

NANTICOKE LEGACY

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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



In 1947, WORLD WAR II VETS gathered at Sarnoski's Tavern to make plans for West Side playground, (names shown are as listed on photo). From left, first row, Pete Sarnoski, Ed Ronczka, unknown, John Chicy, Katra, John Kochan, Frank Ronczka. Second row, Harry Homnyak, Cas Katra, Joe Smereski, Len Boberick, Ed Zoborney, Ted Katra, Sadowski, unknown. Third row, Michael Wasilczyk, Lasecki, Deschak, Leo Smereski, Crossin, Millard Skalla, Joe Boberick, Leon Kalinowski, Katra, Fourth row Peter Katra. If anyone is able to supply us with correct spellings or full names, please contact us at 570-258-1367

IN THIS ISSUE:

Annual Spring Raffle and Lottery
Basket Winners –

Virtual Tour #4 - An afternoon of
remembering

In Honor - WWII vets who made the
ultimate sacrifice

Nanticoke's Palace Theatre (1909-
1912)

By John Plummer

Focus: The Hummel Family of
Nanticoke- Facing tragedy 67 years
ago.

The Nanticoke Stove – The Saga
Continues.

By Chet Zaremba

Website and Amazon Smile Program,
Research Form and More Society
News

Upcoming meeting schedule

THURSDAY, MAY 24

THURSDAY, JUNE 28

THURSDAY, JULY 26

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.

**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*To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical
documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania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

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 \$25 for the first hour – By
Appointment. See our website for more information.

Editor's Note:

The Nanticoke Historical Society is constantly adding, great stories, photos and artifacts to its archives. We are continually in the process of cataloging many of those items. But as you will see in this issue, the Society is also an active and vibrant part of the community. We are dedicated to accumulating and saving as much information as possible for future generations who will undoubtedly see themselves in the following situation. How many times, in discussions with family members, have you heard the comment, "I wish I'd asked Mom and Dad more questions before they passed away." Perhaps you've even said it yourself when confronted with an unknown fact about a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle. I've heard it many times in the years writing for the Sunday Dispatch in Pittston. I've received calls from all across the country from people who have said they were pleased to see the name of a relative or friend in the column and found out they achieved some important goal or office or simply volunteered in the community. Usually it's followed up with the "I wish I'd asked more questions." comment. The Nanticoke Historical Society has aided many family members not only across the country but outside of the country in finding out more about their Nanticoke ancestors. The society maintains the Samantha Mill House which houses all the documents photos and items in its archives. The society works off of donations, memberships and research requests. If you are one who hopes that the society will maintain the history of Nanticoke's families and locations so future generations can learn about their past, please become a member or make a contribution. We at the society will always appreciate your generosity and will steadfastly continue to be stewards of our city's history.

Judy Minsavage, newsletter editor

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPRING RAFFLE!

Lottery Basket -
Jackie Yohey, Nanticoke

Spring Raffle

1st place

Joseph Stryjak,
Nanticoke \$125.00

2nd place.

Ray Blockus, Texas \$50.00

3rd place.

Debbie Freeland, Colorado
\$25.00

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RECENT MONETARY DONATION:

Deborah Freeland,
Mr. & Mrs. Ray Blockus,
Atty. Charles Petrillo
Andrew Sherbine
Sam's Club.

THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

Beverly Camp-Mugford
Jay Ruckle

SOCIETY NEWS

Nanticoke City Virtual Tour #4

An Afternoon of Remembering

Whispers were heard among the many attendees as they shared personal memories during the Nanticoke Historical Society's Virtual Tour #4 presentation held at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina on April 21. An occasional "I remember that place," or "that was a good store" was heard from the audience as Chet Zaremba, vice president of the society, paged through only a portion of the 15,000 photos and videos projected onto a large screen from his trusty laptop.

In narrating the program, Zaremba along with John Sherrick, society information officer, imparted their extensive knowledge of various businesses and locations that existed throughout the city of Nanticoke from as far back as 1909. The tour led those attending through the streets of Nanticoke stopping at the various car dealerships, grocery stores, churches and banks.

Some of the strongest reactions came when a photo of the interior of Diamond's Candy Shop, "on the square" came onto the screen, obviously bringing forth a flood of childhood memories. The Nanticoke Hotel, also garnered reaction, as Zaremba pointed out that the location now holds a Burger King noting "All of these grand places are gone."

The presentation ended with a slide show of various city properties as they originally looked many years ago and how they look today. It was an afternoon to reminisce, but also to educate young adults and newcomers to the city who were in attendance. Future projects are being planned by the society and will be announced on its Facebook Page as well as on its website www.nanticokehistoryonline.org.

If you wish volunteer or perhaps become a member please contact the society at 570-258-1367 or go online to the Get Involved tab on our website listed above and download a membership form. 



Chet Zaremba, vice president of the Nanticoke Historical Society opens the program and invites attendees to shout out locations they would like to see during the Nanticoke City Virtual Tour



One of the many Nanticoke businesses familiar to those who attended the society's Nanticoke City Virtual Tour #4.



Chet Zaremba guides viewers, with numerous photos, through the streets of Nanticoke during the Virtual Tour #4 held at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina, 38 W. Church St. in Nanticoke.

They made the ultimate sacrifice

Beginning just two decades after the World War I, the Second World War is known as the most widespread and deadliest in history. With more than 30 countries involved military and civilian deaths were estimated between 50 million and 80 million deaths. The war extended over a six-year period.

Politicians and citizens were divided with some agreeing with President Franklin D. Roosevelt opinion that aiding Great Britain in their fight against German aggression would result in the United States simply being an enabler to help England defeat the Germans. Isolationists believed the president's policies would thrust the United States into a disastrous war. All discussion became irrelevant when Japanese aircraft attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941

During the war years 1941-1945 there were 405,399 recorded deaths among U.S. service members. That was about 0.3% of the population at the time with an average 297 deaths each day.

Some statistics for United States service members who have been classified as MIA which include POWs who have not been identified or recovered, number about 150,000.

According to Gold Star Casualty Search, Pennsylvania alone recorded 30,232 killed in action during World War II.

We salute all of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. We salute all who served in all branches of the armed services as well as in medical units, and on liberty ships in World War II and in all conflicts from the American Revolution to the Iraq War. We salute those who are now serving with bravery in all parts of the world. 



WWII Draftees Leaving for the train from Market Street, 1942

SOME FACTS ABOUT WORLD WAR II

- **The country with the largest number of WWII casualties was Russia, with over 21 million.**^[9]
- **For every five German soldiers who died in WWII, four of them died on the Eastern Front.**^[2]
- **It is estimated that 1.5 million children died during the Holocaust. Approximately 1.2 million of them were Jewish and tens of thousands were Gypsies.**^[9]
- **Eighty percent of Soviet males born in 1923 didn't survive WWII.**^[2]
- **Between 1939 and 1945, the Allies dropped 3.4 million tons of bombs, which averaged to 27,700 tons per month**
- **Max Heiliger was the fictitious name the SS used to establish a bank account in which they deposited money, gold, and jewels taken from European Jews.**^[2]
- **The longest battle of WWII was the Battle of the Atlantic, which lasted from 1939-1945**

In Honor - WWII vets who made the ultimate sacrifice

The Nanticoke Historical Society is honored to hold a vast amount of military information in its archives. With the upcoming Memorial Day Holiday, we are publishing the following names of Nanticoke City World War II Casualties and Missing in Action as Of Dec. 7, 1945. In future issues we will highlight local veterans from all wars.



James Adams
Joseph N. Andruskevich
Edward J. Antonik
John Balutski
Paul J. Barnoski
Henry Barvinski
Walter R. Berosh
Louis J. Bieda
Edward R. Bieski
Leonard Blaskowski
Frank N. Bogdan
George D. Briggs
Frank Brojakowski
William Brown
Michael K. Buczkowski
Henry J. Butkiewicz
Joseph Cherr
Leonard S. Chesko
Peter Cipriani
Peter Cirko
Clyde E. Clothier

Edward Cravitz
Thomas Czerwinski
Milton Ditzler
Charles Dombroski
Loren E. Dunn
John A. Dzik
Herman H. Englehart
Francis P Ford
Andrew Frantz
Warren M. French
Leon Gonshor
John Gordon
Leonard Gorecki
Anthony Gorescrewski
Theodore Grabowski
Harold Gross
Frank R. Grozio
Armond A. Guerra
Frank R. Grozio
William H. Harrison
Drew Harter Jr
Pershing J. Hill
Michael Horanzy
Daniel R. James
John J. Janiczek
Benjamin Jones Jr.
Leo S. Kaczmarczyk
Dennis C. Kamowski
Sylvester Kamowski
Joseph Karvaski
Luther J. Kemrits
Robert S. Kessler
Paul E. Kinney
Walter Klinitski
Frank Kloputski
James Kmetz
Stephen M. Kmetz
Leonard S. Kocaj
Joseph Kotch
Henry A. Kavaleski
John Kozey
Raymond R. Kroskiewicz
Raymond Kurzawski
Alfred Labenski
Alex Lasniewski
Joseph B. Lawrence
Daniel F. Leinthall
Martin E. Levineski
Jack B. Levanda
John S. Lewis
Leonard A. Luba
John J. McKeown
Edward C. Mack

Frank Maczuga
Leonard Maddy
Mansor J. Mansor
Ambrose J. Meck
Arnold Menge Jr.
Joseph W. Meshinski
Joseph Minsavage
Michael Morris
Ambrose J. Meck
Louis Novashinski
Cyril Onderko
Joseph Orlovski
Thomas Owaxany
James J. Owens
Anthony Palombe
High P. Patterson
John Petro
Charles G. Quees
Peter Radzink
Elwyn J. Roberts
Chester Ruminski
John P. Rutkowski
Michael Sabol
Joseph Sekulski
William H. Semner
Albert Shelmerdine
Walter Sierzant
James Smith
Chester Smurol
Alexander J. Staub
Joseph H. Stigora
William E. Sutton
Chester Swigonski
Robert Tennesen
Charles A. Toback
William J. Traber
Albert F. Valentinelli
Frederick T. Vollrath
Stanley Wardecki
Michael Waselus
George E. Webster
John R. Williams
Walter Wojciechowski
Henry T. Wytrykowski
Theodore Zabrenski
Leonard Zatorski

NOTE: These names are as listed in our Historical Society Records. If there are misspellings, we apologize. Please contact our office to correct any discrepancy. Thank you....



Nanticoke's Palace Theatre (1909-1912)

By John Plummer

I've been following the Nanticoke Historical Society website for some time, including the "Stories" section. Concerning the Family Theatre, I read that "If anyone knows of pictures of the façade or interior of the old movie house, the Nanticoke Historical Society wants to hear from you." As soon as I read this, I remembered seeing an old photo of the Palace Theatre, maybe 6 x 8 inches, glued on gray cardboard. It was shown to me by my beloved aunt during a family visit. The Palace predated the Family Theatre, which was on the same site. Afterward, the photo disappeared into the extensive Rees-Thomas archives in Nanticoke for many years. No one else remembered seeing it.

Recently, the photo resurfaced, prompting me to start writing and sharing some Nanticoke and family history. The theatre was owned by my great-grandfather. It was only in the family for about ten years, and both the name and management were changed years before the final land sale.

The Palace Theatre, according to historical society records, opened on Christmas Day, 1909. Edward Whitfield Thomas (1861-1917) opened the moving picture and vaudeville house on the site of his former blacksmith shop located at 145 E. Main St, the spot where NardoZZo's Pizza and Pierogies is currently located.



Edward Whitefield Thomas,

Francis E. Devlin took over management of the Palace in 1912. The Wilkes-Barre Record reported that the theatre would be “under a new management and new name, as Mr. Thomas has decided to quit the show business, for the present at least and has rented the building to Frank Devlin of Wilkes-Barre.” The name was probably changed to the Family Theatre shortly thereafter, as the same newspaper article indicated it would be. In 1915, the Wilkes-Barre Record states Devlin as the proprietor. Devlin started building apartments on the adjoining property in 1915. According to the Nanticoke Historical Society, the apartment building is one of Nanticoke’s “most recognizable buildings.” In 1910, it looks like the apartment spot was occupied by a billboard advertising a partially readable name of a store that we know by the sign gave out S&H Green Stamps.

The Palace Theatre photo above was probably taken in 1910, since close inspection reveals an advertisement for D.W. Griffith’s 1909 11-minute silent movie “Lines of White on a Sullen Sea.” A family legend states that my grandfather (to the left of the ticket taker) took the train to New York to pick up the movie posters and other supplies. Penciled on the outside matting of photo are the names of some of the people in the photo. Tommy Tippins (1875-1918) is standing in front of the drum. John H. Rees (1881-1979) and his father-in-law Edward W. Thomas (1861-1917) flank the ticket booth. Percy C. Thomas (1885-1935) is barely visible standing in the right doorway. He is the son of Edward, and brother-in-law of John Rees. One of the other four on the right is Chester E. Curtis (1859-1929), who gave his occupation in the 1910 census as “ticket taker” The lady in the booth is unknown, as are seven others. We do know that in 1915, E.W. Thomas married Atta Eva Beishline Smoyer (1874-1961) who was a ticket booth attendant.

The E.W. Thomas Blacksmith Shop located at 145 E. Main Street.



Although Francis Devlin became the proprietor on or before 1915, it looks like the theatre was not sold until 1919. The Edward Thomas estate sale notice specifies the sale of the property “containing 4000 sq. ft. of land, more or less...improved by a brick moving picture house.” The 1919 date of sale is also supported by a reference in a letter from Lawrence Thomas, who was serving in France with the American Expeditionary Force from May 1918 to May 1919.

Old photographs and ephemera rekindle interest in family and local history. What was it like to live in Nanticoke back then? Clues into the past can sometimes be rediscovered in attics and closets. Be sure to share these finds with family and friends, and maybe make a copy for the Nanticoke Historical Society. 📷

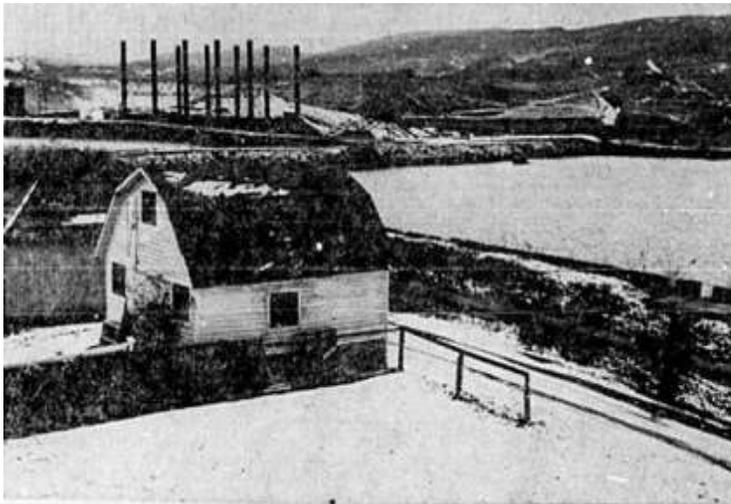


Focus on: Delbert Hummel A Nanticoke family faced tragedy 67 years ago

On a cool March day in 1951, seven-year-old Delbert Hummel left the apartment rented by his parents at 38 N. Market Street, ran up Coal Street then up Slope Street hill to play with a companion, James Williams. This day would end in tragedy as Williams' back yard on W. Main Street was only a few feet from one of the twin reservoirs of the Susquehanna Coal Company.

It was believed Hummel slipped while throwing rocks into the water. Williams ran home and informed his mother of the incident, not sure whether to believe the awful story she quickly called the Hummel apartment to confirm that young Delbert was not there. The authorities were summoned to the reservoir, but could not save the young lad.

City administrators had warned the coal company many times about the danger of children playing around the large pond since no barrier or fence prohibited children from access to the area. A situation that was even more evident since one of the reservoirs was situated directly behind West Main Street School. The reservoir had already claimed one life and city officials did not want a second



One of the twin reservoirs owned by Susquehanna Coal Company - 1951

At some time during the afternoon Hummel and Williams wandered across the alley to the dangerous edge of the water, which, although not especially deep, was polluted with run off acid mine water and mud that could pull down and suffocate anyone unfortunate to become caught in its grasp.

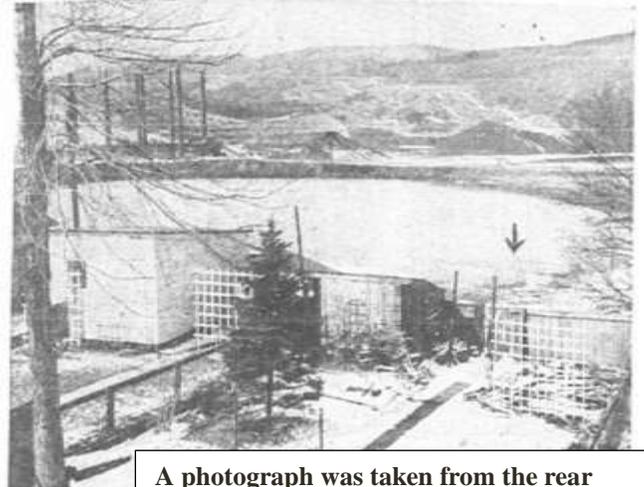


Rear of West Main Street School

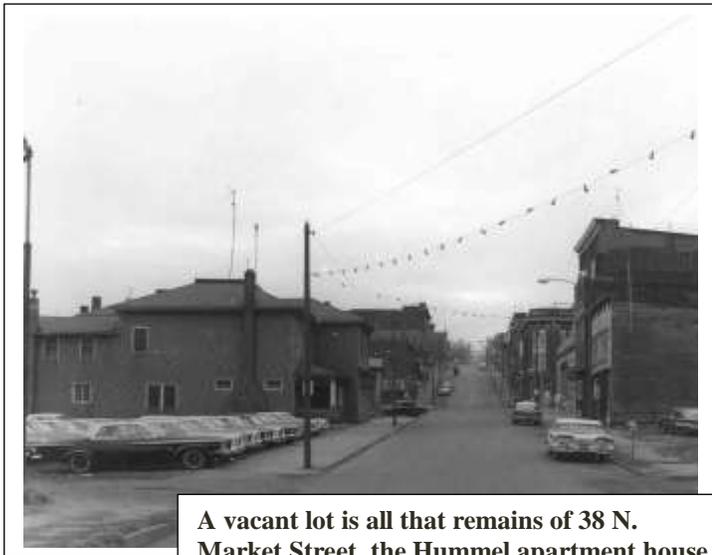


Funeral services were conducted at the home of his paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hummel of Rock Street, Honey Pot and the boy was laid to rest in Hanover Green Cemetery.

The Susquehanna Coal Company finally acquiesced to the demands of the community by erecting a fence on their property that extended from the school to Hay Street. It was of minimal value however as any child determined to slip between the wires could easily do so in a few seconds. The reservoirs remained intact throughout the 1950s. Children looking out of the second floor windows of the fourth and fifth grade classrooms of the West Main Street School were able to see chemical changes in the water at different times of the year, when the liquid would turn a bright green or deep orange.



A photograph was taken from the rear yard of the W. Main Street home in 1951, with an arrow pointing to the spot where the Hummel child slipped into the water.



A vacant lot is all that remains of 38 N. Market Street, the Hummel apartment house, in 1961. Delbert would have accessed Store Alley through the back of the building.

A week after the accident, an injunction to eliminate the “unattractive nuisance” responsible for the boy’s death was filed in Luzerne County court by Attorney John M. Dudrick on behalf of the residents of Nanticoke. Citing the occurrence of other tragedies, it was recommended the reservoirs be drained and filed in

The dangerous ponds were finally eliminated in the 1970s as the entire area was filled in to make way for construction of the Apollo Circle Housing Project. 



The same view in 2018. The garage at the left is the only structure remaining from the day of the accident.

Research for this article courtesy of Nanticoke Historical Society information officer John Sherrick

The Saga of the Stove Continues

BY Chet Zaremba – Vice President Nanticoke Historical Society

Work on our Nanticoke Stove is continuing at a slow steady pace. As we were beginning the disassembly, Mike Passetti and I noted that when we brought the stove into our building on a hand truck we placed the main portion of the stove on its end. This part of the stove contains the oven and all the surrounding fire brick. Its weight is easily several hundred pounds. This portion of the stove is to sit on a pedestal. The question now was how to get this massive piece placed correctly on the pedestal. It became very apparent that this was going to be a major project. At this point I realized that I needed muscle, and plenty of it.

I called two of our life members, Mike Chimola and his brother Dan. Both of these men make Hulk Hogan look like Pee Wee Herman. Next, I called my son Mike, and his son Brady. Mike is 6'4" and about 290 and his son Brady, age 13, is already over 6' and is working out in the weight room as a member of the Nanticoke High School Football team. These four behemoths lifted that stove like it was a box of tissues and safely placed it on the pedestal. It is great to have people like these who can be called upon to assist in any project when needed. My sincere thanks to all of them.

Next Mike Passetti and I began to disassemble in earnest. Every screw, nut, and bolt that was taken out was bagged and identified for future reassembly.

I took a number of the chrome, or what I thought should be chrome, parts to my garage where I have buffers and other equipment to clean them up.



A bit of tender loving care have parts of the stove shining like new.

STOVE

continued page 11

I found that many of the parts were highly encrusted with cooking grease and grime. While buffing some parts, I could actually smell cooking odors from the debris being buffed off.



After extensive cleaning this face plate shows the temperature gauge and manufacturer, Buckwalter Stove Co. Pat. Aug 31, 1915.

Accompanying this story are photographs of some of the already cleaned parts. I am about halfway through with the buffing. When that is finished we intend to use a cleaner-wax on the main body of the stove. We'll keep you posted as to our progress. 🇺🇸



This list plate indicates the destination as C.H. Lecher Hardware Store in Nanticoke.

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEBSITE:



Over the next few months we will be updating the information on the society's official website www.nanticokehistoryonline.org. The process will take some time, but we will keep those following the society's news updated through Facebook and emails. We appreciate your patience in this process. In the meantime, if you are a frequent visitor to our website, proceed by clearing your browser history of previous visits to our website then log on in order to see our updated version. We are committed to making your future visits to our site a pleasant and educational experience. In the meantime, like our page and keep following us on Facebook.



AMAZON SMILE PROGRAM

The Nanticoke Historical Society is now a part of the Amazon Smile Program which garners donations for the society through ordering online using the Amazon Smile program. Whether you're an avid or an occasional user of Amazon it's now simple to donate to the society on a regular basis without any out-of-pocket expense other than ordering the product or item that you wish from Amazon. Simply log on to smile.amazon.com and choose the Nanticoke Historical Society as your charity of choice. It will ask you if you want your purchase to be credited to the society. Then proceed to order. Amazon will then donate 0.5% of your purchase to the society. That 0.5% does not add to your purchase price. It comes out of Amazon's portion of the proceeds. It's as simple as that. We thank all of those who are participating in the program. Please pass this information on to family and friends. Past donations have helped the society with overhead expenses for the society's offices at the Samantha Mill House and purchasing of necessary office supplies. If you have any questions in regard to the program, please call the society offices.

The Nanticoke Historical Society
Samantha Mill House
495 East Main Street
Nanticoke, Pennsylvania 18634
570-258-1367

HISTORICAL RESEARCH/PHOTO REQUEST FORM

Thank you for contacting the Nanticoke Historical Society in regard to your research/photo request. Please complete this form as completely as possible and mail it to the NHS at the above address.

There is a \$ 25.00 charge for all responses and that fee covers one hour of research. The base fee must accompany this request form and also covers up to four (4) pages of photocopies. There is a separate fee and postage schedule for photographs. Should your request require more than one hour of research, you will be contacted regarding the additional fee.

DO NOT send requests asking for Aall@ information available about a subject, family name or specific person. Such requests are too broad for our volunteer staff to handle.

IMPORTANT: The fee you pay is based on the time spent on the research, not on the results. While many searches produce results, not all do. Although every effort will be made to obtain the information, there may be no information available. Submission of this form indicates the acceptance of these terms.

Requestor Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip _____
email: _____ Phone: _____

Description of Research/Photo Request: _____

Subject Name: _____
Pertinent information to assist with your request: _____

SIGNATURE

I understand that this service of provided as a courtesy and that all research is done by NHS volunteers. Requests are processed in the order that they are received and may take any amount of time to produce any results. I understand that the volunteers are not responsible for the data contained in my results, or lack thereof. There is no guarantee associated with this service. Research fees are nonrefundable.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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.

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.