

# NANTICOKE LEGACY

## NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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



### VISUAL DISPLAY HIGHLIGHTS LOCAL HISTORY:

**Nanticoke Historical Society sets up displays of artifacts and documents at the Greater Nanticoke High School**

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INTRODUCED TO THE PAST

\*FOCUS ON - XAVIER WERNET  
A MAN WITH A VISION

\*THE NANTICOKE STOVE  
BY  
CHET ZAREMBA

\*WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

\*WHO KILLED UNION REBEL  
MINERS' UNION PRESIDENT  
TOM MALONEY PROGRAM

### **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

**FEBRUARY 22**

**MARCH 29**

**APRIL 26**

**WE ENCOURAGE ANYONE  
WHO IS INTERESTED TO  
ATTEND.**

## 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To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical  
documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania  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 Web Site

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

Email

[nanticokehistorical@yahoo.com](mailto:nanticokehistorical@yahoo.com)  
[history@nanticokehistoryonline.org](mailto: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

## Editor's Note

It is of popular belief that the more people know about their local history it instills a sense of pride in community. A common bond is established whether we are born of a place or have been relocated to a new location due to work or familial responsibilities. Learning about the generations of people who were stewards of that community is valuable and essential to honoring and keeping that stewardship alive. It is with that in mind that the Nanticoke Historical Society rose to the challenge of supplying the Greater Nanticoke High School with a recurring display of memorabilia that will connect students with Nanticoke's past. The history of the world is of course important, but local history is undoubtedly the birthplace of instilling the passion of learning about who we are as a people and what brought us here. Now, in cooperation with the Greater Nanticoke High School, the Historical Society will help introduce students to the history of the area in which they live. For more information on the Nanticoke Historical Society archives, to volunteer or become a member, call us at 570-258-1367.

Judy Minsavage, newsletter editor

### LOOKING FOR A YEARBOOK?

THE FOLLOWING YEARBOOKS ARE  
LOCATED AT OUR OFFICES:

Nanticoke High School

(John S. Fine or GNA (Greater Nanticoke Area High School), years 1942 to 2004.

Newport High School, Wanamie,

Newport Twp. years 1942 to 1970

GAR High School

Bloomsburg University

Wilkes University

Kings College

Duplicates from each high school  
are available for purchase.

For more information call our  
office at 570-258-1367.

### **The Nanticoke Historical Society is holding its Spring Raffle.....**

**First Prize - \$125**

**Second Price - \$50**

**Third Prize - \$25**

**Tickets are available at the Historical  
Society offices**

**Samantha Mill House**

**(Next to the Mill Memorial Library)**

**Off of Kosciuszko Street**

**495 East Main Street**

**Nanticoke, PA 18634**

**Or by calling - 570-258-1367**

**Donation - \$2 each or 3 for \$5.**

**Drawing will be held on April 27, 2018**

## SOCIETY NEWS

# GNA STUDENTS ARE INTRODUCED TO NANTICOKE'S PAST

Introducing the history of Nanticoke and its people, buildings and contributions to the growth of the Wyoming Valley has always been the objective of the Nanticoke Historical Society. So when Amy Scibeck, Principal of the Greater Nanticoke High School and the school's history teacher James Litchkowski contacted Chet Zaremba, Society Vice President to discuss the possibility of establishing a continuing display of the city's historical artifacts in the entry hall of the school, Zaremba set about formulating a plan to complete the project.

"Past Commencement Exercises" was the theme of the first display which was ready prior to the end of the 2016 -17 school year. A number of past graduating class pictures were displayed including one from 1897, along with that, were a number of old commencement programs and a few other graduation related items such as the 1920 Nanticoke High School class ring that had been previously donated to the society. A Labor Day theme was chosen for the beginning of the 2017-18 school year in September, which mainly revolved around the hard working coal miners and the women who worked in the garment industry. Included in that display, were a number of mining articles such as a helmet and miners lamps, that belonged to Zaremba's late father-in-law.

As football season was in full swing, the October display was "Nanticoke High School Football before There Were Trojans". This display centered on the fabulous football teams of the Nanticoke Rams who won a number of conference championships. Two of the old silver plated football trophies were included as was an original 1948 varsity football jersey that Zaremba was once



A sign posted in the lobby of the Greater Nanticoke High School thanking the society for their display of memorabilia.



Items displayed at the end of the 2016-17 school year as part of the Past Commencement Exercises in the entrance hall of the Greater Nanticoke High School.

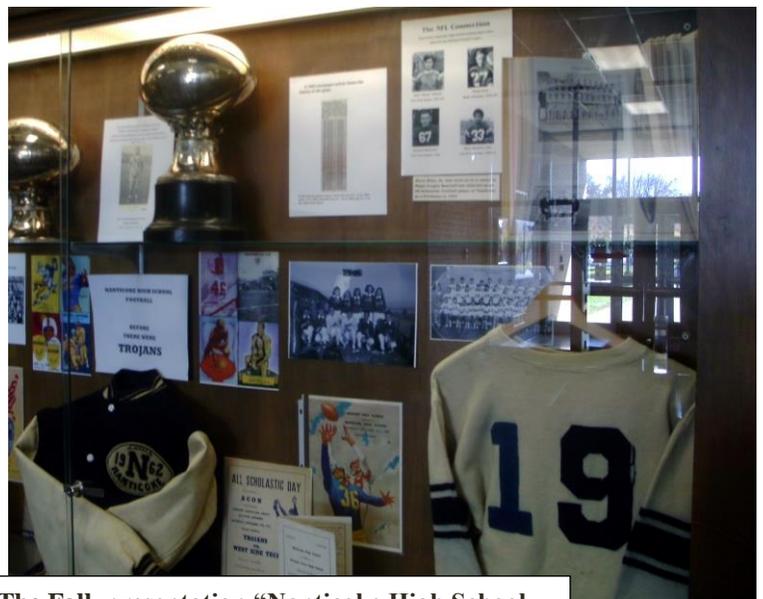
" As president of the Nanticoke Historical Society I am thrilled that our organization has been given the opportunity to introduce the history of Nanticoke to the students of Greater Nanticoke Area. This cooperative effort is being maintained by our Vice-President Chet Zaremba and GNA history teacher Mr. Jim Litchkofski with the approval of High School Principal Ms. Amy Scibek and District Superintendent Dr. Ronald Grevera. The GNA officials are to be commended for their commitment to education and the preservation of the history of Nanticoke." Julianna Zarzycki,



Photos of past Nanticoke High School graduating classes are on display at the High School courtesy of the Nanticoke Historical Society

issued for junior varsity games. Looking forward to the next display, Zaremba said, "I am working on a "Timeline" theme. I am going to take a number of our Main Street Pictures and arrange them in the manner that shows the changes throughout the years. I am also going to add a number of "Then and Now" photos of areas around town." A planned future display will consist mainly of pictures of the trains and trolleys and early transportation in Nanticoke.

The displays will hopefully capture the imagination of students as they attend classes and bring about interest in learning more about community in which they live. To learn more about the many artifacts and records held by the society all are invited to visit the society offices in the Samantha Mill House (Next to the Mill Memorial Library off of Kosciuszko Street), 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke, PA or call 570-258-1367 for more information.



The Fall presentation "Nanticoke High School Football Before There were Trojans" Included a collection of items showcasing the Nanticoke Rams football team. The Rams won several conference championships.

## FOCUS ON....

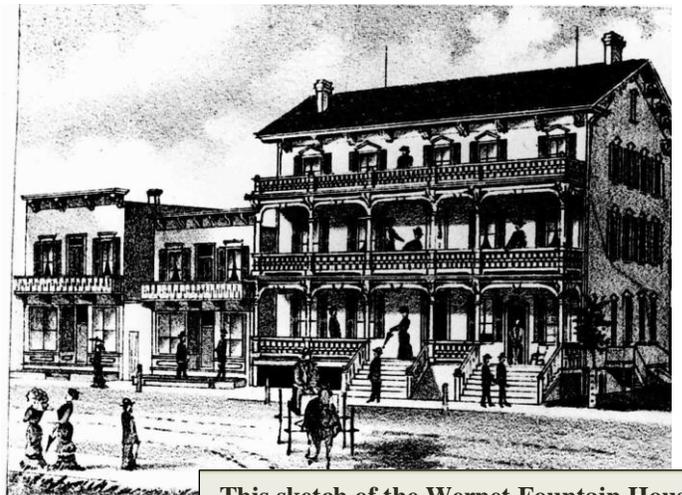
# Xavier Wernet – A Man with a Vision

Xavier Wernet left his home in Baden, Germany and traveled to the United States in the spring 1851. He made his way to Pittston and worked in the coal mines. Eventually he moved to Carbon County taking a job in the lumber business. By August of that year Wernet relocated to Nanticoke and for a short time worked at the Susquehanna Coal Company.

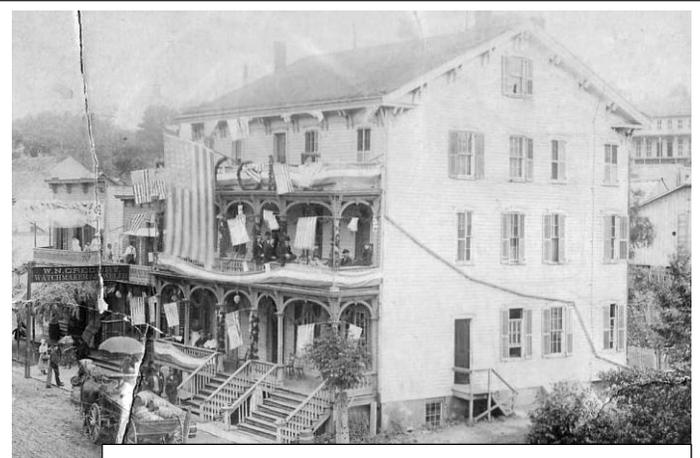
Seeking a better life, he knew learning a trade would give him more stability. He took up shoemaking and stayed with that for the next fourteen years. He later became interested in the grocery business and eventually met and later married Hannah Garinger of Hanover Twp. in 1861. In 1862, Wernet purchased land from Charles Keithline along what is now E. Main Street for \$700. But Wernet felt that there was still something better for him. In 1868, he settled in Berwick where he finally hit his stride becoming the proprietor of a hotel.

Wernet returned to Nanticoke and in 1870 taking all he had learned about hotel business, he constructed the Wernet Fountain House Hotel on the corner of E. Main and Locust Street. Relying on his experience, Wernet turned the establishment into the premier hotel.

Wernet then set about buying up available parcels of land. He purchased one for \$2 from Susquehanna Coal Company which was located on the western side of Prospect Street and an additional lot on the Northeast corner of Maple and Noble. As Wernet's assets grew he purchased a plot of land on Hanover Street, opposite Park Street for \$1,700. The land was taken from Charles Garinger for nonpayment of a nearly 3,000 balance on a 5,000 debt owed to the estate of the late Martha Fairchild. It states in the Luzerne County book of deeds that the lot was improved with a two-story frame dwelling with fruit trees. It is noted that this property was where Wernet made his family home.



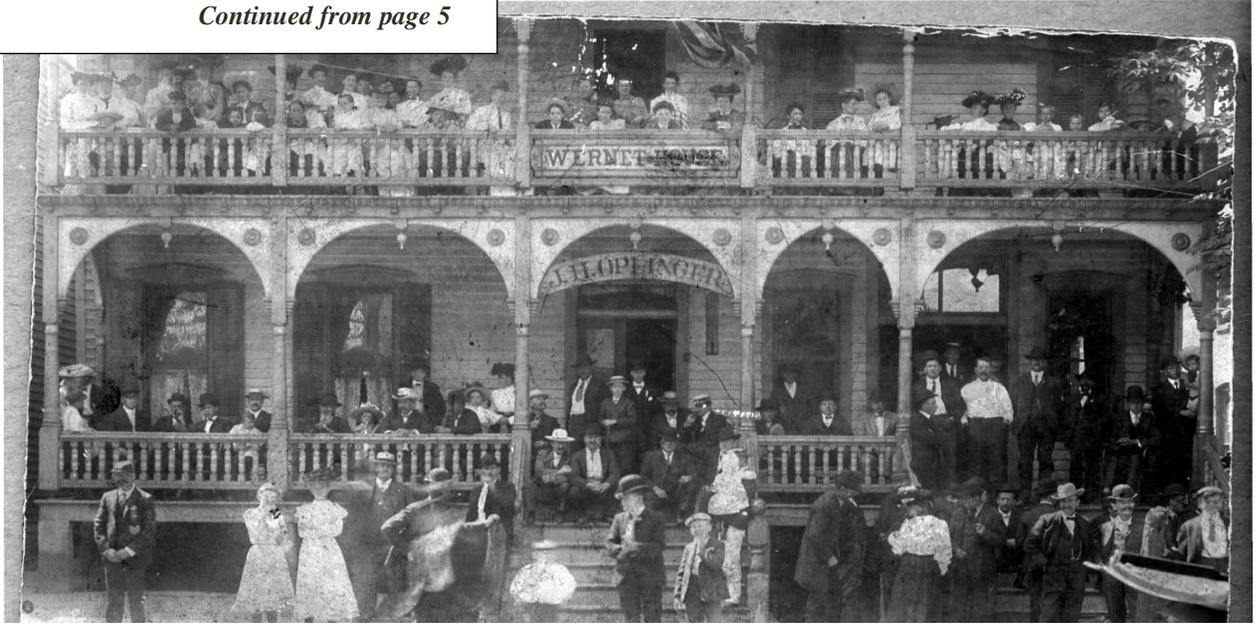
This sketch of the Wernet Fountain House Hotel gives a snapshot of Nanticoke's Main Street in the 1800s



The Wernet Hotel at the intersection of E. Main and Locust Street is dated circa 1900, but is considered to be actually be between 1880 and 1888.

Wernet's hotel, then called the Wernet House, was advertised as far away as Baltimore Maryland, "Good accommodations, centrally located, first class stable for horses, and a bar supplied with choice drinks and cigars."

Even though Wernet's Fountain House Hotel was doing well, he leased the operation to John H. Oplinger in 1888 and retired from business. He continued his interest in purchasing and selling real estate.



Taken from "The Leading Business Houses" 1889 edition of Principal Cities and Towns "We have here a number of fine hotels whose general fame is wide-spread. Of this number is the grand Wernet House, which has now been open as a public hostelry for 20 years and more. It is 4 1/2 stories high, is run on the American plan, contains a large number of finely furnished sleeping apartments, and is equipped with all the modern hotel conveniences, including a fine bar, and reading and writing rooms. The dining room is a special feature, and the table, at all times, fairly groans with all the luxuries and delicacies in season."

Wernet and his wife Hannah adopted two children Ella and Xavier Jr. Ella married George W. Sutliff, in 1886, but after three years of marriage, according to the Wilkes-Barre Record, "he deserted her and never returned," She divorced Sutliff in 1891.

Wernet became one of Nanticoke's notable residents. He was also known as the Father of Nanticoke Masonry. In the early 1860s he became a charter member of the Nanticoke Lodge No. 541, which was organized on Aug 10 1875 and according to Region 7 Masonic listings is still active and meets the second Thursday of the month. Wernet was elected treasurer and the served as treasurer of the lodge until 1911. During that time, Wernet also served as a director of the First National Bank of Nanticoke. Wernet's wife Hannah, passed away in 1898 of a cerebral hemorrhage. She was buried from the First Presbyterian Church and interred in Hanover Green Cemetery.

In 1906, upon selling his holdings on E. Main Street for \$28,000, all buildings located on the parcel were demolished. The hotel was spared by new owner Charles Schwartz.

City Councilman Charles Hesser purchased the Wernet Hotel from Schwartz for \$16,000 and renamed it the Hesser Hotel He later renovated and added a floor to the structure. By 1911, the hotel was scheduled to be razed to make way for the new Nanticoke National Bank. But instead Jerome O'Brien purchased the relocated hotel in 1914. The building was moved, turned and set onto a parcel of land facing Locust Street allowing construction of the bank to proceed.. He renamed the establishment The O'Brien House, but the new name never caught on.



Undated photo of the newly named O'Brien House was taken after it was moved and turned to face to Locust Street to make way for the construction of Nanticoke National Bank



**Nanticoke National Bank opened for business on Main Street in 1913 at the site of the former Hesser Hotel (formerly known as Wernet House)**

After experiencing failing health for two years, Xavier Wernet passed away in 1912. He is buried in the Hanover Green Cemetery.

According to Historical Society records, Mrs. Fannie Clingerman was the last owner of Wernet's once grand hotel. Clingerman renovated and reopened the building in 1926.

Ella Wernet married Robert L. Evans in 1911 and lived in her family home at 115 Hanover Street. No record is found as to when Ella Wernet passed away.

Xavier Wernet came to this country with a dream, a dream that was realized by the opportunities of which he took advantage. He then in turn used what he learned to contribute to his community.



**Ella Wernet Evans in 1946 -- lived in her family home at 115 Hanover Street**



**The Nanticoke National Bank added an addition in 2008 after the demolition of the Leader Store on Main Street.**

**The second institution under the name First National Bank began operations at 35 E. Main Street, former site of the Nanticoke National Bank, Guaranty Bank and Omega Bank.**



**The Masonic Hall on Main Street, Nanticoke in 2008, where Xavier Wernet was elected to serve as treasurer a record 36 times**

## Wernet family heirlooms on display at Nanticoke Historical Society.

In September of 2017, Marilyn Hoben, great great granddaughter of Xavier Wernet donated the following items to the Nanticoke Historical Society: Those marked with an asterisk were believed to have to been given to Xavier and his wife Hannah at the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in April of 1886.

- Bone china creamer and sugar bowl – hand-painted sugar and creamer made in Germany for Mary Commandery No. 36, Knights Templar a Masonic order of Philadelphia, Pa.. Philadelphia, 1903, K.C.;
- Decorative plate – This plate commemorates the 1900 state conclave of Knights Templars in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. It was made by the famous Knowles, Taylor & Knowles of East Liverpool, Ohio for Pittsburgh Commandery No. 1. It pictures a scene of angelic cherubs with the York Rite Crown & Cross emblem overhead. It has a beautiful maroon border trimmed in gold and measures 8 inches in diameter.
- Water pitcher - James Tufts, Boston, quadruple plate, #2332. \*
- Cup – Wilcox Silverplate Company, Meridian, CT, #3937\*
- Knife sharpener that was part of the above set\*
- Decorative plate – Tulips and lily of the valley, Limoges China (most likely made by Limoges China Company in East Liverpool, Ohio, established 1887). 



### THE NANTICOKE FREEMASONS

The Nanticoke Lodge No. 541, was instituted on August 10, 1875. Officers were Allen A. Lape, W.M.; John A. Gruver, S.W.; Eugene Alexander, J.W.; William O. Davies, sec; Xavier Wernet, treasurer.

1904

The new Masonic building was constructed at 208 E. Main, in a double brick store purchased from James M. Williams. "The lodge room will be twice the present size and the second floor will be outfitted for dwelling apartments. The ground floor will be fully renovated. Wilcox and Walp is doing the work." (WBR 8/26/1904) 1922

Nanticoke Lodge No 541 F&AM burned the mortgage on their building on 28 December. (WBR, Saturday, 12/30/1922)

1951

At a special meeting of the Nanticoke Masonic Hall Association on 18 January 1951, the Trustee's of the Hall Association were empowered to purchase the Owl's building at the corner of Walnut and E. Main Street, for the sum of \$15,000. (Letter to members, 3/2/1951)

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY RECORDS**

# The Nanticoke Stove

by Chet Zaremba, V.P. Nanticoke  
Historical Society

As I left the office of the Nanticoke Historical Society I looked around and thought to myself, boy, we sure filled up this place, we're almost out of room. Although our main objective at NHS is the preservation of information, we have been blessed by many people who have donated physical objects to us. As our storage space is limited we don't actively solicit physical objects but will accept almost anything of historical significance that someone wants to donate to us.

Later that day while at home, I received a phone call from Historical Society information officer John Sherrick. He said "Do we want a stove?" "What kind of stove," I asked. "A Nanticoke Stove," was his answer. He went on to explain that he had received a telephone call from a man in West Nanticoke who said he wanted to donate his Nanticoke Stove to us. Based on this, John traveled to West Nanticoke to look at the stove. John continued our phone conversation, "It's all there, complete in a garage in West Nanticoke"

John then went on to describe the stove and stated that the donor did not wish any recognition for the donation. I told John that if he thought that we should take it, we'll take it.

The next day John, Mike Passetti and his pick-up truck, and I drove to the West Nanticoke garage to claim the stove. An examination of the stove by Mike and I concluded that the stove would have to be dismantled in order to move it. Mike had brought along a set of tools and his large hand truck and soon the work began. There were a minimum number of screws and bolts that had to be removed but the ones that did put up quite a fight to stay in place.



As work continued the stove began to come apart little by little until we had three major parts and numerous smaller doors, shelves, grates, and a lot of dirt. The stove was indeed complete down to the ash pails under the grates. The first two major parts loaded easily but the third took the three of us to get into the truck bed. Finally loaded, it now on its way back to Nanticoke.

**The Nanticoke coal stove, manufactured by the Buckwalter Stove Company especially for the C.H. Lecher Hardware Store.**



Once back at our office we unloaded it into the kitchen where it will be on permanent display soon. The stove has two nameplates, the first is the largest and is inscribed "Nanticoke" on a plate that also holds the oven thermometer. The dial of the thermometer indicates that the stove was manufactured by the Royersford Stove Company, in Royersford, Pennsylvania circa 1915. A second plate on the stove is inscribed "C. H. Lecher, Nanticoke, PA," obviously referring to Lecher's Hardware as the place to which the stove would have been shipped and then subsequently purchased.

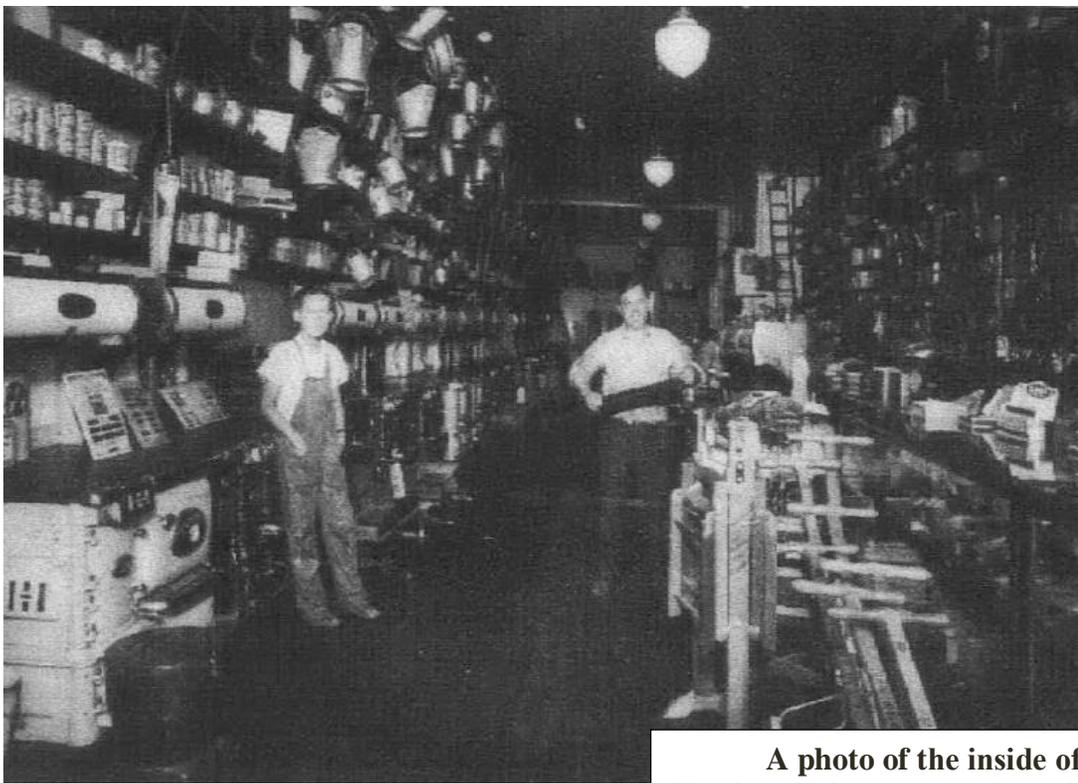
Since then I have been buffing some of the plated pieces to bring back their luster and it is our plan to within the next month or so, re-construct the stove in the kitchen where it can be seen by one and all. We invite everyone and anyone to stop into the Nanticoke Historical Society and see this fine piece of Nanticoke History. 

**Royersford Borough** in Montgomery County, PA was incorporated in 1879 from Limerick Township. The early history of the borough shows that stove manufacturing contributed greatly to the growth of the borough. Up until 1865 the service industry constituted the entire trade of the small village.

Royersford moved to becoming an industrial center with the start of the Royersford Iron Foundry. The company's buildings were primarily designed for the manufacture of coal and wood stoves. The plant attracted stove retailers and other businesses to the area and by 1884 Royersford, was estimated to contain 1,000 residents. Soon most of the areas containing the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads and Main Street of the borough were filled with industrial buildings, bringing more people, shops and stores to the area.

**ROYERSFORD BOROUGH**

*continued page 11*



A photo of the inside of Lecher's Hardware shows a number of the Nanticoke stoves lined up in the store ready for sale.

The Buckwalter Stove Company, one of the largest stove manufacturers in the region, opened sales agencies in several of the largest cities in the country, including Philadelphia, New York and Chicago. After owner, J. A. Buckwalter's death in the late 1920s, innovation and a plan for garnering future revenue ceased.

By the 1930s some of the larger businesses surrounding the stove manufacturing industry closed. With the increase use of electrical appliances, for which none of these firms had prepared stove manufacturing virtually disappeared. No stove-related industry remains in Royersford today.

**THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS:**

**Ann and Edward Emelett  
Marigrace Gallagher  
Marilyn Hoban  
Thomas Owens  
John Plummer  
Lori Shemanski**

**Welcome Lifetime Members**

**Cynthia Guffey  
Darlene Matzer  
Cinda Hartman  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard hess  
Judy Thomas**

**SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT LECHER'S HARDWARE STORE.**

On January 14, 1892, John H. Lecher purchased a hardware store at 107 Main Street from Welliver & Co.

“Ground was broken on Orchard and W. Main Street, Nanticoke, for a residence for Mr. Lecher. “(WBR, Thurs, 5/23/1895)

“The new residence will soon be completed. It is a frame structure 36 x 49. Plans were drawn up by architects Galloway Teneyck of Newark and construction was under the supervision of Isaac Shoemaker of Nanticoke. It is a model home. Mr. Lecher expended upwards of \$3,500 on it. It will be lighted by electricity and will have modern improvements.” (WBR, Thurs, 8/1/1895)

John Henry Lecher sold his hardware business (114-116 E. Main) to Charles Henry. After his retirement from the hardware business, John Henry continued to invest in real estate and remained active in the welfare of Nanticoke.

“Charles Henry Lecher's Hardware Store was selling “Nanticoke Ranges” at reasonable prices. Because the store was so narrow the stoves had to be placed on a platform along the wall.” (WBR, 3/6/1912)

In the late 1920s Charles Henry Lecher attempted to retire from the hardware business but the Great Depression forced him to take back the store. He eventually sold the store to his cousin Wilbur Deeter, who conducted the business into the 1970's.

1979

In 1979, Jessie Deeter, who was then the owner of the hardware store, sold the business to John Kropiewnicki.

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY RECORDS**

# Who Killed Rebel Miners' Union President Tom Maloney?

## The Wyoming Valley Good Friday Bombings of 1936

The Good Friday Bombings of 1936, was the subject of a program presented by Robert Wolensky and Michael Chimola and hosted by the Nanticoke Historical Society on January 22 at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina, 38 W. Church St., Nanticoke. In commemoration of Anthracite Mining Heritage Month, the program was presented free to the public and was moderated by Chet Zaremba, Vice President of the Nanticoke Historical Society.

Wolensky and Chimola detailed an engrossing tale of the day 44-year-old Thomas Maloney opened a delivered package at his home in Wilkes-Barre Township which exploded killing his 4 year old son immediately. Maloney died of his injuries a few days later.

Others who received the explosive packages were former County Sheriff Luther Kniffen, of Wilkes-Barre; Harry Gouldstone, of Kingston, superintendent of the Buttonwood Colliery of the Glen Alden Coal Co. These two devices were not exploded. Two other packages received by Judge Benjamin Jones and James Gorman, a state Anthracite Conciliation Board umpire from Hazleton, were intercepted in the Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton post offices before they could be delivered. A sixth bomb exploded around 3:30 p.m. that day killing recipient Michael Gallagher of Hanover Township.

MALONEY

Continued page 13

## 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](mailto:history@nanticokehistoryonline.org).

It was suspected since most of the recipients were in the mining industry, labor unions or law enforcement the event had to do with union disputes. It is believed two recipients received boxes in error as they had the same names as two men in the local mining industry. A suspect, Michael Fugmann, was arrested and charged for the crimes. It was later determined his motives were personal. But according to Wolensky and Chimola there are many questions left lingering as to Fugmann's guilt. Fugmann was convicted and sentenced to death. He died in the electric chair on July 17, 1938

Interestingly, members of the Maloney and Fugmann families were in attendance and, at the end of the program and engaged in a discussion of their beliefs about the crime. Members of the Casterline family were also in attendance, as their family member was affected by the day's events.

Wolensky and Chimola are working on a book regarding the bombings in an effort to uncover more information regarding the terrifying act that panicked residents of the Wyoming Valley. 📖



Historical Society President, Julianna Zarzycki, and society member Sally Gorgas greeted those who attended the Anthracite Heritage Month program.



Family members of victim Thomas Maloney and the accused Michael Fugmann were in attendance and spoke after the presentation of their take on the Good Friday Bombings of 1936.

**Robert Wolensky left and Michael Chimola, answer questions after their presentation of Who Killed Rebel Miners' Union President Tom Maloney? The Wyoming Valley Good Friday bombings of 1936 The Anthracite Mining Heritage Month program was hosted by the Nanticoke Historical Society at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina, 38 W. Church St.,**

