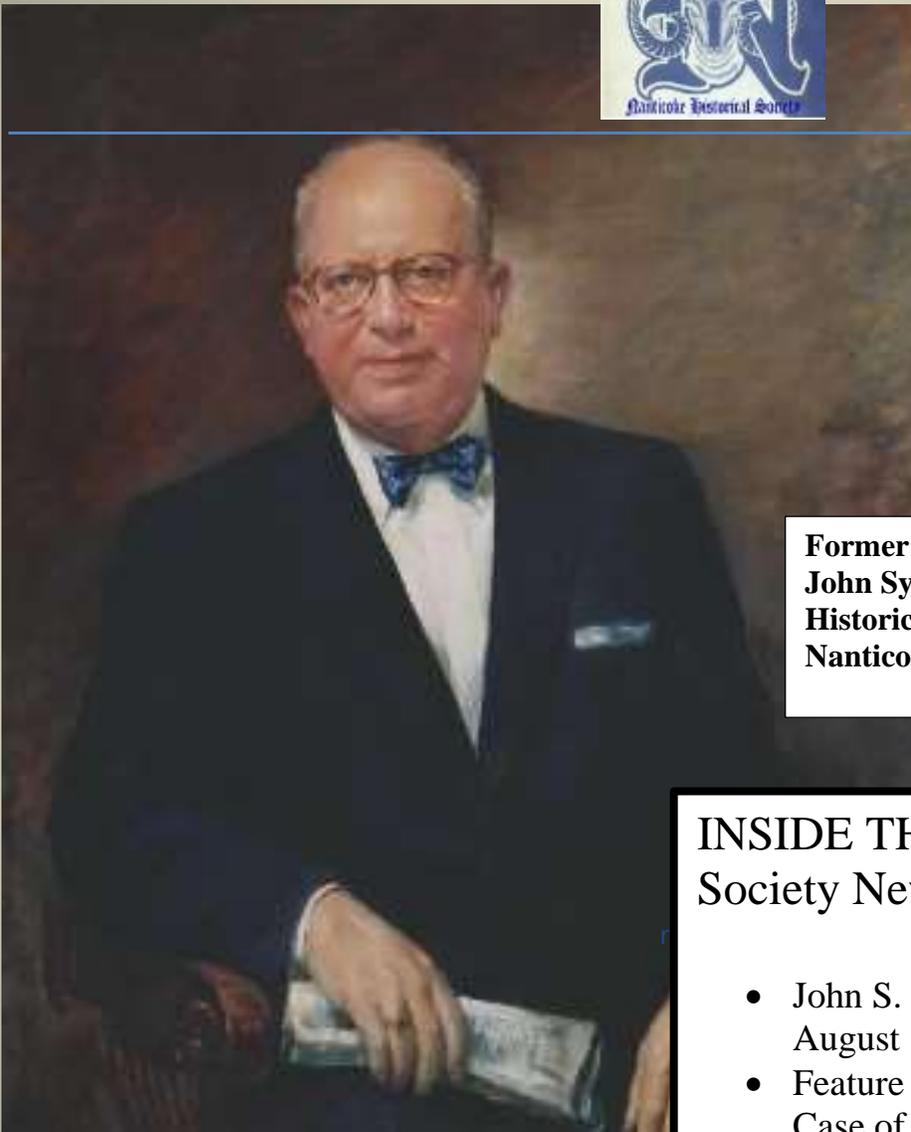


NANTICOKE LEGACY

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Samantha Mill House, 495 E. Main Street, Nanticoke, PA – 570-258-1367



Former Pennsylvania Governor – The late John Sydney Fine will be memorialized with Historical Marker made possible by the Nanticoke Historical Society.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Society News and Projects

- John S. Fine Marker Dedication Set for August
- Feature Story PART II – The Strange Case of Abram I. Eckert
- Focus On...Jewell - The Hanleys of Nanticoke
- Unusual Facts about our feature stories
- Welcome to New Members

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Patricia Olenginski Johnson

Looking for

Surnames: Catherine Sheen

- Patricia Van Dyke

Looking for

Surnames: Snyder, Retzlaff,
Kessler, Miller, Dudeck,
Scott

- Mark & Sherilyn Herron

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION STATEMENT:

The object of this society is for educational, charitable, and literary purposes with a primary focus to research, preserve, develop and disseminate the history of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania.

To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific area where these articles may be preserved, appreciated and used by the citizens of Nanticoke to enhance their heritage

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Our Redesigned Web Site
www.nanticokehistoryonline.org
Email
nanticokehistorical@yahoo.com
history@nanticokehistoryonline.org

OFFICERS

President: Julianna Zarzycki
Vice President/Corresponding Secretary/Treasurer:
Chester Zaremba

NEWSLETTER

Judith L. Minsavage

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Individual \$20

Family \$30

Lifetime \$100.00 Individual

Please advise us of any changes in email or home mailing address

Non-member – research fee \$20 for the first hour –
By Appointment

Upcoming meeting schedule

All meetings take place at 7 p.m. at the Samantha Mill House located next to the Mill Memorial Library.

Enter the parking lot off of Kosciuszko Street. To get directions call the society office at 570-258-1367

Thursday, Sept 29
Thursday, Oct 27
Wednesday, Nov. 30
Dec. no meeting

Editor's Note

Susan V. Bosak, social researcher, educator and creator of the Legacy Project, a social research endeavor, defines the concept of legacy as "A powerful life tool for all ages and a catalyst for social change. Legacy is about life and living. It's about learning from the past, living in the present, and building for the future." That definition is one of the reasons we decided to title our newsletter, The **Nanticoke Legacy**. Certainly no matter if we were born here or in any other city, town, borough or township throughout this country, the importance of what we learn from the lives of people who came before us is valuable. Our society information officers, in honoring past generations, document their legacy to us, so we get a sense of their lives, where they were born, how and where they lived and worked, where they have been laid to rest. They record the changes in the city of Nanticoke, its beginning and its growth. It's a monumental task. Documenting that legacy and passing it on to those who come after us is the fundamental motivation for The Nanticoke Historical Society. Therefore, please enjoy the first titled edition of **Nanticoke Legacy**.

Judy Minsavage, Newsletter editor

READ A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY ON JOHN FINE.....

<http://nanticokehistoryonline.org/> On the Home page at the bottom click on the **blue button** with the orange and white B labeled **Blogger** will like you to <http://nanticokehistoryonline.blogspot.com/>

SOCIETY NEWS

JOHN S. FINE HISTORICAL MARKER DEDICATION SET

The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission and the Nanticoke Historical Society will dedicate an official State Historical Marker Commemorating Nanticoke native and Nanticoke High School graduate, Gov. John S. Fine, 1893 – 1978
On Friday, August 19, 2016, 11:00 A.M.

Fine's Legacy

As a graduate of Nanticoke High School, John S. Fine became a practicing attorney in Nanticoke and later a Luzerne County Judge. He then went on to serve as the Governor of the Commonwealth of

THANK YOU – TO THOSE WHO HAVE DONATED TO THE JOHN S. FINE HISTORICAL MARKER -

John S. Tomko, Jr.

Norma Ushinski

John "Yogi" Jagodinski

George Manos

Mike Stachowiak

John Gregorowicz

John Pocreva

Gene Danowski

Sally Gorgas

Barbara Von Dran

Frank Wojick

Andy Sherbine

Patricia O. Johnson

The Society would especially like to thank:

Dr. Ronald Grevera, Superintendent of Greater Nanticoke Area School District for his overwhelming cooperation in making this project possible.

Pennsylvania from 1951 to 1955.

Upon assuming the role of governor of Pennsylvania in January of 1951, John S. Fine faced a great many challenges. After World War II, Pennsylvania suffered from a recession and burgeoning unemployment. The baby boom was underway and many of those children were becoming of school age.

Short on revenues and unable to renovate schools and pay for additional teachers whose salaries averaged \$3,400 per year, Fine knew he needed to be innovative in his search for funding. Also needed was an overhaul of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Agency which Fine updated to meet the demands of growing communities. His focus was on expanding mental health programs, cleaning of state waterways and building new highways. He began a movement to study the recommendations for restructuring the government, all of which needed funding. With all of these challenges ahead, Fine proposed a one half percent income tax which was promptly rejected by the Pennsylvania General Assembly. In its place a one percent sales tax was passed in 1953.

His initiatives regarding building new schools and additions to existing schools led to the biggest building boom in the state's history. Fine signed into law, job training for the unemployed, improvements in the health care system, rehabilitation programs for drug users and commercial housing for the elderly.

A uniform child adoption law and prison reform law were adopted. He established a Governor's Commission of Race Relations and opened up the State Police to African Americans. He was instrumental in the construction of the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike giving access to Luzerne County. Fine's four years advocated growth and prosperity in Pennsylvania.

The strange case of Abram I. Eckert

Murder on Main Street

Judith Minsavage

PART II

RECAP

Nanticoke resident, Abram I Eckert, was scheduled to die on the gallows at Luzerne County Prison on December 8, 1896. The night before, he calmly kissed and hugged his wife and 7 children, and said goodbye to his brother Daniel, sisters Almedia O'Rourke, May Lockhard and Mary Hess, and niece Mary Baker her husband George and another niece, Mary Case. Eckert watched as his grieving family walked reluctantly down the long corridor toward guards waiting to usher them out of the prison. He was served his last meal; a guard remembered that Eckert enjoyed it more than would be expected of a man with only hours to live. At 9 p.m. Eckert lay down on his cot. A guard was posted in his cell. Other death row prisoners turned in for the night. A hush fell over the cell block. The execution was hours away, or was it?

Months before this scene played out, Eckert, murdered his boss, Frederick T. Bittenbender a Nanticoke school director and First National Bank board member, on July 6, 1895. Earlier in the day, Bittenbender threatened Eckert with the loss of his job, and that afternoon, Eckert approached Bittenbender on Main Street. After a heated exchange, Eckert pulled out a pistol and shot Bittenbender in front of several witnesses. A trial resulted in a verdict of first degree murder. Eckert's attorney's appealed the conviction to the Supreme Court on several points of law concerning the degrees of murder available on

QUOTE:

“The people of Luzerne County, of Lackawanna County and Pottsville, people of the mine, most of them understand and know that you are trying to do something for them, to help them and to further develop their region along new lines.”

Governor John S. Fine

Speaking at the ground breaking for the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike; March 1954. 



In this undated photo, Governor John S. Fine with Mamie and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

*Jules Schick: Photographer –
Nanticoke Historical Society File photo*

Would you like to help promote the history of Nanticoke for future generations?

Donations are being accepted for the John S. Fine historical marker - Call 570-258-1367 for more details and information.

which the jury could rule. The Supreme Court denied the appeal. Eckert was sullen and withdrawn at the decision. A judge then scheduled Eckert to die on May 14, 1896. Shortly before the newly schedule execution date, Eckert came down with a case of peritonitis. The governor issued a respite until Eckert was in better health and set his new date of execution for July 1, 1896. But an appeal of the conviction by Pennsylvania Board of Pardons member, Charles Parrish, was considered viable by the governor and once again a respite from execution was granted and rescheduled to occur on October 8, 1896.

A grateful Eckert wrote from his jail cell. “Would you kindly allow me space in your valuable paper to publicly express my thanks to the friends who so generously assisted me while passing through my late ordeal. To Mr. Boland and his estimable wife for their kind favors extended to myself and heartbroken family and to the official of the jail for many courtesies and to Patrick Foley and David Edwards for their kindness and lastly to Messrs. McGovern, Thornton and O’Neil my attorney for their unceasing efforts in my behalf, and to Mr. Parrish for his kindness to a comparatively stranger in obtaining my reprieve. Abram I. Eckert. County Jail.”

Due to scheduling the Board of Pardons could not meet before the October execution date, so once again the decision to commute Eckert’s sentence was made. It was reported the next day in the Wilkes-Barre Record “When the news of Abram I. Eckert’s respite was received from Harrisburg by the Wilkes-Barre Record on Wednesday night, Eckert had gone to bed and did not know that the date for his execution had been set ahead again, to December 8, 1896 until he saw the item in the paper.



This is a very early photo is of the First National Bank on Main Street Nanticoke.
In 1895 Abram I. Eckert of Nanticoke killed Fred Bittenbender also of Nanticoke just a few feet from the front entrance of the bank, of which, Bittenbender was a board member

Nanticoke Historical Society File Photo



69 W. Main Street

* House built by William Bittenbender in 1912; Uncle of Fred Bittenbender.

His, residence until his death in 1935 when the property was willed to his wife and son, William, Jr.

Gladys Davis (teacher) residence (1919 City Directory)

William W. Bittenbender, Jr., residence (1919-1943)

Fred and Mary Smith purchased property from William Bittenbender, Jr. (1943)

Property passed to their daughter, Katherine, a Nanticoke school teacher.

The property was purchased again in 2001.

Nanticoke Historical Society Archives

He was cheerful yesterday and now has still stronger hope that his sentence will be commuted to imprisonment for life."

But efforts over the following two months did not result in a change of sentence, and with the day of the hanging upon him, he met with his family to spend the last hours of his life. His family gone, the prison guard seated at his side, and inmates fast asleep, the long night of December 7, 1896 began.

Unanswered Questions

The prison guard watched as Eckert squirmed restlessly in his bed, turning several times. At early morning's light, an hour from the time he was to be awakened, Eckert turned toward the wall, made a gurgling sound, his body went lifeless. The guard sprang to Eckert's side; he was unconscious, barely breathing. Several attempts to resuscitate him failed, but Eckert was dead.

The reality as to what had happened did not set in until the next day, when it was announced Eckert died from a drug overdose. Morphine, they said. However, the warden, guard, nor Eckert's family had any idea of how Eckert could have obtained the deadly dose of the drug. An inquest was held, no fault was placed. Speculation was, perhaps he had stored it from a time when he was ill; or perhaps it was smuggled in by some unidentified visitors earlier in his imprisonment. However it happened, Eckert cheated the gallows. He escaped the judgement placed upon him. Or did he?

Eckert was buried in Nanticoke Cemetery on December 10, 1896. 

FOCUS ON....

The Hanleys of Nanticoke.... Where is Jewell?



Jewell Hanley
Nanticoke Historical Society File Photos

Hanley was scheduled to also perform for the first annual ball of the Dr. Heyer Memorial Clinic, (location not published). In 1936, we find Jewell became a student with the Hilda Man Hertz School of Dancing located in the Kresge Building, 60 east Main Street and was a featured entertainer of the Ritz-Carlton revue and



Nanticoke Historical Society information officer, John Sherrick, in piecing together the history of families who have lived in Nanticoke, posed an interesting question. Where are they now? With this question, came about our new Focus On section, that will either ask that question, or perhaps tell “the rest of the story” giving us insight and perhaps some surprises about the history of the people who lived and grew up in Nanticoke.

Our first story centers around the William Hanley family who lived on East Main Street. In 1935, 9-year-old Jewell Alice Hanley burst onto the scene described in the Wilkes-Barre Record as a “fast stepping tap dancer and songbird performing with Kathleen R. Sweeney’s floor show at the firemen’s ball at Sans Souci Park.” Other entertainers on the bill were Bobby Sheehan, Marie McLaughlin, Betty Honeywell, Mary Lees, Thelma Moharter, Gertrude Kennedy and Geraldine Reed.

floor show held at the Holy Trinity Church, now St. Faustina Kowalska RC. Church.

In 1938, she joined a cast of 125 to perform a number called “Hot News” in a two-day presentation called Headlines Revue.

Then by 1939, Jewell performed a solo tap dance in Rollin’ Rhythm Revue, a three-day performance sponsored by the Nanticoke Lions Club, held at the high school auditorium. Also in 1939 she performed with Johnny Dole at an event that honored Three-time national A.A.U. boxing champion, Bill Spear.

Hanley, throughout the 1930’s, performed at various venues, but 1939 we lose track of her. Did she change her name, become a professional dancer. Perform on Broadway, or did she merely quit entertaining? Anyone who may be able to again shine a spot light on her life is welcome to call our office at 570-258-1367. 



An Advertisement for the Hilda Man Hertz School of Dancing as it appeared in the The Wilkes-Barre Record Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Thu, Sep 10, 1936 –



On left, Kathleen Smith, Regent of the Shawnee Fort Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, watches as Mary Ann West, a descendent of Captain Andrew Lee, unveils marker provided by the Chapter at the Hanover Green Cemetery.

SOCIETY PARTICIPATES IN EVENT COMMEMORATING CAPT. ANDREW LEE AND HANOVER GREEN CEMETERY ANNIVERSARY

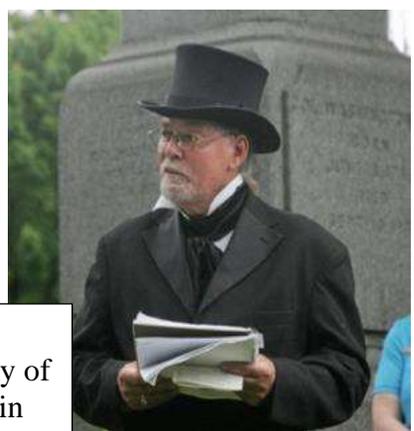
The Nanticoke Historical Society would like to thank the Shawnee Fort Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Hanover Green Cemetery Association for inviting us to participate this past June in the dedication of the marker for Captain Andrew Lee, a revolutionary war hero who, with his family, settled in Nanticoke. We'd also like to congratulate the dedicated officers of the Hanover Green Cemetery on their 240th anniversary.

Captain Andrew Lee's life certainly rivaled the best of historical stories. He, not always by his own design, ended up in the most challenging of circumstances and some of the most important battles of the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars. The marker funded by the DAR Shawnee Fort Chapter reads:

Captain Andrew Lee 1739 – 1821 Revolutionary War Soldier, Spy for General Washington. Marker Placed June 2016.

To read Lee's fascinating story check out our newsletters online at www.nanticokehistoryonline.com, or call our office at 570-258-1367 for a copy...

Len Luba, president of the Hanover Green Cemetery, served as master of ceremonies at the 240th anniversary of the cemetery which included an event honoring Captain Andrew Lee.



Some interesting Facts about stories in this issue

JOHN S. FINE HIGH SCHOOL....A rose by....



INTERESTING?

In 1970, the Nanticoke High School was re-dedicated as John S. Fine High School. But according to this bronze sign in the possession of the Nanticoke Historical Society the school was originally slated to be called Dwight D. Eisenhower High.

CAPTAIN ANDREW LEE....Mr. Manners?

CAPTAIN ANDREW LEE WAS RELATED TO EMILY POST – American author who is most famous for her writings on etiquette and the founder of The Emily Post Institute.

Emily Post's father was architect Bruce Price. One of Price's most notable accomplishments designing Quebec's famous Château Frontenac.

Captain Andrew Lee, was a 2nd great-grandfather of Emily Post,

A 3rd great-grandfather of Emily Post was Lazarus Stewart one of the leaders of the Paxton Boys.

ABRAM I. ECKERT- better late than never...

The Warrant of Respite

Official Document from the Governor Staying the hanging which was to have taken place today.

“Sheriff Martin was somewhat uneasy last evening as the messenger from Harrisburg had not put in an appearance at 8 o’clock with the official papers from the governor respiting Abram Eckert, and he did not know whether or not to proceed with the hanging today. The following telegram was then sent to the governor:

TO: Governor Daniel H. Hastings, Bellefonte, PA.

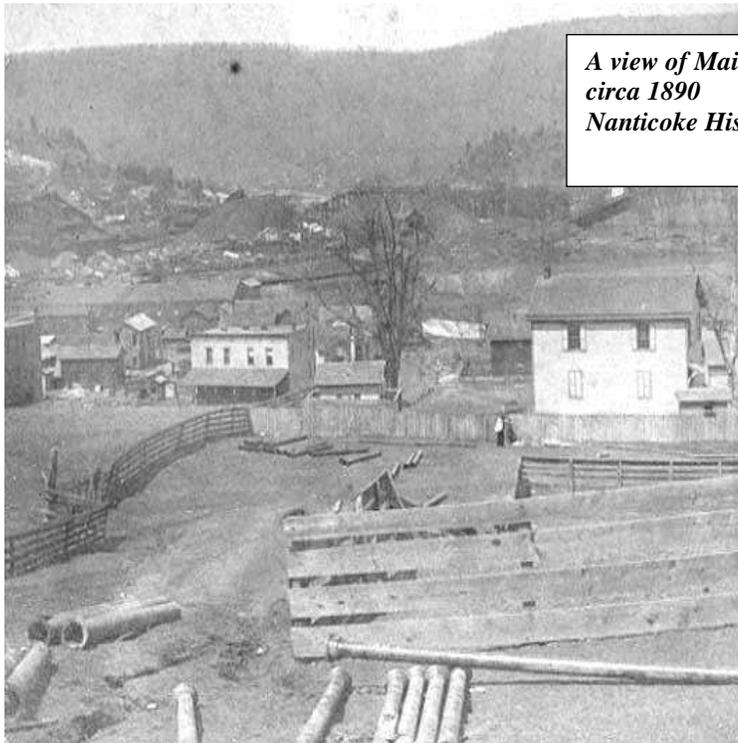
“Telegram from Mr. Beitler respiting Eckert received: Where are the papers? Please Answer.”
Signed James Martin, Sheriff Luzerne County.

“Later in the night the sheriff received, by the special messenger L.H. Harris, the warrant staying the execution of Abram Eckert. The messenger arrived at 8 o’clock not having had time to get a meal since 7 o’clock a.m. He was quite fatigued but his duty was imperative and a few hours delay would have made things very unpleasant for the sheriff.”

Published in the Wilkes-Barre Record July 1, 1896

ELIAS BITTENBENDER Inventor

Elias Bittenbender and William Bittenbender father and uncle of Frederick, who was killed by Abram Eckert in 1895, received a patent for improvements to a mining bit, employed in mining coal or in quarrying rock.



*A view of Main Street, Nanticoke from Prospect Street –
circa 1890
Nanticoke Historical Society File Photo*

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS ISSUE AND UPDATED LOOK OF THE NANTICOKE LEGACY NEWSLETTER:

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

SOCIETY NEWS:

Keep up to date on everything that is happening at the society.

STORY:

**WHO WAS THADDEUS KOSCIUSZKO
FORGOTTEN HERO.**

FOCUS ON.....

**WHO OR WHAT WILL BE OUR NEXT FOCUS
SUBJECT?**

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

AND MUCH MORE!

**** log on to our [Facebook page](#) and
enjoy postings of photos from our
archives.....**

****log on to our newly designed [website](http://nanticokehistoryonline.org)
nanticokehistoryonline.org**

WONDERING WHAT TO DO WITH OLD PHOTOS AND MEMORABILIA?

Our loved ones have a history. Their life stories are deeply rooted in their community as residents, veterans, business owners, teachers, members of organizations and so much more. The Nanticoke Historical Society realizes and respects how important each person's story is to their relatives and friends as well as the community in which they lived. That is why the society respectfully asks those who have lost a loved one to consider the historical society when taking stock of memorabilia and photos. The society may already have pieces of a family's history in its vast database to which pictures of an old homestead, business, rare family photos or writings may be added completing a genealogical picture in tribute to those who have passed. We sometimes find ourselves with memorabilia or photos passed down through generations. Some of these photos may contain scenes of old Nanticoke, a street, or building that has been long since razed. Society information officers will scan and return items to families if requested.

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

We're available 24 hours a day!

Like our Facebook page and keep up to date with all the news regarding the Nanticoke Historical Society. See great photos!

Log on to www.nanticokehistoryonline.org and enjoy stories, past issued of our newsletters and even more photos.

**CHECK OUT OUR NEWS BLOG SPOT
<http://nanticokehistoryonline.blogspot.com/>**