

NANTICOKE LEGACY

NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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



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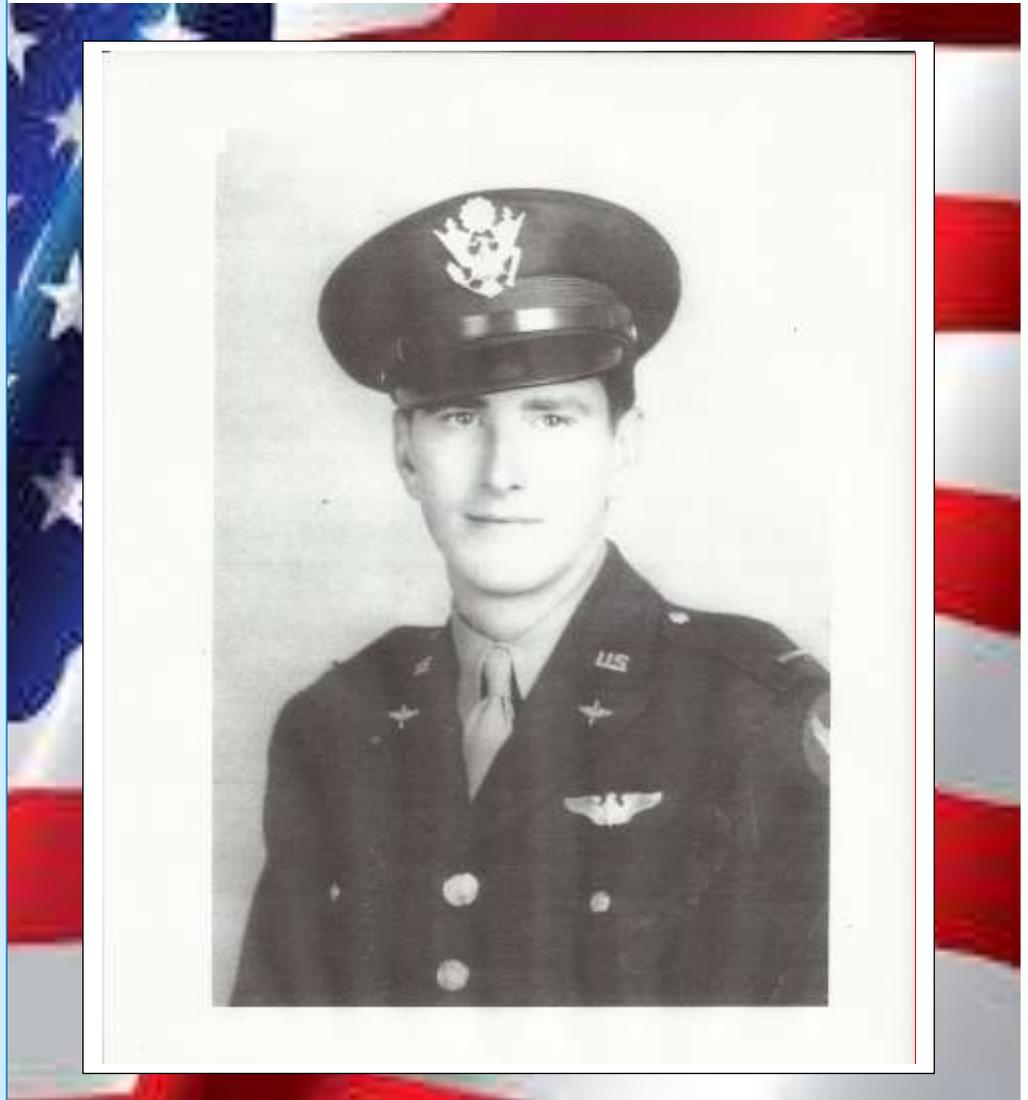
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Looking for a Yearbook?



BRINGING A HERO HOME

Pershing J. Hill grew up in Nanticoke, went off to war in 1942 and never returned home. Here is the story of this brave young man and the amazing efforts to find and bring home his remains 76 years after the fateful WWII air battle that took his young life in 1944 .

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 To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific area where these articles may be preserved, appreciated and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

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

Al Borowski – Lifetime Member

Thank you for your generous donations:

Andy Sherbine

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



UPDATE:

In our last issue of Nanticoke Legacy, in an article entitled “A Time to Celebrate Nanticoke’s Early Beginnings” we highlighted the activities that were presented and the people who participated as the city of Nanticoke celebrated the 175th Anniversary of its first charter. We would like to thank Mark Wolfe for submitting this wonderful photo of his mother Eva Wolfe taken in 1968, Eva designed and sewed this extremely beautiful costume for the celebration.

NOTE: a great deal of the society’s information is digitized. Call our office at 570-258-1367 for more information on how to obtain a research form or go online at www.nanticokehistoryonline.org and click on the Research Page.

NEWS

Nanticoke Historical Society Receives Award



Ron Breznay, president of the Wyoming Valley Stamp Club presents the Certificate of Award to Julianna Zarzycki, president and Chet Zaremba, vice-president of the Nanticoke Historical Society

Usually there is one Certificate of Award given each year by the Wyoming Valley Stamp Club, a chapter of the American Philatelic Society, but this year is an exception. Known as the Sparkplug Award, Ron Breznay, Club President and Tom Bowman, Club Vice-President recently presented the certificate to both the Hoyt Library and the Nanticoke Historical Society. The Club's Executive Board voted to give the awards based on the recipients' assistance in providing a space for the club's bi-monthly meetings. The certificate was proudly accepted by

Julianna Zarzycki, President of the Nanticoke Historical Society and Chet Zaremba, Vice-President, as Breznay stated, "On behalf of the club, I say thank you to the Nanticoke Historical Society and to Julianna and Chet in particular."

According to the Philatelic Society's website, "The APS has members in more than 110 countries. And is the largest, non-profit organization for stamp collectors in the world. Formed in 2016, the Wyoming Valley Stamp Club chapter, offers the following amenities, a Facebook page, Club library, Displays at the Hoyt Library, Field trips, Educational programs

presented to kids and those interested in stamp collecting, as well as various projects. The club welcomes anyone who is a stamp collector or enthusiast."



The certificate presented by the Wyoming Valley Stamp Club to the Nanticoke Historical Society, will be displayed in a place of honor.



Chet Zaremba, relates the story of the acquisition of the Nanticoke Stove, (in the background) to Ron Breznay and Tom Bowman, President and Vice President respectively of the Wyoming Valley Stamp Club. To read the story of the Nanticoke Stove, visit our website www.nanticokehistoryonline.org and click on our stories page, Page down to our Past Newsletter and click on the February 2018 issue.

Brrr... It's Cold in Here!

Since 2010, The Nanticoke Historical Society has been privileged to have as its headquarters the historic Samantha Mill House at 495 East Main Street. We have welcomed many people to our offices at the location and those who have toured the home found it not only charming but also filled with memorabilia that recalls a simpler time. But that is only the beginning, we have an immense number of photos, records and books stored there as well. Unfortunately, though, as with all homes there comes an occasional problem.



This undated photo shows the Mill House fireplace. Today, its stately presence welcomes visitors to the Nanticoke Historical Society

As the weather became colder, and the heat turned up, a strange noise resonated throughout the home. A sort of rumble then a booming sound. That is when we discovered the furnace was not working properly and for safety sake it had to be shut down immediately. The society together with the Mill Memorial Library are working on a solution, but unfortunately funds are desperately needed to continue the work.

With all that is happening with Covid-19 and with the holidays upon us, it is not a convenient time for this unexpected blip on our screen. But, of course, there is really no good time for a broken furnace, especially with the balance of the winter still ahead. We respectfully are asking our members and friends that if there are a few dollars left after filling all the Christmas stockings and wish lists, to consider a donation to help us with the installation of a new furnace. An estimate has been given, and we are prepared to move forward in order to keep the Mill House available for our members and friends for years to come. Any amount will be greatly appreciated and will go toward maintaining the beautiful homestead of one of Nanticoke's first families. If you would like to help with a donation, please send a check made out to Nanticoke Historical Society, 495 East Main Street, Nanticoke PA, noted "Furnace Donation." Thank you for your consideration, and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!



HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WHILE SHOPPING AMAZON THIS CHRISTMAS.

What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization.

How do I support the Nanticoke Historical Society when shopping on AmazonSmile?

Log on to smile.amazon.com, you will be prompted to list your charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. List the Nanticoke Historical Society. Amazon will remember your selection. From then on log onto at smile.amazon.com to purchase from Amazon - every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation. 🎄

It Takes a City

By Judy Minsavage

It started with letters of request addressed to 11 “public spirited citizens” from Nanticoke Mayor, Frank J. Wadzinski, asking their advice in planning Nanticoke’s part in Luzerne County’s 1976 Bicentennial Celebration. The letters addressed to John Haydock, Millard Galat Jr., Stanley Wall, Mrs. Leonard Olzinski, Dolores Sheldon, Steve Valence, Frank Mack, Robert Evanish, Ronnie Bau, Mary Welch and Robert Borowski, asked for ideas to exhibit the theme of patriotism and devotion to country, “absent of commercialism” as the mayor put it, “the country has too much of that.”



In October of 1975, A flag, reported to have been carried at the Revolutionary Battle of Bennington in New York State, was displayed at a meeting of the Nanticoke Bicentennial Committee. Pictured back row left to right, Michael Yurkowski, Paul Kanjorski, E. Edward Gorka, Stanley Jarolin, Wesley Harris, Henry Krasucki, Stanley Glazenski, Anthony Chrzen, Leonard Omolecki, Joseph Grabowski, Louis Paluzzi, Col. Andrew Winiarczyk, Steven Huk. Seated left to right, Dorothy Stankovic, Dorothy Pollock, Jule Znaniecki, Frank Knorek, Millard Galat, Sr., Mary Welch, Catherine Babskie and Leon Borofski.

After that initial contact, it was off to the races as a Bicentennial Committee was formed listing the following: Chairman Frank Knorek, Co-chair Millard Galat Sr., and Co-chair Jule Znaniecki. Other members included, Mary Welch, Dorothy Stankovic, Donna Bromfield, Col. Andrew Winiarczyk, Steve Huk, Stanley Jarolin, Dorothy Pollock, Ed Gorka, Bernard Shiffka, Leo Novak, Charles Pizont, Lou Paluzzi, Jack Hurley, Ronald Stashak, Leon Borofski, Catherine Babskie, and Wesley Harris. The first meeting of the committee was held on October 14, 1975 where a formal Bicentennial Community Application was completed

Committee members contacted the Greater Nanticoke School District to possibly come up with “creative and stimulating ideas” in which faculty and students could participate. On the agenda were reviewing the History of Nanticoke, touring historical homes and locations in the city, and studying local themes for posters to be placed in various city locations. Music, costumes, an “old-fashioned” picnic with games and an Olympic-type marathon field day were suggested.

Two Bicentennial Balls were held at Holy Trinity Church Hall, and the St. Stanislaus Hall. Music was provided by Stanky and the Coal Miners and the Tri Tones. Both dances would kick-off the city’s celebration of its 200th birthday.



Consider giving a gift membership to a family member or a friend for access to reams of research material, books and memorabilia. Call our office at 570-258-1367.



In December 1975, An Ethnic Tree trimming event was held at the Nanticoke Municipal Building and was designated the official start of the Bicentennial Year. Helping with the events from left Dorothy Stankovich, Ron Stashik, Dorothy Pollak, Mary Welsh, and Anthony Piscotty.

200th Birthday - 1976

Various service clubs joined the initiative with Bicentennial Committee members welcoming Leroy Czech of the 400 Club; Eleanor Walters, Quality Hill Playground; Mary Lou and Laura Kohan, J.S. Fine P.T.A.; Rita Legins, Jr. High School P.T.A.; Genevieve Sabatini and Eleanor Uchen, Democratic Women's Club; Dawson Jenkins, Rotary Club; Louis Micocci and Michael Birenza, Sons of Italy Lodge 1506. Chamber of Commerce members George Ellis, Millard Galat, Thomas Fedor, Robert Rundle, Frank Knorek, Joseph O'Karma, Joseph Siesko and Millard Galat, Jr., presented a donation to the Bicentennial Committee to help with the planning efforts.



A Bicentennial Home Christmas Decorating Contest was held. Winners seated left to right Susan Rentko, first prize winner; Mrs. Jean Novak, Mrs. Thomas Painter, and Mrs. Helen Robachefski. Standing John Rentko, Albert Buchanon, Donna Bromfield, Thomas Painter, Tom Painter Jr, Stanley Robachefski, Stanley Glazenski, judge; E. Ward Gorka, judge; Absent from photo were Mr. and Mrs. Richard Zipay also contest winners.

In February of 1976, a large amount of city residents attended as Pennsylvania State Representative Daniel J. Flood presented Nanticoke Councilman Stanley Glazenski with a Bicentennial Flag for Nanticoke, designating the city a Bicentennial Community at the city building

“Patriotism can never die when ethnic groups such as your own support their country and flag in such a manner as you are doing today.” Stated Flood.



Environmental awareness was also addressed as local Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts Jay Cees, Key Club members and local businesses, such as Allan's Scrap Yard and Vector Control joined to sponsor the Johnny Horizon '76 initiative locally and it's Let's Clean Up America for our 200th Birthday Program. Thomas Winarski was chairperson and Mark Skopek, co-chair.

A history of the City of Nanticoke was compiled and available for purchase. The book was to be included in a time capsule that was to be buried on July 4 at Central Park. Homes were decorated with appropriate themes and trophies were awarded for the most beautiful original and outstanding Bicentennial theme.

In May of 1976, a Fiesta was planned for Central Park (now Patriot Square) Planned were pet, bike and doll contests along with a magic show, dancers, parade, and of course polka music courtesy of Stanky and the Coal Miners. Winners of a sponsored essay contest were Charmaine Higgins, Patricia Domzalski, Nancy Canarini, Nancy Rowlands, Kevin Duncan, and Albert Skowski.

July 4, 1976

The entire city either participated or attended in what was called the largest parade in city history as more than 25,000 spectators from all parts of the region lined the streets of Nanticoke. Lt. Col. Andrew W. Winiarczyk, USA- Ret. Was chairman of the event assisted by Ronald Stashak and Al Ruck. Division commanders were James Goodwin, Millard Hafele, John Uren, Thomas Ellswood, Harold Welch, Melvin Swithers and Gary Bray. The parade had six division each with a musical unit.

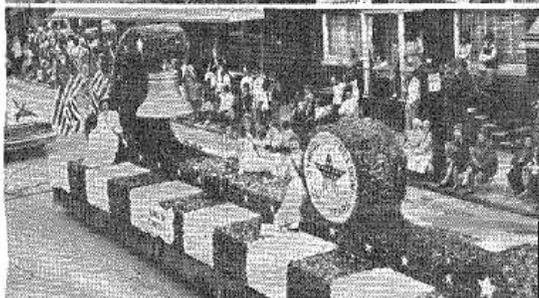
Largest Parade in History Held Last Sunday



In the top photo the Fishing Creek Confederates, a fife and drum corps from Bloomsburg, stopped awhile to entertain onlookers



In the second photo the official viewing stand in Central Park contained VIPs and judges left to right, Frank Knorek, chairman of the Bicentennial Committee; Atty. Frank Harrison, chairman Luzerne County Bicentennial Commission; City Councilman Anthony Chrzan; Clerk of Courts, Eugene Hudak; Rep. R. Omolecki; Lt. Col. Andrew W. Winiarczyk, USA-Ret; Councilman Fred Shupnik; Stanley J. Glzenski, Mary Kozlowski, Mayor, Frank Wadzinski; Mayor Walter Lisman of Wilkes-Barre and Carol Loucke.



The Bottom photos shows the Hanover Township float which was declared the first-place winner of the parade

In total, there were 95 churches, organizations, schools and clubs and an excess of 175 marching units, floats, antique vehicles, with approximately 2,000 participants, most from the city of Nanticoke.

Rose Filippi and her “ladies” from the Park Towers fed the multitudes that attended the parade by getting up in the wee hours of the morning to make sandwiches and decorate the Towers community room for guests. At the start of the parade, the St. Joseph’s Church float broke down. John Rentko stepped in and magically fixed the float. Among those riding on the float were Mrs. Frank Dudinski, Susan Dudinski, Mrs. Charles Marcella, Ann Marie Marcella, Mrs. Richard Kolesar and Jeffrey Kolesar. It was a day full of fun and the unexpected, but Councilman Tony Chrzan wrapped up the overall feeling of the day by saying “I never expected to see this kind of a turnout in the city.”

The July 4th celebration culminated at what was then known as the city’s Central Park for a program that included ringing of church bells in conjunction with the ringing of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia occurring at the moment when the Liberty Bell proclaimed the independence of a new nation in 1776. A unification of nation was experienced as communities across the country participated at the same time.

At that time, Nanticoke’s Central Park was rededicated and thereafter has been known as Patriot Square in an effort to reflect and rekindle the spirit of patriotism and pay tribute to those who gave their lives for the freedoms enjoyed by all who have come to the United States to find a better life.



This photo shows the members of the Nanticoke Bicentennial Committee meeting for the last time to place mementos into a time capsule buried in Patriot Square.

Wrapping up a year of celebration

1976 was a tremendous year not only for our nation, but for Nanticoke and other communities across the country as people worked together to celebrate the 200th birthday of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. After all the festivities concluded, The Nanticoke Bicentennial Committee met one last time to place historical papers, newspaper, photos, mementos and the history of Nanticoke into a time capsule fabricated by Time Capsules, Inc. which was then buried in Patriots’ Square at 2 p.m. on Sunday, December 19, 1976. The monument that now stands in the center of the park was erected over the spot to mark the location of the Tricentennial celebration. The 6 x 12 x 18 aluminum and ceramic box, fabricated by Time Capsules, Inc., was hermetically sealed and will remain in that location until its scheduled opening in 2076.



facebook

Follow the Nanticoke Historical Society on Facebook:



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

Robert Montgomery

William Moyer – 9th PA Infantry Imprisoned at Andersonville

William Nash -

Edward Owens

John R. Powell – served with Co. K 132nd Regiment

Shadrach Reese – Served at Harper's Ferry, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg

WORLD WAR I

Ignatz Cruk

Emmett Curtis

Kenneth Curtis

John Russell Curtis

Walter Czaplinski

Fred Daluski

Louis Danilowicz – wounded in action

Wladislaw Dargiewicz – wounded in action

Peter Davidowicz

Alan Davies – Battery C, 3rd Field Artillery

Arthur Davis - wounded in action

Clarence Davis

Daniel Davis

David W. Davis – Aviation Corps

Hayden Davis – Battery C, 3rd Field Artillery

John R. Davis – US Navy

William Davis – Aviation Corps

William S. Davis – Army Quartermaster's Corp

Howard Deily – Naval Reserves

WORLD WAR II

Warren J. French - Killed in Europe

John Frinsko

Wesley Frinsko, Killed in Action

Julius J. Ganski

Leonard Garecki – Died from wounds in Italy

Albert Gashowski – Staff Sergeant

Earl Gasirowski

Leland L. Gearhart - Killed in Okinawa

John A. Gersomovic – Killed in Action

Edward Gill – POW

Richard Gliddon Sr – Marine Corp

Stanley Gonseski – 340th Bombardment Squadron,
97th Bombardment Group

Edmund A. Gonshor - POW

Leon Gonshor – Killed in Action, Germany

John Gordon – Killed in Action, Guam

Leonard Gorecki – MIA in North Africa

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."

In our September issue of Nanticoke Legacy, Dr. Andrea Nerozzi, Associate Director, Maslow STEM School and Science teacher at Wyoming Seminary Upper School submitted an article entitled An Immigrant's Journey, which told the story of an immigrant who arrived in Nanticoke in 1973/4. The following article, 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 at the Nanticoke Historical Society.

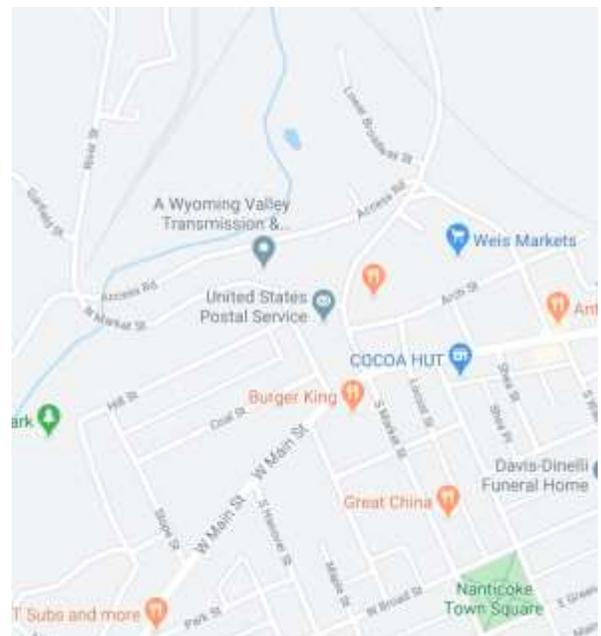
Nanticoke on the Threshold – Andrea Nerozzi

Authors note: One way to add context to your family history, is to refer to maps from the time period. The NHS holds many maps in the collection, both digital and hard copy. Maps can reveal a lot of information beyond geography and create an image of the world that your ancestors experienced.



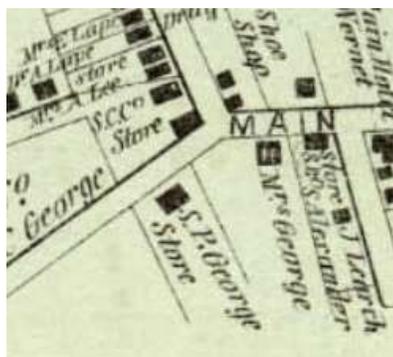
An 1880 history of Luzerne County notes that “In 1851 there were but 56 dwellings within the present limits of Nanticoke. In 1880, the population was 3,884 (Munsell 1880).” Nanticoke would not officially gain the status of a borough until January 17, 1874. NHS resources include two significant maps from that time frame. One, an 1864 map of Luzerne County, includes a detail of Nanticoke (Schooley 1864). It shows the center of the village at the intersection of Main and Market, and indicates several residences, as well as stores and a hotel, the Lines. The second map, from 1873, published by Pomeroy and Company, includes Ashley, Nanticoke and Plumbton, and captures Nanticoke on the threshold of

growth (Beers 1873). Below is an image of the Beers map alongside a current representation of the same area, created through Google maps, which can serve as reference.



A quick assessment of the 1873 map yields two main features, the Susquehanna Coal Company (SCC) in the West and the village of Nanticoke in the Southeast. A list of Business Notices is also prominent. Main street is indicated, but not subdivided into East and West. An untitled street, which will become North Market Street, is

apparent north of Main Street, proceeding from the bend in Main Street toward the Susquehanna River. The future Coal, Hill, River and Garfield Streets, are included in the holdings of the SCC. The only street south of (East) Main is what is now Locust Street, intersecting with current East Spring Street. In the text below, names associated with buildings on the map will be indicated in bold>.

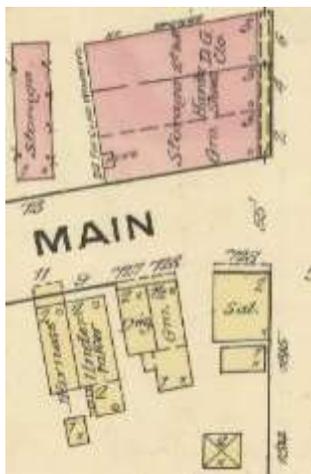
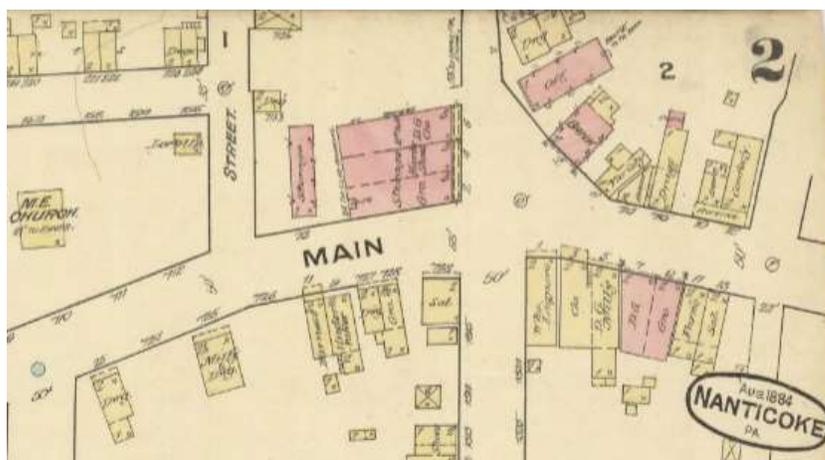


We will take a tour of Main Street. As we move along the street, information will be incorporated from later fire risk assessment maps produced by the Sanborne Map Company. These comparisons will serve to illustrate how quickly the borough changed. We will start our sojourn on (West) Main Street, at the store of **S.P. George**, which was located just southwest of the intersection of Main and North Market, in the vicinity of the Burger King property today. From NHS records: “The Henry George family acquired an interest in the property bordering Main and Market Streets as early as 1854.” Also included in the NHS files: “Samuel P. George was one of the first merchants to conduct a general store in Nanticoke and may have established his business at Nanticoke Corners about 1863. West Main between Market and Orchard Street became known as George’s block.” A SCC map from a later time shows the extent of the George holdings (NHS). The building is evident on the map from 1864.



The fire risk assessment maps produced by the Sanborn Map Company are a great resource for genealogists. They contain an amazing amount of information, streets and buildings, but also details about the structure of the buildings as well as whether the buildings were residential or commercial, and if so what type of business was present. A color-coded key is provided with each map. If you want to learn about a family homestead, the Sanborn maps are an excellent resource. They are available for Nanticoke the following years: 1884, 1888, 1896, 1903, 1907, 1912, 1920 and 1928 and can be located at the Nanticoke Historical Society and online.

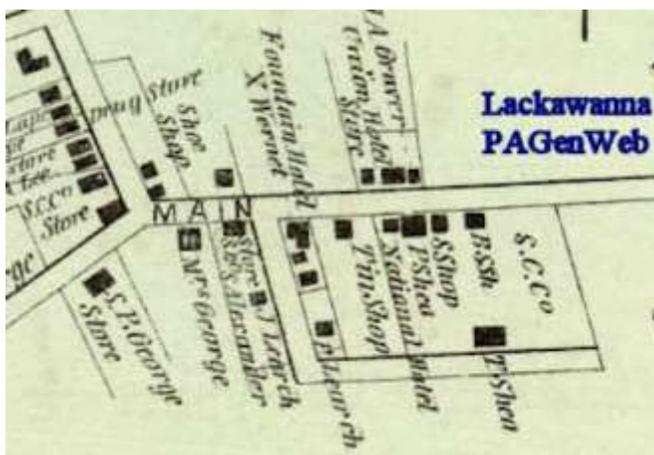
The 1884 Sanborn map shows that the intersection of Main and Market underwent substantial development since 1873. The buildings in red are composed of brick, while those in yellow are wood frame,



an important piece of information when assessing how quickly fire will spread between adjacent properties.

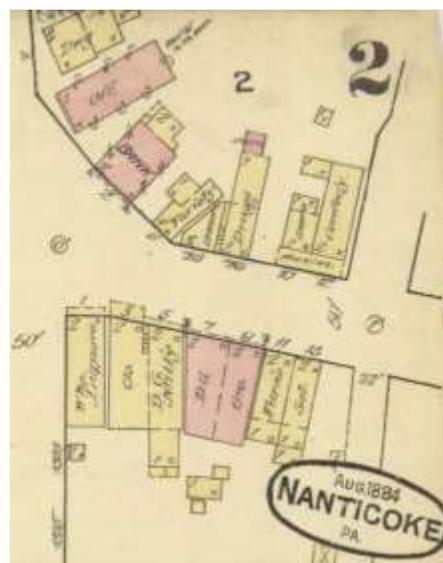
By enlarging the section emphasizing the start of (West) Main, the details of the buildings become apparent. The south side of the street five structures, all frame, with four consisting of two floors. The properties marked 11 and 9 are connected and have slate roofs. They contain two businesses, a harness shop, that also has a single story shed with a shingle roof, and an undertaker. Next door is a double structure with a shingle roof that includes a dwelling and a grocery. It is not certain, by comparing the maps, if this is the 1864/73 S.P. George store. On the corner is a saloon.

In 1864, a large rectangular building, containing a store owned by Lee and Paine, is located diagonally across (West) Main street from the S.P. George property, on the corner of North Market and (West) Main. A similar building with a store is present at that location in 1873, and in 1884; a brick corner structure holds grocery, shoe and clothing shops. The brick building is clearly visible in this photograph, taken circa 1892 from Breaker No 5 (NHS files). By that time, 19 years after the Beers map was created, the borough holds 5 times more people, and many more structures and streets, including the southern extension of Market, are apparent throughout the borough,



Continuing our walk on an 1873 Main Street, we find the residence of **Mrs. S. George**, about where the Rite Aid is today, and adjacent to that, at the corner of (East) Main and (what is now) Locust Street, the store of **Silas Alexander**, which is also the location of the **Post Office**. The fifth Postmaster of Nanticoke, Mr. Alexander started his tenure nine years earlier. In 1873, he earned \$340 for his services and provided the space for the Post Office at no charge to the Post Office Department (USPS 2020). He would resign the position in 1882 (USPS 2020).

Across (Locust) street from the Post Office was the **Fountain Hotel**. Further east is a **Tin Shop**, the **National Hotel** (owned by P Shea), and then the residence of **P. Shea**, followed by two more shops. The residences of **P. Learch** and **T. Shea** can be seen behind the (East) Main properties. Across (East) Main from the **National Hotel** was a store, the **Union Hotel** and the **G. A. Gruver** residence. The Sanborne maps indicate that these blocks also experienced many changes over the next nine years.



The **Fountain Hotel**, later known as the Wernet Hotel, was a thriving business in Nanticoke for many years, and was owned by Xavier Wernet, who is arguably one of borough's most notable individuals. Wernet came to America from Germany with little, and through hard work, discipline and good business sense, became quite prosperous. He was an integral part of the community, involved in various concerns, including the First National Bank. A dedicated Freemason, Wernet was a Charter member of Lodge 541, serving as Treasurer from 1875 to 1912 (NHS).

According to NHS records, Xavier Wernet, arrived in Nanticoke in 1851, briefly working in the SCC coal yards, then as a shoemaker and a grocer, marrying Hannah Garinger in 1861. The **Garinger** farm is indicated among the SCC holdings on the 1873 map. The Fountain Hotel was constructed in 1870 and was the site of the first borough election in 1874. Within a short time, it became the premier hotel in the borough, and is shown here in photographs



from the 1800s. In an 1887 advertisement, it is described as “the largest and most complete Hotel in Nanticoke and ample accommodations for Commercial Men” (NHS). Wernet sold the Fountain House to John Oplinger in 1888.

As you can see, period maps can yield a great deal of information. They can provide physical context to your ancestor’s lives and also can provide clues to what they might have experienced! I wonder what my relatives thought of the borough in 1873. They must have walked these streets, purchased items at the local businesses, visited friends in the community, and maybe even had dinner or drinks at the Fountain Hotel! If I could only listen to their stories...

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of John Sherrick, who has an amazing understanding of the history of Nanticoke, and keeps such wonderful digital records that he enthusiastically, and tirelessly, shared with me. Thank you, John!

Start or Renew a membership for someone dear for Christmas



MEMBERSHIP FEES

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Family \$30

Lifetime \$100.00 Individual

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RESEARCH

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

BRINGING A HERO HOME

By: Judy Minsavage



2nd Lieutenant Pershing J. Hill,

Pershing J. Hill grew up in Nanticoke and resided at 135 Noble Street. Just down the street from the home of his grandfather and Civil War Vet, Shadrack Reese. He was born on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, which perhaps set him on the path he was to follow 24 years later when he left the employ of the Liberty Throwing Silk Mill and in 1942, enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force, and trained to become a bombardier with the 718th Bombardment Squadron 449th Bombardment Group of the 15th Air Force

Adding to the military history of the Hill family was Pershing's brother, Harrison Hill, who on the day Pershing was born, was serving in France under General "Black Jack" Pershing Commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in Europe during WWI. That left no one to guess as to why the lad's mother, Margaret (Maggie) Hill, so named her newborn son.

Pershing went through extensive training to become a bombardier and commissioned officer at Bruning Army Airfield in Nebraska. His unit was formed in 1943 for the sole purpose of carrying out missions aboard the Consolidated B-24 Liberator Bombers, aircraft that were capable of reaching targets in central and Eastern Europe. Operating out of an airfield near Grottaglie, Italy. Hill's crew flew 13 successful major missions, but on their 14th and final mission, their luck ran out.



The red circle marks the area on the Italian coast over which the air battle of January 30, 1944 occurred.

On that fateful mission which focused on a German Luftwaffe Aerodrome near Udine in Northern Italy, between the Adriatic and the Alps, Pershing Hill's B24 was one of eight planes downed during a fierce air battle. Many people on the ground witnessed the carnage, as did the father of archeologist Freddy Furlan. As an adult, Furlan made it his life's mission to detail the air battle, document the casualties, the location of their remains and to devote his time to recovering those remains for their families back home in the US. Furlan's efforts were renewed upon reading a memoir entitled "Escape I Must," published

in 1995 by Harvey Gann, flight engineer and the sole survivor of Pershing Hill's downed Liberator. Gann's book details his experience as a prisoner of war after parachuting from Pershing's doomed plane. Gann also covers the attack on the Liberator in exquisite detail reigniting hope among family members for finding the Liberator and recovering the remains of its crew.

Furlan supplied Gann with a detailed description of what was seen from the ground, not only by his father, but by a large number of eyewitnesses and confirmed by Italian and German documents. Upon reading “Gann’s book, Furlan related to Gann, “The one (battle) in which you were involved was perhaps, one of the greatest air battles ever fought over Northern Italy during the Second World War.”

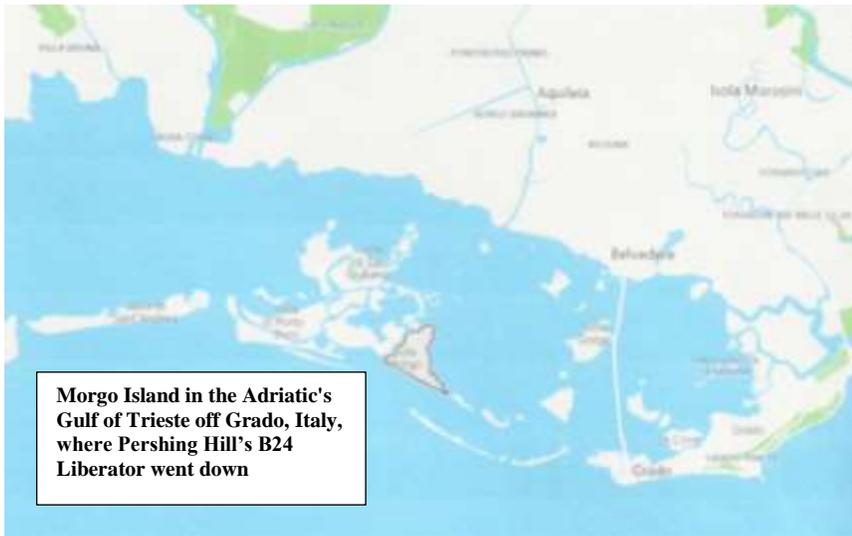
Story Comes to light

At the beginning of 2020, Mike Hill, Pershing Hill’s nephew contacted the Nanticoke Historical Society with the story of Pershing and the details outlined by Freddy Furlan in his report entitled *The Flying Fortress of Campolongo and the events of January 30, 1944. The following description of what actually happened to Hill’s B24 Liberator and her crew was submitted by Mike Hill:*

January 30, 1944

On January 30, they were airborne by about 9:00 a.m. at the rear of a squadron of 35 B-24s heading north. Their mission was to attack a German Luftwaffe Aerodrome near Udine in northern Italy, between the Adriatic and the Alps, positioned to defend against allied air attacks on the nearby German homeland, at a time when the Luftwaffe still controlled most of the airspace over Europe. The weather was hazy to target, with visibility of about 30 miles.

A bombardier flies his airplane throughout a bombing run, from before it begins until after its done. Immediately after the last of his payload of bombs fell from the belly of his plane from 21,000 feet according to plan at 12:28 p.m., with Pershing still at the controls, his squadron was attacked by 30 to 35 German fighter planes. Pershing’s Liberator at the back of his pack was attacked from above and behind by a pair of Messerschmitt 109s. His and two other Liberators and their crews would be lost that afternoon. The last sighting of Pershing’s Liberator was at 12:31 p.m. with its number two engine in flames, on a long, downward glide south into the clouds toward the Adriatic Sea. What became of Pershing’s Liberator was a mystery. No search was conducted. A Board of Officers that reviewed the case in 1948



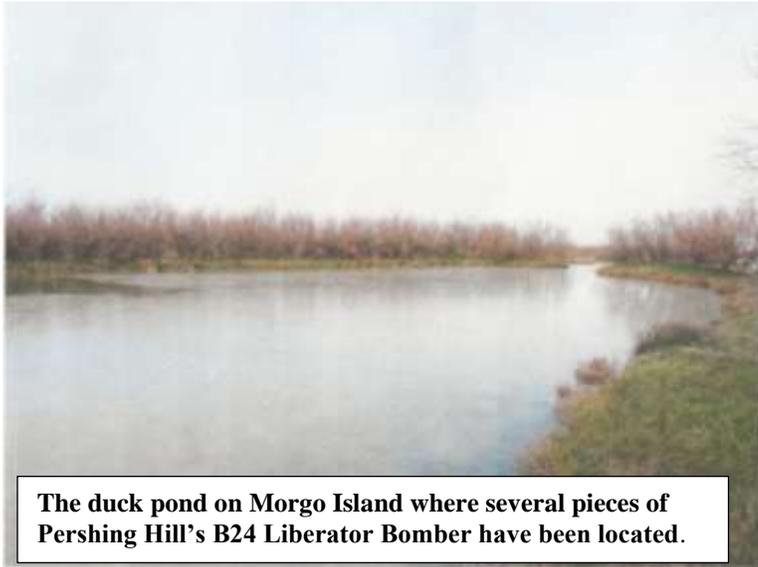
Morgo Island in the Adriatic's Gulf of Trieste off Grado, Italy, where Pershing Hill's B24 Liberator went down

recommended that no further search or investigation be made unless additional information is forthcoming. Families never gave-up hope for the return of the remains of Pershing and his 6 fellow crewmen. Half a century elapsed before a glimmer of hope appeared

Pershing’s pilot 1st Lt. Ben N. Kendall and co-pilot 2nd Lt. Fletcher S. Porter managed to parachute from the burning Liberator at the same time Flight Engineer, Harvey Gann did, but neither survived. Pershing Hill, seated in the lowest and most forward position on the plane beneath where the pilot and co-pilot were seated, was likely protected from the Messerschmitt’s attack from above and behind, while his 6 remaining fellow crew members seated in the fuselage, with only sheets of aluminum to protect them from the high-caliber gunfire raining down from above, were likely wounded, dead or dying, leaving Pershing as the last airman functioning in their aircraft through the remaining 26 minutes of their

journey. Had no one been in control the plane would probably have simply spiraled back to earth aimlessly, putting countless civilians in villages and towns below in harm's way.

“Thanks to Freddy Furlan, Mike Hill stated, the search for Pershing Hill *et al* is probably the most well-researched and best documented account of a search for a missing aircraft and crew on record.”



The duck pond on Morgo Island where several pieces of Pershing Hill's B24 Liberator Bomber have been located.

In an email to Mike Hill, Furlan admitted, “Mine had begun as a normal historical research but then, when I discovered that many of the fallen of that air battle were still missing, I decided to devote myself to their recovery, if possible, to get them back home after so many years. For some I have succeeded, for others, particularly for the 7 of the crew of which your uncle (Pershing Hill) was a part, we are trying to solve the problem even if the difficulties and the costs of recovery are very large.”

Now, 76 years later, thanks largely to Furlan and surviving relatives, it has been documented that Pershing, his 6 crewmates and his B-24 Liberator rest in mud, approximately 10 to 15 feet below the surface of a duck pond created by the impact of their Liberator returning to earth, on largely uninhabited Morgo Island in the Adriatic's Gulf of Trieste off Grado, Italy, about 50 nautical miles northeast of Venice. Official American and German documents report that a total of three B24s, two B-17s, two P-47s and one P38 and their crewmen were downed in the air battle on January 30, 1944.

Hill's actions likely saved lives

The resolution of the mystery as detailed in Furlan's report has been confirmed by the Department of Defense Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. Final confirmation was obtained when DNA analysis of human remains in a boot discovered near the site proved to be that of 2d Lt Harry McGuire, the navigator aboard Pershing's B24 Liberator. It is haunting to note that during the air battle, a Morgo Island landowner's son witnessed Pershing's B24 in a shallow glide, trailing smoke, heading southward toward a small house on the Island. But before reaching that house, bombardier, Hill, likely the only survivor left on board the bullet riddled plane, controlled the bomber eastward, striking the soft clay after which it then exploded with great force.

According to the 449th Bomb Group website, in 2010, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) enacted a plan to investigate ways to recover the lost crewmen of the downed plane. In 2014, archaeologists and the Army Corps of Engineers gathered at the site to determine what logistical strategies would be needed to excavate the site. The Corps provided the DPAA with a cost estimate and confirmation that the site may contain unexploded ordinances. In 2018, an extensive search of the area conducted by the Missing Air Crew Report Team (MACR), using ground penetrating radar, Electrical Resistivity Tomography, metal detection equipment, satellites and GPS equipment found that Hill's B24

is believed to be buried in mud on Mergo. The Families of Hill and the rest of the missing airmen continue to hope the remains of these true American heroes will be retrieved and someday returned home.

Immortalized, never to be forgotten

The Florence American Cemetery is located on the West side of Via Cassia, about 7.5 miles south of Florence. The graves of 4,402 fallen American soldiers are located in a beautiful park next to the Greve River just south of Florence. The Florence American Cemetery and Memorial stretches over 70 acres lined by cypress and pine trees and is the final resting place of mainly soldiers of the Fifth Army who died after the capture of Rome in June 1944 and for others who fell during the heavy fighting in the Apennines in 1944-1945. A large pillar in memory of the fallen stands in front a memorial building on the site. On the outside of the building are listed the 1,409 names of missing soldiers. Those who have been found and identified have a marker in front of their name, but most of them were never found and they rest in unknown graves. The text above the monument therefore reads as follows: *"Here are recorded the names of Americans who gave their lives in the service of their country and who sleep in unknown graves."*



The Florence American Cemetery Memorial Building,

A commemoration ceremony is held every year on Memorial Day at which time the fallen are honored with flower wreaths and speeches so that their sacrifices will not be forgotten.

Crew members of Hill's B24 Liberator still considered as missing.

- 2nd Lieutenant Harry B. McGuire, Navigator, Age 24,
- 2nd Lieutenant Pershing J. Hill, Bombardier (Nanticoke, PA), Age 26,
- Staff Sergeant Given C. Grooms, Radio Operator (Pike County, OH), Age 21,
- Staff Sergeant Nick Gavalas, Gunner (Birmingham, AL), Age 20,
- Sergeant William A. Jones, Assistant Radio Operator (Floyd County, GA), Age 27
- Staff Sergeant Harold T. Thompson, Ball Turret Gunner (Latah County, ID)



Pershing Hill and 1,408 other soldiers who are listed MIA are engraved on tiles at the Florence American Cemetery in Italy. If remains are found, a marker is placed beside the name.

NOTE: Pershing Hill was the youngest sibling of David Franklin Hill, who played on the 1926 Nanticoke High School Championship Basketball team.

We at the Nanticoke Historical Society hope that sometime in the future the remains of Hill and his fellow crewmen will be retrieved and returned home.

JOIN THE EFFORT TO BRING THESE HEROES HOME

Along with Pershing Hill's B24 crew led by pilot, 1st Lt. Ben N. Kendall and co-pilot 2nd Lt. Fletcher S. Porter, a second B24 bomber

went down in the same area near Grado, Italy in 1945. This plane's crew led by pilot, 1st Lt. Howard Hanson and co-pilot Lt. Edward Betz, also, have members listed as MIAs. If you would like to add your name to the list of petitioners asking the U.S. Government to take action for the recovery of the remains of all of these WWII Airmen visit the 449th Bomb Group WWII website at <https://449th.com>. Page down to Urgent! And click on "sign the petition."

Soldier Born On Armistice Day Is Missing In Italy

As the church bells and whistles sounded, and people danced with joy in the streets on Armistice Day, 1918, a son was born to Mrs. Margaret Hill of Nanticoke.

She rejoiced over the new arrival, and because she knew then that another son, Pfc. Harrison F. Hill, in the Argonne forest of France as the last shot of World War I was fired, would soon return to her.

Pfc. Harrison did return, but today the boy born as all the world hoped that another such war never would be fought again, is missing in action in Italy.

Named Pershing John Hill in honor of the commander of the U. S. expeditionary forces in France, Gen. John J. Pershing, he was 23 when he entered the services on May 7, 1942.

On January 30 he failed to return from his 11th mission over Italy as navigator-bombardier on a Liberator bomber of the 14th Air Force. The news reached his mother at her home in Alden, Pa., near Philadelphia, last night, through a War Department telegram. She and her daughter, Mrs. Charles Walsh, with whom she lives, immediately came here to notify other members of the family and are staying with the airman's brother, Harrison F. Hill, 122 Lyndwood avenue, Hanover Township.

Second Lt. Hill, 24, was commissioned at Santa Ana, California, on June 12, 1943. He went overseas on January 1 last, and since was stationed at a base in Italy.

He has a brother, Tech. Corp. Shadrach Hill, now home on furlough, who is assigned to the Army



PERSHING J. HILL

Air Corps at Drew Field, Fla., and a nephew, Durwood F. Hill, of Lyndwood, in the armed forces.

Second Lt. Hill and his family lived at 174 East Broad street, Nanticoke, until a year ago, when the family moved to Alden. He was graduated from Nanticoke High School and worked at the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Company, Baltimore, Md., before he entered the services.



This photo from the 449th website shows the crew of Hill's B24 Bomber.

Left to right, Back row: SSgt. Nick Gavalas MIA; Airman Lamarca, SSgt. Harvey Gann POW; Cpt. Gerald Herrington KIA; SSgt. Harold Thompson, MIA; SSgt. Given Grooms, MIA
Front row: 2nd Lt. Pershing Hill, MIA; , 2nd Lt. Harry McGuire. MIA; 1st Lt. Ben Kendal, pilot KIA; Airman Pelkey



This photo from the 449th website shows the Hanson B24 Bomber crew. Left to right, Back row: Cpt. Howard Hanson MIA, Sgt. James Cox KIA, Lt. Edward Betz KIA; Lt. Fermano, Sgt Lawrence Brady MIA; Lt. Darrell German KIA
Front row: Sgt. Thomas McGraw MIA; Sgt. Albert Acompora KIA; Sgt. Adloph Turpin, KIA; Sgt. Lawrence Nally, MIA



We would like to thank Mike Hill, Pershing Hill's nephew, for bringing this story to light, and for his detailed account of Pershing's last mission. It is important to note that 76 years later there are still WWII American heroes who were declared missing in action and their remains have not been properly laid to rest. We encourage everyone to take this opportunity to add your name to the petition mentioned above to not only have this Nanticoke hero returned home, but the remains of the many still to be recovered. Take this time to visit:

449th Bomb Group WWII website at <https://449th.com>. Page down to Urgent! And click on "sign the petition."

Thank you

A Labor of love

Charles Schisler graduated from Nanticoke High School, got married and resided at 181 West Green Street in Nanticoke. Then, in 1941, he moved his family to Philadelphia, but Schisler's heart remained in Nanticoke. After hearing that St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church on State Street would be celebrating its 75th anniversary in 1957, he, as a former member of the congregation, undertook a project constructing an oak altar for the church's upcoming events commemorating the anniversary.

The altar stands 20 feet high by 24 feet wide. Taking eight months to carve and build, Schisler, a plant superintendent for Haskell-Dawes Machine Co., in Philadelphia, labored on the project after work and on weekends. In an article in the 1957 Sunday Independent Schisler admitted, "The altar is as much my wife's as mine, as she designed the ornamental carving and letters that were traced onto the wood."



In 1957, Charles Schisler inspected the altar he carved and assembled as a gift to St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Because the project was being constructed for the church, Schisler credited the lumber company for reducing the price of the oak and paying for the shipment of the altar.

Today the altar stands as a reminder of the Schislens' dedication to the church and their craftsmanship. 📸



The altar as it stands today at St. John's Evangelical Church on State Street in Nanticoke.



Last 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.

ANSWER:

During World War II, whiskey, a popular commodity was disappearing from liquor store shelves in Nanticoke and across the US. During the war, distilleries were ordered to convert to the manufacture of industrial alcohol. What reserves of whiskey already produced were redistilled for the war effort. In actuality, the ending of Prohibition in the 1933 helped make this possible. Without the distilleries running and supplies in stock, America would have had difficulty filling the need for industrial alcohol.

According to americanwhiskeytrail.distilledspirits.org, the stop in the manufacture of American produced whiskey opened an opportunity for the rum industry. Produced in the Caribbean, rum became a "drink of choice" for many Americans. Industrial alcohol according to the website, was used in the following: The manufacture of rubber, antifreeze, tetraethyl lead (used in the production of aviation gasoline), rayon for parachutes, and ether.

- 23 gallons of industrial alcohol were required in the manufacture of a Jeep.
- 19³/₄ gallons were needed to produce one 16-inch naval shell.
- One gallon was needed in order to make 64 hand grenades or two 155mm Howitzer shells.

Various Locations of the Nanticoke State Liquor Store:

1943-1964 - 243 Prospect Street, (Nanticoke Telephone Directory, 1943 - 1960)

1971 - Official opening of the State Liquor Store in the Colonial Village Shopping Center



Other Items rationed during WWII



Cooks were asked to save fats created during the cooking process. Fats were used in the production of glycerin. It was announced that "Every 2 billion pounds of waste kitchen fat collected could produce 10 billion rapid-fire cannon shells."

Americans were also told "One tablespoonful of kitchen grease fires five bullets. One pound of kitchen fat makes enough dynamite to blow up a bridge."

Blue points were issued toward processed food
Red points were issued for meat butter cheese, lard etc.

This Issue's Mystery Question

What four former Nanticoke High School football players were drafted into the National Football League?

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

LOOKING FOR A YEARBOOK?

THE FOLLOWING YEARBOOKS ARE LOCATED AT OUR OFFICES:

Check our website for availability – UPDATED JANUARY 2019

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

Duplicates from each high school are available for purchase.

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

Visit our website – www.nanticokehistoryonline.org