

NANTICOKE LEGACY

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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



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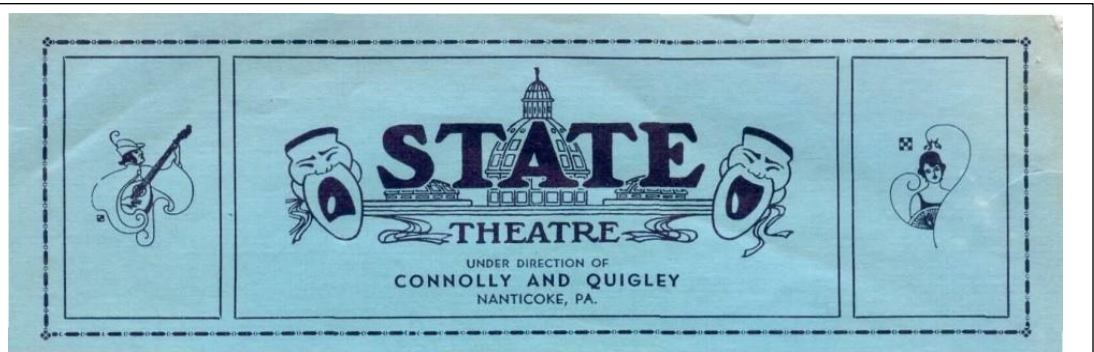
NEW MYSTERY QUESTION:

YEARBOOKS
AVAILABLE

SHOP AMAZON AND
HELP THE SOCIETY



This postcard for the early 1920s shows East Main Street with the entrance to the State Theatre on the right and Strauss' Million Dollar Store on the left.



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 To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific area where these articles may be preserved, appreciated and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

Upcoming meeting schedule

Thursday – May 30

Thursday – June 27

Thursday – July 25

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 All to Attend

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Samantha Mill House

(Next to the Mill Memorial Library)

Off Kosciuszko Street

495 East Main Street Nanticoke, PA 18634

570-258-1367

Our Web Site

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 EDITOR, STORIES AND NEWS

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

RESEARCH

Non-member – research fee \$25 for the first hour – By Appointment. See our website for more information.

Editor's Note: Our Town Nanticoke:

Being interviewed for the WVIA Our Town Nanticoke documentary was quite an experience. The interview lasted about 10 minutes in which time; those interviewed had to touch on three major areas of interest regarding the subject about which we chose to speak. The process was orderly and kept on schedule by Lisa Mazarella, producer of the Our Town series for WVIA-TV and her production crew. The most exciting thing about the day, was talking with the people who came to the Nanticoke Historical Society Offices to participate. Some traveled a great distance to relate their memories but also to confirm that a person's roots are an important factor in what can be achieved in life. Certainly, the purpose of everyone there was to make Nanticoke the star of the show. Our city has managed to survive a wild history, through the time of the Indians and early settlers, land conflicts, wars, the rise and fall of "King Coal" and hard economic realities. Over time, Nanticoke has managed to pick itself up and dust itself off, with the help of those that love the city, support it, respect its past and have hope for its future. Thank you to all who participated.

Judy Minsavage, newsletter editor

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

John Plummer upgrade from
regular membership
Thomas & Donna Wall
Leonard Omolecki
Jack Minsavage

Family Membership

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hartman

**Advertise in the Nanticoke
Historical Society
Newsletter - Legacy**

**Our newsletter is on our website and
Facebook Page - 24- 7
And is sent across the country
Great for online businesses as well**

\$25 - Business card size

\$50 - Quarter page

\$75 - One-half page

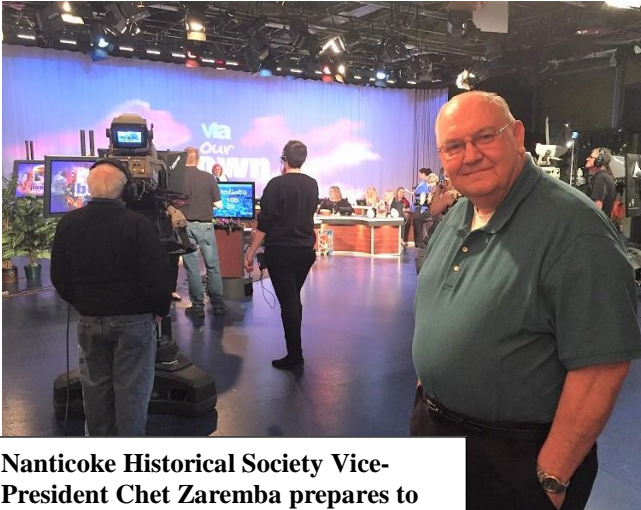
\$125 - full-page

**Contact 570-258-1367 for more
information**

***WE HAVE DONE RESEARCH FOR NANTICOKE RESIDENTS WHOSE DESCENDANTS ARE NOW
LIVING IN:***

Holden, Massachusetts; Newark, Delaware; University of Georgia, Fargo, North
Dakota; Holden, Massachusetts and Slupca, Poland

SOCIETY NEWS



Nanticoke Historical Society Vice-President Chet Zaremba prepares to view the premier of the WVIA documentary *Our Town Nanticoke*

Nanticoke Historical Society participates in WVIA Documentary

NANTICOKE'S SHINING MOMENT

It was a tale of two cities on Thursday, April 25 as the premier of the *Our Town Nanticoke* documentary aired on WVIA-TV. One side of the story detailed the city's interesting and historic past and another side detailed its present and future. In its collectivity, the stories exhibited a vibrancy that most agreed was unknown even to the participants. Those who engaged in the interview process in March, gathered on premier night at the WVIA studios to attend a wonderful buffet with desserts provided by the Luzerne County Community College Joseph A. Paglianiti Culinary Institute.

It was agreed by all that coming together to share the party atmosphere and see the result of the WVIA production was a truly gratifying experience. Prior to the premier, those who agreed to answer phones were schooled as to the procedure of taking calls from viewers who wished to become a member of WVIA and to purchase the DVDs. It was quite a night.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RECENT DONATIONS:

Mr. & Mrs. Henry (Denise) Grudkowski

Olive May

Sharon Jarrow

David & Mary Hill

Lexington Village Corporation

Jared Whittaker

George Shern

Helen Gretski

Susan Coffee Samsel – Former Nanticoke resident and now of Malibu, California who read our newsletter on the internet and sent in a donation thanking us for the informative newsletter and the work we do to preserve Nanticoke History.

John Tomko - Life Member spearheaded the project to purchase an aluminum ramp and door threshold which now makes our building ADA compliant. Tomko paid for half of the cost of the ramp. We thank him.

We appreciate your generosity in helping the Nanticoke Historical Society continue its good work.

See page 5 for an update on our DESIGNER PURSE BINGO fundraiser to be held at 1 p.m. May 18 at the Warrior Run Fire Hall.



Nanticoke Historical Society President, Julianna Zarzycki inspects the wonderful confections supplied by the Luzerne County Community College Culinary Institute at the WVIA Our Town Nanticoke premier.

Nanticoke was shining as bright as the Northern Star and we at the Nanticoke Historical Society along with residents, business owners and city administrators cheered as each new sales goal was announced. Historical Society President, Julianna Zarzycki, and Vice-President Chet Zaremba were instrumental in providing historical photos and back up materials for the hours of video shot during the interview process. Zaremba commented, "It proved the value of having an historical society such as ours, brimming with back stories and photos that enhanced the narrative." We were very proud to have participated in the project," added Zarzycki.



From left, Sharon Warren, Julianna Zarzycki, and society member Sally Gorgas



Lisa Mazzarella, producer of the WVIA Our Town Series and Janine Whittaker, Nanticoke Historical Society member share a congratulatory hug.

The Our Town Nanticoke documentary was aired a second and third time on April 26 and 27. The Historical Society will have a limited number of DVD's available for sale in the coming weeks and will notify its members and city residents upon their availability. 📺



Left to right, Donna Wall Nanticoke City Manager, Wendy Wiaterowski, wife of deceased former mayor of Nanticoke, Rich Wiaterowski and Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz Mayor of Nanticoke answer phones at the WVIA Our Town Nanticoke premier.



Tom Wall, Nanticoke City Police Chief and wife, Donna Wall, Nanticoke City Manager arrive for the premier.



From left, John Stanky, Al Borowski, former Nanticoke resident and Dottie Stanky enjoy reminiscing about times past. Stanky and the Coalminer's performed songs at the end of premier

Historical Society Designer Purse Bingo Fundraiser is planned.

The Nanticoke Historical Society is holding a Designer Purse Bingo, Gift Card and Basket Raffle at 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 18 at the Warrior Run Fire Hall. There will be designer purses such as Michael Kors, Coach and Dooney and Bourke, gift cards and baskets and 50/50 drawings.

Great food, dessert and refreshments will be served. Doors will open at 11 a.m. and games will start at 1 p.m. Tickets are \$20 if purchased before the event, and \$25 at the door. You won't want to miss this great event!

There will be many chances to win. Please call Janine at 570-574-2523 or Sally at 570-332-4253 for more information, to obtain tickets. 📞



From left, Al Borowski and Chet Zaremba, Vice-President of the Nanticoke Historical Society, who both participated in the documentary, celebrate surpassing the DVD sales goal

Spring Raffle winners are announced.

Thank you to those who participated in our Spring Raffle Fundraiser - The winners are as follows:

1st Prize Mary Hill

2nd Prize Christine Shemanski

3rd Prize Debbie Freeland

Congratulations to our winners!



Zaremba and Lisa Mazzarella prepare to cut the delicious cake baked in honor of the event by the Sanitary Bakery.



In Honor of Our Military



The Nanticoke Historical Society is honored to hold a vast amount of military information in its archives. It is our pledge to focus on those hometown heroes who sacrificed so much for our country's freedom. A new partial list of the many names of local veterans of all wars will be listed in our "In Honor of Our Military" Section of each Newsletter. The lists are long, so if a loved one's name has not appeared, please follow upcoming issues. Information obtained from the Nanticoke Historical Society archives.

WORLD WAR I

Joseph Baranski, Killed in Action

Peter Bereski,

Michael Betza, **US Signal Corp**

William Beynon, Battery C, 3rd Field Artillery

Antonia Biancodine,

Angelo Biassi, Wounded in action

Frank Biegda, Died in France of influenza

Stanley Bienkowski, Wounded in action

Harvey Bierley, Wounded in action

William Blackburn, Battery C 3rd Field Artillery

Joseph Blockus, Died in France

Martas Blockus,

Charles Bobwich, Killed in action

Joseph Bogdon, Wounded in action

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....

WORLD WAR II

Daniel R. Benia

Walter R. Beresh, Killed in action

Louis Bieda, Missing in action

Eugene Bierfeld, Killed in action

Edward Bieski, Killed in action

Len Boberick

Joe Boberick

Frank Bogdan

Percy Bray, Army Air Corps

Donald Briggs, Army Air Corps Killed in action

George Briggs, Killed in action, Luzon, France

SEE WHAT'S IN OUR ARCHIVES

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF ALL THE RECORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS THAT ARE IN THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES, GO TO OUR WEBSITE

www.nanticokehistoryonline.org

CLICK ON THE "WHAT'S IN OUR ARCHIVES LINK."

KOREAN WAR

Michael D. Harvath, Wounded in action

Eugene Horanzy, Company C, 73rd Heavy Tank Battalion

Paul J. Huber Jr., U.S. Air Force

Lloyd Jarman, Wounded in action

Leo Jarmusik, 5th Regimental Combat Team

Edwin John Jones

Harold Jones, Wounded in Action

Henry Kamowski, Killed in action

Harry R. Klein, U.S. Marine Corps

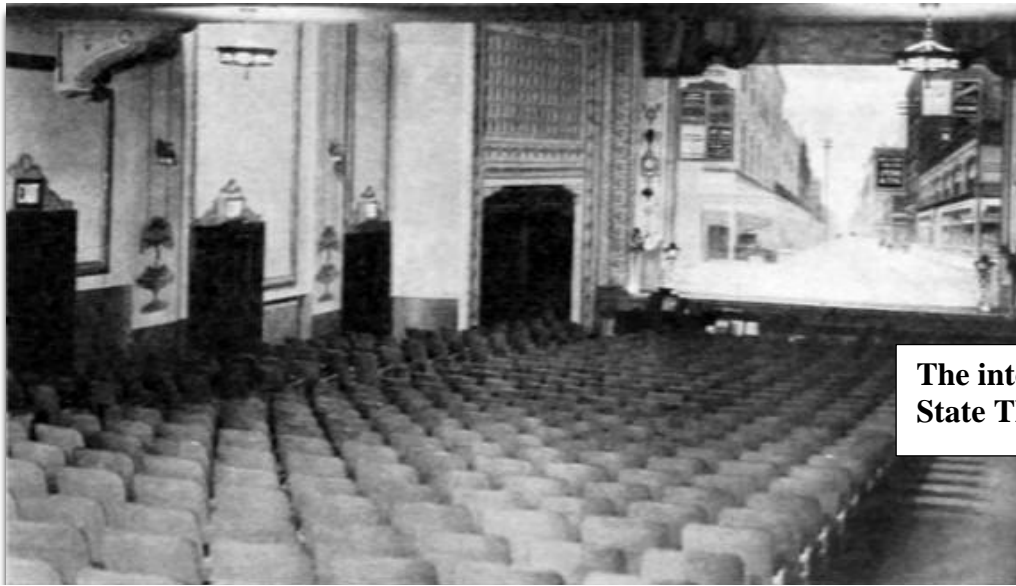
Joseph Klopotoski, 8th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Calvary Div.

Louis Klopotoski, Co. F. 27th Infantry Regiment 25th Div.

Cyril Kotulak, U.S. Navy

Clete Kresge, Air Corp, 988th Bombardment Group

Stanley Kruczek, 7th Division Artillery 15th AAA



The interior of the majestic State Theatre in its heyday.

The State Theatre

Judy Minsavage

Of Matinees and Memories

Whether it was a first date, first anniversary or first movie seen as a wide-eyed youngster, the State Theatre at the corner of Main and Broadway Streets held and still holds many fond memories for those who grew up in Nanticoke. Unfortunately, the theatre was razed in 1981, but just the mention of it recalls a time when life was simpler, and an afternoon matinee or Saturday evening spent viewing the popular movie of the time, was the place to be. Candy bars and popcorn were the order of the day and everyone had their favorites. Sadly, the many movie theatres that were in the boroughs and towns up and down the Wyoming Valley closed falling victim to the rising popularity of television and then to the multi-choice movie complex. The State was something special though, it hovered above the rest with elegant interior design qualities and an orchestra pit which allowed for traveling musical shows. Those who remember the theater's elegance agree taking in a movie at the State was something special.

A Little History:

The property on which the theatre sat was originally a plot of land owned by the Loren Luke Estate which was then sold to Edmund M. Connolly and William G. Quigley in 1920. Prior to the transaction, a section of the property once was occupied by Price's Cigar Store and Metcalf's Hotel.

After purchase of the property, Connolly and Quigley started the search for a store for the corner lot with a 23-foot frontage on Main St. and 85 feet on Broadway Street. The men sold a portion of the property to William Challenger for development. Challenger proceeded to build a 3-story brick building naming Austin Reilly as the architect. The ground floor was to contain five shops, one facing Main Street, four facing Broadway. The second and third floors extended over the lobby of the State Theatre. The second floor was to contain 16 offices and the 3rd floor was reserved for apartments. A unique feature of the building was a set of display windows extending 28' along the interior wall of the theatre lobby. A legal agreement was drawn up among the three men regarding privileges and easements to, of, in and on the land of the other, signed and recorded on March 2, 1921. The agreement allowed for the sharing of the westerly interior wall of the theatre. The main entrance of the theatre jutted out onto Main Street and led back to the theatre which wrapped around the back of buildings on the east side of the theatre entrance. The plans called for the theatre to be built of brick and steel with only as much wood as was necessary. Approximate cost of the structure was \$165,000 which according the US Inflation Calculator would amount to \$ \$2,330,058 today.



This 1923 photo shows the theatre canopy and Challenger building

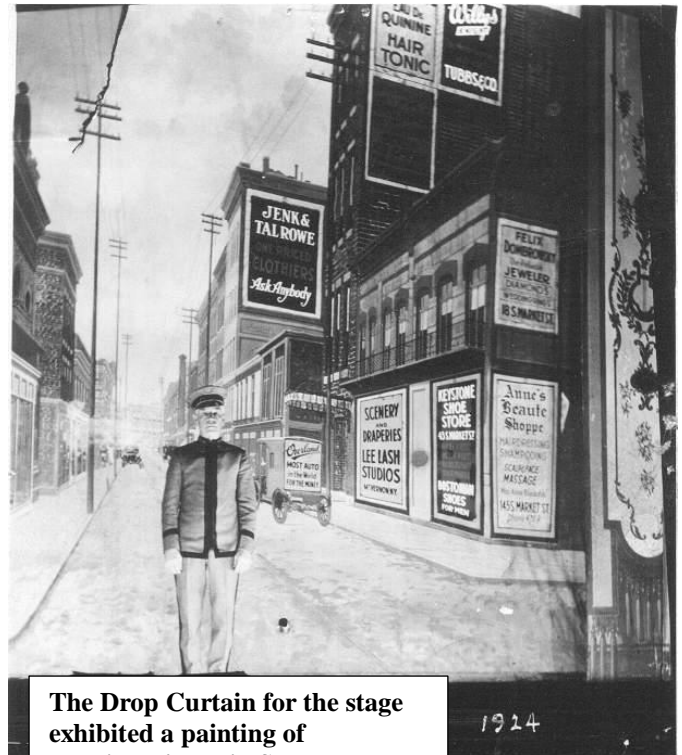
Construction of the theatre began on August 3, 1921. The J.L. Turner Company of Nanticoke was awarded the contract for the plumbing, heating and sheet metal work. The name of the theatre, The State, was revealed for the first time in the Wilkes-Barre Record on November 2, 1921. The original opening date was scheduled for April 24 but was then moved to May 1, 1922. The showing of *The Child Thou Gavest Me* was set to start at 1:15 p.m. The movie starred Lewis Stone, Barbara Castleton, William Hall and Little Richard Headrick who at the age of three, was a popular child star.

A step into another world

A description in the Wilkes-Barre Record denotes the opulence of the design and decoration of the theater. "Leon H. Lempert of Rochester was the designer of the building. The general contract was awarded to Brieg Brothers of Scranton, who oversaw carpentry, masonry and plaster work. The Clintock-Marshall Company of Pottsville erected the structural steel. The tile work in the restrooms and the beautiful eight-foot lobby was done by Lewart and Company of Wilkes-Barre. The heavy plush carpets, designed in harmony with the decorative scheme of the walls, floors and stairs leading to the mezzanine under the balcony were furnished by the Challenger store. Here, one is greeted with beautiful upholstered lounging furniture, drinking fountain and wash rooms. The loges and balcony are divided by a heavy brass railing and the furnishing of the loges all richly polished and highly upholstered were purchased from Strauss' Million Dollar Store. The balcony has a seating capacity of 350. The long hand-painted panels on the walls show up beautifully under the indirect lighting system."

To add to the setting, a drop curtain revealing a "perfectly-painted reproduction" of E. Main Street stores lining both sides of the street covered the stage area. The curtain was the product of the Lee Lash Studio of New York City.

Over the next several years, the theater offered not only movies but various shows including Vaudeville, Comedy, Minstrels, plays and magic shows Margaret Ford, of Nanticoke, who gained fame as a Vaudevillian, performed at the state theatre in 1923.



The Drop Curtain for the stage exhibited a painting of Nanticoke's Main Street

Firsts at the State

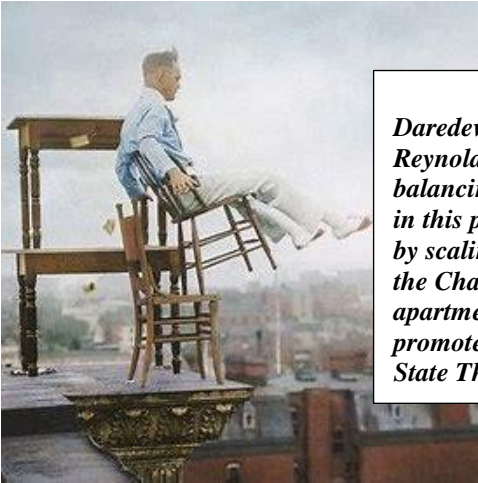
The first 3-D movie was screened in June of 1924. Colored glasses were given to those attending.

Champion swimmer, Henry F. Sullivan, the first American to swim the English Channel, appeared at the State. His swim from England to France took 26 hours and 50 minutes. Sullivan joined a vaudeville show to travel and narrate photos of the feat.

A "Novelty Revue" was featured starring Gertrude Avery, "The ingredients as they necessarily

must be, are the usual component parts of such performances. Miss Avery is assisted by six young men. They all sing and dance” However the “novelty” part of the show was not mentioned for the fact that “if the description were completed the novelty would be spoiled.” So, attendees were told they’ll have to find out for themselves.

In 1931, a new superlight silver sound screen was installed “at great expense.” The new screen measured 20 x 18 while the old screen was 14 x 12.



In 1923, Daredevil Johnny Reynolds replicated his balancing act as shown in this promotional photo by scaling the front of the Challenger apartment building to promote his show at the State Theatre.

Sammy Davis Jr. in Nanticoke

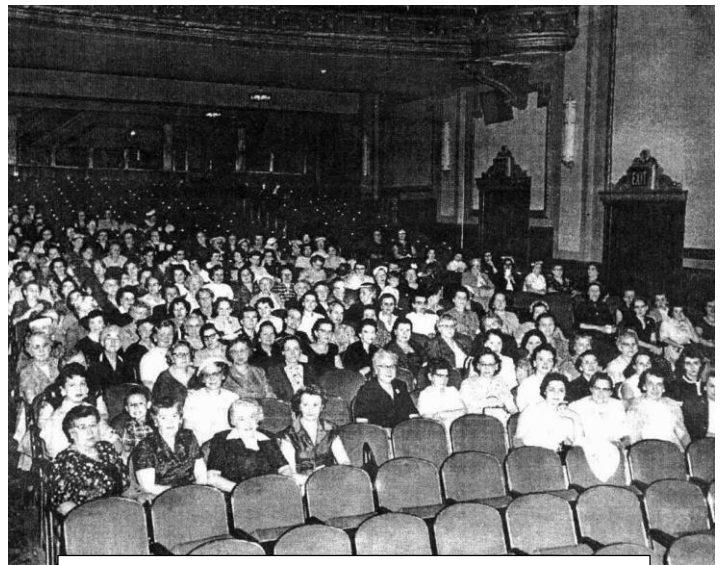
After several years, the theater closed in the summer of 1933 for renovations. Upon reopening in August of that year, the theater once again hosted musical and comedy shows, magic shows and even a hypnotist along with many popular movies of the time. Vaudeville shows brought many entertainers to the city. In 1934, a show which included a deaf dancer, a ventriloquist and comedians, listed Warner Brothers new featured entertainer, Sammy Davis Jr., as the closing act. At the age of seven, Davis appeared in musicals, Davis played the title role in the film *Rufus Jones for President*, in which he sang and danced with Ethel Waters. In his young life he toured with his father and uncle.



*A very young Sammy Davis Jr. performs his first film role in the movie *Rufus Jones for President*.*

According to his biography: “John “Jammie” Reynolds (born 1890 or 91), was an American daredevil. Little is known about early life, what became of him once he stopped performing or even his real name. An acrobat and juggler, he was known by many names - Daredevil Johnny, Daredevil Jack, the Climbing Wonder, The Lizard, the Human Spider, and the Human Fly.

A newspaper article from 1922 claims he began performing at the age six in Buffalo, balancing on one foot from a flagpole 140 feet in the air. His first major stunt came at age 12 when he climbed up the side of the Old South Building in Boston, balancing atop four chairs and five tables on a plank projected over the side of the building. Reynolds was arrested several times after his performances accused of “unlawful assembly”.

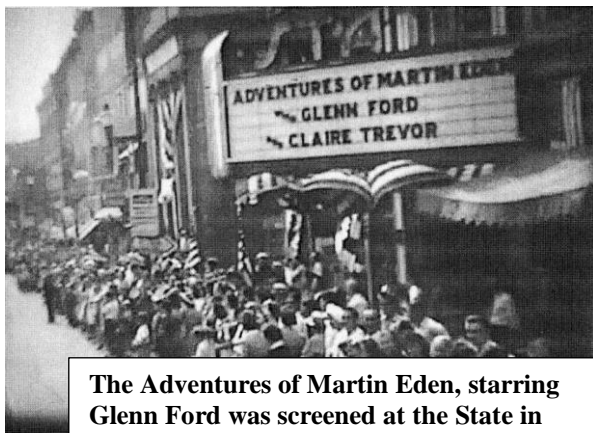


This undated photo shows a group of ladies attending an appliance demonstration at the State Theatre hosted by Bartuska’s Furniture Store.

In 1935, co-owner W.G. Quigley died at the age of 50. Quigley was president of the Nanticoke Theaters Corporation which oversaw the operation of the State he originally purchased with Edmund Connolly, as well as the Rex Theater. He was the head of the Motion Picture Theater Owners of NEPA.



Harriet Quigley, widow of W.G. Quigley, third from the left, is shown here with Ronald Reagan in this 1949 photo.



The Adventures of Martin Eden, starring Glenn Ford was screened at the State in 1942

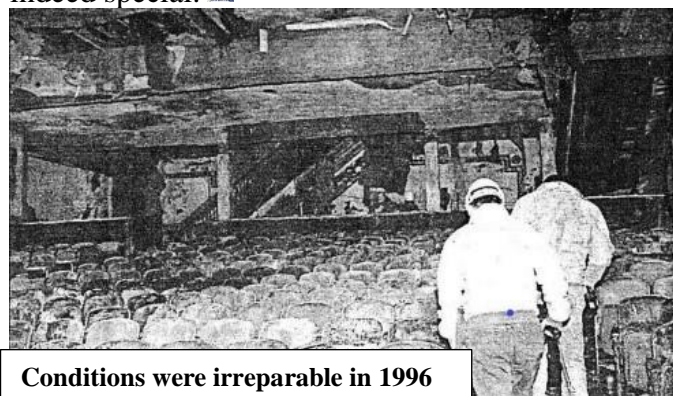
A sad ending for a grand lady

In 1964, The State had been idle for a year. There were rumors that a Philadelphia concern was negotiating for the purchase. In 1969, Luzerne County Sheriff Joseph Mock took possession of the theatre and Marion Apartment building from Marglim Theatres, Inc. and on April 11, 1969, sold the property to Milton H. and Rose Weissman for \$29,000. By 1970, the theatre was showing X-rated movies and children's feature on Saturday afternoons Edmund Connolly, the man who made the State

Theatre come to life, died in 1972 at the age of 77. On April 30, 1974, Milton and Rose Weissman sold the theatre and Marion Apartment building to George R. Seletski for \$62,500.

Sadly, after many years of entertaining young and old, the theatre closed for the last time in September 1981. The General Municipal Authority of Nanticoke purchased the State Theatre and Marian apartment building from Seletski on April 6, 1996, for the sum of \$270,000. In those last years, there was much controversy between the owner and the city of Nanticoke, with Seletski appealing to city officials to help him with funding renovations to enable to utilize the building as an arts and entertainment venue. The property, however, was considered by city officials to be in so much disrepair that it was deemed far too expensive to refurbish. The Marian Apartment Building built by William Challenger had been empty for several years and was in extensive disrepair. That unique wall that joined the theater lobby and the apartment building Challenger, Connelly and Quigley agreed on so many years ago meant the destruction of one building meant the end of the other.

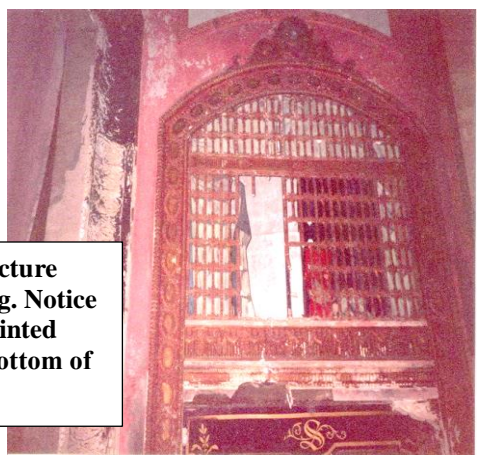
In January of 1996, an inspection by city officials showed just how deteriorated the interior of the theater and apartment building had become. On Tuesday, May 14, 1996, residents watched as the last remnants of the once grand lady were taken down. Each remembered the beauty and style evident in the décor and how the State Theatre became a place one would take their special someone or to spend a few hours in surroundings that took them far from the work-a-day life. It was indeed special. 📺



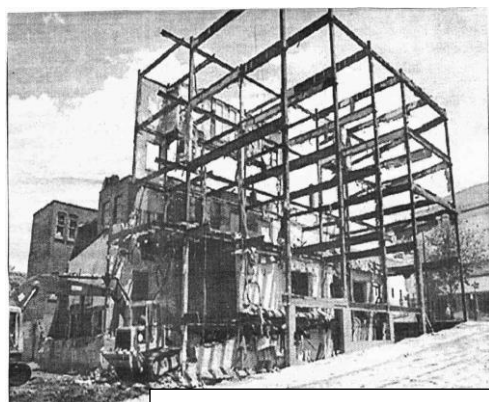
Conditions were irreparable in 1996



The wall paintings exemplified the once elegant interior design of the State



The Architecture was stunning. Notice the hand-painted "S" at the bottom of the photo.



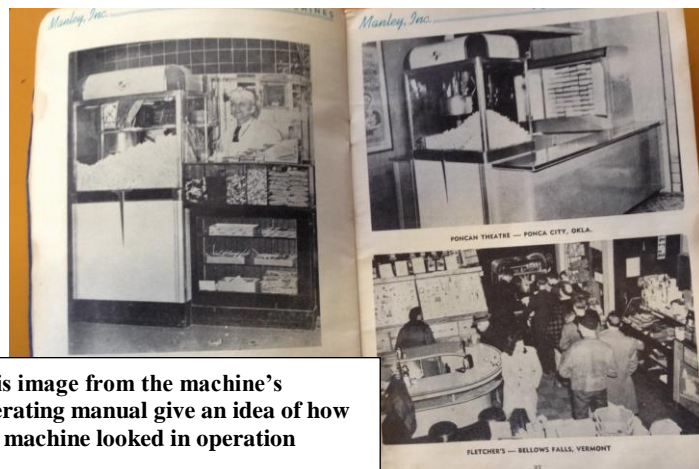
The final days of the State Theatre

A New Life:

We can still have State Theatre Popcorn!

Thanks to local firefighters one last remnant of the State Theatre remains in operation today.

Charlie Alles has been a Nanticoke firefighter for 30 years and in that time, he has always remembered the State Theatre popcorn machine being in the basement of the Hanover Engine Co. #4 on Espy Street in the Hanover Section of Nanticoke. Well at least until a few weeks ago. The story of how the machine wound up there begins with fire truck driver, Jack Wolfkiel, who was an usher in the State Theatre in its heyday. Alles described Wolfkiel as that guy with a flashlight who reprimanded the kids for necking in the back row. When the State Theatre closed, Wolfkiel, or Jackie as he was affectionately called by fellow firefighters, had the foresight to inquire about the machine and made it known he wanted it for the Fire Department. In 1981, the machine was somehow brought to the fire station where it was used on meeting nights to make popcorn.



This image from the machine's operating manual give an idea of how the machine looked in operation

Alles, as well as Fire Chief Kevin Hazleton have fond memories of the machine in the time that it stood in its original place at the end of the concession stand in the State Theatre. the lobby was always filled with aroma of the freshly popped buttery snack. Alles explained that sometimes promos were held that would entitle movie goers to receive a free box of popcorn. Alles reminisced about spending many Saturday afternoons at the theatre recalling the first movie he believes he saw at the State was "Help" starring the Beatles.

He also never failed to miss the many James Bond movies shown there. "A quarter got you in. You bought the ticket from the ticket booth lady," who as Alles laughingly remembered was not very pleasant. "You would walk in the theatre and Jackie would tear the ticket in half – they were numbered on both sides. During the intermission there would be a raffle for a small prize." Alles recollected he once won a toy camera. In 1991 the idea for a fire company fundraiser was suggested. The popcorn machine was used to make Christmas popcorn which included sugar and red or green food coloring. The delicious concoction was bagged and labeled State Theatre popcorn." We did it every year, it was a great fundraiser." Alles stated.



**Hanover Engine Co. #4
Firefighter Charlie Alles and
Nanticoke City Fire Chief Kevin
Hazleton show off the refurbished
State Theatre Popcorn Machine**

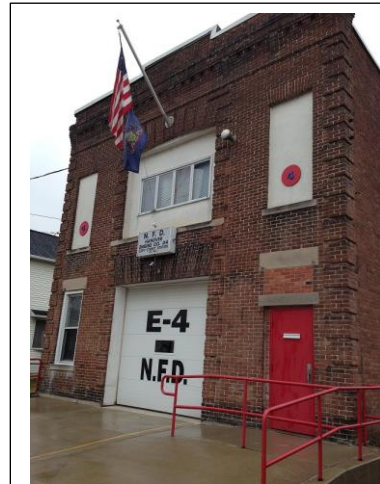


**Torn theatre tickets were
found in the drawer of the
State Theatre popcorn**

In 1996, a fire in the basement in the facility caused some damage to the machine. The corners of the top cover melted, and the firemen were worried the wiring also sustained damage, so the machine went out of service. About six months ago, Alles, with the help of firefighter Justin Gildea, started a restoration project on the machine. A new set of casters, wiring and kettle works were installed, and a couple of interior parts were manufactured, breathing new life into the historic machine.



**Firefighter, Charlie Alles explains the
mechanism of the State Theatre popcorn
machine.**



Now the State Theatre popcorn machine will star at the Burger Burn, the fire company's fundraiser held in conjunction with the Nanticoke city-wide yard sale on May 18. Along with pulled pork, halushki, hamburgers hot dogs, State Theatre popcorn will be added to

the menu so come and see the machine in operation and enjoy some nostalgic moments sharing memories of the State. Alles added, "I keep telling the young guys, this thing is a piece of history don't ever let it go."



A big thank you to Alles, Hazleton, and all the men of Hanover Engine Co. #4 for salvaging what would have been a long-forgotten relic from extinction. 🇺🇸

**Be sure to stop by the Fire
Company's Burger Burn and sample
some State Theatre Popcorn on May
18.**



State Theatre
Popcorn Machine
was manufactured
by Manley Inc. of
Kansas City, MO.
In 1947

History of Manley Inc.

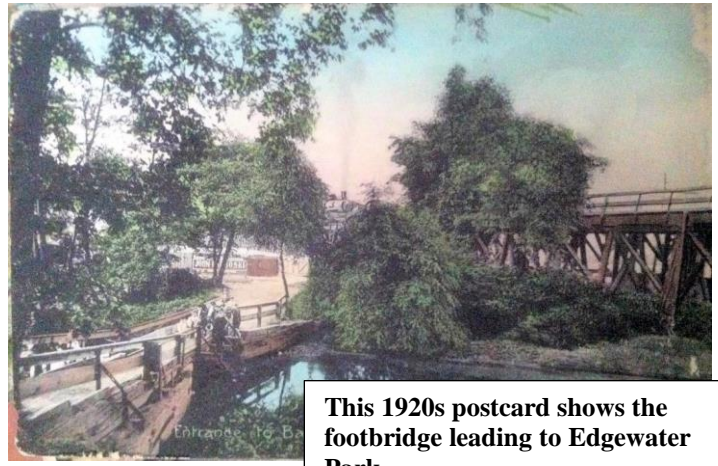
Julian Burch started making popcorn machines under the name the Burch Manufacturing Company early in the 1920s. Charles T. Manley joined Burch and started a new company. The name changed from Burch Manufacturing to Manley on September 18, 1940.

By 1947, Manley held 70% of the movie theater market for which the upright or cabinet-style popper was most popular. By the 1950s, the company provided a complete line of concession stand products including soda machines, hot dog rollers, counters and grills.

Underground Nanticoke:

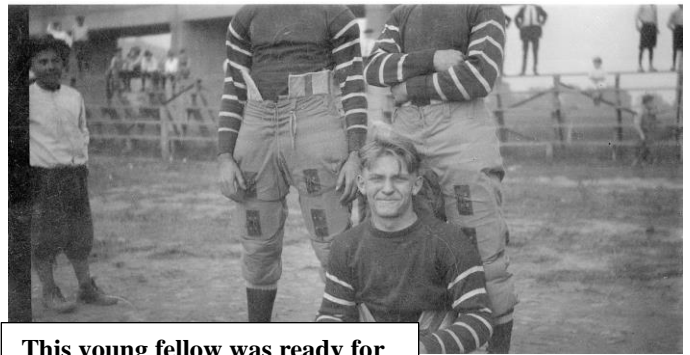
A diamond in the rough

Just picture a park on a sunny Sunday afternoon, with families strolling about and sports fans taking in an action-packed baseball game with the Susquehanna River, as was said back in the day, “a stone’s throw away.” It was a reality to those living in Nanticoke from the early 1900s to around 1952. Letters written to the Wilkes-Barre Record in 1908 by sports fans lamented that the Powder House Field, (located in the vicinity of Apollo Circle) which had been used as a baseball field, had been allowed to deteriorate, and as one sports fan described, “A town the size of Nanticoke, and with such timber as may be found here, should have as good an amateur team as anyone need wish for. But one thing is certain, this talent can never be developed to its full extent on the Powder House field.”



This 1920s postcard shows the
footbridge leading to Edgewater
Park.

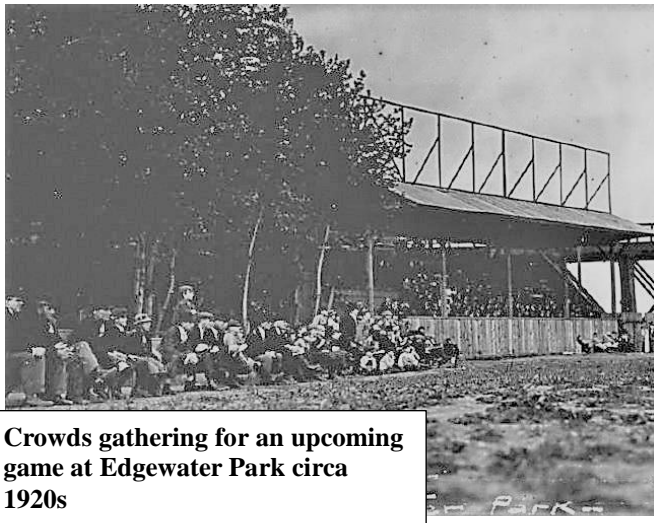
A new athletic field was planned, near the train bridge along the banks of the Susquehanna. When finished all types of sports were expected to be played there including tennis, quoits, alley ball and of course baseball. Also planned was a ¼ mile racetrack. James Badman, a local contractor, was hired to perform the work and an opening ceremony was planned that included a 100-yard dash, and a baseball game. A contest, that was open to women only, was announced promising a prize given to the person who suggested the most suitable name for the new park. Mary McHenry entered her choice as Edgewater Park, she was awarded \$5 for her entry. On August 6, 1908, at 2:30 p.m. the park officially opened.



This young fellow was ready for
a great football game

Over the next couple of years, residents crossed a footbridge over an old canal that took them to the park at the river’s edge. But the Susquehanna would show its strength rising from time to time, flooding the area and destroying the grandstands and field.

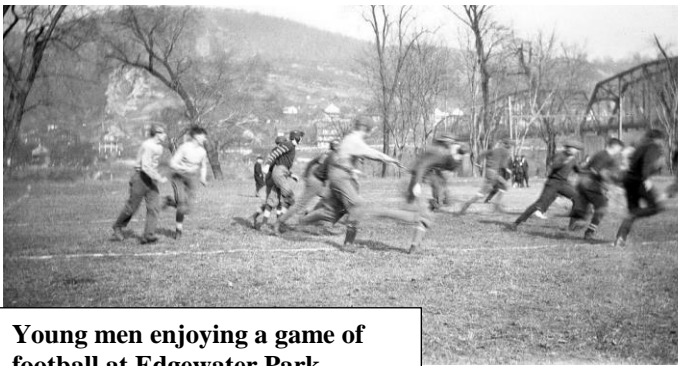
By 1914, the Nanticoke Bridge was constructed, and Edgewater Park was then sandwiched between the new span and the Pennsylvania Railroad Bridge. In 1920, The Susquehanna Athletic Association breathed new life into the park after a renovation plan was formulated.



Crowds gathering for an upcoming game at Edgewater Park circa 1920s

The Nanticoke baseball team, as members of the Wyoming League, played their first game against Bloomsburg at the park. Much anticipated high school football games between rivals Nanticoke and Plymouth were held.

By 1924, it was decided that the park needed new bleachers for scheduled high school football games. However, after contracting for the bleachers it was decided by the school's sports program directors that the bleachers would much better serve the new Lincoln Field. Throughout the 30s the park was used by various league teams as well as city youngsters who would use the field for an occasional baseball or football game.



Young men enjoying a game of football at Edgewater Park

By the 1950s, the park became better known as Riverside, due to the use of the area by the Riverside Athletic Club. A playground was dedicated in 1951. Events were held there in 1952, but when and why the area was abandoned and left to become a stretch of overgrown land is unknown. All that remains of the park are the letters Riverside A.C, painted on the abandoned railroad bridge.

On your next trip across the Nanticoke Bridge, while entering the city, picture that sunny Sunday afternoon and the park stretching just below the last abutments. It must have been beautiful. 📷



This undated photo shows the beauty of Edgewater Park.



Riverside A.C. painted on the side of the railroad bridge



A path remains

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UNDERGROUND NANTICOKE:

DO YOU KNOW WHERE THERE IS A SECRET GEM HIDING IN THE CITY THAT MAY HOLD AN INTERESTING TALE OR WOULD PERHAPS BRING BACK SOME MEMORIES OF DAYS GONE BY? CALL US AT 570-258-1367. WE'RE NANTICOKE'S HISTORY DETECTIVES. WE'LL DO OUR BEST TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUR HIDDEN GEM.

Did you have the answer to our last issue's mystery question?

What was the very last movie that was shown in the State Theatre prior to its closing in September 1981?

Answer:

The answer to this question was a little more complicated than we expected. The John Travolta feature "Blow Out" was said to be the last movie to play at the State Theatre before its closing. The title of the film remained on the marquis long after the building had been closed. However, that has been questioned by some who say that the last film featured was "Raiders of the Lost Arc" and Blow Out was advertised but was never screened.

The movies were respectively released in June and July of 1981, and either answer could be true. Now our question is, does anyone remember if Blow Out was the last film or was Raiders of the Lost Arc the last? If anyone has the answer, please call us at 570-258-1367.

Our New Mystery Question:

Prior to John F. Kennedy's memorable campaign stop in Nanticoke, what other former U.S. President visited Nanticoke. And what caused the former chief executive to cut short his speech to residents who gathered to greet him?

*Find the answer in our next newsletter or on the Stories page of our website
www.nanticokehistoryonline.org*

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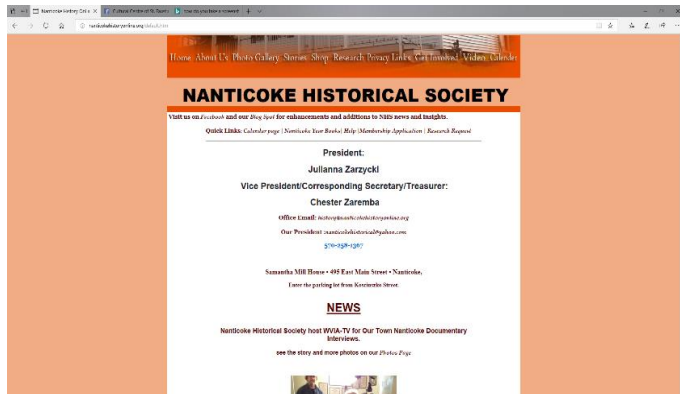
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We are committed to making your future visits to our web site a pleasant and an educational experience and are constantly looking for ways to enrich your knowledge of the history of Nanticoke. Please log on to read more regarding the stories published in our newsletters. Follow our fundraising efforts, and check our calendar of events for meeting dates and times. We also invite you to keep following us on Facebook.



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CHECK YOUR ATTICS AND YOUR BASEMENTS

You may have memorabilia or photos that could have some historical significance to the city of Nanticoke. You may not realize it, but an old family photo may contain some long-forgotten location in the city, or perhaps one of the many businesses that flourished here at one time. We're adding to our archives daily. Before you throw away those long-forgotten items, let the Historical Society check them for any historical value. Thank you for your consideration.

HERE ARE TWO GREAT WAYS TO SUPPORT THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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1. Go online to shursavemarkets.com
2. If you do not have an account, click Register and complete the quick registration.
3. Login to your new account and click Show Account
4. Click on the Community/School Rewards tab and select the Nanticoke Historical Society.

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**THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
APPRECIATES YOUR
PARTICIPATION.....**

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John S. Fine or GNA (Greater Nanticoke Area High School)

Newport High School, Wanamie,

Newport Twp.

GAR High School

Bloomsburg University

Wilkes University

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Duplicates from each high school are available for purchase.

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

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