

# NANTICOKE LEGACY

## NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

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### A TIME TO CELEBRATE NANTICOKE'S EARLY BEGINNINGS

This photo was published in the Times Leader on June 23, 1968 as the City of Nanticoke celebrated the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its first charter. The unnamed group attended the opening of Anniversary Headquarters at 9 E. Main St. Among the many educational and recreational programs planned were musical and dance revues, parades, promenades, caravans, block parties, a carnival week, industrial and historical displays, tours conducted throughout the August celebration week, a contest to select a queen and various sports events. The highlight of the celebration was to be a performance of "The Nanticoke Story", with a cast of over 300 people narrating and acting out various highlights of Nanticoke's history.

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 To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific area where these articles may be preserved, appreciated and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

**Due to the Coronavirus  
Pandemic meetings are  
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](http://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**

**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**

**Theodore S. Wiaterowski - Individual Membership**

**James Farr - Life Membership**

**Dorothy Nowak Koprowski - Individual Membership**

**Colleen Waldron - Family Membership**

**Susan (Rushin) Yuschak - Life Membership**

## **Thank you for your generous donations:**

**Collective donation In Memory of Bill Jones**

**Tony Margelewicz In Memory of Bill Jones**

**Barbara VonDran - in Memory of Richard Zarzycki**

**Richard Raspin - in Memory of Richard Zarzycki**

**Albert Vandermark**

**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.

## IN MEMORY OF:

**Richard J. Zarzycki -**

**3/8/1940 - 6/24/20**

Richard, the husband of Julianna Zarzycki, President of the Nanticoke Historical Society, was a member and treasurer for Alden Rod & Gun Club for 35 years, Hanover Fire Co. 4, serving as president, secretary and line chief. Richard was also a member of New Jersey National Guard and a lifelong blood donor to the American Red Cross. Along with his wife he is survived by daughters, Christine Banditelli and husband, Steve, Wilkes-Barre; Alicia Kairo and husband, Scott, Mountain Top; and grandchildren, Michael Swicklik Jr. and Emma Kairo.



## FROM THE EDITOR:

**Judy Minsavage**

If you or a loved one would like to send in a paragraph or two regarding how the quarantine has 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 our office at 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke, PA 18634 or email to [history@nanticokehistoryonline.org](mailto:history@nanticokehistoryonline.org)

## NEWS

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

- First Place Winner      Edward Tomko - Nanticoke
- Second Place Winner    Ed Jameson - Nanticoke
- Third Place Winner      John Hickey - Arizona

**Congratulations to our winners!**

## The Nanticoke Hospital Clock is chiming again:



**To Recap:** In the Summer of 2019, the Nanticoke Historical Society was contacted by Dr. Donna Snelson, Director of History at Misericordia University asking if the society would be interested in acquiring a clock which had been placed at the school some years ago. The clock in question is a Herschede Tubular Chime Tall-Case Clock that once stood majestically in the entrance of Nanticoke Hospital and was presented to the hospital in memory of Charles E. Jones. Jones, who was the focus of a story published in the November 2019 issue of The Society Newsletter “Nanticoke Legacy” came to Nanticoke in 1877, established and operated the Boston Store in the city for many years. Jones passed away in 1920 and upon his passing the clock was donated to the hospital.

The clock, manufactured by Herschede Clock Company in Cincinnati Ohio, is an award-winning design evidenced by numerous gold and silver medals received for its superior construction. Over the last few months, the historical society was fortunate to have received donations that covered the cost of moving the clock to the society offices, cleaning, installation of replacement parts, as well as providing funds for future maintenance. We would like to thank Andrew Netusil, owner of Netusil Jewelers, Plains, for the work he performed on the clock to get it back into running order. We would like to thank all the donors that made the acquisition of the clock possible, and will also make it possible for future generations to enjoy

Thank you to all those who generously donated to preserving this wonderful part of Nanticoke’s past. 🇺🇸

**To hear the melodic chimes of this beautiful clock log on to our website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) and click on our Videos Page.**

## 1968 - 175<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF NANTICOKE’S FIRST CHARTER

By Judy Minsavage

2020 will be quite a year to remember most especially for the novel coronavirus as well as for its much-used terminology such as social distancing, flattening the curve, quarantine and masks. It will also be a year that will see the cancelation of many of the events and church festivals that we have come to know and love. As we look back over the years, most can remember attending one of the many



local events where people gathered to enjoy a day or even weeks filled with music, dancing, games, good food and fun for all ages. Our city has lost some of the cohesive elements that have bonded us in the past, but memories never fade. Over the next few issues of Nanticoke Legacy, we'll bring back some memories of city-wide celebrations that were made possible by countless volunteers that worked many hours to sponsor events that were appreciated by thousands of people and brought residents together.

At this time, we're also looking to add to our history of some of the many church festivals that offered our favorite foods and music. If you have photos and memories of your church festival, we invite you to bring them in to our office to scan and return to you. You can also email them to our newsletter at [nanticokehistory@aol.com](mailto:nanticokehistory@aol.com). Tell us the name of the church festival, dates of the event, and your contact information. With your permission, we will publish your photo in an upcoming issue of Nanticoke Legacy. In the meantime, here is the first of the many items found in our archives that show celebrations once held in Nanticoke highlighting its active social past.



## 1793 - 1968

In 1793, William Stewart and his brother Captain Lazarus Stewart received land from the Susquehanna Company for their part in defending the Connecticut Yankees claim to the land they acquired from King Charles II of England and the resolution of a treaty with the Iroquois enabling purchase of lands. In that year, William Stewart, under a colonial charter, owned Lot #27, now known as Nanticoke. He had his land surveyed and planned for streets and sale of acreage. By March of 1794, He had sold 36 lots at \$10 apiece.

To celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's first charter, an Executive Committee consisting of George Ellis, general chairman; Dr. Angelo Picchi, president; John Grontkowski treasurer; Edward Brezinski, executive secretary; Joseph Siesko, vice-president; Millard Galat, headquarters

chairman; Mrs. John Pocreva, spectacle division; Mrs. William Ditzler, revenue division; Gerald Hudak, men's participation; Bernard Szot, men's participation and Stanley Ftorkowski, parade chairman; set up headquarters at 9 E. Main Street. The opening heralded the beginning of a number of summer events that would culminate in a weeklong celebration in August. A letter to businesses and residents initiated by George Ellis, General Chairman stated, "To commemorate this important occasion, we have planned a week of festivities unequalled in our history, during which Nanticoke will play host to thousands of and visitors who will gather to enjoy the tremendous entertainment our celebration will provide." The letter set off a firestorm of volunteers and participants to make the city-wide celebration a success.

More than 200 units including eight bands and 60 floats took part in an anniversary parade with the 389<sup>th</sup> US Army Band from Fort Monmouth NJ, Veterans of Foreign Wars Drill Team, and fire units from Germantown, Sunbury and Levittown. It was reported that thousands of people lined the streets to watch the parade headed by Nanticoke Fire Chief and Grand Marshall, Stanley Ftorkowski.

In August 1968, during the final days of the months' long celebration, The Greater Nanticoke Area 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee and the citizens of Nanticoke presented a play entitled "The Nanticoke Story."



**The Top Photo published in the Times Leader 1968 Best Family groupings** – left to right Cadelia Marcinkowski, Karen, Lorraine Marcinkowski, Phyllis Marcinkowski, Noel, third prize: Diane Kline, Dee Dee, Bertha Kline, with sons, Diane Kline, first prize; Mrs. Matesica, Cecelia Wilkes, Mrs. Edward Wilkes, the Wilkes Children, Cindy Edward, Michael, Thomas, second prize.

**The Bottom Photo – published in the Times Leader 1968** – Amy Rowinski, first place, best pre-teen group; Daria Brezinski, first prize, best teenage group; Ruth Rowinski, Dorothy O'Connor, Dolores Rentko, first prize for best replica costume of the dance hall girls; Jean Kravits and daughters, first prize for best mother/daughter group; Mrs. Stanley Micholski and Jacqueline Souzzi, third prize for best granddaughter and mother grouping; Joan and Barbara Jurta, third prize for best pre-teen group; Susan Rentko, second prize for best pre-teen group; Mrs. William Ditzler, second prize for best replica costume.



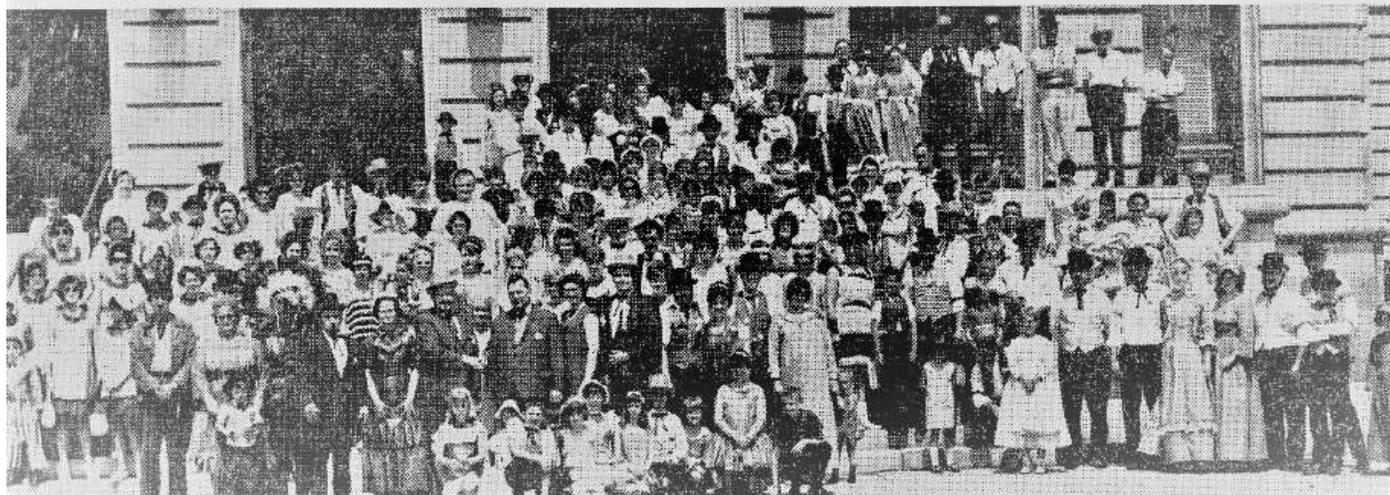
**Awards Presented in Brothers of the Brush Contest:**

**From Left first row, Howard Hoover, Anthony R. Volpicelli, 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Queen, Sandra Walters; Richard Cholewa, Stephen Salfka, Eugene Wright. Second row, Wilbur Hoover, Stanley Brojakowski, Edward Mikolinis, Gerald Hudak, Bernard Szot, Henry Wojechowski and Joseph Kochanski.**

The Nanticoke Story, was a Rogers Company Presentation, staged by Phillip R. Frable at Lincoln Stadium. The narratives, characters and events were drawn from actual historical records. Some of the past

speeches made by former local dignitaries were copied verbatim. Volunteers from Nanticoke played all the characters, charting the history of Nanticoke in 15 episodes from the first settlers up to the present day. Some of the many narrators for the show included Dr. Thomas Williams, Syl Bozinski, Alan Allan, Mrs. Paul Merrill, Carol Jones and Jane Evans. It was said that “It was the most massive public spectacle in Nanticoke in several decades, possibly rivaling the circus and tent shows that visited the town in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.”

## City's Belles and Brothers Plan Mammoth Caravan Today



This photo published in the July issue of the Sunday Independent shows various anniversary participants on the Luzerne County Court House. A caravan was planned to leave “Central Park” now Patriot Square in Nanticoke and tour through the city proper, then travel through Sheatown, Newport, Wanamie, Glen Lyon, Shickshinny, Mocanaqua and Hunlock Creek.

### IMPORTANT MILESTONES FOR NANTICOKE

#### **227 Years Ago**

William Stewart and Lazarus Stewart applied for the first colonial charter of Nanticoke in 1793.

#### **146 Years Ago:**

Carved from Hanover Twp. and one third of Newport Twp., a second charter, the charter of Nanticoke borough, was granted Jan 31, 1874

#### **94 Years Ago:**

Nanticoke officially became a city in 1926 as elected city officials took office.

**You might just find a family member or friend in photos of the many people that participated in the summer's events in 1968, go to our website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) and click on our Photos page.**

This page from the official celebration booklet shows only a portion of the committees formed to oversee the many activities planned for the city. To see all the photos of groups that participated in the summer's events in 1968, go to our website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) and click on our photos page.



ANTHONY VIORCELLI  
Baritone of Nanticoke

COMMITTEE No. 1



JOHN SHIFKOWSKI  
Solo and Tenor



BERNARD FRANKOWSKI  
Pianist



QUEEN CONTEST

Hegza Al-Sarem, Margaret Powell, Marlene-Glen Jasel, Dzejnski, Vicki Bell.

YOUTH DAY

Seated, L. to R.: Mrs. Chaitin Van Fossen, Chairman; Mrs. Irving Sabin; Mrs. Wilhelmina Quinn; Mrs. Judith Mackenaki.  
Second row: Joseph Kosakalis; Mrs. Raymond Hollings; Mrs. Dorothy Tarasick; William Schlick.  
Absent: Mrs. George Lauer; Shirley Galena.



CELEBRATION BALL COMMITTEE

Seated, L. to R.: Mrs. Rosalind Rybak; William Gitzler; Maurice Carlson; Charles Deola.  
Second row: Anthony Rindi; David Gerbo; Francis Wilkes; Arthur Davis; John Macintoshski; Tom Tignak; Eugene Muzich; Charles Marolla.



The above photo shows that many types of items that were circulating to commemorate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nanticoke's first charter.

**LOOKING FOR A YEARBOOK -  
HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE YEARBOOKS ARE LOCATED AT  
OUR OFFICES:**

Check our website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) for availability –

Recently Updated

Nanticoke High School

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

Newport High School, Wanamie,

Newport Twp.

GAR High School

Bloomsburg University

Wilkes University

Kings College



# A Bridge Too Far?

## The story of the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge

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**By: Judy Minsavage**

How many times in your lifetime have you crossed the Nanticoke-West Nanticoke Bridge? Well the answer depends on numerous factors such as, age, whether a resident or occasional visitor, and when a person started to drive or wonder farther than a friend's house a couple of blocks away. A person at the age of 70 and a lifetime resident using the bridge at least three times a week on average starting at a given age of 16 the answer would be approximately 16,848 times both ways. The answer could be more or less, but it's a bet that those who were born and raised in Nanticoke have crossed the bridge in their lifetimes to swim at the "deep hole" or fish along Harvey's Creek, spend a day at the Bloomsburg Fair, visit relatives in Plymouth, Kingston, and beyond, more times than they would like to remember. Even those who have moved to other areas or states can approximate their experience with the bridge. It has been taken for granted and mostly unloved for 105 years. It has seen a tug of war as to who held responsibility for its care and it has seen tragedy, but it remains a workhorse, as it allows Nanticoke and West Nanticoke residents to cross its length without a second thought. It has proudly stood the test of time, but for how much longer?

### A Little History:

Meetings to discuss the construction of a bridge from Nanticoke to Route 11 in West Nanticoke began in 1909. The new bridge would replace a toll bridge owned by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Crossing the toll bridge was not only expensive but dangerous and inconvenient to those who would have to wait until it was clear of train traffic. The initial meetings were conducted by Joseph P. Flanagan, Esq., John Harding, Esq., Ira Hartwell, Thomas Butkiewicz, Esq., attorney for the petitioners and J.B. Woodward, Esq., attorney for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Those who wished to see the construction of the bridge were uncertain the bridge would become a reality if funding could not be provided by Luzerne County.



This post card states "The Wyoming Valley from Pikes Peak, Nanticoke" shows the railroad bridge that once served as the only passage between Nanticoke and West Nanticoke circa 1907.

Two types of bridges were proposed, an overhead design, at the cost of \$189,786, and a surface type at a cost of \$149,276. The petition was submitted to Luzerne County in November of 1909. After a grand jury inquest in January of 1910, the Luzerne County Commissioners approved the surface bridge design, it wasn't until February 1913, that Architect D.F. Keefe of Athens, PA was hired to create plans and

specifications to construct the bridge. The work was expected to start in June 1913 and be completed in one year, but the process proved more arduous than expected.

In April 1913, the Pennsylvania Railroad questioned whether the bridge approach that crossed its tracks was a public street or was, in fact, private property belonging to the railroad. In May of 1913, the railroad asked for an injunction against the proposed bridge access road as it trespassed on its right of way. Nanticoke Officials claimed they could prove they had secured the rights to the roadway. The Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad had to approve the plans as well as the bridge would cross over their tracks on the West Nanticoke side.

Over the next few months and into 1914, hearings were held, and objections noted as to how plans for the approach to the new bridge would be formalized, but those who petitioned for the bridge were becoming impatient with the process.

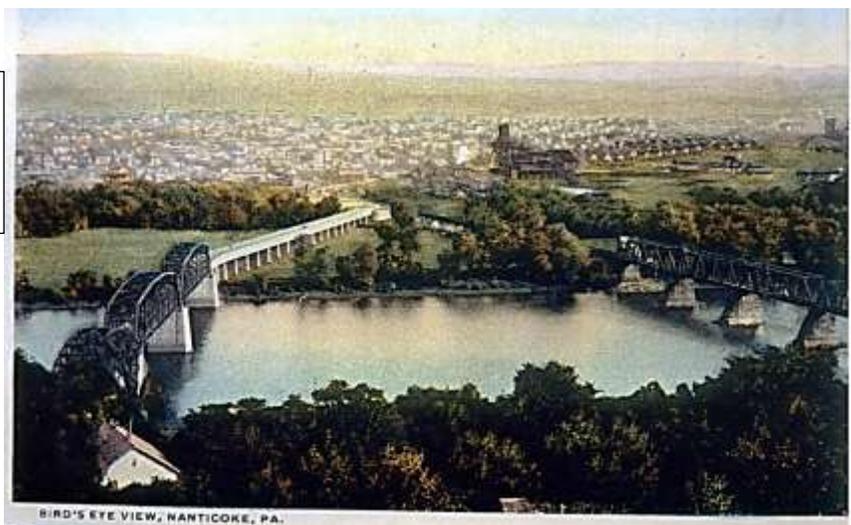
The Luzerne County solicitor asked that the railroad be compelled to furnish a map of its right of way claim at the disputed point. A survey completed indeed showed the present traveled highway encroached at some places from five to ten feet on the railroad right of way. Jointly the Luzerne County Commissioners and Nanticoke Council argued that for 27 years the road had been used by the borough and that fact alone made it a public highway.

In March of 1914, The Courts ruled in favor of the Luzerne County and Nanticoke dismissing the injunction. On July 11, 1914, Dravo Construction was awarded the contract to build the bridge at a cost of \$278,500 which according to the US Inflation Calculator is equivalent to \$7,140,573 today.

**To See the official List of the original petitioners for the Nanticoke West Nanticoke Bridge go to our website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) and click our Stories Page**

On July 13, 1914 at 9:19 p.m. it was reported that the “last brick was laid into the driveway.” An automobile from the Broadway Garage, driven by Edward Mace, was the first vehicle to pass over the new structure. In the car were H.H. Shaffer, Superintendent of Construction; Leonard Shaffer, Charles Miller, Samuel Sobers, Harry Freeman, Edward Shatting, Charles Shatting, Russell Morgan, and Russell Curtis.

**This postcard entitled “Bird’s Eye View, Nanticoke, PA circa 1920, shows both the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge and the Pennsylvania Railroad Bridge.**



By 1929, the bridge needed resurfacing, and negotiations continued over the next several years between Nanticoke City Council and Plymouth Township officials regarding installation of a much-needed traffic light. Residents complained about the ½ hour wait to pull out from the bridge onto Route 11. A traffic light was installed in 1938 but only operated on Sundays and holidays.



**This photo shows the rising waters of the Susquehanna during the flood of 1936.**



**This photo said to be taken circa 1937 shows two youngsters sitting on a wall on the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge. This photo could be earlier as The Dixie Flyer Auto was only manufactured between 1916 and 1923.**

The condition of the Nanticoke Bridge deteriorated in the 40's and 50's. The span was painted in 1944 and was virtually neglected for the following 20 years until its condition became dangerous.

It was stated in an article published in the April 2, 1950 issue of the Sunday

Independent, that "The (Nanticoke) bridge was built to serve the needs of the past, the horse and buggy days when Luzerne County had only 612 automobiles and 26 trucks registered. An automobile was out of reach of all but wealthy families, so travelers did not give much thought to the narrowness of the bridge." Efforts were made to get a new bridge built but over time those hopes faded.



**This photo from the 1960s, shows the bridge needing some serious attention.**

It is not clear what happened to the original traffic light, but in 1950, Plymouth Township residents objected to the installation of a new traffic light due to the cost. They believed it was not a township problem since Route 11 was a state highway and the bridge was owned by the county. Community Service Clubs were asked to collect the funds for the installation for the fact that West Nanticoke and part of Plymouth Township were served by the Nanticoke Fire Department and ambulance. Stanley Janowski, member of the Nanticoke Rotary Club, quickly offered the clubs assistance to pay the installation fee. Nanticoke Mayor,

Anthony Dreier, and City Solicitor Peter Kanjorski worked out an agreement with Plymouth Township to erect a traffic light. After much confusion, the traffic light was installed in July of 1950 but immediately stopped working causing a great deal of frustration as it took two months to repair.



**This photo published In the March 11, 1966 Times Leader Evening News shows a 75-foot section of a side wall which collapsed.**

In August 1950, an 18 x 4-foot section of the bridge gave way under the wear and tear of nearly 40 years of traffic. Throughout 1952 several initiatives were put forth to replace the existing bridge, A petition to the Luzerne County Commissioners on behalf of the Nanticoke Service Clubs was presented by Atty. Neville Shea, Jean Evans, of The VFW; Leonard Pawlowski, American Legion; Martin Znaniecki, Nanticoke Businessmen's Assoc. and members of the Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary Clubs and AMVETS. It was also hoped that the State would intervene to replace the bridge but to no avail.

Tragedy strikes in 1957-58 the bridge saw tragedy as two young teens were killed as the car in which they were riding bounced off a girder through a guardrail and plunged 40 feet into the Susquehanna River. It was fourth in a string of accidents that happened at the same site, one of which also claimed the life of a serviceman

## Then came Agnes

After the Agnes flood, the bridge was not reopened to traffic right away. It was learned that the bridge repairs and updates would cost \$450,000 and there would be no chance for Federal funding as the government claimed the deterioration of the bridge was not flood related.



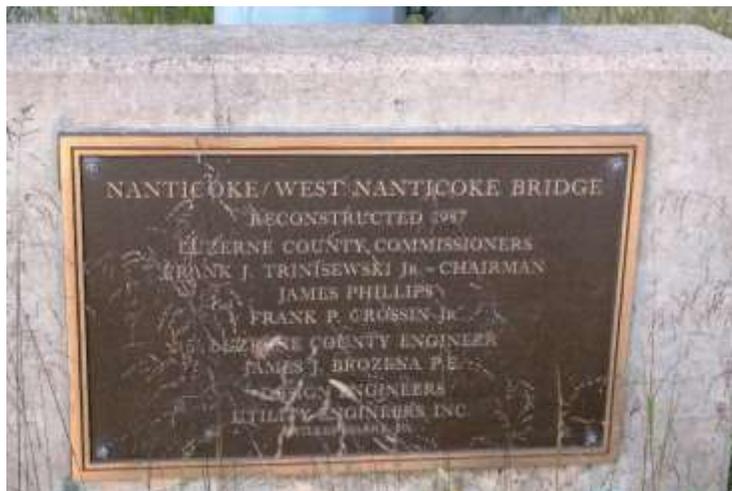
**The flooding caused by Hurricane Agnes in June of 1972 added to existing damage of the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke bridge. Federal funding was not provided for repair.**

In a meeting with County Commissioners, E.C. Wideman and Frank Crossin, Nanticoke Mayor E. Edward Gorka, Frank Knorek, president and George Ellis, executive secretary of the Greater Nanticoke area Chamber of Commerce; Arthur Coombs, Carl Rees, William Samuels and Richard Moskaluk, members of the Nanticoke Kiwanis Club, R.E. George of Colonial Village Shopping Center and John Churnetski, Luzerne County engineer, pleaded with county commissioners to find the money to repair the bridge. By 1973, a \$30,000 improvement program was launched to replace a 120-foot concrete parapet along the sidewalk and to install steel railing.

In 1987, some improvements were completed and a stone memorial placed.

## Bridge gets historical acknowledgement in 2016

The Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge is heralded as rare by Nathan Holth, author and webmaster. On his website [historicbridges.org](http://historicbridges.org) it is stated that “This bridge consists of two large pin-connected Pennsylvania truss spans and a slightly smaller truss that is a combination of a



Pennsylvania and a Parker truss with multiple connection types. This bridge is a rare surviving example in Pennsylvania of a large pin-connected truss bridge. Pin-connected truss bridges once carried many of Pennsylvania's highways over the large rivers in the Commonwealth.

At one time, Pennsylvania was one of the few states with a sizable population of pin-connected truss bridges crossing large rivers.”

The post goes on to say that most of the bridges in Pennsylvania with this type of construction have been demolished. The organization also goes into great detail about the design of the bridge and how it was unusually altered in construction, emphasizing how one end of the bridge was reinforced, they believe, because cars and trucks would be idling on the bridge for extended periods of time to gain access to Route 11. It also emphasizes the need to preserve the bridge because of the unique feature of combining the two types of truss construction in the same structure.

Unfortunately the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Inventory of historic bridges does not see the bridge as particularly noteworthy and will not list it as historic, neither will the National Register of Historic Places although Holth, and his Historic Bridge Organization have petitioned them to do so. To read a detailed finding regarding the construction and historical aspects of the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge go to [historicbridge.org/Nanticoke](http://historicbridge.org/Nanticoke).

According to the website: [historicbridges.org](http://historicbridges.org), Nathan Holth holds a Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a Political Science Major and a History Minor. He has over ten years' experience studying and working with historic bridges. Since 2008, he has volunteered and/or been hired by a several experts in the historic bridge field.

## Time may be running out

Recently Luzerne County and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation officials imposed a new 15-ton weight limit on the county-owned bridge. The decision was made to reduce any further damage to the bridge and give enough time to get funding and a cost for repair. The road to either repair or replace the bridge is expected to be long and arduous if Federal or State funding is applied for as the bridge would be added to an already long list of bridges needing repair or replacement.

Although the future of the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge is uncertain, it will always hold many memories for residents of Nanticoke, West Nanticoke and Plymouth. It has been a link to many enjoyable times. When crossing next time, give the bridge a thought, as to all the years that it has served the community and to the hope that its unique construction will not be lost to history. 📷

## Some Interesting Facts:

In 1915, A road crossing watchman kept a tally on the bridge over a 24-hour period and released these figures. From 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. 788 autos, 2,215 pedestrians, and 49 teams crossed the Nanticoke Bridge. At night 141 autos, 1,100 pedestrians, and 24 teams were counted. Taking an average of the number of people in the autos and the teams, it was estimated that approximately 8,000 people crossed the span in 24 hours.

In August of 1950, as part of an initiative to replace the Nanticoke bridge with a new structure, State police and groups of officials set up at the Broadway entrance to the bridge to engage in a traffic survey to see how many vehicles crossed the bridge during a normal day. They positioned themselves on the bridge in order to ask where a particular motorist came from and where they were going, but motorists were nervous about seeing the group and veered away from the bridge. Thus, the initiative failed to produce any results.

**We're pretty sure many crossed the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge to get to this favorite location. This circa 1940s photo submitted by Steve Wachisen, shows adults and youngsters enjoying the spectacular views and spending an enjoyable afternoon at Tilbury Knob in West Nanticoke.**





## 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

*Frank Lape* - 52<sup>nd</sup> PA Infantry  
*William Lape* - 9<sup>th</sup> PA Infantry Imprisoned at Andersonville  
*Leisenring, William* -  
*Cornelius Line* - 41<sup>st</sup> PA Infantry  
*Samuel Line* - 41<sup>st</sup> PA Infantry  
*T. McLeish* - Officer

### WORLD WAR I

*Dr. B. Cooper*  
*Thomas P. Cooper*  
*Thomas J. Cooper*  
*Dr. Joseph P. Corgan*  
*Peter Costanzo* - Killed in Action  
*Ambrose A. Coyle*  
*Delbert Craig*  
*John L. Craig*  
*Max Crauser*  
*Edward Cravitz*  
*Charles Crawford* - Battery C 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery  
*Dr. J. Elmer Croop*  
*Thomas Crosswell*, - G Co. PA Reserve Militia

### WORLD WAR II

*Edward H. Cannon* - Pvt First Class, Bronze Star  
*Herman H. Englehart* - Drowned in Action South Pacific  
*W.W. Epperson*  
*Robert A. Evans* - POW  
*Joseph A. Fabian* - Pharmacist's Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Navy  
*Andrew Finn* - POW  
*Orville F. Flynn*  
*Francis P. Ford* - Killed in action - France  
*Joseph S. Formulak*  
*Paul E. Fouchia* - Coast Guard  
*Andrew W. Frantz* - Killed in action - France

### KOREAN WAR

*Joseph E. Cannon* - Corporal - Marines  
*Arthur Will* - 70<sup>th</sup> Truck Battalion  
*Stanley Wilushewski* - 92<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Searchlight Company 8<sup>th</sup> Div.  
*Albert Wolfe* - Air Corp  
*Donald Woods* - 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.  
*John P. Wyda* - Army Medical Corp  
*Narciss Wydawski* - Marines  
*Theodore Yanakowski* - 2<sup>nd</sup> Chemical Mortar Battalion  
*Ronald B. Young* - Air Force  
*Leonard A. Yachna* - 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division  
*Edmund Zajaczkowski* - Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Co. A 23<sup>rd</sup> Reg.  
*Henry Ziglinski* - 8076 Mobile Army Surgical Hospital  
*Narcey Zmijewski* - US 512<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber Squadron

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

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

*In this and our next issue, companion articles written by Dr. Andrea Nerozzi, Associate Director, Maslow STEM School and Science teacher at Wyoming Seminary Upper School will appear. The first article, *An Immigrant's Journey* tells the story of an immigrant who arrived in Nanticoke in 1873/4, just at the time that Nanticoke evolved from a village to a borough as a result of the developing coal industry. The second, *Nanticoke on the Threshold*, references a map from that time period to describe the businesses and people who were part of the nascent community. Both of these articles highlight the type of resources available through the Nanticoke Historical Society.*

### **Author's note – Andrea Nerozzi**

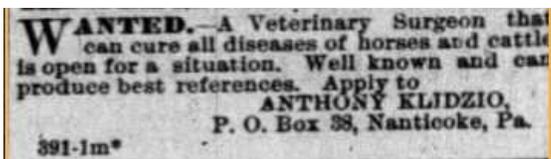
*I find the stories of why people came to America to be fascinating. Equally riveting are the immigrants' journeys, what they encountered when they first arrived, and finally, how the arrival of the immigrants altered the places in which they settled. Nanticoke offers a wonderful opportunity to explore these migration narratives and weave personal stories with the development of the community. As you investigate your family history, I encourage you to do some research to create a sense of surroundings, and make history come to life! Remember, the Nanticoke Historical Society is ready to help, with hard copy and digital resources, and a knowledgeable staff to assist you in your quest!*

## **An Immigrant's Journey**

**By:**

**Dr. Andrea Nerozzi**

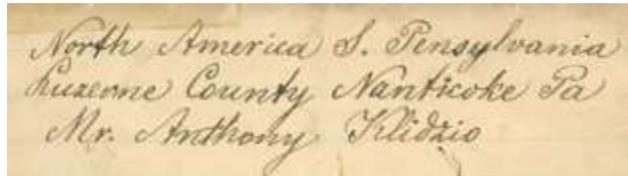
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My Great-Great Grandmother, Rozalja Bielinska came to America in 1873 to marry Antoni Klidzio, who arrived a few years earlier, and worked for the Susquehanna Coal company as a stock doctor, a skill he learned as an estate manager in Poland. Antoni also sought veterinary work independently through newspaper advertisements (Wilkes Barre Record, 1875) and, later, Directories (Nanticoke Directory 1887). The NHS holdings include these sources, which can also be located through subscription online services.

Although growing rapidly, Nanticoke, with a population of about 2,000, would remain classified as a village for another year. The Polish population was small, just over 100, with the first Polish families arriving in 1869 (Accursia 1946). Following the advice of a relative, Antoni, who was eager to start a family, bravely sent a proposal in a letter to a woman he never met. Fortunately, we still have the letter in our possession. Antoni writes “Emboldened by cousin Żylińska’s suggestion, I come to you Lady with a request to accept the title of my wife” and sends a photograph. Later that year, in a letter that is now lost, Rozalja accepts the proposal. If you are cleaning house or finalizing an estate and find old documents that you no longer wish to have, rather than discarding them, please consider donating them to the historical society where they will become a treasured part of the collection, accessible to historians and genealogists.

The address that Antoni provided to Rozalja lacks a house number and street, or a PO Box, a consequence of the village not yet establishing official names for many streets. Only “Main Street” is labelled in a map from the period (Beers 1873). Therefore, mail was delivered through common knowledge of the recipient’s residence. Alternatively, individuals could check for mail at the Post Office, which was located in a store owned by Silas Alexander. I wonder how many other engagements were made possible through the services of the Post Office.

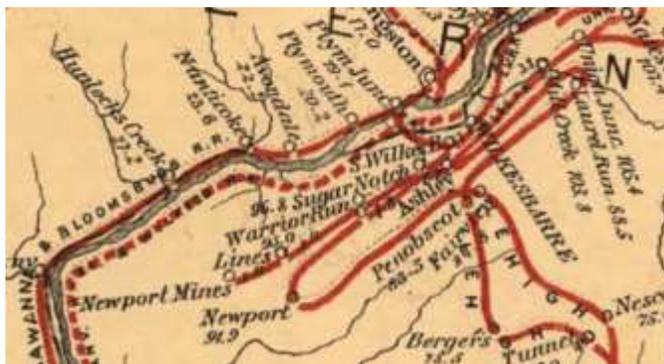


I can only speculate on why Rozalja accepted Antoni’s proposal, but it is likely there is more than romance involved, as this investigation into the context of Rozalja’s life reveals. Her family was from Warsaw, Poland, where her father served as a Burgess, and, like Antoni’s family, rebelled against the Russian occupation. In 1873, Rozalja was employed as a governess in Lithuania, near Kovno (Kaunas, Google maps), a region that had recently suffered a crop failure and cholera outbreak. This tragedy, along with the lack of economic opportunity and persistent social unrest, resulted in the emigration of many Lithuanians. Although adjacent, the cultures of Lithuania and Poland are distinct, and it is likely that Rozalja, like Antoni, was in a fairly isolated situation. In short, Antoni and Rozalja had similar backgrounds, and the support of their extended families was enough assurance that their marriage would be successful.



After Rozalja accepted the proposal, Antoni must have followed through on his promise to send her a “ship ticket that will bring you to New York, where our marriage will make me the happiest of people.” However, I am unable to locate Rozalja’s name among passenger lists to New York or other harbors. When researching your family, you can assume that some things will be more difficult to determine than you imagined. In this case, it is likely that her name was mis-spelled, as the window of inquiry is narrow, October 1873 to February 1874. I may have to enlist professionals for help!

It is safe to assume that in 1873 a single woman in her mid-twenties, even if educated and able to speak several languages, would not travel alone. Her companions may have included others who emigrated to Nanticoke at the encouragement of relatives already in the region. Presumably, Rozalja started her journey by taking a train to a German port. The steamship leaving either Hamburg or Bremen, would take a little over a week to cross the Atlantic. If she entered through New York Harbor, Rozalja would have disembarked at Castle Garden to be processed and screened for infectious disease, as Ellis Island did not begin operating until 1892. Alternatively, the plans may have altered to bring her to Philadelphia, or even Baltimore.



Assuming that Rozalja entered New York Harbor, she would likely arrive in Wilkes-Barre via the Lehigh Valley or Lehigh Susquehanna (LS) Railroads, and then transition to the LS Nanticoke Branch, which was completed in 1862 and extended to Wanamie (Chamberlin nd). The closest passenger station to Nanticoke on the extension appears to be in Alden (West 2020), where she and other passengers would then be taken by wagon to their final

destination. Later, Nanticoke included several passenger stations, the most notable on Arch Street.

I wonder at what point in this journey Rozalja and Antoni first met? New York? Wilkes-Barre? Nanticoke? What did she think when she set foot on the dusty Main Street of the small borough? It is likely that she arrived before the wedding date and stayed with friends in a private residence, rather than in one of the four hotels in town. A popular location at that time was the Fountain Hotel, owned by Xavier Wernet, which later was named the Wernet House, seen here in a sketch from the late 1870s (NHS).



At that time, Nanticoke was a Roman Catholic mission field, with services held in individual homes and officiated with visiting clergy. The Polish community was deeply rooted in its faith and “twenty families and as many single men decided to get annually a Polish missionary from Chicago until a pastor would be installed in the newly founded parish of St. Stanislaus.” (Sister Accursia 1946). Although communities gathered, RC churches were not constructed until later, Saint Stanislaus in 1875 (Centennial 1975). In the coming years, the couple would become members of this community, with Rozalja offering Polish language instruction. Be sure to consult the histories of local churches in your research; they often contain personal details.

Antoni and Rozalja were married on February 15, 1874, with a certificate officiated by Saint Nicholas RC Church in Wilkes-Barre (family files), but the location of the ceremony is not clear. Their union was witnessed by two Poles, Zygmund Twaronksy and Wladyslaw Czechowitz. By researching the names of these two individuals, I learned that Wladyslaw later married Antoni’s niece, Alexandria Klidzio, which the family didn’t know existed! My advice leave no stone unturned! In requisite time, on November 22, 1874, Mary Klidzio, my great grandmother, was born, seen here in a family photograph with her parents from 1876. If you have photographs of relatives that you don’t want, or can’t identify, but were residents of Nanticoke (check the photographer’s information on the back), please consider donating them to the NHS! You can also deposit digital files of your collection for others to reference. 📄



*I hope you decide to investigate your family history! I’m sure you will learn a lot along the way! Although tedious, it is important to document where you accessed information.*

**Andrea Nerozzi**

**PART II OF THIS SERIES BY DR. ANDREA NEROZZI AND RESEARCH PROVIDED BY NHS INFORMATION OFFICER JOHN SHERRICK, ENTITLED “NANTICOKE ON THE THRESHOLD,” WILL BE PUBLISHED IN OUR NEXT EDITION OF NANTICOKE LEGACY.**

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# Underground Nanticoke

Actually, not so underground.

**By: Judy Minsavage**



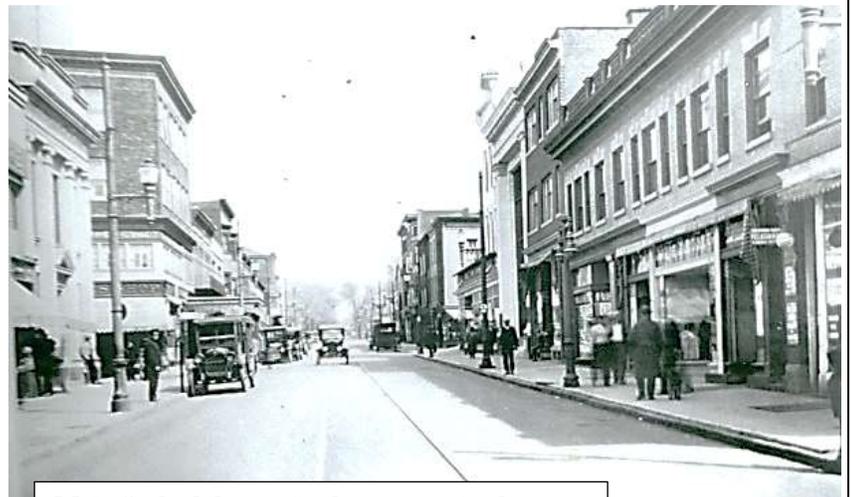
**This treasure is located on the Green Street  
side of the Victoria Building**

It seems that every fair-sized town or city has its share of surprises. Walk down a street that you have traversed every day, something catches your eye and you wonder, “Where did that come from?”

Nanticoke, too, has its share of “underground” treasures that have somehow survived that largely go unnoticed. You may have to look quick to find them, but if you do run across one, let the Nanticoke Historical Society know about it. We love discoveries.

Chances are you’ve passed these lamp posts thousands of times and not taken any notice of them. They are definitely old and as far as we know, there are only four of them left in the city. Perhaps you can take a hint as to their location from the photos. These lampposts which are located at the intersection of South Prospect and East Green Streets, have, we suspect, stood since the 1920s. The reason we suspect this is because of this photo of Main Street in the 1920s. Similar lamp posts lined Main Street and the cars are definitely of that era.

Benjamin Franklin introduced Street Lighting in the United States. The original lights were candles placed inside of a glass shade. Gas lights were introduced in 1792 and were introduced in the US in Newport, Rhode Island in 1803. After Thomas Edison



**Main St. had decorative lamp posts in the**

patented the first commercially successful light bulb in 1879, streetlights were used for the first time in Cleveland, Ohio when 12 lights were installed around the city's Public Square.

In 1905 Nanticoke City Council voted to install Arc Lights on streets such as Main, Prospect and South Streets in the city. Arc Lights, or Lamps as they were most generally called, were used by many US cities in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were exceptionally bright and needed rather high poles as they are considered a predecessor to the lighting that is seen today on major highways. One drawback for these high-powered lights was that they were said to require substantial maintenance.

Whether the Arc Lights were actually installed in Nanticoke or some other type were used is not known, however the four poles that remain at the corner of Prospect and Green Streets did in fact contribute to the lighting of the city in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The next time you are in the neighborhood, take a moment and inspect the design of the poles and try to picture them painted added a particular beauty and charm to the streets. 📷



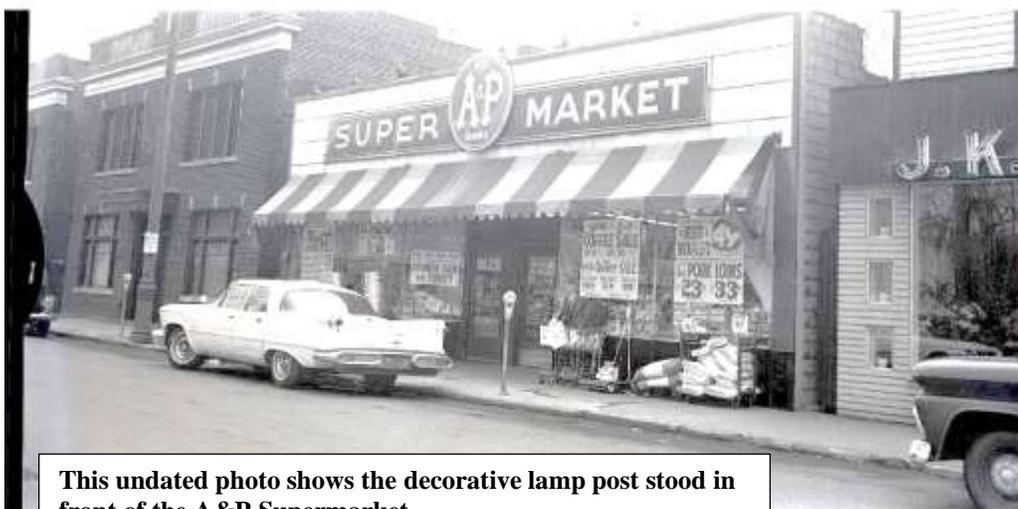
The photo to the left of a home at the corner of Prospect and Green Streets shows the pole pictured above in the far right of the picture



This post is across from the Victoria Building on Green Street



This post stands on Prospect Street



This undated photo shows the decorative lamp post stood in front of the A&P Supermarket.

## DID YOU ANSWER LAST 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 Nanticoke Trojans, 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.

We're sure most everyone found one item wrong with the photo. The "h" was left out of the "Our State Champs" section of the sign. That was easy, but the other thing wrong would only be obvious to the players, coaches, and anyone who follows the Nanticoke Trojan's Basketball team records. In 1969, the team suffered a devastating loss in a playoff game to the Steelton-Highspire Steamrollers and were not State Champions in that year. In this photo, the Wilkes-Barre Barons basketball team honored the Nanticoke Area Trojan team at King's College and had somehow thought the team won the state championship. It was supposed that the "rush job" to have the sign painted for the event was to blame for the misspelling of the word champs. The most interesting part of the answer to this question though lies in the weeks before this event and the controversial playoff game that resulted in a spectacular upset of the Trojans. **Read the Rest of the Story on page 23.**

## **The Rest of the Story:**

It was 1969, and the Nanticoke Trojan Basketball team was ranked third in the state, one of two unbeaten teams in the running for the PIAA Class A title. The Trojans beat West Scranton for the District 2 crown and that win capped 11 league titles in 15 years for team coach Sylvester “Syl” Bozinski. Excitement was building that perhaps the ‘69 team would bring the state title back to Nanticoke repeating Bozinski’s championship team in 1961. Bozinski wouldn’t compare the two teams, or predict the outcome, saying “We haven’t gone that far in the playoffs to get excited about it.” They still had to get by Shamokin.

The Trojans went on to beat Shamokin, which set up the semi-final matchup between Nanticoke and Steelton-Highspire School District located near Harrisburg, PA. At the half, Nanticoke had a 16-point lead, but something went awry in the next half that left coaches, players and fans scratching their heads. Nanticoke was called for 23 traveling violations in the second half, after breezing through the first half with no such calls. Fans were mesmerized and questioned the officiating, and the sudden turn-around as Nanticoke’s lead was quickly reduced. Assistant coaches Rich Rutkowski, John Kashatus and Joe Ciampi wanted to call time-out but Bozinski, not a fan of time-outs, refused saying “ We’ve just got to get settled.” Steelton-Highspire breezed past Nanticoke taking the semi-final game with a 57-54 score.

Of course, many locals complained about the officiating. one reported conspiracy theory circulating cast suspicion on league officials for wanting the competition to continue in a more lucrative area where ticket sales would be doubled, another being officials wanting District 1 team Penn Crest to have an “easier opponent” who they felt was Steelton. But one thing is for certain. The Nanticoke Trojans team players and coaches remained gentlemen and accepted the defeat with grace and dignity. Dave Washinski team forward was quoted as saying, “We took it as a team. We were taught by coach to play your best and usually you come out a winner. But in this case, it didn’t.”

## **This Issue’s Mystery Question**

**In 1946 during WWII, what popular commodity was being rationed in Nanticoke and across the US with no new stock being produced for market? The reserves of the product were being used in the manufacture of smokeless powder, fuel to propel torpedoes, synthetic rubber and medical supplies?**

**The answer will be published on our website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) in the coming weeks and in the next issue of Nanticoke Legacy.**