



NANTICOKE LEGACY

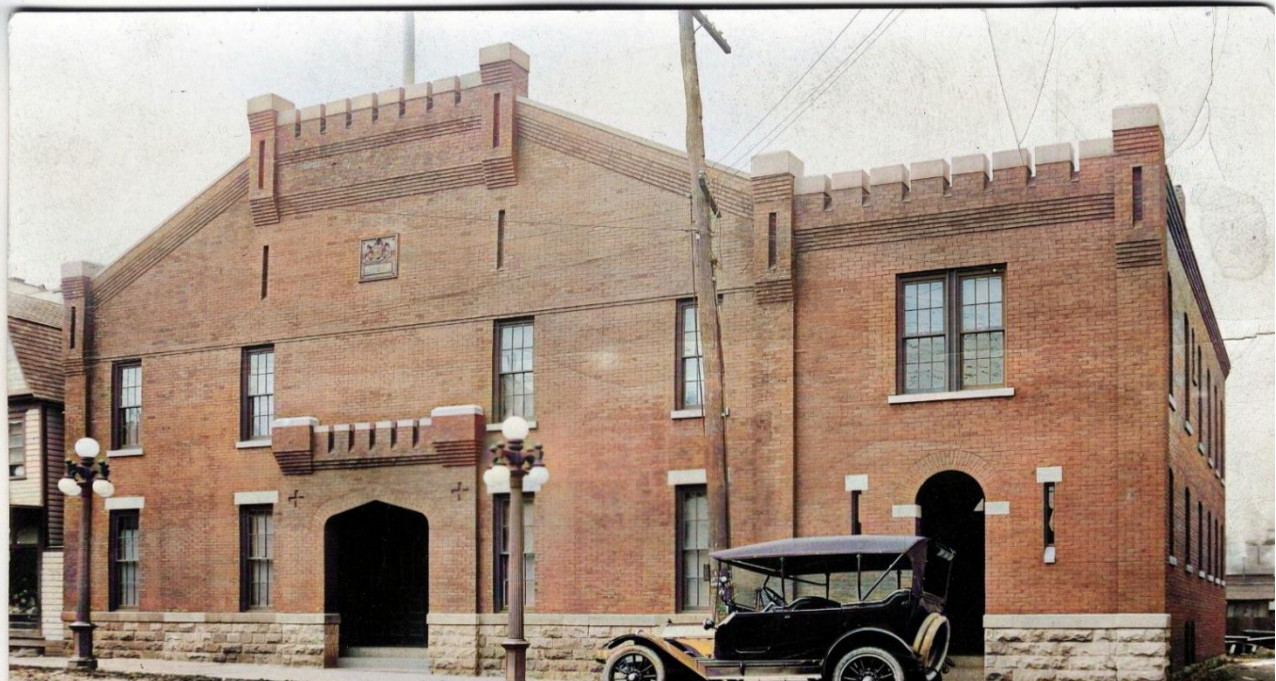
A PUBLICATION OF THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

September 2026

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Volume 3, Issue 15



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This Issue's Mystery Question

OUR WEBSITE

www.nanticokehistoryonline.org

EMAIL

Office email – nhs63@comcast.net

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 Passeti

President Emerita – Julianna Zarzycki

**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.**

Thank you for your generous donations

Andy Sherbine

John Tomko

Stephanie Shern

Philip Shern

John Gregorowicz

THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

We extend our thanks to all of our members who have renewed their membership. Your continued support helps the Nanticoke Historical Society helps to 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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 27– Annual Society Potluck Picnic

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

October 3 – History Fair: Viewmont Mall

The Nanticoke Historical Society will join 32 other Organizations and Historical Societies for a one-day exhibition from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Viewmont Mall in Dixon City.

October 24 – Tea Leaf Reading Workshop

Join Dr. Genel Gronkowski at the Samantha Mill House, 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke, at 1 p.m. 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 stop in or mail a check to our office - tickets also available online at www.nanticokehistoryonline.org. (with an additional \$2.00 online processing fee)

December – Christmas Party –details to be announced.

Nanticoke Historical Society announces \$1,000 Scholarship to GNA 2026-2027 graduate students

The Nanticoke Historical Society is proud to announce the Scholarship Program for Senior Students of Greater Nanticoke High School. To learn more about how to apply please email the society at nhs63@comcast.net to receive an information packet.

Application must be received by December 31, 2026.



The poster features a teal and blue color scheme. At the top left is the Nanticoke Historical Society logo, which includes a graduation cap icon. The main text reads 'SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR SENIORS' in large, bold, white letters. Below this, it says '\$1,000 Scholarship Grant' and 'APPLY NOW' in bold white letters. A white box on the right contains two bullet points: 'Information available upon request' and 'Apply by December 31, 2026'. At the bottom left, there is an email icon and the address 'nhs63@comcast.net'. The background of the poster shows a graduation cap and some greenery.

Nanticoke Historical Society

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR SENIORS

\$1,000 Scholarship Grant

APPLY NOW

- Information available upon request
- Apply by December 31, 2026

nhs63@comcast.net

The President's Corner

By Chet Zaremba

The Nanticoke Historical Society is in a constant state of change. As we progress through the years, now through 31 of them, we find that what we did yesterday no longer fits our needs or that we have found a better way of doing it.

We are quickly running out of room in our building, so we have to make changes. The main room on the second floor is being converted to a storage room. As we had done in the smaller storage room, we have purchased steel shelving on which we will place banker boxes, properly labeled with its assigned identification number. Jack and Judy Minsavage have been instrumental in the massive project. In addition to the shelves, all the filing cabinets are being rearranged to be used for storage. Judy, Tania Gronkowski, and Charlotte Dudkowski have done a great job with all the garments and textiles that we have.

We recently reorganized our wooden drawer file with proper labeling and identification of the contents. Our small picture file has been redone. All photos in that file have been categorized, and a new filing system has been put in place.

All of this is being done so that if and when we need something, it will be very easy to find it after placement, each item is entered into our computer system for easy retrieval.

Our library has been recently reorganized into sections. Heretofore when a book came into our possession it was assigned a one-up number and placed on a shelf. All books were then in numerical order regardless of the subject matter. We have now set up different sections where one who is interested in a subject can go to that section and find a number of books relating to that subject. Sections are set up as Local History, Pennsylvania History, Local Authors, Anthracite Mining, Sports, Military History, etc. etc.

So at "The Office" things remain the same.....in a constant state of change. 📷



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Nanticoke Police Force 1950

First row seated left to right: Desk Sgt. Kazmier Brodzinski, Mike Fedorchak, Chief of Police, John Smereski; Mayor, Anthony Dreier; Sgt. Stanley Witchkowski, William Tyburski, Desk Sgt. Lee Kurowicki, Second row: Edwin Morgan, Joseph Antkiewicz, Phillip Machung, Leonard Prusakowski, Leo Hornsby, Joseph Magnosi, Simon Kupinewicz, James Kosloski, Michael Gabrick, Ralph Farmer

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PARTICIPATES IN ANNUAL OBSERVANCE OF THE WYOMING MASSACRE

The Nanticoke Historical Society proudly participated in the annual observance commemorating the Battle and Massacre of Wyoming, a solemn remembrance of one of the most significant Revolutionary War events in northeastern Pennsylvania. The ceremony, hosted at the Wyoming Monument in Wyoming Borough, honors those who died during the July 3, 1778, conflict in the Wyoming Valley.



July 4, 2026 - Wyoming Commemorative Event

The yearly observance is part of a long-standing regional tradition organized by the Wyoming



NHS commemorative wreath presenters, from left: Gene Danowski, Tania Gronkowski, Judy Minsavage, John Telencho, Jeff Warchal, Paul Warchal

Commemorative Association, whose commemorations trace back to the centennial observance in 1878. That first major commemoration drew national attention and helped establish the annual gathering as an important act of historical memory for Luzerne County and the surrounding Wyoming Valley.

For the Nanticoke Historical Society, participation in the event reflects its mission to preserve, interpret, and share local history. By joining other historical, patriotic, civic, and veterans' organizations at the Wyoming Monument, the Society helps connect the people of Nanticoke with the broader story of the American Revolution as it unfolded in the Susquehanna River region.

The Battle of Wyoming occurred when Patriot defenders up and down the Wyoming Valley faced a force of Loyalists and Indigenous allies aligned with the British during the Revolutionary War.

William McKerachan made his home in the village of Nanticoke in 1774. Weary of the continuing struggles in Ireland, his homeland, he made his way to America to begin a new life. He became Nanticoke's first schoolteacher, but years later, serving as a captain of the Connecticut Forces, he led the "Hanover Boys" bravely into battle, where he and many of those brave men fell. The Patriot defeat and the heavy loss of life became a defining moment in local history.



Hundreds of people attending were treated to a memorable program



As America approaches major anniversary milestones, including commemorations tied to the nation's 250th anniversary, the Society's participation is especially meaningful. It reminds residents that national history is also local history, carried forward by communities that continue to remember the sacrifices, struggles, and stories of those who came before. To read



Local military unit presented the colors



Costumed re-enactors helped bring the Revolutionary War era to life.



Tablet at the base of the monument shows officers who lost their lives in the Battle of Wyoming

Despite the warm weather, attendees were inspired by the music and solemnity of the event.

Society Plaque registered with International Time Capsule Society

- Capsule is scheduled to be opened on July 4, 2076, the 300th anniversary of our nation.
- Produces a framed certificate of registration from the ITCS [International Time Capsule Society](http://InternationalTimeCapsuleSociety.org).
- By registering the capsule with the ITCS and including plaque details in the process, ensures the plaque is part of a documented, searchable historical record, and the capsule's story is preserved for future generations



NHS Time Capsule to be opened in 50 years on our country's 300 birthday



GET YOUR TICKETS - Tea Leaf Reading Workshop

OCTOBER 24 – 1 p.m.

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.)



Historical Society Participates in National Night Out

On August 4, 2026, the Nanticoke Historical Society participated in Newport Township's National Night Out. The event was held at the St. Faustina's Grove in Sheatown, from 4 until 8 P.M.

National Night Out is an event that promotes community and camaraderie partnerships between the police and



Visitors enjoyed our Nanticoke-Newport Trolley cut-out



Charlotte Dudkowski and Sally Billings manned the NHS Booth

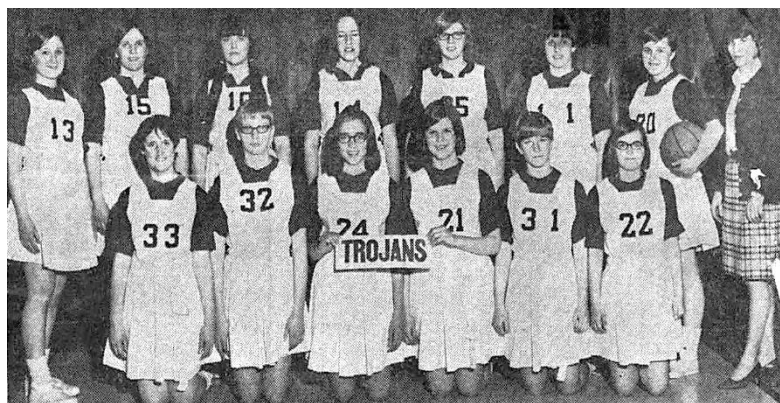
neighborhood residents. It is

estimated that 17,000 communities across the country participate in the event. A variety of law enforcement, first responders, human service organizations and civic groups were in attendance.

Our Historical Society showcased photo displays of the Nanticoke-Newport Trolley and the trolleys in service from the late 1800's to the 1950's. Those in attendance had an opportunity to take a photo with our 4' x 8' trolley cut out. The cut-out is from an original photo of the Nanticoke-Newport trolley that serviced the area many years ago. Membership applications were available as well as items for purchase.

We had some wonderful conversations with both new and familiar community members, enjoyed reminiscing with those that recognized places shown in the photos, invited those that stopped by to visit us at the Historic Samantha Mill house and enjoyed some of the tasty food items available. It was a beautiful summer evening, and we were glad to participate in the event.

Thank you to Tania, Gronkowski, Events and Activities Coordinator for planning the display, Charlotte Dudkowski, Society membership coordinator and Society member Sally Billings, who helped to man the booth for the evening, and thanks to all who stopped by our table to visit with us.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In 1969 the Nanticoke Area Girls' Basketball Team clinched the Wyoming Valley Basketball Championship.

Kneeling from left, Donna Lee, Ann Marie Aiukewicz, Janice Kelly, Denise Toballa, Debbie Krupinski, Theresa Butz. Standing Carolyn Katra, Linda Kuprionas, Irene Antoff, Sharon Quees, Jan Carter, Jeanne Antolik, Betty Jane Wojcik, Coach Elaine Deluca

“What’s it like to be a Nanticokian?”

By John S. Tomko, Jr.

To start, “Nanticokian” isn’t an official term in dictionaries, style guides, or used formally for Nanticoke. Sometimes, writers use it to give the place a unique identity, but people from the city don’t usually call themselves that in daily life. Instead, you’ll hear expressions like “from Nanticoke,” “a Nanticoke native,” or even just a family or neighborhood name, which often means more than any label.



So, being a Nanticokian means feeling like the place has already given more than it had, and you are part of what’s left. This isn’t about defeat, but about being realistic. The city was built quickly, with a clear purpose, and around something that wouldn’t last forever. Anthracite was at its core. The people who came—immigrants, miners, families—saw work as a duty, not a dream. They quickly set up churches, unions, and neighborhoods formed by language, jobs, and closeness. This created a certain kind of person: practical, tough, and not likely to explain themselves. Even today, long after the industry has disappeared, that way of thinking remains.

Being from Nanticoke is less about your location and more about how you handle things. People quietly accept limits—whether economic, geographic or social—but they also expect to endure. Many leave, but they don’t fully let go. The city stays in their minds, even if they never come back. Serving, especially in the military, fits this pattern. It’s not unusual, but a natural next step. The city that once sent men underground now sends them out into the world. The idea is the same: you go where work or duty sends you.

And there is memory. Not the kind you find in museums, but real, lived memory—families who can trace their roots through streets, churches, and shifts in the mines. Even when buildings are gone, the mental map stays clear.

Most places change by adding new layers over time. Nanticoke feels like a place where layers have been stripped away. What remains is more open. You can see structure clearly—what built the city, what kept it going, and what happens when the main purpose is gone.

So, what does it mean to be a Nanticokian? It means coming from a place that gave everything early on, and living with that legacy quietly. It means knowing effort without show, loyalty without needing to say it, and identity without having to explain. Whether you stay or leave, you carry the place with you. In some ways, it’s finished, but in others, it lives on through its people. 🏠

This article is adapted from the author’s forthcoming book “NANTICOKE: How We Came to Be” which will soon be available at our office.

Driven by Memory: Nanticoke's Car Dealership Days

By: Judy Minsavage



Al Fink Auto – West Main Street

For many families in Nanticoke, buying a car was not about flash, color, or speed. It was about thrift, repairability, and endurance. A family car took fathers to work, mothers to the store, and families to church on Sunday or to visit Grandma and Grandpop in a neighboring town. It also carried children



*Matheson Pontiac West Main and
North Market Street*

to school events, relatives to Sunday dinners, and families over familiar streets lined with homes and corner stores. Most families settled for a used Chevrolet, Ford, or Plymouth because these cars were roomy, affordable, and easy for local garages to repair. In the 1940s, a Chevrolet Special Deluxe or Ford Super Deluxe was a practical choice. In the 1950s, families often looked to the Chevy Bel Air or Ford



*Lape-Catnes Chevrolet in
background – Main Street*

Fairlane, while by the 1960s, popular models included the Ford Galaxie and Plymouth Fury.

From 1928 to the late sixties, Nanticoke had many car dealerships vying for the attention of city customers.

O'Karma Motors – 450 West Main Street – Ford – 1955 – 1983

Gabe's Motors – Lower Broadway - Pontiac – 1928 - 1978

Rees Motors – 183 West Market Buick – 1920 – 1970

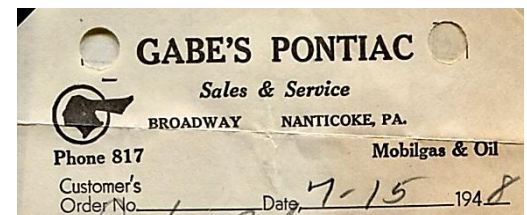
Al Fink Auto – 421 West Main Street – Oldsmobile – 1948 – circa 1968

Superior Motors – 510 E. Main Plymouth - Chrysler—1945 - 1963

Belles Garage – 438 East Main Street - Studebaker – 1948 – circa 1963

Lape-Catnes – Catnes - Main Street - Chevrolet – 1928 – 1961

Matheson Pontiac – West Main and North Market Streets - 1926 – 1932



Choosing a model that could carry a family safely through long winters mattered most. Reliability was key, especially on icy hills, narrow streets, and early-morning drives when ice and snow could make every trip feel uncertain.

During the 1940s, families depended on older cars because World War II had halted civilian automobile production from 1942 to 1945. New cars were scarce, and after production resumed, prices remained too high for many working families. Keeping the family automobile running for several years became essential, which kept local repair shops busy. A father or neighbor might spend a Saturday under the hood in the driveway, while children watched from the porch and learned that a dependable car was something to be cared for, not replaced lightly.



Belles Garage - East Main Street

In the 1950s, the Chevrolet Bel Air, Ford Fairlane, Plymouth

Savoy, and Plymouth Belvedere were popular choices in Pennsylvania, largely because they were affordable and easy to repair. Most families still purchased used cars because they were practical.



Rees Motors - Market Street

By the 1960s, as families began taking more road trips, new cars became more visible on local roads. Still, used cars continued to dominate among working-class buyers. Popular models included the Chevrolet Impala, Ford Galaxie and LTD, and Plymouth Fury, all of which reflected the era's growing interest in comfort, space, and dependability. For many, the car meant a little more freedom: a drive to a nearby town, a summer visit with relatives, or a family outing that began with everyone piling into the back seat. Sportier models were

being offered, but to the average consumer, those makes didn't seem sensible compared with a roomy, dependable family sedan or station wagon.

Small-town auto stores have given way to large, multi-brand dealerships with hundreds of cars to choose from. Still,



O'Karma Motors - West Main Street

many of us remember the family cars that carried us through daily life; one

of them may even have been a favorite. We also remember the pride and responsibility that came with making the down payment on that first car. 📷



Cease Motors 1938-1957 - Lower Broadway

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

By John S. Tomko, Jr.

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.

Joseph Minsavage (1912-1943)

Joseph Minsavage, born on November 18, 1912, in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, is a remarkable figure whose journey began in the small town where he was raised by his parents, Joseph Sr. and Anna (née Nanorta) Minsavage. His upbringing appears typical of young boys in Nanticoke during that time. Joseph's academic journey culminated in his graduation from Nanticoke High School, likely in 1931, where he distinguished himself by participating in basketball and football. This early success in sports and academics set the stage for his future achievements. Those achievements paved the way for his enrollment at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York, where he pursued a major in Liberal Arts. Standing 6'3" and weighing 183 pounds, Joseph excelled on the Syracuse football field. He played for three years as a guard and forward during his sophomore and junior years while demonstrating versatility as a wide receiver and end. His relentless determination earned him three letters in football from 1934 to 1936, and he was equally dedicated to basketball.

After graduating from Syracuse University in 1937, Joseph Minsavage brought his passion for sports and education to James High School, now known as Jamesville-Dewitt High School. He served as a coach and teacher, inspiring young minds and athletes. In 1939, he became the head coach at Onondaga Valley Academy, continuing to leave a lasting legacy of commitment to education and sports in the Syracuse area.

As with most young men at the time, the twenty-six-year-old Joseph enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1942. Commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve, he trained in naval artillery and embarked with the naval gun crew of the Liberty ship SS *Henry Knox*.



Joseph Minsavage



Nanticoke High School Football Team - Joseph Minsavage in the third row, fourth from left



Liberty Ships during World War II

The *Knox* was one of 2,710 Liberty ships built during World War II in response to the need for ships to transport war materiel and, eventually, troops to support the global war of the United States and its allies. These ships were mass-produced in eighteen American shipyards between 1941-45. By 1943, a Liberty ship launched every thirty-nine days after laying the keel. Three ships, on average, were completed on any given day. Typical of all Liberty ships, the *Knox* displaced 14,245 long tons and, with five holds, could carry approximately 9,000 tons of cargo with tanks, locomotives, and planes lashed to

the deck. Or it could carry 230 million rounds of rifle ammunition, 440 tanks, and 2,840 jeeps. It was 441 feet 6 inches in length, 56 feet 10.75 inches at the beam (width), and had a draft of 27 feet 9.25 inches. It has a single screw prop propelled by two oil-fired boilers and a triple-expansion steam engine. Its speed was approximately 32.2 miles per hour, with a range of 23,000 miles. Among its armaments, it may have had a 4-inch stern gun, two 37mm bow guns, four .50 caliber machine guns, and possibly two .30 caliber machine guns. The *Knox* had a crew of ninety-two consisting of fifty-one Merchant Marine sailors responsible for the ship's operations and forty-one U.S. Navy gunners for the ship's defense.

The *Knox* was last seen afloat on June 19, 1943. While transiting the Indian Ocean west in the vicinity of 0°01'S 71°15'E toward Iran, at approximately 7:10 p.m. local time, the Japanese submarine I-37 sent a spread of torpedoes severely damaging the *Knox*, engulfing its deck in flames, and killing twenty-five of the crew outright. The remaining sixty-seven boarded lifeboats and proceeded toward the Maldives. After a harrowing trip through rough seas and with little food or water, forty-one survivors arrived in the Maldives on June 30, 1943. Ensign Minsavage is reported missing/presumed dead. Later, he is reported killed/body not recovered. It is assumed that he was among those killed by the torpedoes and subsequent magazine explosion, which sunk the *Knox* after three hours of burning.

There is no grave for Joseph in any of Nanticoke's cemeteries. His name is listed on a memorial at Trinty Cemetery in Sheatown, which honors Nanticoke men who served in World War II. 

Final in a Series

By John S. Tomko, Jr.

For several years, *In Honor and Memory* has told the accounts of individuals whose lives intersected with military service. Some served in the World Wars. Others served in Korea, Vietnam, or in times of peace. Their ranks differed. Their assignments differed. Their experiences differed. Some returned home. Some did not.

Each story began with a person. A son or daughter. A student. A worker. A neighbor. Someone who formerly walked the streets of Nanticoke and lived within the institutions that shaped life in the city.

Military service became the focus of these profiles because service often reveals character most clearly. It places individuals in circumstances where duty, sacrifice, courage, endurance, and responsibility are tested. Yet as these stories accumulated, something surprising began to emerge. The stories were different, but the responses often seemed familiar. Again and again, individuals accepted obligations larger than themselves. They served when called. They endured difficult circumstances. They adjusted to changing conditions. They returned home and resumed their lives, or they carried what they had learned into new communities, new professions, and new responsibilities. Their military service became part of their story, but rarely the entirety of it.

Taken one at a time, these profiles preserve the memory of individual lives. Taken together, they reveal something else. They reveal the place that produced them.

Without intending it, this series has assembled evidence. Across generations, wars, occupations, and decades, the stories point to a common source. They suggest that Nanticoke produced more than coal, businesses, churches, schools, or neighborhoods. It produced people formed by certain expectations: that responsibility should be accepted, that service matters, that difficult tasks should be undertaken rather than avoided, and that one's contribution is measured less by recognition than by the fulfillment of duty.

The purpose of this series was to honor individuals and preserve their memories. It has done that. But it has also accomplished something larger. Along the way, it has helped to answer a question that was never fully asked at the beginning: *What kind of place consistently produced people like this?* The answer is Nanticoke.

Each person remembered in these pages was unique. Each lived a life that cannot be reduced to a single description. Yet each was also, in some measure, a manifestation of the place that formed them. Through their service, their sacrifices, and the lives they lived afterward, they reflected qualities that recurred across the generations. In the end, *In Honor and Memory* has not simply been a series about veterans. It has been a series about Nanticoke, told through the lives of those who carried a part of it with them wherever they went.

Over the years, *In Honor and Memory* set out to preserve the accounts of individuals whose lives included military service. In doing so, it revealed something larger. Each profile told the story of a person, but together they told the story of a place. Through generations, wars, occupations, and circumstances, these men and women carried with them habits of duty, service, perseverance, and responsibility that had been formed long before they put on a uniform. Their lives remind us that the measure of a community is not found only in its buildings, industries, or population, but in the character of the people it produces. If there is a lasting lesson in these pages, it is that Nanticoke's greatest legacy was never coal alone, but the generations of citizens who carried something of the city with them wherever life took them. Their stories have been remembered here. What they reveal about Nanticoke will remain.

This concludes the *In Honor and Memory* series. Thank you for allowing these stories to be remembered. 



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Nanticoke High School Class of 1950 visits Washington DC

The Pulaski Building

From the Nanticoke High School Class of 1905 to the Demolition

By Chet Zaremba

High School students had been attending the State Street School since 1892. The 1893 graduating class consisted of 11 girls and 1 boy. As the years progressed and class sizes became larger it became obvious that a new high school was needed.



Pulaski High School Completed in 1906



State Street School

On January 14, 1904, the school board decided to erect a new 12-room school building next to the Centennial School. Attorney Charles Shea presented a statement from the clerk of courts showing that residents had voted 746 to 569 in favor of constructing a new school building on the Centennial lot. Then, on Wednesday, April 20, 1904, an announcement by the Nanticoke School Board was published in the Times-Leader soliciting sealed bids for a “brick high school building”.

The graduating class of 1905 entered their senior year as students at the State Street School as the new school was under construction. While at State Street, the class of 1905 elected officers: Charles O’Brien, President; Bernice Griffith, Vice-President; Bessie Dew, Secretary; Eddie Makowski, Treasurer; and Charles Gough, Critic.

The new high school was finished at a cost of \$42,000. It had three stories and a basement. Electric lights illuminated the building. The first floor contained 4 school rooms, a director’s room, principal’s office, and a fireproof vault connected to the principal’s office. There were two lavatories on the first floor and a cloakroom for each school room. On the second floor were four more school rooms, cloakrooms, lavatories for teachers, a teacher’s room, and a library. The third floor was the high school room, with a seating capacity of about 100; a chemical laboratory; a laboratory for the study of physics; and a principal’s room.

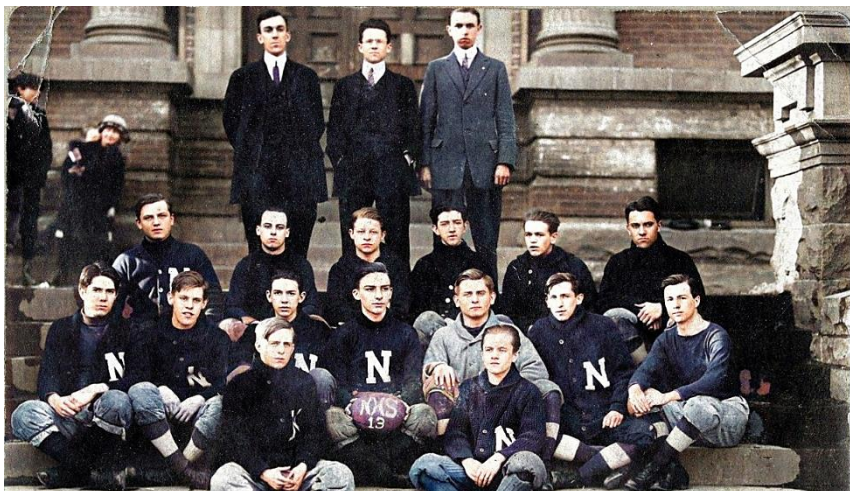


St. Mary's Band posed on the steps of Pulaski High School

The pupils of the new school were required by Superintendent Griffith to be in attendance at the building at 9 a.m. on Monday, March 20. Everything was in

perfect order, and not a single recitation was delayed all day. The main entrance was beautiful and imposing. The doors were flanked on either side with large brick pilasters and four round terra cotta columns with Corinthian caps. That entrance was used as a background for photos of many groups. Many impressive photos are in the possession of our historical society, including the three shown in this article. There are a number of other photos showing the school facility, graduating classes, and sports teams.

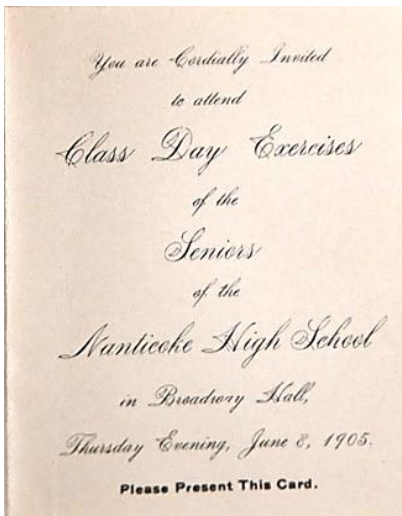
The first graduating class consisted of 18 members, not since 1905 was the largest high school graduating class in Nanticoke history. Marguerite Davies, Bessie Dew, Jennie Grant, Bernice Griffith, Gertrude John, Sophie Morgan, Lydia Schwartz, Jessie Van Loon, Hanna Williams, Eugene Brader, Roy Eder, Charles Gough, Edward Makowski, Silas Mayfield, Charles O'Brien, Dana Park, Stanley Rolf and Harry Smith.



1913 Nanticoke High School Football Team



1906 Pulaski High School Faculty

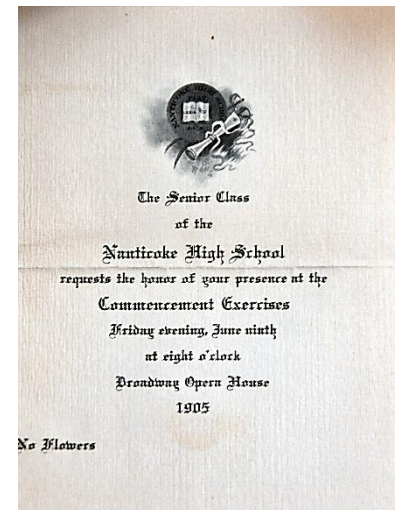


Class Day Exercises were held on June 8, 1905, at the Broadway Hall.

Commencement was in the Broadway Opera House on June 9th.

Education continued in this building for high school students until a new high school was built at Main and Kosciuszko Streets. The first high school class graduated from the new school in 1915.

Upon the exit of the high school students, the building was renamed the Pulaski Elementary School. It continued as such until, on March 7, 1929, a large crack appeared in the foundation of



the school building, caused by settling of the ground at the intersection of Prospect and Noble Streets, extending all the way to Maple Street. The ceiling and joists of two schoolrooms were affected. The floors were reinforced by the Nanticoke Construction Company.

By January of 1930, the fate of this beautiful building was sealed as damage to the building continued to mount.

A newspaper report on January 1, 1931, indicated that there had been no further cracks in the Pulaski and the pupils and parents were pleased with conditions as they then existed.

Classes and activities at the school continued until April of 1947 when the basement flooring was discovered to be pulling away from the building.

NANTICOKE SCHOOL WALLS GRADUALLY PULLING APART

It was reported at a meeting of Nanticoke school directors last evening that walls in the centre of the Pulaski buildings are slowly but surely pulling apart with north half of the building moving down the hill towards the park. This school was erected on the highest point in the city at Noble and Prospect streets, and is constructed on a solid rock foundation. A large crack in the walls was first noticed about a year ago when the directors let a contract to reinforce and shore up a number of the main joists of the first floor. Since that time the cracks have widened gradually from the foundation to the top of the building. There are no mine caves in the vicinity of the school building and the cause is believed a general settling of the surface in that part of the city.

Supt. Welneck of Susquehanna Collieries Co. with a number of his engineers and several outside engineers made a thorough inspection of the building and at the meeting last evening recommended that certain repairs be made. The directors decided to inspect the building on

Friday-afternoon at 2 to determine what action is necessary. The Centennial school building which adjoins the Pulaski on the same grounds also is affected by the settling.

The supply committee was empowered to purchase 2,000 feet of white pine for the manual training department and colors for the art department. The resignation of Miss Bess Winters was read and accepted. A poor lighting system reported by the building committee in the Washington school was ordered repaired and a new meter installed. Supt. Diffenderfer reported that the average attendance of fifteen per cent. must be maintained at the night schools, one of the classes being discontinued for this reason. Other classes will be discontinued unless the attendance increases.

Secretary John Wadzinski and Director Cooney were elected to attend the State convention at Harrisburg on February 4, 5 and 6. A check amounting to \$6,882.07 was received from ex-Tax Collector Charles Gorakl. The next meeting will be held on Monday evening, February 10.

The seriousness of the situation came to light when Joseph Petro, a plumbing contractor, was sent to the school to repair a break in a steam line leading to the structure's heating plant. He found that a section of the basement floor had spread open, leaving crevices from which moist air, similar to that which ordinarily comes from mine openings, was being thrown off.

Pieces of the concrete flooring had broken off and had fallen into these crevices. These developments took place since a previous inspection of the building about two weeks prior. The school was ordered to be abandoned at once.

SCHOOL AT NANTICOKE IS CLOSED BY MINE DAMAGE

355 Pupils Transferred From Pulaski Building. Concrete Floor Breaks

The Pulaski school building on East Noble street, Nanticoke, has been closed indefinitely due to a mine subsidence affecting the structure. A total of 355 pupils, 13 teachers and a principal have been transferred to another school building where they have been placed on a part-time schedule pending the reopening of the damaged school building. The actual closing of the school took place at 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon following an investigation by Alvin Harry, Plymouth, an inspector for the Department of Labor and Industry at Harrisburg.

HAZLETON IS DEFEATED BY HOUSE VOTE

Jenkins Loses First Round In Fight For Anthracite Laboratory

Washington, April 24—(AP)—The House voted tentatively today to establish the government's \$450,000 anthracite laboratory in Schuylkill Haven instead of Hazleton, Pa. The vote was on whether the appropriations committee may stipulate in the Interior Department appropriation bill that the laboratory site be changed from Hazleton, selected by Secretary of the Interior Krug to Schuylkill Haven. The

Classes were dismissed, and pupils and teachers were instructed to report to the Lincoln School the next day at 12:15 p.m., where classes would be held for the balance of the school term.

A number of meetings were held between the school board and officials of the Susquehanna Collieries Company regarding possible repairs to the school.

FOUR MEN INJURED WHEN OLD SCHOOL COLLAPSES

Four men were injured this afternoon about 3 o'clock when the abandoned Pulaski school building at Nanticoke collapsed while being razed.

One of the men, Jacob Urban, who resided at the rear of the school, was caught under the debris. He was soon dug out and rushed to Nanticoke State Hospital. How badly he was injured was not known at 3:30.

The other three, also working with Urban on the third floor of the building, jumped as they felt the building caving under them. They were reported to have suffered minor bruises. Their names were not immediately available.

The building was being razed by Barney Makarczyk, Nanticoke contractor.

Legion Votes \$100 To Freedom Train

Directors of Wilkes-Barre Post American Legion, met last night and voted a donation of \$100 toward the expense of the Freedom Train which arrives Thursday.

A request for a contribution was made by David Davis, treasurer of the Freedom Train Committee under William Healey.

Four years prior to this, the old Centennial School, located on the same plot of ground, was torn down when it was termed unsafe by the State.

Demolition commenced in November of 1947. The old school was going, but she wasn't going easily. 🏠



The Pulaski High School

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Forgotten Tales of Nanticoke.

By: Tania Gronkowski

The Iceman

On the afternoon of Saturday, November 14, 1914, Frank Rineheimer of Slocum found a body in the Wapwallopen Creek. The unidentified man was frozen in ice, wearing overalls, positioned face down with his hands extended above the ice. The body was found about 3 p.m.



Wapwallopen Creek

Squire Thomas of Dorrance was notified of the findings along with the Glen Lyon authorities, including James Burke, Chief of Newport Township Police. The body could not be removed from the ice until Deputy Coroner Frank Strzalka gave his permission and instructions on how to remove the body. It took several hours for the proper authorities to be contacted to give the permission needed.

Late in the night on November 20th Squire Thomas received permission to remove the body. The victim was believed to be John Paczinski, aged 80, of Glen Lyon. He had disappeared on November 16th, but the identity was not confirmed.

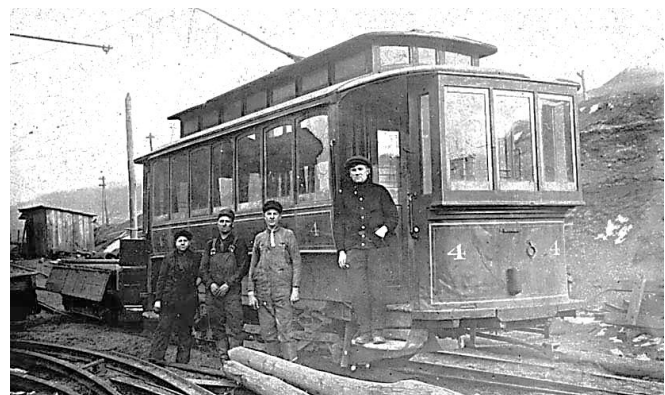
On November 23rd it was reported that the victim was indeed John Paczinski (Paczinski) who had disappeared on Tuesday, November 10th. He wandered away from work that morning and a vigorous search had been made to find him. He was identified by a relative, Louis Blaschinski of Glen Lyon.

John Paczinski (Paczinski) had lived in Glen Lyon for the last 25 years. He was well known and had many friends. He reported feeling ill on the day of his disappearance. It was surmised that a temporary derangement caused him to wander away from his work at the coal mine. John worked in the mines for many years and performed jobs outside the mine. He had a wife and 2 grown children that survived him. His funeral service was held at St. Adalbert's Church with the Rev. Lapinski presiding. His body interred in the church cemetery.

One can only guess what happened to this man that caused him to fall into the creek and end up miles away. It is fortunate that he was found, identified and put to rest by family and friends. This story has a conclusion: the identity of the Iceman revealed, relatives that lived on, and a place of rest. Many of these forgotten stories have no conclusion. Rest in Peace Mr. Paczinski (Paczinski) and know that your story is not forgotten. 🙏

Street Car Escapes Disaster

May 31, 1915, an open streetcar owned by the People's Street Railway was engaged by the Columbus Band to advertise a picnic at Kirmar Park. The car contained 32 passengers, most of them band members. The streetcar left Glen Lyon and traveled about ½ mile before jumping the track. The car ploughed up the ties for close to 40' and cut off a telephone pole before stopping at a sheer edge of an embankment. If it had traveled on another foot, it would have gone over the edge, and many deaths would have resulted.



Circa 1910 People Street Railway Maintenance Crew

As the streetcar left the track, an orphan was thrown between the rails and the car stopped directly over his body. The floor of the car was pulled up and people began digging up the ashes in the roadbed to extricate the boy. He had to be brought up into the car to be released from being ground under the car.

Dr. N. Ray Meyers (Myers) examined the orphaned boy and found no broken bones. Dr. Meyers (Myers) believed that it was a miraculous escape from death. The young boy was very ill that evening, but it wasn't certain if it was nervous shock or internal injuries.

The same streetcar had gone off the track an hour before this accident but had been put back into service. The cause was thought to be a defective wheel. Motorman Thomas M. Thomas was running the car at the time of the accident, and all traffic was delayed for an hour.

Research shows that Motorman Thomas M. Thomas lived at 170 Robert St., Sheatown, in the year 1919. Dr. Meyers (Myers) lived at 27 E. Main St., Wanamie, and his office was at the same address. He married Dell MacLawrence of Wanamie, was the school director in Newport Township and promoted the construction of the Wanamie High School.

The orphan boy that had such a sensational escape from death by the derailment is unknown. He was never mentioned by name nor were there any further articles reporting about his recovery. 

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Nanticoke's Hidden History

Main Street Memories: From a Palace to Pizza

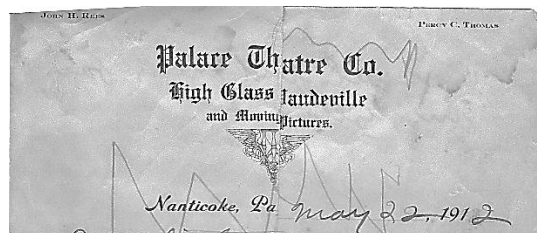
By: Judy Minsavage

For longtime residents, places like Woolworths, Cimmets, Peoples Shoe Store, Gaysons, Restaurant, the Leader Store and many more bring back memories of Main Street shopping, school days, factory whistles, snow on the sidewalks, or the smell of coal smoke in winter. Younger generations may ask what stood here before, who opened this door, and why these places still matter.

Buildings that have survived the wrecking ball, may still have a recognizable storefront or configuration that lets us see some remnant of its past, but sometimes, the original storefront is gone, and we're left to wonder about the age and purpose the building served.

One such building stands on Main Street. Its history is decades long and during those many years the location provided city families with time to escape into a world much different than their own.

In 1885, The property started out as lot forty-five owned by Thomas Shea, upon which E.W. Thomas's Blacksmith Shop began operation. But in the early 1900s Thomas constructed a one-story building on the lot and named it the Palace Theatre.



performed outside of its walls. In one instance the Palace engaged a professor named D'Ealmon, who performed a Harry Houdini type show, as followers gathered at the Pennsylvania Railroad Bridge the performer jumped into the Susquehanna River handcuffed, a distance of about thirty-five feet. To cheers from the crowd he emerged safe his hands uncuffed, he swam to shore. As the popularity of the theatre grew, renovations became necessary, a larger stage, balcony seating, rear expansion and improved projection equipment. By 1912, the Thomas-Rees partnership dissolved, and Frank Devlin took over management of the theatre.



The Palace Theatre late 1909 - From left. Thomas Tippins, John H. Rees, Woman in booth (unknown), Edward Whitfield Thomas, Percy Thomas in doorway, and

Name Changed from Palace to Family

The Family Theatre offered city residents a wide range of entertainment from 1912 through to the 1930s, including major silent-era films, vaudeville acts, serials, war films, and early talkies.



Daddy Longlegs - 1920

Its programs featured well-known stars such as Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Buster Keaton, Rudolph Valentino, and Lon Chaney, along with productions by D.W. Griffith. Over time, the property passed through several owners, including George and Emma Jennings, Sadie Devlin, Edmund Connolly and Harriet Quigley, and later Leo and Mary Pierontoni.

By 1954, the building was

no longer operating as a theatre, and in 1956 it reopened as Nardozzo's Pizzeria.

Nanticoke's hidden history is not only underground, though the mines are what brought it to the status of a city.



In 1954 - Advertised as Family Teen House

It is also the buildings that remain, old maps, locations shown in family photographs, newspaper clippings, and in the stories people tell. Although we become familiar with what our city looks like today, the buildings that remain hold an immense amount of history, a history that is not gone simply because the front sign has changed.



The Family Theatre - on the right next to Lape Catnes Chevrolet on Main Street



Nardozzo's Pizza Today

Built on Faith:

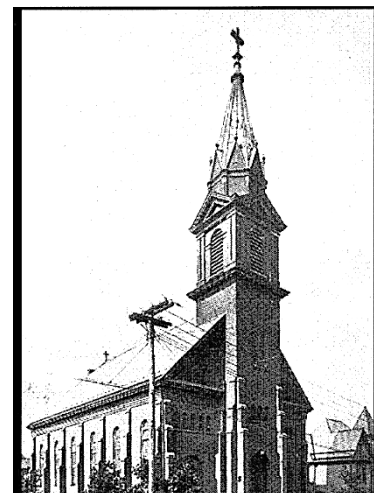
Holy Trinity–St. Faustina Catholic Church: A Story of Faith, Survival, and Community

By: Judy Minsavage

In 1968, a treasured piece of Nanticoke's Catholic history was discovered among the private papers of Thomas A. Butkiewicz Sr., one of the city's prominent early residents. It was the original 1896 mortgage for Holy Trinity Church on Hanover Street. The loan, negotiated through First National Bank for \$7,000, bore the signatures of parish trustees Thomas A. Butkiewicz, Joseph Krauser, Emil Malinowski, and Simon Savage. More

than a financial document, the mortgage was a witness to the courage of a young congregation willing to sacrifice for a permanent spiritual home.

Holy Trinity's story began in a community already rich with Catholic faith. Nanticoke was home to several churches that served immigrant families and working people who built their lives around parish, school, and neighborhood. Among them were St. Stanislaus, founded in 1874; St. Francis, founded in 1876; St. Joseph's founded in 1888; Holy Trinity, founded in 1895; and St. Mary's, founded in 1901.



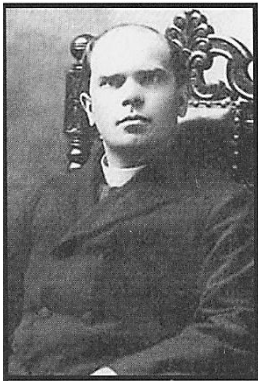
The First Edifice of Holy Trinity Church 1895-1929 – Seating capacity of 520 people.



St. Faustina Kowalska Catholic Church - Formerly Holy Trinity Church – Hanover Street

According to the Diocese of Scranton, Catholicism first took root in Northeastern Pennsylvania through the work of Catholic missionaries, beginning as early as 1825 with the building of St. Augustine Church in Susquehanna County. As coal communities grew, so did the need for parishes that could serve families in their own languages, traditions, and neighborhoods.

St. Stanislaus was the first Polish Catholic Church in Nanticoke, but by 1894 a group of Polish Catholics gathered to organize a new parish in the city. From that meeting came Holy Trinity Catholic Church. On May 4, 1895, the cornerstone of the new church on Hanover Street was blessed, and Father Francis Hodur became the first pastor. From the beginning, Holy Trinity was more than a building. It was a place where immigrant families could worship, educate their children, preserve their heritage, and support one another through the hardships of daily life.



Father Francis Hodur - Pastor - 1895 - 1897

In 1897, Father Hodur left the parish and founded the Polish National Catholic Church. Holy Trinity, however, continued forward. He was succeeded by Rev. J. Dudkiewicz, and over the next two decades a number of pastors guided the parish through

brief but important terms of service, including Rev. A. Nowicki, Rev. B. Iwanowski, Rev. J. Delinikajtis, Rev. W. Matulajtis, and Rev. W. Hordych.

On December 7, 1919, Father Wieziolowski was assigned to Holy Trinity, beginning one of the most important pastorates in the church's history. For his contributions to the Polish cause, he received the Haller Swords and the Cross of Merit of the Polish Army Veterans Association of America. Under his leadership, Holy Trinity entered a period of remarkable growth. On September 1, 1923, a parochial school was erected, accommodating approximately seven hundred students under the supervision of the Bernardine Sisters.

During Father Wieziolowski's 48 years as pastor, the parish became one of the strongest Catholic institutions in Nanticoke. In 1931, a new church edifice was completed at a cost of \$225,000. Designed in the form of a cross, with a theater-type floor and no

pillars, it seated 1,200

people and stood as one of the largest and most impressive churches in the city.

Through the decades, parish life flourished around worship, education, service, and fellowship. Holy Trinity supported many societies and ministries, including the Catholic Women's Council, the Holy Trinity School Guild, the Sodalities of Our Lady, the Holy Name



**Father Roman A. Wieziolowski - Pastor
1919-1967**



Undated photo - Holy Trinity Prior to the Construction of Holy Trinity Parochial School

Society, the Rosary Society, the Third Order of St. Francis, Boy Scouts, school basketball, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Knights of the Altar, senior and children's choirs, ushers, commentators, and lectors. These groups helped make the parish a social and spiritual center for generations of families.

By the 1960s, Holy Trinity remained an active and beloved parish. In 1962, the Catholic Women's Club held its 26th annual dinner, reflecting the dedication of parish women who continued to organize, serve, and preserve the bonds of community. Their names, recorded in the program, represent the many parishioners whose quiet work sustained the church year after year.

Sodality To Hold Coronation

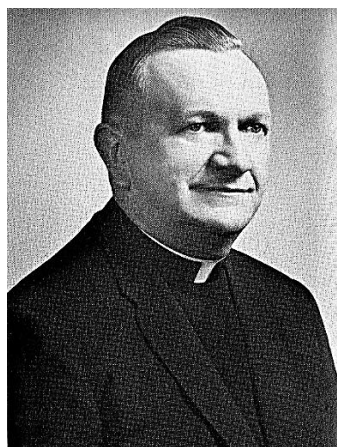


BERNADINE SUTCHO



EOBERTA KIZURICH

Sodality Coronation - 1958



**Reverend Walter W.
Poplawski Pastor - 1967-1970**

In 1967, Rev. Walter Poplawski was serving as pastor. Two years later, in 1969, the interior of the church was renovated to meet the requirements of the liturgical renewal that followed the

Second Vatican Council. In 1970, Holy Trinity celebrated its 75th anniversary, marking three-quarters of a century of faith on Hanover Street. After Father Poplawski died suddenly on December 27, Father Bernard A. Toloczko was appointed pastor. His ministry brought continued renewal. He assisted the Bernardine Sisters by serving as Director of Religious Education, taught religion to eighth-grade students, and accepted broader leadership responsibilities within the Catholic community.

From 1982 to 2000, Father Toloczko oversaw major improvements to both the church and school. The interior and exterior of the school were completely renovated, as was the church interior. The vestibule was converted into a chapel for daily weekday Masses, a grotto of Blessed Virgin Mary was erected beside the church, and a chapel was built in the parish cemetery. These projects showed that Holy Trinity was not simply preserving the past; it was continuing to adapt to the needs of its people.

A CENTURY OF FAITH AND A PARISH THAT ENDURED

In 1995, Holy Trinity marked its centennial, celebrating one hundred years since its establishment in Nanticoke. Bishop James C. Timlin served as principal celebrant of a Mass of Thanksgiving on September 24, 1995. Father Bernard Toloczko was joined by priests who were native sons of the parish, and Monsignor John C. Masakowski delivered the



**Father James Nash - Pastor -
2006 - 2022**

homily. The celebration was more than an anniversary. It was public recognition that Holy Trinity had carried the faith of generations through immigration, war, economic hardship, changing neighborhoods, and the passing of time.

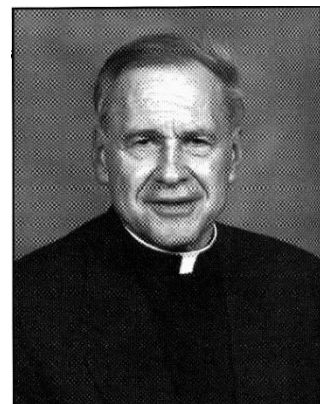
In 2006, Father James Nash became pastor of Holy Trinity. Within a few years, he would help guide Nanticoke's Catholic community through one of the most difficult periods in the history of Catholic life in Nanticoke and the surrounding area. Long-established parishes that had once served separate ethnic neighborhoods and close-knit communities began to close or consolidate, including St. Stanislaus, St. Joseph's, St. Mary's, Holy Child in Sheatown, and St. Francis. Out of that painful transition came a reorganized Catholic community under the name St. Faustina Kowalska Parish.

Yet through these changes, the church on Hanover Street remained. The building first begun by Holy Trinity's founders in 1895 and enlarged through the faith

A list of Pastors appointed to serve at Holy Trinity Church

Reverend F. Hodur — 1895 to 1897
 Reverend J. Dudkiewicz — 1897 to 1899
 Reverend A. Nowicki — 1899 to 1900
 Reverend B. Iwanowski — 1900 to 1902
 Reverend J. Delinikajtis — 1902 to 1903
 Reverend W. Matulajtis — 1903 to 1904
 Reverend W. S. Hordych — 1904 to 1906
 Reverend B. Iwanowski — 1906 to 1919 (2nd time)
 Reverend R. A. Wieziolowski — 1919 to 1967
 Reverend W. W. Poplawski — 1967 to present

List of Pastors of Holy Trinity Catholic Church from 1895 to 1967



**Monsignor Bernard Toloczko
Pastor - 1970-2005**

and sacrifice of later generations continued to serve as a house of worship. Its survival is significant because it represents more than architecture. It represents the strength of a parish community that adapted without forgetting where it came from. While many neighboring churches closed as populations shifted and parish life changed, Holy Trinity–St. Faustina Kowalska Parish endured as a visible link between Nanticoke’s Catholic past and its present.

Today, St. Faustina Kowalska Parish, under the faithful guidance of Father Brian Van Fossen stands as a reminder that a church is kept alive not only by stone, brick, and stained glass, but by the people who continue to gather, pray, remember, and serve. From the first mortgage signed in 1896 to the present-day parish community, its story is one of perseverance. It has survived because generations of parishioners believed it was worth sustaining, and because it continued to offer what its founders first sought: a spiritual home for the Catholic community of Nanticoke. 



**Father Brian Van Fossen -
Pastor 2023-present**

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Your kind donation today will make history tomorrow.



On Sally's Corner

The Boys on the Block

By: Sally Gorgas

Summertime was a three-month break from school, with plenty of activities and games to keep us busy.

In our younger years, we spent most of our time on the playground behind St. Mary's School. I also enjoyed going to the Mill Memorial Library to find books to read and places to relax. In the neighborhood, we filled our days with games.



Sally Gorgas

As the kids in the neighborhood got older, our interests changed. I remember one summer when the Washington Fire Company, on Washington and Hanover Streets, had a bazaar. The streets were closed for a few days, and the great highlight was a Ferris wheel in front of the station on Hanover Street. From the top, you could almost see the whole town. What a sight to behold! It seemed like my own personal Ferris wheel.



Then we discovered boys! Many lived in the

neighborhood, so we saw them frequently. After supper, the boys would hang outside Frey's store on the corner of Washington and Hanover Streets. They were Gregory, Arthur, Chester, Tommy, Bob, and Stanley. The girls, my sister Pattie, Susan, Diane, and Delores would sit across the street on the low-to-the-ground windowsills of Washington School. I don't know why we never



The Original location of Frey's Store as it looked long after closing

mingled with each other. Maybe we were all shy. Unfortunately, we all had to go home when it got dark. Pattie had a crush on Bob, and I had a crush on Arthur.

Sadly, summer came to a quick end. Some of the boys were in my ninth-grade class but we never acknowledged each other or our summer of just looking.

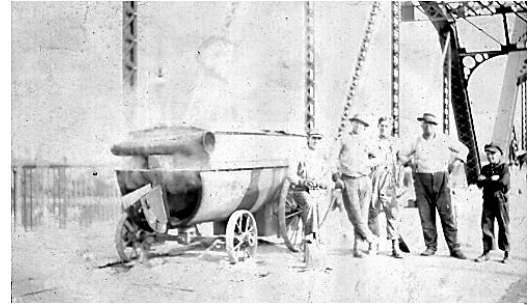


Washington Street School

Answer to Last Issue's Mystery Question

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

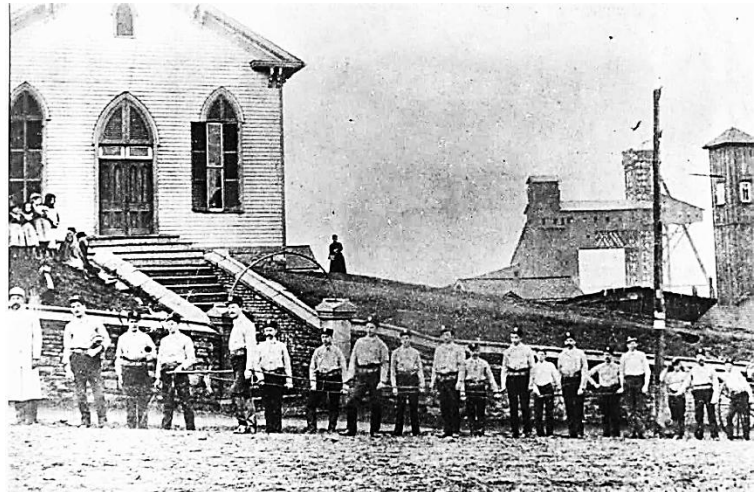
At 9:19 p.m. on July 13, 1915, the last brick was laid on the \$300,000 Nanticoke Bridge. One minute later an automobile from the Broadway Garage, driven by Edward Mace arrived. Several men crowded into the car and made the first trip across the bridge. Some of those who were present were H.H. Shaffer, superintendent of construction, Leonard Shaffer, Charles Miller, Samuel Sobers, Harry Freeman, Edward Shatting, Charles Shatting, Russell Morgan and Russell Curtis. After months of work, the Nanticoke Bridge officially opened on July 14, 1915.



The Nanticoke Bridge Under Construction

Our New Mystery Question

In this photo taken in the 1890s members of what hose company posed with their hand-drawn hose cart in front of the Zion Reformed Church on W. Main Street?



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.