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# NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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## Nanticoke Historical Society announces major acquisition

“We are so lucky to have been able to preserve this collection,” Chet Zaremba, vice president of the Nanticoke Historical Society said when asked about the recent acquisition of artifacts belonging to Nanticoke native and former Governor of Pennsylvania, John S. Fine.

Earlier in the summer, Zaremba was contacted by Lillian Michak, who along with her daughter Donna owns Today's Treasures in Plymouth. Through a chain of events, Michak was alerted to the fact that Fine's grandson, John S. Fine III, was moving out of state and unloading a treasure trove of memorabilia belonging to his grandfather who served as Governor of Pennsylvania from 1951 to 1955. Zaremba and

## The Society is asking for your help

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Due to the efforts of the Nanticoke Historical Society, and with the help of society member Mike Cmiola, an historical marker containing the name and achievements of former Pennsylvania Governor John S. Fine will become a reality for society officers this year.

This is a great opportunity for the community to share in this effort. The society, in coming months, will be putting together a fundraising effort to achieve the \$2,000 needed to obtain the marker. Soon, letters requesting donations will be mailed to society members, businesses and organizations in the city. It is the society's hope that everyone will be as generous as possible.

The culmination of these efforts will result in a celebration at the marker site, which will be on the Greater Nanticoke Area School District campus, and coincide with an open house at the Historical Society Offices in the Samantha Mill House, 495 E. Main Street. It is also the hope of the society to have a city-wide celebration to honor the event.

Plans are still being formulated. To keep up on the society's progress log on to [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) or like our Facebook page. We'll keep you posted.

*Acquisition*

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NANTICOKE POLICE DEPT.

fellow society members, John Sherrick, Mike Passetti and Mike Chmiola acted immediately requesting Michak set up a meeting with Fine III to retrieve items he no longer could store.

Upon seeing the magnitude of artifacts, Zaremba instructed his helpers to “Take everything and sort it out later,” which he says is the society’s motto. Along with over 260 law books, photos and certificates the acquisition includes two valuable editions of Black’s Law Dictionaries, the former governor’s cane and one particularly prized letter dated Sept. 1, 1953 from Otto F. Messner, Secretary of revenue to the Honorable John S. Fine. Attached to the letter is a one dollar bill, the content stating, “This is no bunk, it is the real McCoy.” We’ll tell you more about this truly unique and amazing find in our next newsletter, along with Fine’s life in Nanticoke, his personal tragedies and how innovations of the time affected his term in office.

## Acquisition leads to creation of new space

Now in the possession of over 260 books making up the personal law library of former Pennsylvania Governor John S. Fine, the society is taking the opportunity to not only honor one of Nanticoke’s most famous residents, but to offer a room in the Samantha Mill House for those interested in the law.

The John S. Fine Reading Room will have its official unveiling after books, photos, certificates and other memorabilia are placed. Prior to the recent acquisition of the memorabilia, previous research by the historical society had shown there wasn’t much out there in the way of letters and personal effects belonging to Fine. Thanks to the donation of items by John S. Fine III, the society has the largest known collection of historical materials attributed to his grandfather.

**So was John S. Fine the 35<sup>th</sup> or 100<sup>th</sup> governor of Pennsylvania? Find out in the next issue.**

## Did you answer these questions posted in the last newsletter about the early history of Nanticoke?

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

**Answer:** Protestant, Congregationalist, Methodist, Lutheran and Protestant Reformist  
According to u.s.history.com, a division among Christian beliefs resulted in more than 900 denominations currently existing in the United States. The U.S. was the first western nation to be founded predominately by Protestants.

2. What family dominated the industrialization of Nanticoke and Newport Township in the mid-1800’s?

**Answer:** The Lee Family

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

**Answer:** Iron ore—According to geology.com, Earth’s most important iron ore deposits are found in sedimentary rocks. They were formed from chemical reactions that combined iron and oxygen in marine and fresh waters. The two most important minerals in these deposits are hematite and magnetite. These iron ores have been mined to produce everything from paper clips to steel beams.

## *If you’re not already a member of Nanticoke Historical Society ...*

JOIN A PROGRESSIVE GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT PRESERVING FAMILY HISTORIES SO THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN EXPLORE THEIR ANCESTORS EARLY LIVES AND TRACE THEIR FAMILY LINEAGE.

WE HAVE PEOPLE CONTACTING US FROM AS FAR AWAY AS SOUTH AFRICA AND IRELAND AND WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO BE ABLE TO HELP THEM TRACE FAMILY MEMBERS WHO TRAVELED TO THE UNITED STATES AND SETTLED IN NANTICOKE.

TO OBTAIN A MEMBERSHIP FORM LOG ON TO

[www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org)

or call our offices at 570-258-1367

# Calendar of Events

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

Date - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

Time: - 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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

*Nanticoke Historical Society will have items  
outside for sale .*

## MEMBERS ONLY PICNIC

Date – SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Time – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

*Members are asked to bring a covered dish or  
share a dessert. Please let us know what you  
will be bringing. Hot dogs, hamburgers and  
refreshments will be supplied. Bring lawn  
chairs.*

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

Meetings will begin:

Sept. 24 - 7 p.m.

Oct. 22 - 7 p.m.

Nov. 17 - 7 p.m.

At the

Samantha Mill House

(Next to the Mill Memorial Library)

495 East Main Street

Nanticoke, PA 18634

## WE WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS

**Sharon Jarrow, Nazareth, Pa.**  
**Looking for Surnames: Edwin & Louisa  
Williams Wright of Glen Lyon, daughter  
Emily Wright, Thomas Wright (brother  
of Edwin)**

**Darlene Matzer, Nebo, NC**

**Looking for Surnames Turley, Stewart,  
Roberts, Kline, Womelsdorf**

**Michael Stachowiak, Nanticoke**

**Looking for Surname: Stachowiak**

## We're available 24 hours a day

Keep up to date on all Nanticoke Historical Society  
news, see great photos and read interesting stories  
on our blog log on to  
[www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) or message us on  
Facebook



Undated photo of The A&P Supermarket. Can anyone  
guess the location? *Historical Society File photo  
(Pawlowski Collection)*

# Captain Andrew Lee, Washington's Spy

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In 1804, Captain Andrew Lee settled in Hanover (Nanticoke) with his wife Priscilla and raised a family. He built his massive home on the banks of the Susquehanna, in what is now Honey Pot. One can only wonder if he cherished his serene surroundings. After all, the life of Captain Lee, prior to that time, was anything but quiet. According to the *Genealogical and Family History of Wyoming* by Horace Edwin Hayden, Lee was born in East Hanover, Dauphin County, PA in 1739. In 1754, he served as a volunteer in General Edward Braddock's army during the French and Indian War. After the war, he joined the "famous" Paxtang Boys of 1763, a group of mercenaries who were revered as well as feared for their retaliatory treatment of the Indians.

From 1776 to 1779, Lee was commissioned ensign in the Second Canadian regiment (Congress Own) under General Moses Hazen. He served as captain of dragoons from 1779 to 1783 during the Revolutionary War. He was captured by the British and imprisoned aboard a ship in New York Harbor but managed to escape.

However, it's around 1777 Lee's story takes an intriguing turn. According to an account written by John Bakeless, author of *Turncoats, Traitors, and Heroes*, General George Washington was angered that British prisoners had consistently escaped from Lancaster Prison and vanished even though the nearest British post was miles away. Washington charged Lee's commanding officer, General Moses Hazen, with the task of finding their method of escape. Washington suspected an underground railroad, with "royalist sympathizers" and safe houses stretching to the Delaware River. Hazen sent for the one man he knew could complete the task, Captain Andrew Lee.

Upon learning of Washington's order, Lee disguised himself as a British prisoner, and allowed himself to be taken to Lancaster Prison to live among the very men he fought against, the one objective, to gain the trust of British prisoners and hopefully discover their means and route of escape. His mission was so secretive, fellow soldiers were told Lee was "on command" and "not to ask questions."

Upon arriving at Lancaster, Lee was herded into the prison barracks by an "American intendent" that was an acquaintance. Thankfully he did not recognize Lee under his heavy disguise. As the tortuous days of his imprisonment wore on, Lee took notice of an old woman who regularly visited the prison giving fruit to British prisoners. He noticed covert gestures and exchanges and was told the old woman's son had been punished and "thrown out" of the American Army. Lee was relatively sure this was the person that was enabling prisoners to escape. He soon discovered his suspicions of the woman held true.

A bribed sentry left his post on a rainy night and soon Lee saw a figure moving among the sleeping prisoners waking them saying, "Not the man-but come." Lee followed as prisoners exited an unbarred section of stockade. The now freed British soldiers were joined by the old woman and a male companion. They were ushered to the woman's house, fed and were told that as they moved on they must stay in a group.

Lee realized the miles-long trek ahead alongside the enemy soldiers would not be easy, but, one made more difficult for the fact that Lee recognized a soldier he'd "punished" at one time and knew the young man would surely be able to recognize him. Lee pulled his coat up to cover his bearded face. A gun fire alarm at a nearby American camp alerted the countryside of the mass escape. The fugitives were told they had to move on. Lee fell in line; surely keeping an eye on the man that could bring about not only the demise of the spy mission, but his own as well.

**Next Issue: Captain Andrew Lee fights for his life.**

## To Read More About Andrew Lee :

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A History of Lodge No. 61, F. and A. M., Wilkes Barre, Pa. A history of prominent members. By Oscar Jewell Harvey

Genealogical and Family History of the Wyoming and Lackawanna Volume 1 edited by Horace Edwin Hayden, Alfred Hand, John Woolf Jordan

Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the American Revolution, By Edwin G. Burrows

The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography "Diary" Sullivan's Expedition to Staten Island 1777

published by: The Philadelphia Publication Fund of Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1879.

Notes and Queries: Historical, Biographical, and Genealogical ..., Volume 2  
edited by William Henry Engle - Where he was a spy - General Hazen

Historical Papers and Addresses, Volume 11  
By Lancaster County Historical Society

Turncoats, Traitors, and Heroes  
By John Bakeless

## We are inviting you...

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to begin your journey of discovery along with many other people locally and nationally who are finding a treasure trove of information in the Society's archives.

To acquire an  
**HISTORICAL RESEARCH/PHOTO REQUEST FORM**

Log on to our website  
[www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) or call our office at 570-258-1367.

Our database is quite extensive and growing with new acquisitions every day.

## 1950

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All information taken from the Times Leader Evening News.

### JULY

The West Nanticoke Red Wings played a donkey baseball game under the lights with a team from Glen Jones Circle J. Ranch of Sadalia MO. **Raymond Pincovski**, chairman of the event, was assisted by **Frank Kaminski, John Frace, Phil Condu** and **James Murray**. *From 1948 to 1950, The Glen Jones Circle J. Ranch traveled to locations from Missouri to New England with their trained donkeys for fund raising events.*

The Premo Record Shop at 32 East Broad Street advertised they had the following records in stock: Rootee Tootee, A Razz A Ma Tazz, Snookey Ookums, Two Lovers and Frankie and Charlie Polkas.

According to the Times Leader Evening News, dated July 10, 1950, "Construction of a new highway from Wilkes-Barre to Nanticoke generally following the trolley car route will begin. According to preliminary plans the Nanticoke highway will begin near the intersection of Carey Avenue, West End Road and Oxford Street, thence southwest 7.6 miles to Nanticoke." *The beginning of the Sans Souci Parkway.*

Topps, 7 E. Main Street, advertised ladies blouses in eyelets, batistes and crepes for \$1.59.

As Janitors removed flooring and rotted sills at the Nanticoke High School gymnasium, they placed it outside, by the school tennis courts. Residents were told they could, without charge, take the debris and use it for firewood.

Girls aged 18 to 25 were invited to register to be chosen queen of the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Community Picnic held at Sans Souci Park and sponsored by the Nanticoke Businessmen's Association. The winner was to receive a crown, engraved loving cup, scepter, chaperoned trip to New York City, a dress, a coat, 45 rpm record player, records, nylon hose, camera and cake. Tickets good for one-cent in rides or trade were handed out at city businesses.

**The Historical Society thanks the following people for their monetary or artifact donations:**

**JOHN S. FINE III, DALLAS, PA**

**BARBARA BUCKINGHAM,  
NEVADA**

## **NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Samantha Mill House  
(Next to the Mill Memorial Library)

495 East Main Street  
Nanticoke, PA 18634

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### **OFFICERS**

**President: Julianna Zarzycki**

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

### **NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

**Judith L. Minsavage**

## 1950

### AUGUST

Liberty Mill Throwing Plant held their annual picnic at Stashkil Grove in Pond Hill. Over 200 people were expected. **Catherine Thomas** and **Leonard Novinski** chaired the event with committee members, **Edward Davis, Donald Lacey, Chester Chesinski, George Lazur, Stanley Puzio, Louis Grilly, Stanley Wisniewski, Louis Novak, Leonard Maillol** and **Frank Peters**. It was stated in the article that the Nanticoke plant, established by **Charles M. Epstein Sr.**, in 1918, was the oldest of the Liberty Plants.

The Nanticoke Businessmen's Association 10<sup>th</sup> annual Community Picnic was held. There were candle, egg, three-legged, potato sack and wheel barrow races and a ladies shoe kicking contest. Mrs. **Betty Fiyut** of East Washington Street won a sack of four. But the highlight of the event was the selection of **Joan Mieczkowski** of Sheatown as queen. The results were based on applause meter results. Other contestants included, **Victoria Markowski, Sylvia Zionkowski, Gloria Paczkowski, Cecelia Stortz, Caroline Kline, Joan Wasenda** and **Elizabeth Whelan**.

The Quality Hill baseball team won the championship in the Junior Softball Playground League. Members of the team were **Henry Wadas, Daniel Sokolowski, Richard Distasio, Reynold Smith, Robert Herman, Joseph Golab, Ernest Turley, James Davis, Frank Shepanski, James Griffith, Edward Krynick, James Yannacone, Eugene Victor** and **Sam Ricci**.

**Robert Davis** was the first Nanticoke policeman to receive a pension under the provisions of the Nanticoke Police Department Pension Fund. Davis was to receive half of his monthly salary or approximately \$93. A semi-formal ball was planned to benefit the policemen's Pension and Benevolence Society. Police Chief, **John Smereski** noted that officers receive \$2,200 per year, out of which, they must purchase uniforms.

# The early beginnings Of the Nanticoke Police Department

The following information is a small sampling of facts about the early beginnings of the Nanticoke Police Department. Facts were obtained from the Nanticoke Historical Society Archives and Wilkes-Barre Record.

## 1876

An item in the Council notes for 1909 stated that the police department was made permanent in **1876**.

(A list of public servants was found in 1912 in a time capsule that had been buried in the park. It named John Dunn as High Constable in 1876. Others were Borough atty. Harry Haakes; Street commissioner John Dunn; Constable, James Ryan.)

## 1887

Burgess Thomas O. Evans was tried for extortion and found guilty.

Salary of the chief of police was \$75 per year.

## 1891

Nanticoke Chief of Police: Thomas Powell, (h) 108 E. Church, term of office 1 year; salary \$150 per year and fees

## 1892

The first paid police department in Nanticoke was established. The police cruiser was called the "Black Maria."

Nanticoke was to have a uniformed police force. The contract for the uniforms was awarded to William Loskowskie, a Main Street tailor. They consisted of a helmet, coat, and policemen's club. There were 12 uniformed officers, one from each of the 11 wards and the chief. The uniforms were to be ready by 1 April. The names of the officers were Solomon Havard, Ivor J. Walters, John F. Delaney, Thomas F. Hatch, WG Goss, Thomas Moore, Edward D. Jones, George Manoski, Patrick Keating, John French and DW Jones. The men were expected to appear for the first time in their new uniforms on Memorial Day.

*(WBR Fri 3/25 & Fri 4/8/1892)*

### *In The Nanticoke Historical Archives*

Agnes Flood, Appointment with Disaster  
Agnes Flood: A Portrait of Agnes (3 copies)  
Agnes Flood: Agnes Revisited (3 copies)  
Agnes Flood: photo album  
Agnes Flood: The Great Flood of '72 (3 copies)  
Agnes Flood: The Wrath of Agnes (2 copies)



*Photo of Nanticoke's first paid police force. From left, first row: High Constable, Charles Erb, and John D. Williams. Second row, Chief of Police, Lee Millington, Patrick Keating, George Leower, Stephen Thomas. The burgess drew \$25 per month, policemen were paid less. It was reported that the picture was taken by a "transient photographer" at the Ross Williams Building, South market Street. Town council, "in those days" met at the park. The meeting chamber was an old bandstand. Information obtain from the Nanticoke Historical Society Archives and Wilkes-Barre Record. (Historical Society File Photo)*

## Early beginnings cont'd

### *Sound familiar?*

What's intriguing about history is that it repeats itself. The early Nanticoke Police Force was challenged with a number of murders, thefts and domestic abuse calls evident in the stories published in the Wilkes-Barre Record and part of the historical society archive. Here are just some of the lighter stories that may give you a chuckle.

High Constable Charles Erb impounded about 50 ducks yesterday running at large. He was attacked by a large Polish woman of Ridge Street, whose ducks he was driving along. She gave him a pretty fair thrashing and he will have her arrested for assault.  
*(WBR Tues 8/23/1892)*

John Gallagher, a tough customer from Newtown, a suburb of Wilkes-Barre, arrived in Nanticoke on the evening of 23 September "loaded to the neck" and determined to "lift somebody's h'ar." He claimed that Joe Thomas, or your notorious Jimmy Cooker, whatever his name is, wasn't in it with him. Gallagher had come to town to show Nanticoke's great slugger, Joe Thomas, how easily a WB man could lick him. In his enthusiasm during his oration, he struck his companion, O'Leary, on the side of the

head to show him how to do Thomas and sent O'Leary sprawling into the gutter. O'Leary got to his feet and both men fought like savage dogs for five minutes. When Gallagher tried to tear a board off the sidewalk in front of Courtright's Harness shop (15 W. Main) to club O'Leary, the latter man gave him a kick that sent him down and then ran away. (*Nanticoke News, reprinted in the (WBR Sat 9/24/1892)*)

Officer Fred Baker was arrested and placed in the lockup for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. (*WBR Wed 10/5/1892*)

Since the new lock was placed on the lockup, several of the police officers have not received keys and several of them have resigned in dissatisfaction. (*WBR Sat 10/8/1892*)

Josie Stow, age 13, and Agnes Drepko, both of Wanamie, were arrested by Daniel Burns, constable of Wanamie, for selling copper wire that had been stolen from the People's Street Railway Company. Both girls were arraigned before Squire Robbins and, after a hearing, were released because of their ages. (*WBR 11/20/02*)

## Some Interesting Facts:

*According to word-detective.com*

"The most likely origin of "Black Maria" does tie the phrase to an actual "Maria," but not a human one. "Black Maria" was a famous racehorse of the day, born in Harlem in 1826, whose exploits were widely celebrated in the newspapers. It seems entirely plausible that the name of the horse thereafter would be applied to the police carriages, usually colored black, which swiftly transported miscreants to jail."

"Paddy wagon" takes its name from "Paddy," a familiar form of the name Patrick (from the Irish form, Padraic or Padraig), which was used in early 20th century America as a derogatory term for Irish immigrants. One might assume that this use is similarly derogatory, referring to a supposed propensity of Irish-Americans to be arrested, but big city police forces of the period were themselves composed largely of Irish-Americans.

**Next Issue:** There was a story in 1885 that not only kept Nanticoke residents, but all of the Wyoming Valley on the edge of their seats.....

## Dateline - Nanticoke 1885

### Murder on Main Street: The strange case of Abram I. Eckert



*Patrol Boys pose for photo with Nanticoke Police Chief, Vincent Znaniecki and Officer Joseph Magnosi October 1934, courtesy of Mrs. Vincent Znaniecki. Historical Society File Photo*

## 100 Years Ago

*Courtesy of the Wilkes-Barre Record – Historical Society Archives:*

Only 8 revolvers were confiscated from young men during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations. There had been 25 the previous year. No serious accidents were reported. It was thought this meant the borough was becoming saner and safer. (*WBR 7/8/15*)

There were 32 arrests in July. Patrolmen Thomas Jones and William Roberts were promoted to sergeant. Patrolman Lloyd of the Hanover section complained that the owners of horses were not properly securing the animals after they were put out to pasture in the morning and that they were running at large in the 8<sup>th</sup> ward. (*WBR 8/4/15*)

The police payroll for July was \$405.45. The burgess reported 32 cases disposed of, \$43.80 collected in fines, \$10 for 25 permits, \$45 for 18 licenses. (*WBR 8/4/15*)