
NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SECOND QUARTER 2015

Spring Cleaning? Keep the Nanticoke Historical Society In mind

Spring is the time of year most of us are rummaging through boxes stored in attics and closets. There is always a stash of items that one just can't throw away, because the badge, medal or document belonged to a loved one perhaps from generations ago. A family photo collection may contain numerous pictures of a back yard outing or the family homestead on Main Street. Before dusting off the box and storing it for yet another year, consider contacting the historical society.

We're particularly interested in photos of city locations and homes of a by-gone era. Identified

Spring

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William McKarrachan teacher and patriot Part II

One can only imagine what was going on in the mind of William McKarrachan as he participated in the heated discussion between Lazarus Stewart, Zebulon Butler and Nathan Denison at Forty Fort on the morning of July 3, 1778. Was he in agreement with Stewart that members of the colonial militia go out and engage the British troops advancing toward the Wyoming Valley or did he see the merits of Captains Butler and Denison decision to wait for reinforcements. We'll never know, but what we do know is that the outcome of the early morning encounter decided McKarrachan's fate at the end of the day.

In part one of William McKarrachan, Teacher and Patriot, the resident of Hanover, now Nanticoke, had been appointed the Captain of the 5th Company of Hanover in 1776. Prior to that, a series of battles between the Connecticut Yankees and the Pennsylvania Settlers known as Pennamites resulted in killings on both sides. The hostilities between the two factions culminated at the Battle of Rampart Rocks near present-day West Nanticoke, where the Yankees defeated a Pennamite force of 600 on Christmas day 1775.

Skirmishes between the opposing forces continued until the Continental Congress, on April 15, 1776, appealed to both sides to cease their hostilities and join in the fight to obtain independence from

McKarrachan

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family portraits can be added to our biography file Or, as was recently the case, a person in possession of a class ring belonging to a distant relative was delighted to find it could be donated to the society.

We would love the opportunity to try to match up items with other entities that may find historical value in them. Such was the case with a recently donated sports medallion awarded to a Nanticoke High School basketball player in 1926. Thanks to the gentleman who happened to be in possession of the medal and the historical society, it is now on display at the high school with the team's championship trophy.

The Society is dedicated to piecing together the city's long history. Devoid of a detailed narrative, there is nothing better from which to do that than old photos, records of organizations, school memorabilia and old newspapers. We do reserve the right to accept or deny items that we can and cannot use, or store ourselves, but at the very least, we may be able to take some of the burden off of family members who find themselves undecided as to what to do with countless old photos and/or memorabilia that may contain valuable pieces of the city's history.

It is also important to note that if a family would like to retain ownership of documents or photos, information officers at the society will scan and return those items.

**For more information or to donate items
Contact the Historical Society at 570-258-1367
or Email: history@nanticokehistoryonline.org**

**CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE:
nanticokehistoryonline.org**

**“LIKE” OUR FACEBOOK PAGE
Keep up with all of our news and events,
read great stories and see photos.**

British rule. The newly annexed Connecticut County of Westmoreland, now the Wyoming Valley, assembled a Pennsylvania militia and two companies, forming the Connecticut Line of the Continental Army. In 1778, McKarrachan and his company of men were called to service when British troops led by Colonel John Butler, with the help of fragmented tribes of renegade Indians, systematically destroyed settlements and moved east toward Westmoreland.

A Fateful Decision

The garrison at Pittston Fort had fallen to the British and a compliment of Continental Army Troops from the southern end of the valley had not yet arrived at Forty Fort. On the morning of July 3, British Colonel John Butler sent a message to Colonel Nathan Denison of the Continental Army at Forty Fort, demanding that all forts, troops, and other premises in the valley be surrendered. In return, he guaranteed the safety of all inhabitants. Denison returned a message saying he would consult with Lieutenant Colonel Zebulon Butler. He then sent orders out to all militiamen to join him at Forty Fort. By noon, some 375 men including McKarrachan and his men joined Denison at the fort.

Once there, McKarrachan made a fateful decision to turn over his unit to Captain Lazarus Stewart a member of the Paxton or Paxtang Boys, a group of vigilantes who were accused of the massacre of the Conestoga Indians in 1763. According to History of Wyoming: in a series of letters from Charles Miner to his son, By Charles Miner, Adam Hubley;

McKarrachan said to Captain Stewart, “My pursuits in life have thus far been those of peace, you have been used to war and accustomed to command. On parade I can maneuver my men, but in the field no unnecessary hazard should be run. A mistake might prove fatal. Take you the lead; I will fight under you with my men as an aid, or a private in the ranks. Your presence at the head of the Hanover boys will impart confidence.”

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.

1935

Nanticoke native, **Joe Minsavage** was a star football and basketball player at Nanticoke High School in the 1930's. After graduation he attended Syracuse University and was starting wide receiver for the football team for three seasons, receiving three letters. Minsavage played two years on the Syracuse basketball team as a reserve guard and brought the same effort to basketball as he displayed in football.

After graduating college in 1937, Minsavage was hired as athletic director and a teacher at Jamesville High School. He went on to become a teacher and head football coach at Onondaga Valley Academy.

In 1942, Minsavage joined the Navy. He was trained in artillery. On June 19, 1943, the ship on which he was stationed, the Henry Knox a World War II Liberty Ship was torpedoed and sunk in the Indian Ocean just off the island nation Maldives. 25 crewmen and gunners died in the sinking. Survivors in lifeboats made their way to the Maldives arriving on 30 June. 13 Gunners and 13 crewmen died during the journey, with 12 Gunners and 29 crewmen surviving the ordeal. It is unknown whether Minsavage went down with the ship or died during the journey to Maldives.

1968

Dan Distasio, was selected Coach of the Year by the Sunday Independent Sports Department. The selection was based on conduct, appearance, sportsmanship and accomplishment. According to a newspaper article published, Distasio captured the award because of the success and interest he stimulated at Nanticoke Area in the three-year period he was there. Distasio started his career as quarterback on the 1950 teams previously mentioned here. After high school he joined the service. In 1965 he returned to Nanticoke as a freshman coach. In 1967 Nanticoke School District was joined with rivals Newport Twp. Distasio had the task of turning the former bitter rivals into a cohesive unit. He did and led the team to a championship season.

Now the head of McKarrachan's unit, Stewart insisted the best plan of action was to have the troops meet the British on the battlefield. Denison and Butler wanted to wait for the reinforcements known to be on the way. We can only imagine that as a teacher, McKarrachan must have listened intently to both sides. Most of the militiamen agreed with Stewart as they were witness to fires consuming properties to the north. They argued that the whole valley could be devastated if they waited. Stewart reportedly questioned both officers' bravery.

Colonel Denison gave in to the demands and by 3 p.m. most of the garrison left the protection of the fort. Still considering it rash to attack, Denison and Butler halted at Abraham's Creek, a mile or so northeast. Another argument occurred, and again both were questioned as to their bravery. Under immense pressure, Butler and Denison agreed to proceed, advancing toward Fort Wintermoot. Colonel Zebulon Butler led 484 men to meet the enemy along with Continental Army Captains Durkee and Ransom. A line of battle was formed. Colonel Butler ordered his men to keep firing into the British line. Butler's men advanced, pushing back the British but the American's were swarmed by Indians who had been hiding in the woods. In a few moments many men lay dead. The line was forced to retreat with the Indians right behind them taking scalps. Those who were able to outrun the Indians made their way back to the fort. Many men were captured and put to death. Forty-four men led by Asaph Wittlesey tried to defend the women and children at Forty Fort.

How and where William McKarrachan fell in battle is unknown, but his name along with Lazarus Stewart and many others is inscribed on the Wyoming Monument marking a burial site of just some of those killed that day. He traveled from his home in Ireland to escape the threat of war, but ended up fighting for a cause in a new land. A struggle that would eventually give rise to the freedoms we experience today. Therefore we can label him a hometown hero.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

VIRTUAL TOUR OF NANTICOKE – PHOTO PRESENTATION

Date – May 12

Time - 6:30 p.m.

Place – Guardian Elder Care – 147 Old Newport St. Nanticoke.
For the staff and patients and their families.

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.

THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE CITY-WIDE YARD SALE

Date - May 16

Place – Visit our table at the Mill Memorial Library parking lot

Nanticoke Historical Society will have items outside for sale and hotdogs and baked goods inside the Samantha Mill House – from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

MIRACLE OF THE BELLS – BEHIND THE SCENES – STORY OF OLGA TRESKOFF,

Date – May 17 -

Time – 1 p.m.

Place – Cultural Centre of St. Faustina, 38 W. Church St.

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

MEMBERS ONLY PICNIC

Date – July 11

Time – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Place – Nanticoke Historical Society – next to the Mill Memorial Library

Members are asked to bring a covered dish or share a desert. Please let us know what you will be bringing. Hot dogs, hamburgers and refreshments will be supplied. Bring lawn chairs. In the event weather is too hot, event will be moved indoors.

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

To Read more about The Battle of Wyoming: Visit the Mill Memorial Library

Battles of the American Revolution, 1775-1781, including Battle maps and charts of the American Revolution / By Henry B. Carrington.

The Revolutionary War; America's fight for freedom. Prepared by Special Publications Division. Bart McDowell

Other books and publications of Interest:

Battles of the Revolutionary War: 1775-1781 (Major Battles and Campaigns) Paperback –

By W. J. Wood

The Bloody Tomahawk: The Second Battle of Wyoming Paperback – January 27, 2011

By James B. Miller (Author)

Massacre of the Conestoga's: On the Trail of the Paxton Boys in Lancaster County

By Jack Brubaker

Zebulon Butler: Hero of the Revolutionary Frontier (Contributions in American History)

By Linda A Fossler and James R. Williamson

In the Next Issue:

For those who are following AMC's, Turn, Washington's Spies. You may be intrigued by the amount of espionage that went on as America fought for its independence. Even if you haven't caught this engrossing series, you may be interested to know that one of the first residents of Nanticoke was Washington's "man on the inside" Read all about the daring mission this unassuming soldier and local hero undertook during the Revolutionary War.

SOCIETY MEETING SCHEDULE

Dates –Thursday May 28, Time – 7 p.m.

No meetings for - June July and August

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

Nanticoke – 1950

May

The **American Legion Post 350** held its annual Memorial Day parade. Those participating were Gold Star Mothers, Nanticoke High School band, 100th Armored Column, Red Cross unit, Nanticoke Hospital Auxiliary and Gray Ladies, Boy Scouts, Community firemen, police, service clubs, VFW, Am vets and Spanish American War Veterans.

Hudak's Nite Club on W. Grand Street featured the Buckskin Frontier band with **Richard Dix, Jake Wyatt** and **Max Baer**. The **State Theater** screened Wabash Avenue with Betty Grable and Victor Mature,

Mayor **Anthony R. Drier** announced the State Highway Department and Wilkes-Barre Traction Company would work out an agreement on removal of street car rails from East Main Street.

National Hospital Day was celebrated at **Nanticoke State Hospital**, 700 people visited the institution to tour and inspect the facility.

The **Nanticoke Community House** drive was extinguished and checks were returned to contributors. The Central Committee in charge of the drive to build the Community House explained the lack of resident unity and economic conditions caused the drive to stall. A Mother's Day dinner sponsored by the Nanticoke women's Regular Republican Club was held at the Silver Maple Inn, **Doris Merrill** was vocal soloist. Singing was led by **Kathleen Nafus, Irene Pearson**, pianist. **Mary Howells** the oldest mother present and **Doris Merrill** the youngest mother received gifts.

American Legion Post 350, Nanticoke donated the McKesson oxygen tent with a cylinder truck to the Nanticoke State Hospital. The oxygen tent had electric refrigeration which was of the latest scientific development.

May (cont'd)

C.A. Gibbons, vice president and general manager of Susquehanna Collieries Division announced the No 7 breaker would be discontinued as a coal preparation plan on July 11. The mine would continue to operate. The tonnage will be transported by railroad to the Glen Lyon breaker. The Nanticoke breaker was erected following a fire which destroyed its predecessor on Feb. 6, 1923. The No 7 had been producing coal since 1869.

JUNE

An agreement was reached with Plymouth Twp. to install a traffic light at the West Nanticoke approach to the Nanticoke Bridge.

Lape Hose Company held their fifth annual fireworks display. For the first time, the company planned to add daylight fireworks to the program.

Some jobs that were advertised in 1950

Staff Nurses – for General Hospital 6 days a week \$150 per month plus complete maintenance \$10 additional for evening and night duty.

Office Worker – Intelligent, 33 to 45 preferred Start \$30.00 - 8 to 3:30 p.m.

Woman – aggressive, pleasing personality able to meet the public Box 142,

Middle aged woman for housekeeping, companion. **C. MacDaniels**, 152 West. Poplar St. West Nanticoke

Duplan Silk Mill held Nanticoke Duplan Week in order to acquaint the residents with problems and accomplishments of the company, “to develop public relations on a community wide basis **L.H. Siebecker**, manager of the company said. In the information packet given to residents it was reported that payroll for the Duplan Mill was \$1,475,000 in 1949. The company used 75,700 worth of electric power made with anthracite and in addition burned 28,000 worth of anthracite. Insurance benefits ran over 28,000 since 1946 it was reported Duplan workers benefited by \$81,796 in insurance payments.

146 seniors were scheduled to graduate from Newport High School. Gordon Ridenour, journalist from New York and feature writer for the New York Herald Tribune spoke at the commencement exercises.

The Historical Society would like to thank the following people for their monetary or artifact donations:

Barbara Von Dran
Tim Dillon
Josephine Bashista
Henry Levi
Christine Shemanski
Debbie Voyton
Bernie Dalmas
Cory Eckrote
Barbara Mayewski

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

In 1830, what forms of religion were the most prominent in Nanticoke?

What family dominated the industrialization of Nanticoke and Newport Township in the mid 1800's?

The discovery of what mineral created what industry and employment for several families in Nanticoke?

ANSWERS IN OUR NEXT ISSUE –Third Quarter 2015.

Artifact from the early 1900's donated to the Historical Society

Perry B. Evans began selling gentlemen's clothing and accessories in Nanticoke in 1912. The society records do not show the original location, but by 1913 the store had moved to 20 E. Main Street and operated from that location until 1917. Recently, a descendant of the Evans family, Cory Eckrote, donated a large thermometer that decorated the store in honor of his children Kaithlin, Cassidy & Jaxon.

The thermometer is a great example of bringing our city's history to life, as the signage reads, "Perry B. Evans, Clothing and Gents' Furnishings – Satisfaction Guaranteed, 20 East Main St. Nanticoke, PA."



The Nanticoke Historical Society Welcomes:

Susan Crisler Donnelly, Harveys Lake - Life Member

Winners of the 2015 Easter Raffle:

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

First Prize -

Barbara Von Dran, Bear Creek

Second Prize

Andrianna Rysiek, Brooklyn

Third Prize -

John (Yogi) Jagodzinski, Wilkes-Barre
Twp.

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Samantha Mill House
(Next to the Mill Memorial Library)
495 East Main Street
Nanticoke, PA 18634
570-258-1367

Web Site - www.nanticokehistoryonline.org

Email - nanticokehistorical@yahoo.com
history@nanticokehistoryonline.org

OFFICERS

President: Julianna Zarzycki

Vice President/Corresponding Secretary/Treasurer:
Chester Zaremba

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Judith L. Minsavage

Those interested in obtaining information from the
society archives are asked to submit an

HISTORICAL RESEARCH/PHOTO REQUEST FORM

The form can be found on our website listed above or
can be obtained from our office by calling 570-258-1367.

Answers to questions about the early history of Nanticoke

In our last newsletter we asked our readers
these questions:

What names were given to the first streets?

The very first streets were named Main, Market,
Chestnut, Walnut, Pine, Spring, Broad and Water.

What was the Widow's Haul?

Shad fishing was a major business in Nanticoke in
the late 1700's. Many families were supported by
the fishing industry, and shad, a close relative of
the herring, was abundant. After the Battle of
Wyoming an arrangement was made that each
fishery donate one haul to the widows and children
of those killed in battle. The price of shad was five
to eight cents each.

What made Nanticoke a bustling waterfront town?

The Great Haul of 1789 amassed 10,000 shad,
fisherman traded with peddlers for salt to preserve
the fish. Nets were used to catch enormous
amounts of the fish, and blacksmiths made
fishhooks of iron. The North Branch Canal which
was constructed in the early 1800's opened travel
and trade with many other regions. Employment
opportunities were abundant in boat building, and
operating and maintaining the canal.

Note:

Nanticoke Dam was built in 1830, which prevented
the shad from spawning. Eventually the shad
disappeared.

*Facts obtained from History of Nanticoke City and
Newport Township by C. Charles Ciesla and the
Nanticoke Historical Society.*