class cities having a population of less than 250,000.



Nanticoke's Main Street circa 1926

Nanticoke - Early Milestones:

- **A village in 1830**
- **Borough, 1874**

It was 1921 in the Borough of Nanticoke, and local sub-assessors John Polenchar, Anthony Swovick, Dennis Dorris, John Stavitski, and Blazius Pisarezik began distributing assessment slips to all women of the borough so that they might be assessed and properly registered for voting in the coming election. All that was required was a name, occupation, and place of residence. Any woman wishing to vote was required to pay a nominal tax ranging from six cents on a \$10 valuation (applicable to housewives) to a maximum of eighteen cents on a \$30 valuation (applicable to schoolteachers and certain classes of wage earners).

Women were granted the right to vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920. But in Nanticoke, garnering the women's vote was especially important. In 1921, a petition was circulated to make Nanticoke a third-class city. A majority of the residents had already signed the document. William Morgan of the Taxpayers Association presented the petition to the borough council, which requested that a special election of borough voters start the process.

According to the 1920 census, the population of Nanticoke was 22,164, more than the city of Pittston, making Nanticoke the third largest city in Luzerne County. In 1923, Nanticoke became the thirty-seventh third class city in Pennsylvania as the population topped 25,000.

The original list of appointments included:

H. Judd Abbott: Chief of Health
 Mrs. Lottie Drapiewski: Treasurer's Clerk
 Stanley Dropiewski: Department of Streets and Public Improvements
 James Grick: Chief of Police
 Stanley Janoski: Department of Parks and Public Property
 Edward J. Lewis: Fire Chief
 Frank (Nork) Narkiewicz: Department of Public Safety
 Dr. William O'Borski: Meat and Milk Inspector
 Stanley Sakowski: head of Department of Weights and Measures
 Anthony Swovick: City Assessor
 Michael J. Torlinski: City Solicitor
 Michael Wenslaw: Street Commissioner
 Teofil Znaniecki: Department of Accounts and Finance
 William Walp – Police Clerk

Annual Salaries

Mayor	\$1,200
City Commissioners	\$1,125
City Clerk	\$1,800
Supt. Commerce/Finance	\$3,000
City Solicitor	\$2,000
City Controller	\$1,125
City Treasurer	\$1,000
City Assessor	\$2,100
City Health Officer	\$1,800
Chief of Police	\$2,400
Police Captain	\$1,800
Police Lieutenant	\$1,800
13 patrolmen	\$1,620 each
City Detective	\$1,620
Mayor's Clerk	\$900
Police Clerk	\$900
Sealer of weights/measures	\$1,200
Janitresses	\$720 each
Meat/milk inspector	\$900
Plumbing inspector	\$600
Building inspector	\$900
Electrician	\$720
Supt. of Streets	\$2,000
Assist Supt. Streets	\$1,800
Truck drivers	\$1,620 each

NANTICOKE ENTERS RANKS OF THIRD CLASS CITIES TODAY

NANTICOKE HISTORY DATES BACK TO 1771; FIRST LOT BROUGHT \$10

NEW OFFICIALS OF NANTICOKE CITY

NANTICOKE VOTERS 3 TO 1 FAVOR COUNTY'S 4TH CITY AFTER LONG AGITATION

"KID MAYOR" PUTS TOWN ON ITS FEET

NANTICOKE GIVEN CITY GOVERNMENT

NANTICOKE

THE IRON HORSE

Nanticoke as a third-class city is official.

Chief of Fire Dept.	\$1,000
Driver mechanic	\$1,820
5 truck drivers	\$1,620 each

Over that first year there were many changes: ordinances proposed, resolutions passed, property assessments to conduct, and, of course, problems to solve.

But as the years went on and elections returned, the new city government evolved stepping up to the challenge of leading its population through challenging times.

The spirit of its people who immigrated here from many countries carried Nanticoke from village days to borough years and brought new voices to the rolls when women were given the right to vote. People shared traditions, religious beliefs, family values, the same shift whistles and small storefront businesses, the same pride in a town built by the miners, businessmen and families that arrived from elsewhere and stayed.

So on the morning of January 1, 1926, Nanticoke officially became a city of neighbors who refused to give up on one another, working together in celebrations and in tough times.

Today Nanticoke stands the test of time. Forging ahead as new challenges present themselves, testing the resolve of its leaders. Nanticoke is not unlike that of many cities and towns across America. Let's celebrate and be proud of our history. 🇺🇸

IN SEARCH OF: Long Lost Video Tapes

An article, recently brought to our attention, describes how the Nanticoke Sarmatians, a club organized in 1933, planned to show an eight-reel set of films titled "*See Yourself and Your Hometown in the Movies.*" Starring the city of Nanticoke and its residents, the films highlighted thousands of people and scenes, including students in local schools, marching bands, churches, community organizations, police, fire and ambulance units, hospital staff, Boy Scouts, and footage of the 1940 flood. With the flood prominently mentioned, the films were produced around that time. One might think of it as an early version of WVIA's *Our Town* series—though it features far more participants and extensive scenes of the city itself.

The screening was scheduled for December 7, 1957, at the Hill Top Inn in Nanticoke. We are hoping someone may recall this film collection, the event itself, or even have knowledge of film reels stored away in an attic or basement. The historical value of such a collection today would be extraordinary.

In 1957, the officers of the Sarmatians Club were Stanley F. Dudrick, president; Joseph C. Janowski, vice president; Theodore J. Sajeski, recording secretary; and Joseph P. Siesko, treasurer. Other members included Joseph Grabowski, John M. Dudrick, Louis Glowacki, Walter Pawlowski, Adam Olszewski, Leo Dudrick, John Romanowski, Anthony Piasecki, and Frank C. Baker.

Please check your closets and attics. If you remember this event or the Sarmatians Club, or if you have any information that could help us locate these films, please contact our office and ask for our archivist, John Sherrick. 🇺🇸



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

IN HONOR AND MEMORY

John Haydock, Jr. (1917– 2002)

By John S. Tomko, Jr.

John Haydock, Jr. was a member of a generation shaped by economic hardship, global war, and the demands of postwar civic life. His life, though not fully captured in formal records, reflects a steady pattern of service, responsibility, and respect for both local and ancient history.

John was born in Nanticoke on September 3, 1917, and grew up during the Great Depression. He was the son of John and Anna (Tomko) Haydock, who immigrated from Czechoslovakia, and was the second of thirteen children. He attended Nanticoke High School but left after tenth grade at age sixteen in 1933.

Like many young men from the Wyoming Valley, he found work and purpose in the Civilian Conservation Corps. He served at CCC Camp 583, Company 342, in Galeton, Pennsylvania, helping to build much of Cherry Springs State Park. The park is known for having the darkest skies on the East Coast and attracts both professional and amateur astronomers. The CCC gave him steady work during a time of high unemployment and introduced him to public service, discipline, and life beyond Luzerne County. For many, the CCC was more than just a job; it prepared them for future responsibilities.



Members of the 1st Battalion 2C 339th Infantry of the 85th Division crossing the river Adige in Verona.

John served in the European Theater of Operations. His military record shows front-line service, and he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Combat Infantry Badge, the European African-Middle Eastern Service Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal. These awards clearly reflect the nature of his wartime experience and need no further explanation.

After the war, John returned to Nanticoke and joined others in rebuilding civilian life. Like many veterans, he focused on work, family, and community instead of seeking public attention. For a while, he owned and ran the Nanticoke Veterans Taxicab Service. Although there is little information about the business, it shows a typical postwar



Nanticoke Mayor John Haydock waving to crowd during city parade.

path: veterans starting businesses that served their communities. In a city that relied on local transportation, his taxi service met real needs and kept him connected to daily life in Nanticoke.

Much of Haydock's life after the war was not recorded in official documents. This was common for men of his generation, whose contributions were practical and often went unrecognized. Still, it is clear that he had a lasting interest in history and archaeology, which linked his local roots to a wider human story.

In 1981, Haydock took part in an archaeological dig in Jerusalem led by Dr. Yigal Shiloh, as part of the City of David Excavations. This project focused on the city's oldest settlement layers and used careful scientific methods. Haydock joined as an amateur working with professionals, showing his serious interest in history rather than just being a tourist. His involvement in such a project shows how deeply he valued learning about the past.

John's interest in archaeology was not limited to faraway places. He also helped excavate a Native American site near Nanticoke, showing he understood that the area's history went back long before its industrial and colonial times. This interest in local Indigenous history would later influence his work in the community.

John served briefly as Mayor of Nanticoke, showing the trust his community had in him. On August 8, 1987, while he was mayor, he signed a Treaty of Peace with representatives of the Nanticoke Indians. Although this was mostly a symbolic act and not a legal treaty, it was important. It formally recognized Indigenous history and showed respect and a desire for reconciliation, based on civic values rather than politics. There is little documentation about the event, which is common for local ceremonies, but its meaning comes from the intention behind it.



As Mayor of Nanticoke, John Haydock championed Nanticoke's history.

All these parts of his life—military service, postwar business, civic leadership, interest in archaeology, and honoring Indigenous history—create a clear picture. John Haydock, Jr. was part of a generation whose service was quiet, whose leadership came from circumstance, and whose lives were rooted in their communities rather than in seeking recognition.

He is remembered not through many records or public awards, but through the city he served, the history he cared about, and the respect he gave to those who came before him. In this way, his life shows the lasting spirit of Nanticoke.



IN SPOTLIGHT

In 1964, these young safety patrol members were honored with a theater party courtesy of the State Theater management, Moose Club and Nanticoke Police Chief Simon Kupinewicz.

Do You Recognize Anyone?

Forgotten Tales of Nanticoke.

By: Tania Gronkowski

LOCAL HEADLINES PROCLAIMED:

Local Fisherman Struggles to Catch “German Submarine” in Susquehanna River

“German Submarine” Spotted in Susquehanna River

Elusive “German Submarine” Escapes Local Fisherman



Historically, Nanticoke has always been home to many enthusiastic fishermen. During the first week of May 1915, Dan Sakoski and John Rupinski had a novel experience on the river. The men of Polish descent, both ardent fishermen and hotelkeepers, had been fishing for about two hours with poor luck. They became impatient and desperate for a catch. No matter what they attempted, they were unable to land any of the finny tribe.

Mr. Sakoski was unable to restrain himself any longer, his impatience got the better of him and desperation overwhelmed him. Sakoski dived headlong from the boat into the river desperately trying to grab a German carp swimming past the boat at a depth of six feet. The “German submarine” proved to be too elusive for Sakoski and the only thing he caught was a heavy cold.

When Sakoski reached the shore and climbed onto dry land, he was very embarrassed and ashamed of his foolish attempt at this new method of fishing. Fearing ridicule, Sakoski pledged his companion, John Rupinski, to secrecy. He did not want to be the “butt of ridicule and merry jest.” It is a mystery as to how the story found its way to the newspaper reporter.



Our files show that John Rupinski resided at 115 W. Field St. in 1915. There is no other information on the men or at which hotels they worked.



115 West Field Street

The German carp is a torpedo shaped fish that originated in Europe. It was considered a delicacy and a “King’s Dish.” Dr. Spencer F. Baird, head of the U.S. Commission of Fish & Fisheries, brought the carp to North America in the early 1880s. Those of European descent were familiar with the tasty fish and frequently caught them in the Susquehanna River. 🐟

Nanticoke's Hidden History

143 South Market Street

By: Judy Minsavage

The Story Behind the Façade - In Nanticoke, we pass familiar buildings every day—places that have quietly stood through generations of change. Many long-time residents remember landmarks, yet few know the full story behind the buildings themselves or the roles they once played in shaping our city. In this series, we will explore those familiar places, and untold stories, uncovering their past and bringing Nanticoke's hidden history into focus—while renewing pride in the city we call home.



143 South Market Street

John H. James came to Nanticoke from Maesteg Wales in 1860 where he and wife Caroline raised a son and daughter. James prospered and in 1889, working as a miner for the Susquehanna Coal Company he also had a saloon on Main Street which many said made James a fortune. Soon after he was presented with an opportunity to purchase a building at 143 S. Market Street which then housed the Burleigh Pacific Saloon. James quickly turned it into a hotel that included a banquet and meeting hall on the top floor. It became a popular meeting place for organizations, social clubs and religious groups. Such as, the daughters of the Good Samaritan, the Good Templars and the Good Samaritan Lodge. Quite a popular man about town, with a “jolly” personality, he was soon appointed Postmaster of Nanticoke and later a jury commissioner.

But James' luck changed after the passing of his wife. His business began to fail, and he returned to work in the mines. During that time, he was severely burned in a mining accident his hands and face disfigured adding to his misery.

James went missing for a time in 1897 leaving friends and family to fear he had met with another tragedy. Much later he was discovered in Scranton hospital after being severely injured falling from a trolley. Unable to recover from all of his misfortune and penniless, he died at the “poor house” Retreat at the age of sixty-five.

Over the years 143 South Market Street passed to various owners. From the late 1800s to the early 1900s “saloons” occupied the first floor, then various businesses such as Helen Roscoe Millinary, the Nanticoke Bird and Cage Store and Samuel Stein Cleaner and Dyer. With the top floors as residential apartments.

Anthony Danilowicz purchased the building and quickly sold it to Thomas Warne then in 1898 the building passed to John Smoulter a prominent Nanticoke businessman.

By 1913 Jeanne and Mike Dorak operated a popular saloon in the building. But misfortune once again struck as a fire damaged much of the building. The Dorak's rebounded, repairing and restoring their business by adding



John Smoulter

a new front, and making improvements at the rear of the building and interior alterations at the location. The building served as a residence and housed many businesses. The two-story brick front, added in 1934, has evolved over the years into the building residents recognize today.

The following are just some of the businesses housed at 143 South Market Street up to 1950.

- Michael Lupco Saloon
- Helen Roscoe Millinery
- Novelty Cloak and Suit House
- Little Pal Shop
- Samuel Stein Cleaner
- Lyons Music Store,
- Lez Music Store,

Xmas Specials LITTLE PAL SHOP 143 S. Market St. Nanticoke.		
<p>Sheer Frocks For the "Little Miss" 3 to 16 \$1 to \$1.98 Newest Shades and Designs Flannel Pajamas For Girls and Boys from 2 to 16 59c to \$1.25</p>	<p>Just Arrived! A Complete Line of LADIES SILK HOSIERY 3 Different Grades 59c pr. 2 for \$1 79c pr. 2 for \$1.50 Also Silk & Wool at this price 98c pr. 2 for \$1.75</p>	<p>We Carry a Full Line of Children's Stockings and Socks 25c to 50c Pair</p>

NOVELTY

CLOAK & SUIT HOUSE

DISPOSAL CLEARANCE SALE

All early Spring merchandise is being sacrificed at "Give Away" Prices to make room for incoming summer apparel—This is one of those great "NOVELTY" sales thousands lack forward for—but this time we have a limited stock, so "first come, first served."

<p>Smugger SUITS \$7.95 2 1/2 Good Smugger Suits in the 2-tone style—left of three-quarter length coats.</p> <p>Women's and Misses Sport Coats \$8.95 2 1/2 Good Smugger Suits in the 2-tone style—left of three-quarter length coats.</p>	<p>Closing Out 50 Silk Dresses \$1.95 Values to \$7.95</p> <p>New Print DRESSES \$3.85 Prints and Floral Shades Beautiful Styles Large Selection to Choose From</p>
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First Quality **Silk Hose** Clifton and Service **59c pr.**

GRAND OPENING

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 28th

BLUE BIRD

RESTAURANT

159 So. Market St.
Nanticoke
(Formerly the Majestic)

• • •

PUBLIC IS
CORDIALLY
INVITED

• • •

THE BEST
OF FOOD SERVED
AT ALL TIMES!

• • •

We Are Also
Featuring a
Complete
FOUNTAIN SERVICE

Thoroughly Air-Conditioned—Now in Comfort...

Undoubtedly the most notable business, and one that stirs the most memories, was the Blue Bird Restaurant which operated from 1950 to 1997. The business started out at 159 South Market but moved to 143 sometime in the early sixties. Many remember days of meeting at the Blue Bird for a meal or an ice cream sundae. The customers chattering, the smell of home cooked food and coffee brewing, Today the building still stands, a testament of time, the front, hiding the histories of the first businesses the Burleigh Saloon and James Hotel and the people who served the city for many years behind the familiar front door.



One can see the building's original version behind the added façade.

The next time you pass an old building in Nanticoke, pause and imagine the stories it might hold—much like 143 once did. Places like these remind us that our city's history is still all around us. Through *Nanticoke's Hidden History*, we hope to spark that curiosity and encourage a deeper appreciation for the people and places that have shaped our community—especially as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Nanticoke's designation as a city.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT – SUMMER FUN!

Back in the day, youngsters gathered on street corners and vacant patches of land to play ball or ride bikes. Many remained lifetime friends, others moved away. There was always a neighborhood crew. These fellows gathered sometime in the 1950s at the corner of Spring and Walnut Streets to have some summer fun. Front, Dave Shemanski, Back Row from left, Robert Levanda, Fred Jones, Henry Shemanski, Unknown, Ron Rybak.



Built on Faith:

The First Independent Church of Nanticoke – Formerly the First United Methodist Church

The Legacy of Nanticoke’s Early Worshipping Communities

By Judy Minsavage

December 13, 2025, was a day filled with memories of weddings, funerals, potlucks, youth gatherings, seasonal celebrations, and shared hope. It marked the 150th anniversary of the charter of what was then the First United Methodist Church of Nanticoke. Long before the congregation had a permanent home, Methodist believers met in a shared schoolhouse and in the homes of early settlers. From those humble beginnings grew a church whose history extends far beyond the date of its charter.



The First Independent Church of Nanticoke - formerly First United Methodist Church



Meeting House at Hanover Green

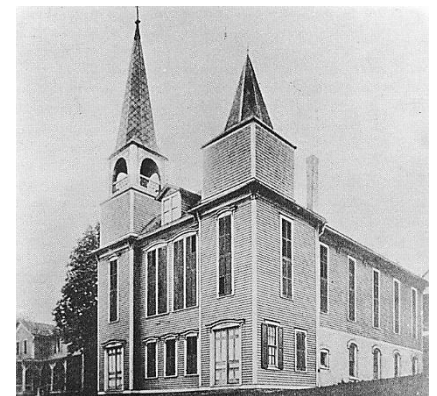
Information about the church’s early development comes from *History of Hanover Township*, published in 1885 by Henry Blackman Plumb reflecting Methodism has deep roots in Nanticoke. As early as 1793, several Methodist groups united to build a meeting house at Hanover Green, where William Colbert preached.

A Methodist “class” soon formed, typical of the early movement and usually consisting of 10 to 12 members. Among them were David and Susan Thompson; Martha F. and Priscilla Lee; Mary Miller; Richard Keithline; Hannah E. Stiles; James and William Thompson; and Elizabeth Mills. These classes met weekly for prayer, testimony, and mutual support, serving as the foundation of Methodist discipline and community life.

In 1830, John and Catherine Mill donated land for a new meeting house on East Main Street, between what are now the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The building measured twenty-four by thirty-six feet, had no gallery, and featured a rear entrance facing Spring Street. It was also shared by other Orthodox denominations. The property was deeded to David Thompson, James Lee, Henry Linn, Silas Alexander, Washington Lee, and others.

Organization and Construction

By 1875, worship services were being held in Snyder Hall under the leadership of Rev. A. W. Wood. On December 30 of that year, the Nanticoke Class was formally incorporated as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Nanticoke. The original trustees were Thomas Hill, George O. Williams, Mrs. G. O. Williams, John Puckey, John



The very first Methodist Church built on Main Street.

Lecher, Luther Curtis, and George Williver. From 1875 to 1877, Nanticoke and West Nanticoke combined as a “single charge.”

The trustees later purchased land for the construction of a new church east of the existing meeting place on Main Street from the Susquehanna Coal Company. Building began in 1876, and Rev. G. R. Hair oversaw the laying of the cornerstone. The church was dedicated on March 5, 1880. A parsonage built in 1877 was later sold and moved to Spring Street, and a new parsonage was constructed on the original site.

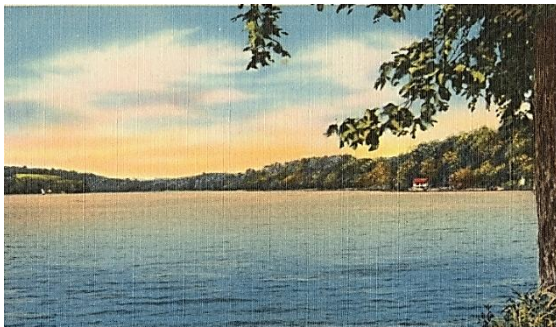
Growth and Renewal

As membership continued to grow, the need for a larger sanctuary became clear. In 1915, the original church was demolished, and on February 11, 1917, Bishop Joseph Berry dedicated the cornerstone of the new building. Construction costs totaled \$40,000. That same year, A. P. Diffendafer reorganized the church school to better serve the congregation’s expanding age groups.



Laying of the cornerstone for the Methodist Episcopal Church

In 1923, the church introduced innovative efforts to engage young people, including installing a radio receiver with aerial wires and an amplifying horn under the leadership of Rev. James Lawson. This allowed Sunday School participants to listen to high-quality broadcasts from larger cities. Rev. Lawson also took a strong public stand on issues affecting the moral and spiritual well-being of the community, especially its youth, urging local leaders to pursue reform.



Post Card - Lake Carey, Tunkhannock, PA

When progress proved slow, Rev. Lawson remained committed to advocating healthier conditions in Nanticoke. His leadership reflected the church’s belief that faith should be expressed not only in worship but also through active concern for the wider community.

To further support youth programs, the church purchased land along the east shore of Lake Carey in Tunkhannock and built a camp known as Fern Cliff. The site became a popular place for

picnics and summer recreation, supervised by scoutmasters and church leaders. In 1926, as Nanticoke achieved third-class city status, the church celebrated its 50th anniversary. With a membership exceeding 1,300, the congregation supported a wide range of activities, including Sunday School classes, Boy and Girl Scout troops, Young Women’s Missionary Societies, and groups such as the Queen Esthers, Home Guards, and Mothers’ Jewels.



Interior the First Independent Church of Nanticoke - Formerly First United Methodist Church

In 1940, three Methodist denominations united to form The Methodist Church. Later, on May 3, 1967, The Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United

Brethren Church, creating the United Methodist Church. That year, the Women's Society of Christian Service became the United Methodist Women, and a men's group known as the John E. Thomas Bible Class was established.



First Independent Church - Sanctuary

The sanctuary's stained-glass windows remain treasured memorials to early congregants and leaders. Over the years, generations of members have worshiped, served, and found community within the church. In 1972, the windows were re-leaded and fitted with protective storm glass.

In 2015, a proposed merger of five Methodist churches in southern Luzerne County was placed on hold after members of Nanticoke United Methodist Church and Ashley's Centenary United Methodist Church voted against it. Broader challenges were faced by many city churches, including declining membership and reduced youth participation.

Today, the First Independent Church of Nanticoke is one of three locations affiliated with the Mount Mariah Independent Community Fellowship, alongside campuses in Shickshinny and Hunlock Creek.



Members of the First United Methodist Church celebrating the nation's 200th Anniversary.

Still standing on East Main Street, the church remains a visible link to Nanticoke's past. As we pass it each day, we should remember that churches and buildings like it have stood the test of time and deserve our respect, our remembrance, and our reverence for the history they carry. 🇺🇸

Today, The First Independent Church of Nanticoke welcomes parishioners.



On Sally's Corner

My Graduation Memories

By Sally Gorgas

I graduated from Nanticoke High School on June 6, 1968, a year of turmoil and unrest in our country. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Two months later, on June 5, Robert F. Kennedy was shot, he died the next day. TV reports were endless. Two major figures were gunned down and months of mourning followed.



My Graduation Day June 6, 1968

Our class was scheduled to go to Washington, DC, and parents received a letter from the school board asking whether the trip should still take place. In the end, we went on a two-day trip, stopping first in Harrisburg and then Gettysburg. When we arrived in Washington, we passed burned-out buildings left behind by ongoing race riots. We also took a ride on a riverboat, but I got food poisoning.

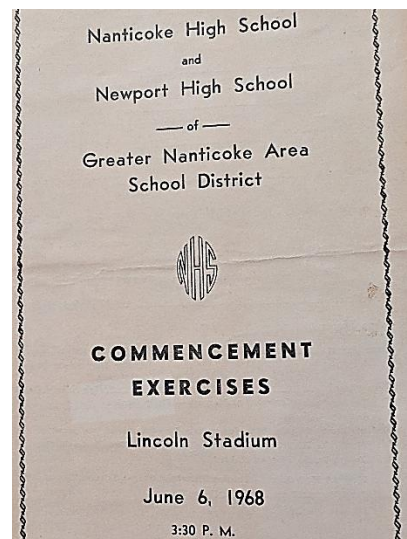
The tours of the White House and the Capitol were enjoyable. But unfortunately because of the food poisoning I missed the Washington Monument. We could not visit the Lincoln Memorial because 3,000 anti-poverty demonstrators were camped nearby. The encampment later became known as Resurrection City.

Although the trip took place during a turbulent year, it was still memorable. I have returned to Washington, DC several times, including one visit to the White House, and each time I was amazed. I would still love to visit again someday.



Class Trip to Washington D.C.

We were the last class to hold commencement exercises in the old stadium. It was an extremely muggy day, and the speeches seemed endless. Later, the stadium was torn down to make way for the new high school. The old high school was eventually demolished, and a CVS built in its place. The building may be gone, but the memories are still there. 📷



Answer to Last Issue's Mystery Question

What happened to the cannon and cannonballs that once stood in the center of what is now Patriot Park And what was the small building on the lower corner of Prospect and East Broad used for?

The Cannon:

In 1904, The Spanish American War Veterans arranged for a cannon to be displayed in Central Park. The gun was shipped from Fort Wadsworth , NY with 20 8-inch shells that would be placed in a pyramid at the base of the weapon.

In 1942 the United States launched a nationwide scrap drive for the war effort. The War Production Board realized that Supplies like steel, copper, aluminum, brass, tin and rubber would quickly be exhausted with the enormity of the war.

At that time communities like Nanticoke sacrificed historic items like the cannon and cannonballs that held a place in what was Central Park. These donations were seen as patriotic. The metal was used to build ships and landing craft, tanks, armored vehicles, aircraft, artillery, weapons and communications equipment. Along with this effort, many civic organizations and private citizens joined the drives.

The Building :

The park building was first used as the city building, then occupied by the Lincoln Literary Society. In 1909 it was repaired, and the Citizen's Band used the building for practice. No date was given as to when it was razed.



The cannon is set in the center of the park the building is to its left.

Our New Mystery Question

On What date did the first auto cross the newly constructed Nanticoke Bridge?



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.