
NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Anton Piotrowski An Accidental History

The Poems of Anton Piotrowski, a book published in 1998 by Wilkes University Press and compiled by Mrs. Jule Znaniecki, is described as an accidental history by Wilkes University History Professor, Harold E. Cox. In the Editor's notes Cox compares Piotrowski's poems to the diaries of Samuel Pepys, written in 17th century England and William Byrd whose diaries show life on an 18th century Virginia plantation. "The Piotrowski poems like Pepys' and Byrd's are themselves accidents of history." Cox writes, "None of these individuals ever would have conceived that future generations would read their work nor was there any organized attempt to preserve these materials."

Piotrowski

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Nanticoke - 1950

January

The editor of the Sunday Independent urged Nanticoke city council to appoint Mrs. **Mary Cooke** to serve the rest of her deceased husband **Thomas'** term as councilman. The paper made the argument that wives of husbands in Newport and Hanover Townships had been appointed to council posts, and that a woman's viewpoint was needed in the city.

A General Electric wringer washer sold for \$139.95 at Tremayne's Electric on East Main Street.

Nanticoke

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The Nanticoke Historical Society would like to thank the following patrons for their generous donations:

Mr. Gaylon White, Cartersville, Georgia

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Through donations we continue to serve the City of Nanticoke. Thank you

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But Jule Znaniecki, Nanticoke teacher and historian approached Cox in 1997 with a collection of Piotrowski's poems translated by Henry Horbaczewski, Mrs. Stephanie Zimolzak, Myra Wilczewski Torken, Edward Sowa, Viola Wojnarski Piszczek, Mrs. Joseph Piszczek and Mrs. Marian Coleman. Instantly Cox was taken with the author's first hand observation of the people and events he encountered upon settling in Nanticoke.

Coming To America

Piotrowski brought his wife and daughter from Suwalki, Poland to the United States in 1891. Seeking freedom from Russian occupation, he, as countless other immigrant families came to New York, and boarded a train west. He made his home on West Field Street in Nanticoke, next to his brother-in-law, only known as Mr. Warakomski. Because of his small stature, Piotrowski worked as a breaker boy, while journaling the hardships, suffering, and mine accidents endured by he and those around him. Upon reading the chronicles beginning in 1891, one is literally transported to the time and place Piotrowski describes. What's prevalent from the very start is Piotrowski's anger over being told of the wealth and riches that awaited him in America. Instead of finding streets paved with gold, he found coal dust, mud and despair. On top of that, he found himself having to fit into a culture that was diverse and foreign to him.

Early Poems

As the young man became invested in his environment he used his writing talent to clearly define the people, places and events centered in the village of Nanticoke.

In the first poem, *Emigrant*, Piotrowski in an excerpt warns:

***“In America, in every factory
You can easily lose your bones
and not reach old age”***

In the next poem, *The Miner*, his description reads,

***“In his back he feels the pains
Doesn't have enough for salt
Lack of everything annoys him,
Beer and store and butcher
Eat away at him like moths.”***

Piotrowski's *Nanticoke: First Day*, takes the reader from uncertainty, to anticipation, to eventual reality of the life Piotrowski had set for himself.

In the final entry, *The Miners Song* we see Piotrowski perhaps begin to assimilate into the culture as he finds humor in the miners he came to respect.

***“A fellow, he got paid
Boss, he paid him fine.
Off to the saloon he went
T' spend a pleasant time.”***

The poor soul ends up in trouble with a woman and a police officer, but in the morning heads for home. In the final stanza he ends with:

***“There his wife began to scream
“Where you been all night?”
“You shedd up, I'll work a week”
Said he,” It'll be all right.”***

The book, which can be obtained at the Historical Society offices and includes an Introduction titled: “*The Nanticoke Polish Community*,” in which Znaniecki details what life was like in early Nanticoke. She also penned short biographies of Piotrowski and his daughter, Mary, who was instrumental in raising cultural awareness.

CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE

nanticokehistoryonline.org

AND “LIKE” OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

Keep up with all of our news and events, read great stories and see photos.

SPORTS – TALK

Now, and in future issues of the Historical Society Newsletter we will be posting information on some of Nanticoke's memorable sportsmen and teams all obtained from our extensive archive. Be sure to **read the story on page 5** regarding one of the Societies most satisfying recent acquisitions.

1941

Johnny Grodzicki was born on Monday, February 26, 1917, in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. Grodzicki was 24 years old when he broke into the big leagues on April 18, 1941, with the St. Louis Cardinals.

1950

The undefeated Nanticoke High School Football squad garnered its third Wyoming Valley Conference victory over GAR. Members and staff of the team were **George Price, Steve Perkovitch, Don Williams, Ed Cwinski, Dan Distasio, Walt Skalla, Joe Yanovitch, Bob Markowski, Jesse Rule, Bill Marcinkowski, Henry Guisti, Charlie Crop, Len Williams, Carl Prushinski, Head Coach Anthony Diksa, Assist Coach Ed Gralla; Joe Gulkanicz, Andy Stadts, Ed Warkomski, Eugene Rygwalski, John Hanish, Bill Yanovitch, Henry Bushello, Bud Gronka, Ed Edmunds, Faculty manager, Harry Dikens; Bigg Jones and Tony Kuligowski, asst. coaches. Charlie Yatsko, Ed Prukalski, John Swrat, John O'Donnell, Pete Bartuska, John Marcharcik, Tom Nardozzo, Paul Guilliford, Ed Rowinski and Tony Carozzoni.**

1951

Edward Rushin was appointed assistant football coach at Mansfield University in 1951. Rushin, a native of Nanticoke a three letter man, played four years of varsity football, two years of basketball and one year of baseball. He played a year of professional football with the San Francisco Clippers. After serving three years as Chief Specialist in the U.S. Navy, he accepted a position as varsity backfield coach in football and head coach in basketball at Sunbury High School. During his four years there Sunbury won two Susquehanna Valley League Championships and two runner-up positions in district finals.

William McKarrachan teacher and patriot

It's unclear why William McKarrachan traveled from Belfast, Ireland to make his home in America. Perhaps he was worn down by the ongoing bitter conflict between the British and French which began to threaten the shores of his homeland. Or perhaps, as a young man, he wanted to see what America had to offer. Whatever the reason, in 1774, McKarrachan, a school teacher and shop owner was firmly entrenched in the village of what is now known as Nanticoke. His peaceful existence, however, would soon be challenged as he would find himself thrust into a war that placed adversaries side by side fighting against a common enemy.

Yankees vs Pennamites

In the 1600's, King Charles II gave the same land in North-Central Pennsylvania to both Pennsylvania and Connecticut allowing both groups of settlers legal rights to the lands. When the Connecticut Yankees, sent forth their newly established Susquehanna Company to survey the tract of land for the creation of a new settlement in 1753, they discovered that Pennsylvania settlers, or Pennamites, were living along the Susquehanna River and throughout the valley. Pennamites argued their right to the land should be honored as they had been there long before the Yankees arrived. Neither side relinquished their rights.

The first Yankee-Pennamite War lasted from 1763 to 1771 and ended with a Yankee victory. The second war ended in the Battle of Rampart Rocks in August 1775, (Nanticoke Falls in the area of Honey Pot and West Nanticoke). A strong Pennamite force of seven hundred men under Colonel William Plunkett defeated the Yankees and drove out the settlers on the west bank of the Susquehanna River. Connecticut assembled four hundred men, under Zebulon Butler and on Christmas Eve of that year surprised the advancing column of Plunkett's army at

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date - FEB 19 - VIRTUAL TOUR OF NANTICOKE – LARGE SCREEN PHOTO PRESENTATION

Place – Nanticoke City Building – 15 E. Ridge Street

Time – Doors open at 6 p.m. Program starts – 7 p.m.

Come and view the Nanticoke of long ago. Before the presentation, attendees can request a particular location of interest to view. Join the discussion of our history.

Date – MAY 6 – TOUR THE HISTORICAL MANSION OF ALBERT LEWIS, Lumber and Ice Baron of the late 18 and 1900's - MEMBERS ONLY – due to space

Place - One Coach Rd, Bear Creek Village, PA

Time – 6 p.m.

Hosted by Barbara Von Dran, current owner of the mansion. Call the office to reserve a spot. Attendees are asked to bring a dessert to share.

Date - MAY 17 - MIRACLE OF THE BELLS – BEHIND THE SCENES – STORY OF OLGA TRESKOFF,

Time – 1 p.m.

Place – To be announced

Large screen Power Point presentation details the participation of the actors in the movie, the Hollywood lot and scenes filmed in Glen Lyon.

SOCIETY MEETING SCHEDULE

Dates – February 26, March 26, April 30 and May 2

Time – 7 p.m.

Place - Samantha Mill House (Next to the Mill Memorial Library) 495 East Main Street Nanticoke.

For more information on any of these events call 570-258-1367.

Rampart Rocks. Captain Lazarus Stewart and his Paxton Boys ambushed Plunkett's column at Harvey's Creek (near the intersection of Route 11 and Route 29) as they attempted to cross the creek.

The Pennamites were defeated. It was at this time that the Yankees gave McKarrachan a role of heading one of the six companies formed to defend the town:

List of Companies and Leaders -
1st Company - Capt. Stephen Fuller, Lieut. John Garrett, Ensign Christopher Avery
2nd Company - Capt. Nathaniel Landon, Lieut. George Dorrance, Ensign Asahel Buck
3rd Company - Capt. Samuel Ransom, Lieut. Perrin Ross, Ensign Asaph Whittlesey
4th Company - Capt. Solomon Strong, Lieut. Jonathan Parker, Ensign Timothy Keys
5th Company - Capt. William McKarrachan, Lieut. Lazarus Stewart, Ensign Silas Gore
6th Company - Capt. Rezin Geer, Lieut. Daniel Gore, Ensign Matthias Hollenback

Skirmishes between the two sides continued. But, by 1778, settlers were called to ban together in a common cause, to fight against the greatest military force of its time.

On July 3, Pennamite and Yankee settlers, McKarrachan among them, marched out of Forty Fort and headed North to where they met the British forces.

NEXT ISSUE:

McKarrachan marches into history.

WHAT IF:

Nanticoke, Connecticut?

One of the little known facts about early Wyoming Valley was that on June 29, 1774, the entire region (then known as Westmoreland) became a town in Litchfield County Connecticut – even though the actual county was located straight east two hundred miles. After the Battle of Rampart Rocks took place between Pennamite and Yankees forces on December 25, 1775 and the Yankees victorious, Connecticut created a county in the Wyoming Valley calling it Westmoreland County.

Worth More than its Weight in Gold

Roger Gilbert contacted the Nanticoke Historical Society through its popular Facebook page. He was in possession of a gold medal once presented to David Price, who, back in 1926 was a member of the Nanticoke High School State Championship Basketball Team. Gilbert asked if any society Facebook friends had information on the medallion. No one responded or claimed the medal. Gilbert then decided he would have it melted down to retrieve its monetary value of \$200.

Society officers suggested that Gilbert make a swap, two lifetime society memberships for the medal. He agreed, and now the medal has been set in a place of honor, in the Greater Nanticoke Area High School display case next to the trophy the 1926 team received after winning the District Championship. In the tournament, David Price was the leading scorer with 52 points, for which he received the medal and Frank Domzalski was second highest scorer at 39.

Vice President, Chet Zaremba, represented the Nanticoke Historical Society in the donation of the medal to the GNA School Board Vice President Ken James, and school board officials, Ryan Verazin, president; Gary Smith, treasurer, Tony Prushinski, secretary; Megan Tennesen; Wendy Kotsko Wiaterowski; Robert Raineri; Frank Shepanski, Jr. and Chet Beggs.

After the presentation, James spoke of a time when students and the community had pride in their school and everything it had to offer. This important piece of a long-standing history has been retrieved and set in its rightful place due in part to the presence of a passionately dedicated and active historical society in Nanticoke.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The American Revolution against England for independence lasted from 18 April 1775 to 3 September 1783, although hostilities ceased on 27 February 1782. With the exception of the Wyoming Massacre, most of the fighting occurred away from the Wyoming Valley.

As one of his first rulings as mayor of Nanticoke, **Anthony Dreier** ordered police to confiscate every slot machine found in the city and to prosecute violators in accordance with the law.

Al's men's shop on East Main Street, advertised Men's ties for 39 cents and dress shirts for \$2.29.

February

Townpeople were interested in establishing a community center for city youngsters. Ballots were printed in local newspapers asking for Nanticoke youths to vote yes or no if they were interested in the center. By weeks end only three ballots were found in the school voting box.

Questions were being raised about a lottery called "The Winner" boasting a top prize of \$1,100. With lotteries deemed illegal, most wondered why the lottery was allowed to continue since others running such games were at the time being tried in county courts.

The American Legion Post 350 reported that with 200 new members joining ranks membership was pushed to over 1,000 members.

March

Henry E. Olinginski was awarded the Bronze Star by the war Department for heroic action against the enemy in the Battle of the Bulge.

The Nanticoke Playground and Recreation Assoc. under the direction of **Sylvester Bozinski**, announced an intramural program would start throughout the city schools.

April

Thank you notes were sent to **Sheldon Greenbaum**, **Burt Andrews**, **Delbert Oplinger**, Biscontini Coal Company and Hack and Sons Contractors for the part they played in establishing the new baseball diamond at Lincoln Field

Welcome New Members:

Roger & Josephine Gilbert

And

Stephanie Stogski

Searching for Surnames: Ziomek, Shershen or
Szerszen

E Mail waname34@aol.com

Easter Raffle tickets & Membership for 2015 mailed.

**At present, The Easter Raffle is
the Historical Society's only fundraiser.
We are asking members and friends to
support our effort as much as possible.**

**If anyone needs more tickets, let
us know and we will mail them out to
you. Thank you for your support.**

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OFFICERS

President: Julianna Zarzycki

**Vice President/Corresponding Secretary/Treasurer:
Chester Zaremba**

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Judith L. Minsavage

May

The Susquehanna Collieries Division of the M.A. Hanna Company announced the closing of the No. 7 coal preparation plant. Tonnage usually handled at the plant would be transported to Glen Lyon. The breaker was erected following a fire which destroyed its predecessor in 1923. The No. 7 had been in operation since 1869.

Nanticoke Hospital hosted over 700 visitors during National Hospital Day.

Mary Marcinko was named May Queen for the annual May coronation services at St. Joseph's Slovak Church. Attendants were **Bernadine Pekarofski, Dorothy Geroch, Margaret Aciukevicz and Marie Kotulak.**

Newport Twp. High School looked to recruit fifty new high school band members. A new scientific test to check musical ability would be administered to those students interested.

The 56 piece Nanticoke Little Symphony directed by **Stephen Cottrini** presented a concert at Forty Fort High School. **Marjorie Popky** played a Bach violin concerto.

June

Miss **Dolores Bartuska** was among 550 local students stranded in New York harbor when their Norwegian ship Svalbard, scheduled to transport the students to Europe, was declared unsafe. President Truman stepped in and made available the WWII transport ship USS General Ballou.

It was reported by **Charles Velon**, president of the Nanticoke Businessmen's Assoc. that things were "looking up" for the acquisition of a new all-male industry in the city. No details were given as to what service the business would offer.

Nanticoke High School graduated 211 students at Lincoln Stadium. **Eleanor T. Gorney** won five scholastic awards.

Can you answer these questions about the early history of Nanticoke?

What names were given to the first streets?

What was the Widow's Haul?

What made Nanticoke a bustling waterfront town?

ANSWERS IN OUR NEXT ISSUE -Spring 2015.