

NANTICOKE LEGACY

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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



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1918 “There was a war on you know”

One of the first lines of narrative of the play Spanish Lady, Reflection on 1918, written by Scranton playwright and musician, Tom Flannery and spoken by the late stage actor/director, Paul Winarski. The play follows the thoughts of several of the plays’ characters as they deal with the life-changing consequences of the 1918 Spanish Influenza on their family, friends and their world .

Read the story and what was experienced in the City of Nanticoke and surrounding areas during the Spanish Flu outbreak.

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 To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific area where these articles may be preserved, appreciated and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

**Meetings cancelled until
further notice**

**When meetings resume,
they will take place at 7
p.m. the last Thursday of
the month at the Samantha
Mill House located next to
the Mill Memorial Library.**

**Enter the parking lot off
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

[Office email - history@nanticokehistoryonline.org](mailto:history@nanticokehistoryonline.org)

[Newsletter email - nanticokehistory@aol.com](mailto:nanticokehistory@aol.com)

OFFICERS

President: Julianna Zarzycki

Vice-President/Treasurer: Chester Zaremba

Secretary – Shelly Jones

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.**

The Nanticoke Historical Society Welcomes New Members

Mr. Brian Carey – Lifetime Member

Monetary Donations:

Mr. Brian Carey - \$200 - in memory of Anthony Mussari

Wyoming Valley Stamp Club - \$100

Mr. Frank Wojick – \$100

Thank you, our work at the society can continue through your generous donations:

We also thank the many members of the Nanticoke Historical Society who have made monetary or in-kind donations, have requested not be acknowledged, but know that their actions have benefitted our organization.

DONATIONS MADE – FOR REPAIR OF NANTICOKE HOSPITAL CLOCK:



Greater Nanticoke Area Government Club - \$500

Mr. Ryan Stetz – GNA Teacher - \$50

Mr. James Litchkofski – GNA Teacher - \$50

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS:

We are happy to say that the Nanticoke Hospital Clock, that we first wrote about in our November 2019 issue of Legacy, is currently in the shop being repaired. With the help of the above donations we are able to continue to get the clock back in working order. We will supply updates as the repair process continues.

DONATION OF PHOTOS APPRECIATED

A much-appreciated donation of a series of photos of the McGregor Building fire was made by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Iracki in memory of Joseph Iracki Sr. The society was not in possession of any photos documenting the aftermath of the fire. These photos add valuable information to our records. Thank you.....

DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ARE YOU GETTING TO THAT ORGANIZING PROJECT AND 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.



IN MEMORY OF:

Bill Jones – Lifetime Member of the Nanticoke Historical Society lost his year-long battle with cancer this month. Bill's wife Shelly also served as Secretary of the Society prior to her husband's illness.

FROM THE EDITOR:

Judy Minsavage

As you will see in our story The Spanish Flu Pandemic 1918 – the Nanticoke Experience, our records were valuable in documenting just what happened during the 1918 Pandemic. What was published herein is just the tip of the iceberg sort of speak. There is much more detail listed in our records such as newspaper articles, a list of those who perished during the pandemic, and how the city and its residents responded. It is there for historians it is there for families researching ancestors.

During this time, it is important that we also document what is happening during the present pandemic. If you or a loved one would like to send in a paragraph or two regarding how the quarantine affected you and your family, if you lost a loved one to the virus, if you volunteered to help, or if you or a member of your family were front line responders. please let us know. We will then be able to create a record for historical purposes, so that future generations can see how we responded locally. Please feel free to send in your submission to:

**The Nanticoke Historical Society
Samantha Mill House
495 East Main Street
Nanticoke, PA 18634**

**Or email us at:
history@nanticokehistoryonline.org**

ARE YOU TAKING THIS TIME TO RESEARCH YOUR FAMILY HISTORY?

With the current Covid-19 Pandemic the Nanticoke Historical Society offices remain closed and will do so until restrictions are lifted but we are still actively doing research during this time. If the quarantine has allowed you to resume or start researching your family history, please give us a call. We are here to help. Call us at 570-258-1367...

The drawing for the Nanticoke Historical Spring raffle will be held at the end of May. Winners will be notified.

1918 – The Nanticoke Experience

By Judy Minsavage

“There was a war on you know” One of the first lines of narrative of the play *Spanish Lady, Reflection on 1918*, written by Scranton playwright and musician, Tom Flannery and spoken by the late stage actor/director, Paul Winarski. The play follows the thoughts of several of the plays’ characters as they deal with the life-changing consequences of the 1918 Spanish Influenza on themselves, their family, friends and the world. In 2020, we are fighting much the same battles. People will once again rise up and be stronger for the experience just as they did after 1918.

In the early 2000s the late stage actor/director, Paul Winarski, approached my husband, Jack and myself, owners of Higher Sound Studios, to record a play written by Scranton playwright and musician, Tom Flannery. The play entitled 1918 contained several narratives performed by some of the area’s finest actors including Nanticoke Historical Society’s information officer and local stage actor, John Sherrick. The narratives, with musical interludes, detailed the horrors of the Spanish influenza that sickened 500 million and killed an estimated 50 to 100 million people world-wide. To say that working on the project was a moving and horrifying experience would be an understatement. The affect the mutant strain of virus had on families, doctors, nurses, children, clergy and every individual regardless of age or race was immediate but then became part of everyday life as one by one people lost someone near and dear. As we worked on the project, we could not imagine that in 2020 the narratives would come to life once again to reflect the current Coronavirus outbreak.

A Little History:

According to the Center of Disease Control, the 1918 pandemic was caused by an H1N1 virus that was avian in origin and caused about 675,000 deaths in the



Makeshift hospitals were established in many schools, churches, and factory buildings across the US



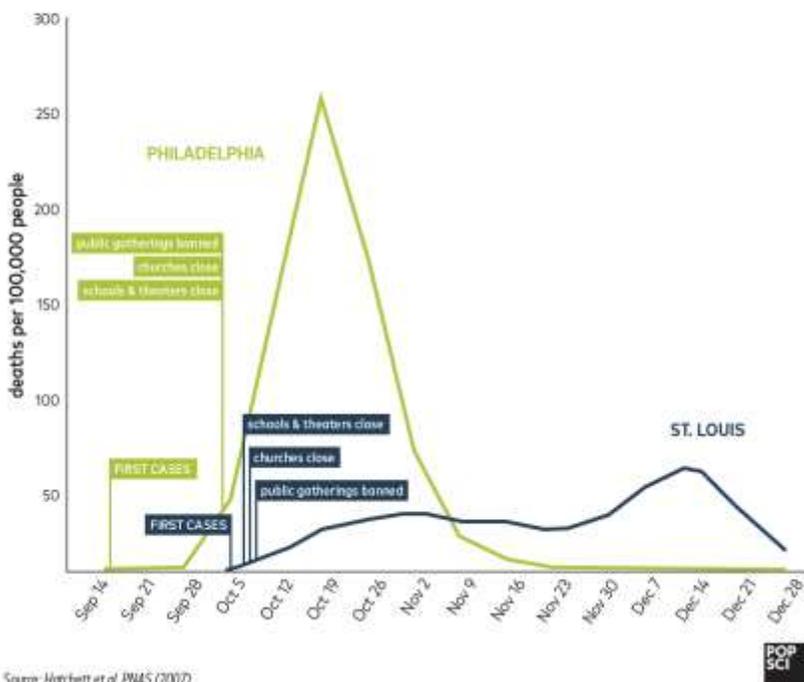
United States. This strain did not discriminate. all age groups were at risk with death occurring even in healthy individuals in the 20-40-year age group. Without a vaccine, there were efforts worldwide to contain the virus, such as isolation, masks, disinfectants and limits of public gatherings. Symptoms of typical flu were apparent in the spring of the year, but in the Fall of the year

GIs, stationed in Europe during WWI returning stateside, resulted in more dangerous deadly symptoms and according to history.com “The life expectancy in America plummeted by a dozen years.”

The death toll attributed to the Spanish Flu as it was called because Spain was the first to report the outbreak, was rampant among US soldiers. It was reported that more were killed by the virus than those fighting during World War I. Schools, churches, theaters and all public places were closed. Shortages of doctors, nurses and health care workers were prevalent. With hospitals unable to treat and house the immense number of patients suffering from the influenza, schools, businesses and churches were converted into makeshift hospitals. As it is today, the flu affected the US economy, shutting down businesses, cities and services across the country.

Delaying preventative measures made the 1918 flu pandemic much worse for some cities

St. Louis managed to flatten their curve by implementing social distancing measures rapidly, whereas Philly decided to go ahead with a parade scheduled on September 28. Their pandemics turned out very differently.



Source: Hatchett et al, PNAS (2007)

What Happened Locally

The following timeline is just part of the Nanticoke Historical Society records. There is much more detail and names in the report than could be offered here. There is a listing of names of those that died from the disease as well as information on most. If you would like further information, please contact the society at 570-258-1367.

The second wave of the flu pandemic occurred when American soldiers returned from the war and moved into densely populated areas. According to history.com, “Philadelphia became a hot zone with over 1,000 deaths in 10 days.” By the summer of 1919, the pandemic ended as those infected either died or developed immunity. When the flu hit, doctors and scientists were at a loss as to how to treat it. The first flu vaccine appeared in America in the 1940s. 90 years after the 1918 outbreak, Researchers discovered that the virus was so deadly because weakened bronchial tubes and lungs and cleared the way for pneumonia, as does COVID-19

Vick's VapoRub sold out



1918 Timeline – Nanticoke

- 9/18 No reports of illness in Nanticoke
- 9/28 Draft registration ordered postponed
- 10/2 First Nanticoke Soldier, Wladislaw Wengrzyn's body was returned to Nanticoke.
- 10/3 Nanticoke Board of Health meets in city hall asks physicians to report all cases of influenza
- 10/4 Government directs closing of amusement houses, saloons

City women gather to learn how to treat victims at home

10/4 Frank Grozio, city police officer, dies from influenza

10/5 A.P. Diffendafer Superintendent closes schools

10/5 – 10/7 Deaths start numbering two to three per day

10/8 Fifteen cases reported in Nanticoke, 250 in Glen Lyon

10/10 – Eight people die in one day in Nanticoke and Glen Lyon

10/11 – Joint meeting of health and school boards and Nanticoke council. Peoples Street Rail was prohibited to allow travel between hot spot Glen Lyon to Nanticoke. Nanticoke Armory and schools used as emergency hospitals. All meetings and churches ordered closed. Ten saloon keepers arrested and fined \$50 for refusing to close.

10/11 Nine Nanticoke residents die in one day.

10/12 – Newport Twp. reports 400 cases

Fifteen hotel keepers fined after refusing to close.

10/14 – Fourteen people die in one day. Most Nanticoke residents

10/15 – Nanticoke factories ordered closed

10/15 Thirteen people die in one day

10/18 275 cases reported in Nanticoke

10/19 Nanticoke cases reach 321

10/21 Nanticoke reports total of 400 cases

10/21 Fifteen people die in one day 5 from Nanticoke ten from Glen Lyon

10/23 Four hundred and twenty men at Nanticoke Susquehanna Collieries out of work.



Mass graves were dug to bury the dead quickly



Some tried to keep life as normal as possible

10/23 Nine people die in one day

10/24 Nanticoke cases top 550 – city considering quarantine equivalent to our stay at home order.

St. Joseph, Stanislaus and St. Francis Churches serve as emergency hospitals.

Twelve people die in one day, including 3 teachers serving as volunteers at emergency hospitals.

10/25 – Nanticoke reports 554 total cases.

10/26 - Nanticoke mills ordered closed

Nanticoke tops 650 total cases.

Four nurses die of the disease in one day

10/29 Nine people die in one day

Undertakers were so overwhelmed it was not possible to secure the names of all the deceased.



Hospitals were so overcrowded many were treated anywhere there was room to set up beds.

10/31 Ten people die in one day including three nurses

11/1 Conditions in Nanticoke continue to worsen as cases top 668.

Nanticoke collieries forced to shut down because of lack of manpower.

11/4 Nine people die in one day

11/5 Ten people die in one day

11/7 Fourteen people die in one day – one from Glen Lyon

11/9 Local authorities lift ban on store closings

11/12 Six Nanticoke residents die in one day

11/13 Public schools were set to re-open, but order was cancelled

11/18 –New outbreaks reported in the Wyoming Valley as businesses reopen



As it is today, masks were required

11/21 It was reported that Pennsylvania deaths topped 42,635

11/22 With resurgence of cases of the epidemic, the board of health orders reclosing of all dance halls, and places of amusement

11/29 Nanticoke Schools scheduled reopening for December 2

12/4 47,000 deaths reported statewide. Nanticoke was no longer reporting new cases.

It was reported there were 350,000 deaths in the US beginning on Sept. 15

12/5 – 1/29 Deaths continued to be reported at one or two per day

1/29/1919 Stouten Frace was the last Nanticoke victim whose death was attributed to the Spanish Flu. Newspapers began dropping the word influenza from many obituaries and replacing it with pneumonia because it became increasingly difficult to determine if the fatalities were related to the disease.

From October of 1918 to January of 1919, two hundred and thirty-one people lost their lives in Nanticoke, Newport and Glen Lyon.



In 1918, Nanticoke health care workers and nurses were given recognition for their bravery in caring for patients afflicted with the Spanish Influenza: From left to right standing, William Evans, Margaret Larkins, Ruth Jones, Belle Waseliewski, Verda Vivian, Mary Humphreys, Edward Williams. Seated, Beth Porter, Ellen Davis, Gwen Winter, Margaret Porter and Ethel Jones.

FACTS:

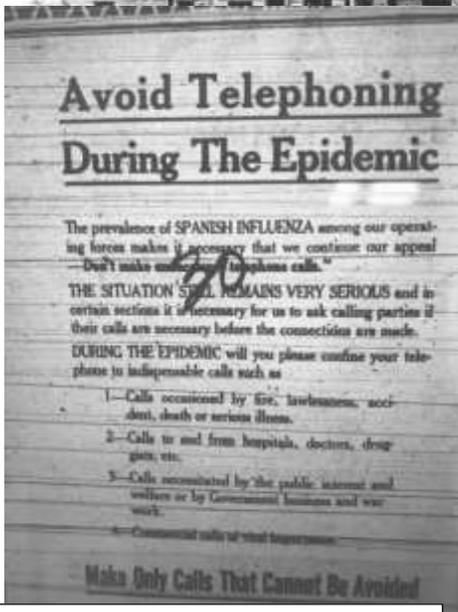
- **Pennsylvania** was ranked number one in the 1918-1919 mortality rate of 27 states reporting as the hardest hit.
- **In Philadelphia, a Liberty Loan Parade** promoting the sale of War Bonds was scheduled to be held a week after the epidemic hit the city. City leaders did not take heed and let the event proceed bringing 200,000 attendees into the city. The city was one of the hardest to be hit. Within six weeks, more than 12,000 deaths occurred with 47,000 cases reported. By the end of six months, there were 16,000 deaths just in the Philadelphia area.
- **Deadly Flu and WWI battled for headlines:** In October of 1918 American soldiers were in the thick of battle fighting against German forces in France. By November, US forces broke through German defenses at Meuse and on November 11, 1918 the Armistice was signed halting the War.

Today as we reflect on the past, we realize we can learn much from studying our history and coming to the realization that at one time or another no generation is immune to hardship and sorrow. One can learn from experience. Our reaction and triumph over the COVID-19 pandemic will be studied by future generations, how we managed through it, how we united in our time of trial, how we all helped each other, respected each other and grew stronger for it. I and everyone at the Nanticoke Historical Society are proud of the City of Nanticoke, it's nurses, doctors, health care workers, policemen, firemen, clergy, city workers, service providers, business owners, those who brought services to its residents and were risking their lives

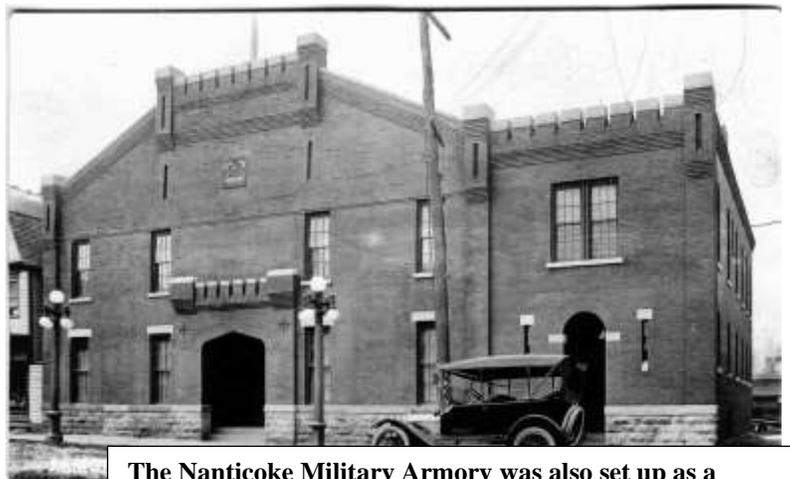
on the front lines and the city residents who put their neighbors health in the forefront and followed social distancing mandates. 🇺🇸



Washington Street School was used as a makeshift hospital



Unnecessary telephone calls were prohibited



The Nanticoke Military Armory was also set up as a hospital



It was advantageous to have the Nanticoke Hospital operating in 1918



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.

CIVIL WAR - cont'd

John G. Freed - 200th Regiment PA Volunteers

Norman M. Freeman - 90th Regt of NY

John D. Hall

Samuel J. James - Veteran of Gettysburg

Keithline, Peter - 203rd Infantry

Andrew A. Lape - 9th PA Infantry

WORLD WAR I

Frank Checklinski

Joseph Cherrie

Ignatz Christian

Joseph Chrzan

Michael Cintala

Albert Clark

Milton Clark - PFC Medical Dept.

Dennis Connell - Wounded in France

Timothy Conroy - Mechanical Corps

WORLD WAR II

Milton Ditzler

Charles Dombroski - Killed in Action - France

Stanley W. Dombrowski

Stanley Domzalski - Killed in Action - France

Eugene Domulevicz - POW.

Thomas Douglas - Killed in action - Germany

Joseph J. Dunleavy - POW

Loren E. Dunn - Killed in Action Pacific theatre

John A. Dzik - Killed in action - Italy

William J. Edwards - Killed in Action

Herman H. Englehart - Killed in Action - South Pacific

KOREAN WAR

John J. Pocreva Jr. - U.S. Navy

Nelson Stryker - Purple Heart

John G. Supkowski - 4th Medical Group Fighter Interceptor Wing

Joseph Swigonski - 40th Infantry Division.

Stanley J. Terkowski Jr - 101st Airborne Div.

Joseph Tillitski - US Army

Alfred Tomczak - Purple Heart.

Robert J. Turley - Corporal US Army

Frank Uranowski - Marine Corps

Michael R. Verazin - 25th Infantry Division

Robert Walacavicz - 145th Field Artillery Battalion. Purple Heart

Leonard Waschco - Captain 25th Division

Ralph Wasiakowski

Donald Webster - US Army

Richard Weiss - 70th Transportation Truck Battalion.

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....

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

On our Home Page:
CLICK ON THE "WHAT'S IN OUR ARCHIVES LINK."

The following article written by Dr. Andrea Nerozzi, Associate Director, Maslow STEM School and Science teacher at Wyoming Seminary Upper School gives us an invitation to accompany her on a journey to find her ancestors and their reasons for leaving their homes in Poland to settle in Nanticoke. Her insight and experiences gives us tips on what we may encounter on our journey to finding answers to questions we may have regarding our ancestors and their stories while imparting the history of the time and a declaration of love and a promise of freedom from across the sea.

Reflections from the Past

By:
Dr. Andrea Nerozzi

Initially, genealogical research focuses on identifying relatives, and defining dates and places. The “who’s”, “when’s”, “where’s” and “what’s” are objective information, and to some extent can be verified by using a combination of family history and public records. The “why’s” are the narrative of your family, and these stories are relevant today.

Rozalja Bielinska Klidzio 1873

Antoni Klidzio and Rozalja Bielinska Klidzio were the first in my family to immigrate to America, ultimately residing in Nanticoke. Fortunately, photographs of both exist. Antoni’s picture (no date) was taken at H. Bennett studios in Wilkes-Barre. Although her family was from Warsaw, Rozalja’s photograph was taken in Kovno (Kaunas) Lithuania (1873), where she was employed as a governess. Remember to note the photographers stamp; it can provide some good clues for the “where’s.”



The mid-19th century was a particularly difficult time in Poland, which was divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria. Antoni lived in Russ, Poland and his travel documents, which were translated from the Russian, state that he was a manager. However, two sources, a letter of recommendation from the Susquehanna Coal company, and advertisements placed by Antoni in local newspapers, indicate that he was a veterinarian. The “passport” also describes Antoni as nobility, and

although I knew that Antoni was educated, I never thought to ascribe such a title to him. These revelations illustrate that family histories can be challenged by formal accounts and indicate that there is more to the story than originally thought.

Antoni Klidzio c1872

To investigate further, I visited the Nanticoke Historical Society where John Sherrick helped me to search the digital family files. Thankfully, another family member, Larry Korona, donated some information, which the Society’s staff supplemented with evidence from newspapers. Through these, I learned that Antoni had a brother, Szymon Klidzio, who immigrated to America before him, which provided me with a new avenue of research as the plot had clearly thickened!



I suggest that as you begin your research, you keep an open mind and embrace any revelations. You may find that you enjoy following leads so much that you venture into areas that are not immediately connected to your family, entering the territory of an historian.

To follow up on the newly revealed branch on the tree, I did the obvious: asked Google! Surprisingly, online sources revealed that Szymon Klidzio came to Luzerne County in 1869-70. The passage, written in a publication of the Polish Falcons, included the following statement in translation: “Poles came to Luzerne county in 1869 and 70 - including **Szymon Klidzio**, Anthoni Chrapikonski, Wladyslaw Hajdukiewica, Jan Sosnowski, Zygmunt Twarowski settling in Parsons.” This is a treasure trove, because it indicates other families that had an association with mine, and by looking into their history, I might be able to augment our story. Indeed, several of these individuals ended up residing in Nanticoke. Eventually, Jan Sosnowski would apply for a patent for a vegetable slicing machine with my Great-Great Grandfather. Also, it places my family at an interesting point in the history of Luzerne County, as they were among the first Poles to come to this region and to Nanticoke, and as such there is a greater chance that their names would appear in published sources.



Szymon Klidzio, undated

My Grandmother, Louise (Budzinski) Shipkowski, preserved the account of why Antoni came to America writing in a note that, “Antoni Klidzio’s grandparents were taken to Siberia and their home destroyed by fire. They weren’t heard from again; thus he (Antoni) came to America”, a sentiment echoed in the Society’s files from other sources. My grandmother also explained that the Bielinskis used to hide Polish rebels from the Russians and therefore Rozalja was also familiar with this struggle. In the years prior to Antoni’s immigration, the Poles staged the January Uprising (1863-4) which was a failed attempt to wrestle control from the Russians. Insurgents, who resorted to guerilla warfare, suffered swift reprisals, with many executed, deported or relieved of their lands, with the later, being the fate of my family.

These trials were confirmed In an article entitled “Polish Miners in Luzerne County” (1946), written by Sister M. Accursia, Bern, where she writes, “The stream of Polish immigration began to trickle into this section at the close of the war between the States and increased in 1876; then the immigration artery expanded to encompass the hundreds of 1881, followed by the ebb tide until 1900 when once more it swelled to include the largest influx of Polish immigrants. Wyoming Valley became the mecca that lured the Poles to settle here who, **like the Klidzio brothers**, sought respite from oppressions in their native land, or (and these were in the majority) or who came here in quest of bread to earn a living.”

Suddenly, the view I had of my family changed, and a large part of their story included political exile. Undoubtedly, Polish exiles were attracted to the United States because of the freedom. Indeed, my family stressed active participation in our democracy, and Antoni recorded every time he voted on the back of his naturalization papers. Clearly, freedom was important, but so was economic opportunity, which is the likely reason that Szymon and Antoni moved to Nanticoke, as it was forecast to benefit from the emerging anthracite coal industry.

How did Antoni feel about leaving Poland? A clue to this can be found in the engagement letter that he sent to Rozalja in 1873. The beginning of the letter, which is written in Polish, is quite poignant – “From the other half of the earth, from among strangers, from among hearts that feel differently, a Polish heart flies

with these words beyond the ocean to (another) Polish heart to find there an acceptance of reciprocation and love.” It appears that Antoni felt like a stranger in a strange land. Antoni asked Rozalja to come to America without ever meeting her directly – they knew of each other through a cousin - and luckily for me, Rozalja had the courage to make the journey and the faith that things would work out.

My family was extremely attached to their Polish roots, with the house decorated with Polish memorabilia and symbolism - Polish eagles, paintings of Poland, statues and jewelry, and frequent reference to Polish culture and notable individuals. Rozalja and her daughter, Mary (Klidzio) Budzinski taught Polish at Saint Stanislaus church. My mother (Mary (Shipkowski) Nerozzi, a third generation American, spoke and wrote fluent Polish; and she and my Grandmother would talk in Polish all the time. Therefore, they struggled to maintain a Polish identity while embracing the opportunities and freedoms presented by this country.

Suddenly, things became clear; my Great-Great Grandfather left Poland reluctantly, and I suspect this was also true to some degree of Rozalja. The reason for the Klidzios’ departure included being stripped of land and title and being forced to start all over again. It must have been difficult for them to adapt to the new circumstances in the small Nanticoke community. Therefore, the sense of pride in their Polish identity was particularly important, something my mother identified with many years later. I wonder, if circumstances altered, and Poland regained its autonomy, would they have returned to their homeland?

If you are interested in genealogical research, I strongly recommend that you look between the lines, beyond names and dates and places, for the story, which you may find consciously or unconsciously affects the current generation. 📖

BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR SOCIETY

Individual \$20

Family \$30

Lifetime \$100 Individual

**Please advise us of any changes in email or
Home mailing address**

WE’RE INTERESTED IN YOUR MEMORIES:

Do you have a fond memory of one of the many stores that were located in Nanticoke in years gone by? Perhaps a favorite candy store, corner grocery, or clothing store, a favorite storekeeper or a kindness shown to your family by a shopkeeper. Tell us in a paragraph or two of your memories by emailing nanticokehistory@aol.com, and we’ll publish your short story. Give us the name of the store, and the street on which it was located and just submit your first name.

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**



This undated photo shows car #790 turning onto Main Street in Nanticoke

Car 790 - Where Are You?

By
Judy Minsavage

Whether it was a shopping trip with Mom to buy school clothes or perhaps a trip to Grandma's house somewhere between Nanticoke and the outlying areas, a ride on the trolley was a special event. One can feel the sway of the car sending out a constant click-click-click sound as it glided over the tracks. That was the way it was for public transportation when street cars began operating in the Wyoming Valley in about 1891 to the end of trolley service in Nanticoke on August 15, 1950.

With the discovery of Trolley Car #790, which was taken out of service in 1950, purchased by Mary and Walter Krakowski of Rolling Mill Hill section and transformed into a rather unique sun porch attached to their cabin in Franklin Twp., memories of the bygone days are rekindled. Car #790, which ran between Nanticoke and Pittston, is being restored by Baut Studios in Swoyersville at an estimated cost of \$300,000.

Matt Stegura, a member of the Anthracite Trolleys Inc., a group involved in preserving the history of local rail travel, gave us a run down on the restoration progress now being performed. Stegura a sophomore at Kings College, majoring in history, found out about the group after meeting Baut Studio owner, Conrad Baut. Soon after Stegura joined the club and is currently helping out with the restoration process. "Unfortunately, the work is on hold now due to the Coronavirus restrictions." Stegura admits, adding,

“Work will continue after the restrictions are lifted. “There are difficulties in getting parts for the car, which is similar to the Boston Type 5 streetcar, but the group will continue to attempt to restore the car as accurately as possible.”



This photo published in the Sunday Independent shows riders on car 788 leaving Nanticoke on Oct. 15, 1950. The group was listed as clockwise, Art Masters, Bill Herman, Bill Anthony, Lewis Edwards, Otto Schimmel, Atty. Frank Grosky, Tom McLaney, Dr. Cliff Mace, Joseph Shannon, John Reeves, Joseph Borofski, Fred Graboske, George Dzurica, R. Jay Hughes, Raymond Selner, Billy Walp, Calvin Fine and Dr. John Dorris.

Car #790 was one of two cars that officially made their final run on August 15, 1950. Car 788 made the run in the early morning hours, but after souvenir hunters stripped the car of many of its attributes, “It would have been impossible to replace the parts,” Stegura said.

Stegura feels that the restoration will take more than two years and at the completion of the project the trolley will be taken to the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton. “It will be the first time since the 1930s that a Scranton transit car and Wilkes-Barre transit car will be side by side in operation. It will continue to operate there until there’s a trolley line in Wilkes-Barre,” Stegura added optimistically. The car will run from PNC Field to Steamtown at least once a week.



These photos submitted by Matt Stegura show Car #790 being worked on at Baut

preparation of adding them into the society’s PastPerfect Software.

Destination scroll the motorman would change showing stops and car usage



This photo shows the front of car #790 as it looks today





John M. Garman

Some trolley history

The talk of introducing electric street rail systems in Nanticoke started in 1891, when Nanticoke resident, District Attorney John M. Garman addressed members of Nanticoke borough council championing the idea of a rail system. It was reported in the Wilkes Barre record on May 13, 1891 that “a syndicate of foreign capitalists” would consolidate the street railways of Wilkes-Barre by the year’s end.

The road to the burgeoning rail transportation system in the Wyoming Valley was not an easy one. There were several separately owned companies positioning themselves to the right of way that was necessary to run the tracks through boroughs and towns. With the charter of the Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Valley Traction Company, planned lines would reach as far north as

Moosic and as far south as Nanticoke. While DA Garman along with other investors laid plans to apply for a charter for an electric rail service between Glen Lyon and Nanticoke, they found they were “railroaded” by Mr. John Smoulter, Jr., President of the First National Bank in Nanticoke. An article in the Wilkes Barre Record dated Saturday July 23, 1892, detailed the scheme. It seems Smoulter stopped in at Garman’s law office for a friendly visit while a meeting was being held by Garman and his rail investors. Smoulter overheard the plans for the new rail system and immediately left his friend’s office and organized a company to obstruct Garman’s plans. Smoulter took the first train to Harrisburg and returned with a charter for the Nanticoke & Newport Railway Company. Smoulter then told Garman he would have to buy the franchise for the rail system and right of way for a total of \$25,000. According to the US Inflation Calculator that amount would equate to over \$700,000 today. Needless to say, that probably ended their friendship. Garman, and his investors did not relent, they petitioned the Nanticoke city council for “another road” according to the Wilkes-Barre Record article of 1892. After approval, Garman’s People’s Street Railway Company was chartered and right of way approved. By 1909, most of the small rail operations were absorbed into the Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Valley Traction Company.



John Smoulter Jr.

Rail Timeline:

Wilkes-Barre And Wyoming Valley Traction Company

On May 1, 1893 the first streetcar came into Nanticoke, collecting fares, although formal service had not yet begun.

Nanticoke Street Railway Company

Opened for business in May of 1893 with Tom Oplinger as conductor and William Mullery as motorman.

People's Street Railway Company

District Attorney John Garman, after four years, succeeded in getting his trolleys up and running from Nanticoke to Glen Lyon in 1895 however much got in the way of the completion



Peoples Street Railway Maintenance crew in 1912

date due to property owner injunctions. It was rumored that the company

would be sold to Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Valley Traction Co.



People's Street Railway Maintenance crew in 1910

Nanticoke Newport Railroad Company

By 1897, John Smoulter's company The Nanticoke Newport R. R. Co. petitioned the courts for dissolution of its charter. The company failed to secure the franchises over the proposed route. But Garman's rail service managed to survive many hurdles, accidents and road maintenance complaints

By 1902 John Smoulter was back in business applying for a rail system between Nanticoke and Warrior Run.

Suburban Street Railway of Nanticoke and Hanover

Nanticoke-Hanover Rail Line

December 24, 1903, The Nanticoke-Hanover Rail Line received a franchise to extend their line from Nanticoke into Hanover and provide service as far as Warrior Run.

Nanticoke Street Railway Company

In 1903, the Nanticoke and Hanover Street Railway was organized. It later merged with the People's Street Railway, operating from Hanover to Glen Lyon.

By 1908 there were several streetcar lines connecting Scranton, Nanticoke and Berwick

Between 1925 and 1930 bus lines were popping up and in 1934, People's Street Railway cars were replaced with buses ending the five-cent streetcar ride

Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Traction Company

Trackless trolleys or electrified buses were introduced with rubber tires, no rails, and powered by overhead electric wires. They were not practical and were discontinued within a few years.

Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Traction Company extended service into the 30s and 40s with the last run in 1950. 📷



This undated photo shows the inside of a trolley car



These four photos show the trolley cars making their way through busy city streets



Car 790 makes its way up Market Street on December 28, 1949

DID YOU ANSWER LAST ISSUES MYSTERY QUESTION?

A beautiful part of the Luzerne County Courthouse is attributed to what Nanticoke artist?

Answer: Olga Sorensen 1877-1963

Born in Frederickshaven, Denmark in 1877, Olga Sorensen immigrated with her family to the United States and was raised in Nanticoke. She attended Nanticoke High School, began her art education at Drexel Institute of Technology (now Drexel University) in Philadelphia, then traveled to Europe to continue her studies. An article published by the Wilkes-Barre Record in 1928, entitled, Artist Returns Home states, “Artist, Miss Olga Sorensen, after spending nine years in Paris arrived on the Steamship Rijndam and was set to visit her sister Dr. Margaret Sorenson Schlanbusch, who resides in Nanticoke.” The article goes on to state, “Miss Sorensen gained local fame before going to France and was expected to paint the portraits of several prominent residents while visiting the area.”

In 1920, Sorensen traveled to France and became a student at the prestigious Academie Julian. her portrait of philanthropist, Helen Gould, was exhibited at the Spring Salon in Paris, an honor for an American artist and, at the time, for a woman. She also studied at a well-known artist colony in France. Sorensen traveled throughout the France painting landscapes and commissions for portraits. On one of her many trips home to Nanticoke, it was reported in the Wilkes-Barre Record, “Several of the stained-glass paintings in the million-dollar Luzerne County Court House dome are creations of her brush also a stained-glass soldier’s memorial window erected in the Kingston M.E. Church was also attributed to Sorensen.”

Sorensen lived in Paris for many years but would return to the US to visit her sister Margaret. By 1935, she had returned to Nanticoke to stay.

F. J. Osterling of Pittsburgh, the initial architect for the Luzerne County Courthouse design added pediments with stained-glass windows connecting the tourelles to the original design. This photo clearly shows the stained-glass



from the editor: THE REST OF THE STORY

In researching the story of Olga Sorensen there are still several unanswered questions, but I came upon some surprises as well. My research into finding the truth behind whether or not Sorensen

painted the Luzerne County Courthouse stained glass windows has netted no positive results. Her name does not appear in either Luzerne County historical records or the history of the Courthouse as being the artist that painted the panels constructed by an Italian American designer. In a biographical piece written by Hawthorne Fine Art, LLC, Sorensen is listed as having painted the panels not only in the courthouse but in private homes. Hawthorne, a fine arts gallery located in New York City specializes in 19th and early 20th century American Art, lists in their inventory this painting by Sorensen:



- *Still-life with Pipe, Books and Jar*
- Oil on canvas
- 11 x 16 inches
- Signed and dated 1900, lower right

I will keep searching for that information and report any updates.

STAUNCH SUPPORTERS OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT

The surprising part of the rest of Sorensen's story was that she and her sister Margaret were Suffragettes. In 1914, Dr. Sings Margaret Sorensen, president of the Votes For Women Club in Nanticoke, and her sister Olga, were the first women in to appear in the Luzerne County Court applying for citizenship papers and who requested to swear allegiance to the United States.

Both were active in the Women's Suffrage Movement and worked tirelessly for the voting privilege. The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920. Pennsylvania was at the time the largest state in which women had not previously had the right to vote. Many strong women across the state including the Sorensen sisters were in large part responsible when the 19th Amendment which was officially added to the United States Constitution in 1920.



Olga Sorensen passed away in 1963, survived by two nephews and one niece. She is buried in Nanticoke Cemetery. 🗿



This Issue's Mystery Question

Can you see two things that are wrong with this photograph published in the Sunday Independent on April 20, 1969 of the 1969 Nanticoke Trojan Basketball Team and Head Coach Syl Bozinski?



Pictured from left to right are Charles Makar, Peter Warchal, Vincent Lukaszewski, Joseph Bargella, Michael Kiewlak, Thomas Bilko, Raymond Gonshor, Thomas Chesko, Robert Yatko, David Morgan, James Kramer, Ronald Womelsdorf, David Washinski, David Pretulak, Michael Pantalone, Stephen Bilko, Coach Richard Rutkowski, Coach Joseph Ciampi, and Head Coach Sylvester Bozinski.

The answer will be published on our website www.nanticokehistoryonline.org in the coming weeks and in the next issue of Legacy.