
NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Legacy of Edward D. Phillips

One Man's Determination

Upon leafing through a large white binder entitled "Nanticoke", one of a collection of fifteen held by the Luzerne County Historical Society and known to local history buffs as "The Phillips," a natural curiosity arises about the man, who over a 30-year period, compiled a history of events, people and places in Luzerne County.

A quick search of the internet found the collection's author, Edward D. Phillips, may have attended Lafayette College in Easton in the early 1900's and won third prize in a senior debate. However, there's no definite proof this is our man. What we do know is Phillips, a native of Port Carbon, was a Coughlin High School history teacher and upon retiring worked as a crossing

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What's Buried in Patriot Square?

The Susquehanna Coal Company laid out Nanticoke's "Central Park", now Patriot Square, in 1874 providing a place for residents to gather, discuss the events of the day and enjoy warm sunny afternoons. Locals did just that attending park concerts, shopping at the surrounding stores and enjoying the beautiful trees and flowers. In 1904, Commander **George W. Simpson**, Spanish-American War Vets made arrangements for securing a cannon for the public park, The gun was to be shipped from Ft. Wadsworth, NY, with 20 8-inch shells that would be placed in a pyramid at the base of the weapon. The cannon was placed on its concrete base and unveiled on July 4, 1904.

By 1909, city fathers were concerned with Central Park's deteriorating walkways, unkempt trees and bushes, litter and vandalism. In July of 1912, Council members made a decision to spruce up the park and create a circular walkway in the center. Work was scheduled for bordering walkways along Broad, Market, Green and Prospect Streets as well.

While doing the excavation for the project, a young city worker, **John Werth**, uncovered a box described in the July 29, 1912 Wilkes-Barre Record as, "one foot in length, five inches in width and two and one-half inches in depth." One can imagine Werth's piqued curiosity as he lifted the box from its dirt-filled nest, handling it with care and pondering its contents. He immediately took it to his father, Street Commissioner Anthony Werth, who upon opening the lid,

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guard there. According to Luzerne County Historical Society librarian, Catherine Bryan, Phillips would spend his lunch hour at the library pouring over newspapers, documents, books and pamphlets doing daily research then would return to Coughlin to teach his history class. That's where the trail ends. No account is found as to what motivated him to write down every minute detail he could find about local communities from as far back as the early 1800's.

We can only assume that Phillips was a quiet unassuming fellow whose true passion was not to let even the smallest detail of life in Luzerne County slip into obscurity. For that, we should be truly grateful. We are privileged, through Phillip's diligent efforts, to have glimpse of how people, events and locations shaped not only Nanticoke, but many communities in our area.

Unfortunately, as dedicated as Phillips was to recording the stories of other's, his own is lost, as he and his wife had no known local survivors. According to an undated article written by former Times Leader Columnist Dave Janoski, after her husband's passing in 1958, Phillip's wife sold his books and papers to a dealer, who in turn sold them to the Luzerne County Historical Society for what had been determined a small price given the huge amount of valuable information they contained. The Nanticoke Historical Society is fortunate to have the chapters dedicated to this city.

The following is a small sampling from the Nanticoke Section of "The Phillips" 1884 –

The Columbian Roller Skating rink was erected. In 1886 the Welsh Congregational Church conducted a fair at the rink.

1889 - First National Bank opened for business in a store room of **Peter G. Mill**. Rent charged was \$25 a month.

1896 – The Nanticoke Athletic Club had as their inaugural event, a bicycle race. **J.P. Gestader** won the ½ mile, **J.B. Anderson** won the mile and J.P. Gestader took the 5 mile handicap. Robert Pratt Jr won a pony race that was held to commemorate the club's grand opening.

1904 - Nanticoke National Bank was organized.

The bank building was erected in 1912. A description of the bank was written as such: "Front of granite, balance pressed brick with stone trimming: two Ionic columns on each side of main entrance. Face is 54 feet high. Vault – steel 28 ½ ton electrically wired."

1909 - The Criterion, the largest amusement hall in Nanticoke was destroyed by fire. The hall was erected in 1906,

1919 - Miners bank – Was organized by **Emil Malinowski** as the Miners Trust Company. Miner's Trust Company took over the Polish National Bank. A site for the bank was built and opened in 1924 at the corner of Market and Broad Streets. Here's a description of the building: "The present edifice cost approximately \$225,000. The exterior is of Indiana limestone. The main entrance doors bronze kalemein (term describes a type of fire door) the floors Tennessee marble. Wainscot, white Italian vein marble with base of Verdi antique. Trim natural African mahogany. Vault doors, 3 feet thick, 135 tons of steel. Interior decorative color scheme of the edifice is ivory and orange in Italian renaissance. When the bank opened over 15,000 visitors stopped in to see the beautiful new bank."

1923 – Nanticoke's First Mardi Gras Parade. **Miss Naomi Samuels** was crowned queen at the corner of Main and Market Streets. She then led a parade of 50 floats through the city.

1927 – The Orchard Tennis Club erected a "fine" tennis court in Charles A. Shea's Orchard. It was the first recreational resort of its kind in Nanticoke. The club had six members. Walter Francis was president and Thaddeus Kolanski, secretary.

Details abound in the over 80-page history ranging from something as small as a town-sponsored contest, to events surrounding city leaders, educators and businessmen who shaped the community. With topics such as Industries, Buildings, Amusements, Hotels, Fire Departments, Music, Education and Streets, it's easy to see why this is one book that is very difficult to put down. ***Watch for more interesting tidbits about the life and times of Nanticoke in future newsletters.***

Calendar of Events

Society Offices: call 570-258-1367

SAMANTHA MILL HOUSE, 495 EAST MAIN STREET,
NANTICOKE

(NEXT TO MILL MEMORIAL LIBRARY)

OPEN HOUSE -

SEPT 25, 7 P.M. - NO CHARGE-THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO SOCIETY OFFICES TO VIEW EXTENSIVE DATABASE AND ACCESS INFO ON PEOPLE & EVENTS OF THE PAST . COME LOOK FOR YOUR FAMILY.

THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS MOVIE

OCT 19, 2 P.M.

PLACE: CULTURAL CENTRE OF ST. FAUSTINA.

FREE EVENT - PROGRAM BY CHARLES PETRILLO,
REFRESHMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR SALE.

REGULAR MEETING

OCT 23, 7 P.M. HELD AT SOCIETY OFFICES TO DISCUSS VARIOUS PROJECTS. THIS IS OPEN TO ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED. REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

VIRTUAL TOUR OF NANTICOKE

NOV. 20, 7 P.M. SOCIETY OFFICES .COME AND VIEW OLD PICTURES WITH AN IN DEPTH EXAMINATION OF EACH PHOTO

SOCIETY MEMBERS CHRISTMAS PARTY

EVERYONE IS ASKED TO BRING A COVERED DISH (IT CAN BE AN ENTREE, DESSERT, BOTTLE OF WINE ETC.) DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED.

WATCH THE NEWSPAPER FOR UPDATES

READ MORE ABOUT PATRIOT SQUARE AND THE ONE OF A KIND CELEBRATION THE CITY OF NANTICOKE HELD IN 1976 IN HONOR OF OUR COUNTRY'S BICENTENNIAL, LOG ON TO www.nanticokehistoryonline.com - CLICK THE "BLOGGER" Button

Buried

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discovered the value of its contents worth more than he may have expected. The metal box contained a paper dated April 26, 1876, upon which, the following was written:

"Burgess of Nanticoke, **Milton Stiles. John Werth, Jr.**, president of town council. Council members: **Dr. William Barnes, George D. Morgan, S.S. Driesbach and Isaac D. Williams.**"

One can only wonder what connection Anthony Werth had to the 1876 town council president, John Werth, Jr. No mention of a relationship could be found by this writer in Historical Society records. We do know, however, Commissioner Werth, named his son, the fellow who discovered the box, John. As Werth continued reading he must have recognized other names of prominent Nanticoke families.

"School directors, **George Arrs**, president; **Jerry O'Brien, John Dunn, George Blakely, Samuel Keithline, Thomas R. Williams** and Treasurer **John Fairchild**. Borough attorney, **Dr. Harry Hakes**. Street Commissioner, John Dunn. Constable, **James Ryan**. High Constable, John Dunn.

Principal business houses, **Hildreth & Co., S.P. George, Silas Alexander, W.P. Jones, Evan Morris, George Hill, I.P. Vandermark, Charles Lewis**, general merchandise. Druggists: **Dr. A.A. Lape, and D.K. Spry**; Clothiers: **A. Hursh, George H. Aurback and C.H. Rich**. Bankers: **Washington Lee Co.**, with **John Werth, Jr.** cashier. Doctors: **Dr. A.A. Lape, Dr. W. Robbins, Dr. R.A. Hylton and Dr. William Barnes**. Ministers: **Rev. Johnson, Rev. Hill, Rev. Harris and Father Mattingly**.

Also enclosed, was a document noting the borough had been organized in Feb. 1874.

Obviously what young John Werth had discovered was a time capsule, that had been buried 36 years earlier on the 100th anniversary of the birth of the nation.

Also found in the box, were two coins, a check and a number of newspapers. The check read as follows: "Nanticoke Bank, Nanticoke, April 26, 1876, Washington Lee and Co. Pay to the coming

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LINKS TO SUCCESS

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Family Finds New Clues

Having precious little background information and several possible spellings of a surname, a family visiting from Nazareth, PA came to the Society offices to garner information on a distant relative who was said to have worked for the Susquehanna Coal Company. Society Vice President, Chet Zaremba, immediately went to the large wooden card catalogue chest acquired from the now demolished coal company office building, which holds thousands of employee cards. There, he found information the family could use to continue their genealogical search.

The card revealed the date the relative came to the United States, how long he worked for the company and wages and hours painstakingly entered by a timekeeper from 1936 to 1943. But the most precious information listed on the card was the full name of each of the relative's parents. This along with other pertinent information gave the family a new avenue to follow, and a better picture of the life of man, who up until that moment, was basically a mystery

The Nanticoke Historical Society has over 95,000 items in its database and an extensive amount of physical items in their reference libraries.

Question:

As mentioned in "What's Buried In Patriot Square?"

In 1904, Commander **George W. Simpson**, Spanish-American War Vets made arrangements for securing a cannon for the public park, The gun was to be shipped from Ft. Wadsworth, NY, with 20 8-inch shells that would be placed in a pyramid at the base of the weapon. The cannon was placed on its concrete base and unveiled on July 4, 1904.

What happened to the cannon and shells?

ANSWER IN THE FALL ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER....

generations or bearer, \$9 trillion, signed by Centennial Committee. Written on the back a notation which read, ***"We surmise that future ages will consider this event perhaps in the light of ridicule, but we give it as the best light we have in this (so-called) barbarous age."***

The coins were an 1863 penny and a three cent piece made in 1868. Newspapers enclosed were the Daily Record of the Times, Wilkes-Barre dated April 25, 1876; The Luzerne Union, Wilkes-Barre, dated April 12, addressed to Charles Lecher; The New York Tribune, dated Oct 2, 1872; the Weekly Herald, New York, dated April 28, 1876; The Weekly Star, Plymouth, dated March 1, 1876 addressed to A.A. Lape; The Plymouth Index, dated April 2, 1876, addressed to Jacob Krause; The People, Wilkes-Barre, dated April 19, 1876 and The Pittston Comet, dated April 19, 1876.

According to the Wilkes-Barre Record

Commissioner Werth took the box to a Councilman Craig, chairman of the park committee who was unsure of what to do with the box.

In an article published in the Wilkes-Barre Record on August 14, 1912, Council President Smith suggested that "the box found in the park be placed in the window of Scureman's," (a drug and photo store located on Main Street) for one week, then in a vault in the city building until the completion of park renovations." It was then decided by council that the box would be reburied with "other similar data and articles."

Without a Trace...

No one can be absolutely sure, but legend has it that Street Commissioner Werth personally oversaw the reburying of the box in Central Park. It is said that he made known the site's location only to his daughter. Over time, and with the death of Werth, his daughter, and anyone who may have known of its whereabouts, the location of the box and its contents are forever a mystery.

In 1976, in honor of the countries bi-centennial celebration, a new time capsule was buried in the park. The park was renamed Patriot Square and a monument to local WWII Veterans was placed at the center of the circular walkway that Anthony Werth's son, John, excavated for so many years ago.

At the time, no mention was made of the discovery of the 1876 time capsule. One can only assume that the box with all of its contents, remains in the same location Anthony Werth had placed it 102 years ago.

NANTICOKE AND THE WORLD

1958

July to December

July

Nanticoke was assigned the REgent5 exchange by Bell Telephone, ending manual operator assisted, telephone service. A new central office would be located on Prospect Street in order to service the area and allow customers to dial station to station to many points throughout the United States and Canada.

August

Two young men, **Irving Briggs** and **Frederick Thomas Jones**, both of Nanticoke, were killed when the car in which they were riding careened off of a girder on the Nanticoke Bridge and plunged into the Susquehanna River. The driver, **Narcissus Wisniewski** was admitted to Nanticoke State Hospital in critical condition.

September

The \$200,000 Mill Memorial Library and park was dedicated on September 14, Attorney **J. Thirwall Griffith**, chairman, announced, "It be clearly understood Miss **Samantha J. Mill**, Nanticoke's greatest benefactor, intended her gift to be for all people of Nanticoke." Attorney **Charles N. Loveland**, trustee of the Mill estate, outlined the background of Miss Mill's bequest of her entire estate to the people of Nanticoke commenting "That her wealth really was created by the people of Nanticoke who mined the coal from which royalties were gained.

Nanticoke High School student body elected Teen House officers **Antoinette Bushko**, treasurer; **Carmine Paulino**, president; **Jean Collacchi**, secretary and **Edward Tomko**, vice president. **Sylvester Bozinski** was advisor and chaperones were **Stanley Galazin** and **Miss J. Pokapus**. Teen house was held every Tuesday and Friday night. Koronkiewicz's Pharmacy, Market Street, advertised, "See our TV Show 9:30 p.m. Tonite on Channel 22." Galli's Seafood W. Church Street– Advertised "Lobster tail for \$1.19/lb., clams 100 for \$1.50."

October

The Nanticoke Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis Club held their annual Halloween Parade with over 400 people participating. Led by the high school marching band the parade ended at Ray's Roller Skating Rink where refreshments were served. Committees were assisted by police, auxiliary police and firemen.

Jimmy the Jeweler advertised bride dolls with 3 wardrobe sets for \$1.44.

November

The Athletic Club of Nanticoke selected **Antoinette Bushko** as queen for the Nanticoke Kingston game in November. **Mary Ellen Ruczkowski**, **Rose Marie Leuter** and **Patricia Babetski** were runners-up.

December

Leventhal's Men's Store, Main Street advertised "sport shirts for \$3.95 and jackets for \$7.95."

Over 100 youngsters attended a Christmas Party held at the State Theater, by owner Edmund Connelly.

Fun Facts:

According to www.peoplehistory.com

Cost Of Living 1958

Average Cost of new house \$12,750.00 Average Monthly Rent \$92.00 Average Yearly Wages \$4,600.00 Cost of a gallon of Gas 25 cents.

World Events In 1958

- 14 year old Bobby Fischer wins the United States Chess Championship.
- Nikita Khrushchev becomes Premier of the Soviet Union
- Nelson Rockefeller Elected Governor of New York
- US Unemployment reaches 5.2 million
- Sir Edmund Hillary reaches the South Pole
- Elvis Presley is inducted into the Army.
- Brazil wins the 1958 World Cup in Sweden

**MEMBERS SEARCHING FOR
INFORMATION ON THE
FOLLOWING SURNAMES:**

Ray Blockus

Surnames: **Blockus, Blokus, Blocus, Chesko,
Chezka, Czieka, Chzan**
Texasgal445@yahoo.com

Bob & Elaine Deluca

Surnames: **Deluca, Tarnowski**
emd469@pa.metrocast.net

Michael Geiger

Surnames: A New one added **Lenahan**
ironmike47@comcast.net

Stanley & Sally Gorgas

Surnames: **Hyduk/Hydak, Haydock, Adamski,
Bialobek, Tomko,
Ulatowski, Bjalobek, Butchko, Paulus, Negosh,
Galick, Harczarik**
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Richard & Theresa Hess

Surnames: **Sienzant/Sierzant, Wiemcak/Wiecek,
Mikolaicik**
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Nancy Heyrich

Surnames: m-grandparents **Joseph Kaminski,
Kuryloski**
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John Hickey

Surnames: New names added **Carter, Toward,
Dougherty, Higgins**
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Sandy Lee

Surnames: **Lee, Burnaford**
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Martha (Becky) Price

Surnames: **Connor, Hopko, Cintalla**
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Barry Littleford

Surnames: **Littleford, Ruddick, Davis
thru marriage Myers, Stewart, Paige
(Tushinski)**
email LIL4D@verizon.net

Richard Robins

Fathers Family Surnames: **Robins, Mott, Wolf,
Dodson, Pringle, Carter,
Sharps, Large, Ives, Bonham, Porch, Morse,
Harrison, Gregory, Wolfe**
Mothers Family Surnames: **Wells, Wheeler,
Hungerford, Miller, Baltzell,
Dugas (Du Vallon), Morris, Kemball, Grosch,
Butz, Smith, Guibert.**
w5brr@aol.com

Helen Wasiakowski

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Hiller (Chyla), Mackiewicz,
Aszuk**
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John Stolarick

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Grandmother Mary Chabala**
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NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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