



HISTORY BYTES

A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication

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May - June 2019

Rick Sedlisky, Editor



The Lackawanna County Heritage Fair takes place from Wednesday, May 29 through Sunday, June 2 at Montage Mountain. Main gates will be open from 12pm daily with waterpark and entertainment available. For additional information, please visit: <http://lackawannacountyheritagefairs.com/>

As part of the first annual Lackawanna County Heritage Fair, LHS offers a variety of presenters whose topics range from Scranton's auto heritage, Lackawanna County rail passenger service, Revolutionary War soldiers, Carbondale, fashion, various ethnic group stories, and letters from a Civil War soldier, to name a few.

Following is a list of presentations sponsored by the Lackawanna Historical Society. All programs will take place near the waterpark.

Wednesday May 29

- 4 pm [Pat McKnight Lackawanna County, the energy source for the industrial revolution](#)
- 5 pm [Ron Moskalczak Scranton's Auto Heritage](#)
- 6 pm [Dom Keating's Rail Passenger Service in Lack Co, 1945](#)
- 7 pm [Jennifer Ochman Louisa May Alcott and Little Women](#)

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Thursday May 30

2 pm [Sarah Piccini LHS Fashion Program](#)

6 pm [Jay Luke's Local History & Anthracite](#)

Friday May 31

Noon [Kathy Zinskie Revolutionary War Soldiers](#)

1 pm [S. Robert Powell "Carbondale"](#)

2 pm [S. Robert Powell "D&H Gravity RR"](#)

3 pm [S. Robert Powell "Welsh in NEPA"](#)

4 pm [Tammy Budnovitch Pysanky demo](#)

7 pm [Bob Savakinus Rocky Glen video](#)

Saturday, June 1

Noon [Bob Savakinus Rocky Glen lecture](#)

1 pm [Paul Browne The Elmira Scranton Double Back Action Combination Baseball Team](#)

2 pm [Stephanie Longo Italians/ Lack. Co](#)

3 pm [Ron Moskalczak Scranton's Auto Heritage](#)

4 pm [John Revak Why What and Where of the D&H Gravity](#)

Sunday, June 2

Noon [George Gula A Ride on the Laurel Line Part one and Two \(1 ½ hours\)](#)

2 pm [KAZKA](#)

3:30 pm [Jason Amico Lackawanna County's Fallen 56](#)

Lackawanna County Theaters – Part One Beginnings and How They Evolved Entertainment in the 1800's

By Michael A. Kashmer

Entertainment venues played a big part in the cultural landscape of our county.

From the earliest of times, people looked to be entertained in one way or another. How else to break the boredom of long hours with little pay? People left to their own devices might drift towards drinking and criminal behavior.

As you can imagine, the very first entertainment offered modest attempts at music and other skills. Only as time went on did these diversions evolve to include musical instruments, costumes, circus acts, dramas, etc.

As shows became more sophisticated, they moved to their own buildings and structures allowing the businesses to flourish.

From a piece I wrote last year about a local pioneer, Dr. Benjamin Throop in the early 1800's, I learned that back then organized entertainment depended on simple, but satisfying choices. Churches encouraged participation during those early days and any new, creative way to bring people into the church was welcome.

Traveling preachers were popular and were often successful in filling the pews on short notice. Dr. Throop's eyewitness reports include audiences drinking heavily and eventually taking over the preaching duties. It was unclear if any of the revelers returned to the congregation for penance.

Another early form of entertainment was "barn dances" that allowed the community's single men and women to meet like-minded folk. Using a generous neighbor's barn, a band made up of a fiddle or two, a guitar-type string instrument and a variety of percussion pieces to keep the beat going was all that was needed. The goal was to get as many people as possible to participate.

Tavern Music

Just as then and now, after a long day at work, people want to put away their mining tools, farming implements or computers and apps. Relaxation can take any number of forms but most contain talking, some food and drink, and maybe music. If you are lucky enough to have all these at your disposal, you are being entertained!

Tavern music was initially someone with a fiddle who was looking to make a few coins while performing for a crowd. Fiddlers who could coax some emotion from their instrument and the audience were well received. A lament made the audience subdued, but if a dance tune was played, the audience became completely engaged. A lively tune

would get hands clapping and feet tapping and as the music wound down, there would be a burst of applause.

Eventually, musicians would play on Friday night after work, and on Saturday too. Not Sunday though, that day was set aside as a day of rest and reflection of the Lord.

Some popular songs of the time were ideal for the fiddle and if the fiddler could sing, that was even better. There was never a lack of patrons who could be counted on to chime in and contribute to the camaraderie. The fiddler encouraged patrons to lend their voices to the amplifying sound.

“Across The Western Ocean” and “Blue Tail Fly” were favorite tunes that reflected everyday life. Songs about family, romance, work, emigration, unknown dangers and death were popular themes. There were political songs and humorous ones too; some of them were quite bawdy.

Irish songs became the mainstay of tavern music in the mid-1800’s, up and down “the line”. Because of the large number of arrivals from Ireland and their growing economic and political power in the Valley, the Irish were able to heavily influence tavern culture.

There were several distinct categories of Irish songs, here are a few:

Irish language songs included beautiful poetic lyrics and internal rhymes that work well in Gaelic, but not in English.

“Sean nos”, old style, the most traditional style of Irish singing.

“Aisling” was an emotional song in which a female character personified Ireland and predicts that Ireland will be set free again one day.

Ballads were popular songs enjoyed by all nationalities and reflected growing American populism with emphasis on life in their new country. Later in the 19th Century, tavern and street singers sold song sheets that people could take home and learn.

It must have been marvelous to see this new community come together. Can we imagine how immigrants enjoyed being a part of this event? Just like in their home countries, neighbors came together for company and enjoyment.

As time went on, communities became more stable with the addition of family homes. Businesses and structures were built solely for the purpose of recreation. That stability was based on jobs and the steady wages that provided wealth and leisure time, which allowed theaters to flower.

The first music hall theaters were ramshackle affairs, non-descript structures with minimal comfort and little decoration. In short time, as populations grew, new residents brought stories of large, well-appointed theaters, complete with a larger band, dancing acts, comedy skits, including renditions of famous dramatic pieces and speeches.

There were also a variety of drinks and things to eat, plus quiet spots to practice some sweet talk with a new acquaintance. Many buildings had boarding rooms upstairs. Others featured card or billiard rooms. The wealthier the town, the fancier their entertainment would be.

An opera house required capital and access to the touring opera companies that entertained along a “circuit” that started in either New York or Philadelphia. The circuits were organized and supported financially by booking agents.

The history of booking agents is fascinating and showed how middle men could make money and enjoy prominence in the growing field called, “Show Business”. The agents grew along with the industry and would be the first to adapt to changing tastes and styles. They were also the first to embrace the latest technological improvements. For example, agents had the capital to invest in the change from vaudeville houses to nickelodeons and then to movie houses.

Lackawanna County enjoyed an excellent geographical location. The Valley had connecting rail lines making it easy to distribute manufactured goods and anthracite coal that the Valley was famous for. A canal network enabled shippers to transport large bulk shipments like grain, iron ore and heavy industrial equipment from the Midwest to eastern markets. Canals were the engineering marvels of their time. They spread to the north and west, but were eclipsed by faster steam engines that could travel from Philadelphia to Chicago overnight.

In Part Two of the story about entertainment in the Lackawanna Valley, we will take a look at the growing number of US-made musical instruments, developing new dancing styles, like “four-part glee” and the use of music and campaign songs arranged specifically for the election campaign of President William Henry Harrison.

We will also take a look at the venues themselves and how some lasted for many years, changing with consumer tastes, while others disappeared quickly.

Michael A. Kashmer is from Scranton, currently living in Bergen County, NJ. He has worked in broadcast and cable TV for nearly thirty years in areas of distribution, finance and programming. His experience includes network start-ups and foreign language programs. A special interest is digital broadband and fiber. Mike can be reached at mikekashmer@aol.com

LHS Membership Information

2019 Membership Reminder

About Membership: Membership privileges include unlimited access to the Society library, 10% discount in our bookstore, advance notice, special discounts and invitations to all Society activities, members-only programs, the quarterly newsletter and the bi-monthly e-newsletter.

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Attached is a membership renewal form that can also be given to a friend who is interested in joining. Please return to The Lackawanna Historical Society, 232 Monroe Ave., Scranton, PA 18510.

Lackawanna Historical Society Membership Form

// Student	\$10	Name _____
// Individual	\$35	
// Family	\$45	Address _____
// Contributing	\$75	_____
// Sustaining	\$150	
// Silver Corporate	\$250	Telephone _____
// Gold Corporate	\$500	Email _____

Following is a link to complete for membership payment if you chose to use it.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSep8tRxXJUut7McTh4g4StczVjC4HRJAXMDE-ztxEDCzLncvA/viewform>

Upcoming LHS Events

Sunday, June 2, 1 pm - 4pm: Tea with Jane Austen, in partnership with Abington Community Library, Catlin House.

Saturday, June 8, Noon - 3 pm: Lackawanna Memories Public Scanning Day in partnership with Scranton Times-Tribune, call 570-344-3841 for details.

Wednesday, June 19, Dine Lackawanna, State Street Grill, 114 South State St., Clarks Summit, 570-585-5590.

Thursday, June 20, dusk: LHS Night at the Drive-In with special showing of **Jaws** at Circle Drive-In, Dickson City

Friday, June 21, 7pm, Rooted in the Hill Pre-Tour Preview Party, Catlin House, \$45 per person. **See ** below.**

Sunday, June 23, 11am – 4pm, Rooted in the Hill: A Tour of Homes & Secret Gardens in Scranton's Hill Section. \$25 per person in advance or \$30 per person on day of tour. Free shuttle service courtesy of Cruz Control Transportation. **See ** below.**

****Tickets for cocktail party and tour are \$60 per person. For details, please contact 570-344-3841.**

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Sunday, July 7, 2 pm, Watres Armory Tour, \$20. **SOLD OUT.**

Wednesday, July 17, Dine Lackawanna, The Nyx, 218 Depot St., Clarks Summit.

Thursday, July 25, dusk, Christmas in July with special showing of **Christmas Vacation** at Circle Drive-In, Dickson City.

Saturday, July 27, noon - 3 pm: Children's Day, Catlin House.

Wednesday, August 21, Dine Lackawanna, Formosa, 727 South State St., Clarks Summit, 570-585-1902.

Friday - Sunday, August 23 - 25: Genealogy Fair, time and details TBA.

Friday - Sunday, Sep. 6 - 8: Avondale Mine Disaster 150th Anniversary Remembrance, times and details TBA.

Saturday, September 14: Tiffany Tour by Dr. Patricia Pongracz, time, details TBA.

Wednesday, September 18, Dine Lackawanna, Stirna's, Scranton, 570-343-5742.

Sunday, September 22, 2 pm: Through the Photographer's Lens: A Look at NEPA in the 1800s by John Revak, Catlin House.

Friday - Sunday, September 27-29, Wedding Dress Exhibit and Program at POSH, Scranton, time TBA

Sunday, Oct. 6 pm: Watres Armory Tour, \$20. **SOLD OUT.**

South Scranton Farmer Market Marks 10 Years Outdoors

Saturday, May 18 marked ten years of the South Scranton Farmers Market offering fresh produce and other products outdoors to the South Side community.

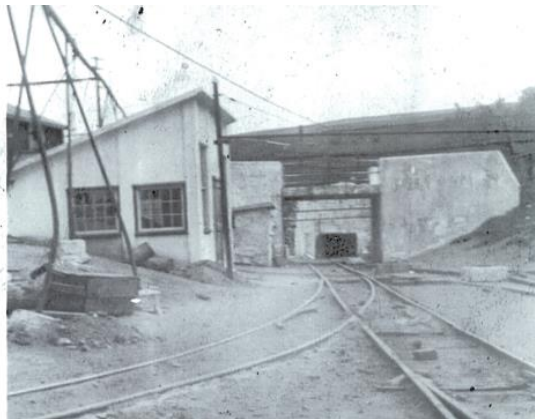
Sponsored by the United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania, the market celebrated the occasion with a move to Cedar Ave. and Alder St. The market will operate at that location on Saturdays from 10am to 2pm through October 5.

Forgetting and Remembering The Baltimore Mine Tunnel Disaster

By Thomas Mackaman



On June 5, 1919, just before 7 a.m. in the morning, train cars carried 143 coal miners through the tunnel mouth and down the slope of the Delaware and Hudson Coal Company's Baltimore Mine No. 2 in Wilkes-Barre, located just over a mile from the city square. Only minutes after the cars began their descent, an explosion ripped through the mine, beginning from a point a few hundred feet from its entrance. This was immediately followed by a fast-moving fire that raged back up the track toward the exterior, drawn by the mine's ventilation system, and then a miasma of toxic gas.¹



When the smoke cleared and rescuers were able to complete their grim work, 92 men lay dead and dying. Most had been killed by flames, many beyond recognition. Collectively they would leave behind scores of wives and sweethearts, over 200 children, as well as brothers, sisters, and an entire neighborhood—a time when most miners walked to work, the dead had overwhelmingly lived proximate to the mine in Wilkes-Barre's East End. Additionally, 44 more men were seriously injured, many never

¹ The fullest account of the accident is Eliss Roberts' *The Breaker Whistle Blows: Mining Disasters and Labor Leaders in the Anthracite Region*. Scranton: Anthracite, 1984. My account is additionally based on the investigative reports by the US Bureau of Mines and contemporary newspaper accounts. King's College students contributed to a Wikipedia entry on the disaster: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltimore_Mine_Tunnel_Disaster.

to work again. Only seven miners on shift that day escaped without major injury. The dead and injured represented about one-third of the mine's entire labor force.

Historic photos show the grim aftermath. A service held at the mine tunnel entrance under a banner reading "Safety First." A wake at St. Mary's Polish Catholic Church in which caskets fill the center aisle. Crowds standing over a long trench dug in the earth for mass burial in St. Mary's Cemetery in Hanover Township.



All above images provided by Thomas Mackaman

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Looking at this last photo, one realizes many of these men must have survived the trenches of World War I only to die underground in their hometown. According to a list published in the *Wilkes-Barre Record*, 81 Wilkes-Barre men died in military service in Europe in the six months the American Expeditionary Forces spent engaged in fighting in France and Belgium in 1918.² This was fewer by 11 than the number killed in one day at the Baltimore Tunnel Mine.

The tragedy in Wilkes-Barre drew national and even international attention, with newspaper articles featured in major US dailies, including the New York Times, as well as the European press.³ The cause of the catastrophe was never precisely determined, but the most likely culprit was a shorted electrical wire making contact with blasting Powder, which was transported on the same train as the miners. Though this was not at the time illegal, the movement of miners in the same train with their volatile blasting powder represented an obvious threat to life and limb. The disaster led to Pennsylvania's prohibition of the transport of miner and powder in the same train.

Forgetting

Nearly as remarkable as the horrific disaster itself, however, was that it was for many years largely forgotten.

To the untrained eye, there is no longer any visible reminder of the mine itself. The hill the Baltimore Mine Tunnel entered now overlooks a shopping complex, anchored by the Wilkes-Barre Home Depot and its sprawling parking lot. On closer inspection, one can make out the scrubby trees and loose rocks of the mine's old culm bank. Some of the houses along Mundy Street can be identified in historic photos. But, until recently, there was no public memory to this historic disaster, the second-worst in the history of anthracite mining.

Why was it forgotten? In part, the Baltimore Mine Tunnel disaster was long overshadowed by two others: The Avondale Mine Disaster of 1869, the deadliest in anthracite history, with 110 fatalities; and the Knox disaster of 1959. (Interestingly, all three disasters see anniversaries in 2019. This year is the sesquicentennial of the Avondale; the centennial of the Baltimore; and the 60th anniversary of the Knox).

A newspaper search of the massive online Newspapers.com database, using broad parameters, reveals that for nearly 100 years, between the early 1920s until 2013, the Baltimore Mine Tunnel disaster went virtually unmentioned in print—just two anniversary articles in local papers in 1939, a reminiscence in 1986, and another fleeting reference the same year. That is, a grand total of four. In the same timeframe, the much more specific phrase “Avondale Mine disaster” made its way into print 639 times. A search for the phrase “Knox Mine disaster,” with the date range from only 1969 until 2012, turns up 898 newspaper articles.

² Wilkes-Barre Record, Feb. 28, 1920

³ FLAME IN TUNNEL KILLS 84, BURNS 42: Spreads Like Blanket Over Miners". New York Times. June 6, 1919.

One can speculate on the reasons for this disparity. The Avondale disaster was anthracite's worst-ever, and, additionally, has the distinction of being the first catastrophic coal mine disaster in the region's history. The Knox, though not nearly so deadly as either the Baltimore or the Avondale—with “only” 12 deaths—was the region's last major mine disaster and helped to bring an end to anthracite coal mining in the upper field. In this way, Knox became highly symbolic of the death of the industry as a whole.

There are other reasons why the Baltimore Mine Tunnel disaster was forgotten—or mostly forgotten, as we shall see.

The disaster took place in 1919, a year of particularly acute global and national turmoil. World War I had just ended. Overseas, old empires disintegrated and new nations were created out of their ashes. It was the year of the Spanish Influenza, bred in the trenches of Europe, which claimed far more lives in the US than the war had, including a great many in northeastern Pennsylvania. It was the largest year of labor strikes in US history, with major steel and coal strikes involving hundreds of thousands of workers. The Russian Revolution had only just taken place, and government authorities and the media fanned the flames of the Red Scare and a new anti-immigrant sentiment that saw the sudden revival of the Ku Klux Klan. It was the year that saw enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting the sale of alcohol, and the submission for ratification of the Nineteenth, granting women the right to vote. A busy year, to say the least.

However, that a mine disaster killing 92 men could be overlooked must also stand testament to a period in which mass industrial accidents were all too common. The following is only a partial list⁴ of mining disasters that occurred in the fifteen years preceding the Baltimore disaster:

*February 20, 1905. The Virginia City Mine explosion, in Alabama; 112 killed.

*December 6, 1907. The Monongah Mining Disaster in Monongah, West Virginia. The official death toll of 362 is probably an underestimate.

*December 19, 1907. The Darr Mine Disaster in Rostraver Township, Pennsylvania, in which 239 bituminous coal miners died, among them boys.

*November 13, 1909. The Cherry Mine Disaster in Cherry, Illinois, in which 259 workers, some as young as eleven, died.

*April 8, 1911. The Banner Mine Disaster near Littleton, Alabama, 128 killed, mostly African American convict laborers.

⁴The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a list of major fatal American mining accidents going back to the 19th century: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/statistics/content/allminingdisasters.html>

*October 22, 1913. The Dawson Stag Canon Number 2 Mine Disaster, near Dawson, New Mexico, where 263 miners were killed.

*June 8, 1917. The Speculator Mine Disaster in Butte, Montana, in which 168 copper miners asphyxiated.

That catastrophes like these took place with such appalling regularity, explains in part why they were quickly forgotten. Among the long list of major industrial disasters in the US in the first quarter of the last century, only New York City's Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911 is well-remembered. That disaster witnessed Italian and Jewish immigrants, mainly teenage girls, jumping to their deaths from a high-rise factory to avoid the flames. This happened in Manhattan, before the very media eyes of the nation.

Remembering

The Baltimore Mine Tunnel Disaster was not entirely forgotten. It was kept alive not by historians or the media, but by descendants and relatives of the victims and survivors.

One of those relatives is Katie Lavery of Wilkes-Barre. Katie, though she was not yet born, lost two uncles in the disaster. At some point early in 2012, she approached Wilkes-Barre City Hall and requested that something be done to remember the disaster. This came across the desk of Drew McLaughlin, an aide to then mayor Tom Leighton. McLaughlin, a recent graduate of King's College, reached out to the King's History Department.

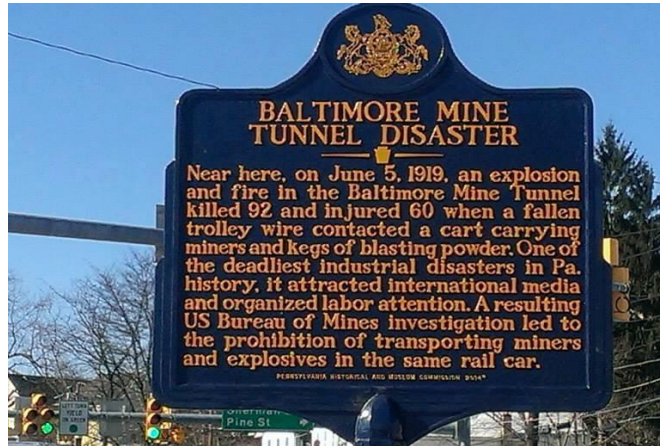
Dr. Dan Clasby and I decided to build a research class around applying for a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania historical marker. Dan has specialization in the field of history and memory. I am a labor historian by training. We set to work with a group of eight history majors: Mike Deangelo, Tony Cardone, Kevin Pryor, Emily Winters, Debbie Gross, Jennifer Momenzadeh, Tiffany Prescott, and Patricia Streeter. Additionally, a History Department intern, Chris Burrige, also contributed to the project.

The students had two tasks. First, they researched the historical context of the time and place. Students individually tackled topics such as industrial and mining history, labor history, immigration history, and everyday life. Second, they combined to "research in common" on the disaster itself, relying heavily on primary sources, as very little had been previously written on the topic.

King's College funded the students so we could present some of their preliminary findings at the Pennsylvania Historical Association 81st Annual Meeting in Harrisburg on November 2, 2012. While in Harrisburg, the students also carried out research at the state archives.

Dan and I used the student research as the basis for our application for a historical marker from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Letters of support were written by eminent scholars of Pennsylvania history, among them Walter Licht, Tom Dublin, Victor Greene, Bob Wolensky, and Walter Howard.

We received word from the commission that we had been successful in a letter dated March, 26, 2013, and the Baltimore Mine Tunnel Disaster once again made it back into the realm of public memory. Newspaper articles, in addition to television reports, once again appeared. The marker's unveiling took place on January 22, 2014. The King's history class was even given a commendation by Pennsylvania's General Assembly.



Meaning

It must be bluntly stated that a roadside historical marker cannot in any way do justice to the lives lost and shattered on June 5, 1919 at the Baltimore Mine in Wilkes-Barre.

So why remember at all?

At the most immediate level, the process of research and writing was clearly a rewarding experience for community members and students. The gratitude from community members was astonishing. Dan and I even received several handwritten letters of thanks from elderly residents. For their part, students realized historical work can be more than “just” academic. Several of the students in the class have gone on to postgraduate studies in law, history and literature.

On a deeper level, rediscovering the Baltimore Mine Tunnel Disaster and bringing it to public attention created new bonds between present and past, helping—along with many similar efforts—to remind us of the region’s history in all its drama and tragedy. In this way the struggles of the past offer a broader panorama on those of the present, in which immigration and labor have reemerged at center stage.

Thomas Mackaman is Associate Professor of History at King’s College, Wilkes-Barre. A specialist in US labor and immigration history, he is the author of *New Immigrants and the Radicalization of American Labor, 1914-1924*.

Unknown School in Dunmore

By Tony Ranella, Jr.

My Uncle Sal Mecca and I were part of a group of people who founded the Dunmore Historical Society. Through 52 years, I've accumulated an abundance of information, including maps and photos pertaining to our local history and in particular, the Pennsylvania Coal Company and its Gravity Railroad.

About four years ago, Rudy Kunz, another founding member of the Dunmore Historical Society, contacted me. He said that a friend came across an article that listed schools in Scranton and Dunmore and on the list was the Boyle – O'Rielly School, a Dunmore school that Rudy never heard of. Rudy, now living in upstate New York, is very knowledgeable about Dunmore's history.

Rudy went through his collection of information, including the Dunmore 75th Anniversary Book written in 1937 by Margaret O'Hara. The book listed all borough schools through 1937. The Boyle – O'Rielly School was not one of them. Rudy asked if I had heard of the school and if so, would I send him the school's information.

Not having heard of the Boyle – O'Rielly School, I contacted a family member and asked if she knew of the school. She did not and suggested that I contact John Sansky, a friend of hers who was very knowledgeable about Dunmore's history. Although he lived in the Sport Hill section of Dunmore, Mr. Sansky was originally from Nay-Aug (Nay-Aug will be explained later in the story).

I called John Sansky and introduced myself. "How can I help you?" he asked. I asked if he had ever heard of the Boyle – O'Rielly School. He responded, "Sure I have. My mom and dad went to that school as kids."

He went on to say that he remembered the abandoned building when he was a youngster. I asked where the school was located. He said that it was where East Drinker Street and the Drinker Turnpike met. "You mean where the houses are?" I asked. "No, across the road where PennDot had their small yard with plow trucks and equipment before all of the major highway work took place," he replied.

I asked him if it was a large school, who the teacher was, how many grades it went to and when it was in operation. He said that it was a one-room school with a fieldstone foundation. He added that all he could say was that he was born in 1920 and the school was long abandoned by then and that it had to have been built in the 1880s.

Earlier, I mentioned the Village of Nay-Aug. Speaking with John Sansky offered an insight to life at Nay-Aug, which was located on the outskirts of Dunmore. He was born and raised there and was a carpenter by trade. His dad worked various jobs as a farmer, at the lumber mill, as well as working for the railroad. His mom was a housewife whose main responsibility was raising the kids.

We talked about growing up poor and going out to “pick coal” to stock up for winter when we didn’t have enough money to buy a ton or two. I shared the information John Sansky provided with Rudy Kuntz who was very appreciative and added that John said to call him with any other questions.

The next day, curiosity got the better of me. Who was Boyle – O’Rielly, and why was a school named after that person? It’s a name that throughout all of my Dunmore research, I never heard of, or a name that anyone mentioned.

I continued to research and found a vast amount of information on a John Boyle – O’Rielly. It turns out that he was born in Ireland in 1844 and as he got older, he seemed to get into a lot of trouble, not only with his military service, but with the law as well. The details are limited.

He was banished to Australia as a convict, but two years later, he escaped and fled to America where he settled in Boston. In Boston, although his life didn’t ease up, he became a poet, journalist, author and activist for human rights, especially for the Irish people under English rule. John Boyle – O’Rielly died in 1890 at the age of 46.

Sometimes, life gets in the way of things such as calling John Sansky to share what I found about the Boyle – O’Rielly School. John died on June 26, 2017 at the age of 97 and was probably the last of his generation born and raised in Nay-Aug.

The Village of Nay-Aug is no more. The once busy hamlet had two major railroads, the Erie and the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western, the latter of which had a six-track yard and small station there. There was also a brick manufacturing operation serviced by the Erie, as well as farms, a lumber mill, church, tannery, stores, a school constructed in the teens of the 20th Century, houses and three roads that connected to Dunmore, Mt. Cobb and Moscow, PA.

Because of the construction of Interstate 81, residents had to move. Everything was eventually torn down. The sad thing is that Interstate 81 was later relocated west of the village to the eastern and northern parts of Dunmore. All that remains of Nay-Aug are few foundations, overgrown roads and the memory of a village that was home to a handful of people like John Sansky.

It’s common knowledge that immigrants’ surnames were often misspelled. Dunmore has many possible misspellings. For example, Dunmore has a “Boyle St.” and a “Rielly St.” that is perhaps or not, missing the “O”. Was that a mistake or was there someone named “Rielly”?

There are others. Sand St. should be Sandt St., named after a German settler who was once a landowner. There is also Bush St. that was named after a German family. The head of household was a blacksmith. His name was spelled, “Busch”.

The spellings or misspellings take us back to the beginning and the school known as the Boyle – O’Rielly School. For posterity, following is a list of all public schools that existed in Dunmore.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1- Original high school, South Apple St. | 8- Eugene Field, East Drinker St. |
| 2- William Penn, North Blakely St. | 9- Nay Aug, Drinker Tpke. |
| 3- George Washington, Green Ridge St. & Madison Ave. | 10- Benjamin Franklin, Sherwood St. & Reeves St. |
| 4- Abraham Lincoln, E. Grove St. | 11- Thomas Jefferson, E. Pine St. |
| 5- James Monroe, Erie St. & Park St. | 12- Henry Longfellow, Corner St. & Elizabeth St. |
| 6- Christopher Columbus, Summer St. & Smith St. | 13- Dundell, Monroe Ave. |
| 7- John Boyle – O’Rielly, East Drinker St. & Drinker Tpke. | |

The name, “Nay-Aug” comes from the Delaware tribe of Native Americans and translates to “Roaring Brook”. In the early days as Pennsylvania Coal Company maps show, the brook was called, “Nay Aug Brook” as the park in the eastern part of Scranton is known.

Copies of other maps show the name, “Nay-Aug Brook” beginning in Madison Twp., with the name extending through Dunmore. When the brook enters Scranton, maps show the name as “Roaring Brook”. Whatever name the brook is or was known by, it remains true to what the Delaware people named it.

We end with John Boyle – O’Rielly. Research to date shows that he never visited Dunmore. If he didn’t, why was a school named for him? History shows those who arrived and continue to arrive are proud “of one of theirs” who did something. Perhaps Irish immigrants at that time honored him for his poetry, journalism and activism and thus named a school for him.

Tony Ranella Jr., a founder of the Dunmore Historical Society, is a Northeast Pennsylvania historian. His many focuses include his hometown of Dunmore, the Pennsylvania Coal Company, its Gravity Railroad, the Erie Railroad and the effects they had on Dunmore.

Mid Valley School District 50 Years Later

By Joseph Peter Klapatch

According to a report by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, Education Research & Policy Center entitled “Merger/Consolidation of School Districts: Does it save money and improve student achievement?” dated April 2009, for the 1959-60 school year, there were 2,277 school districts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. During the 1960s, there were three legislative actions that brought about consolidations of school districts. There was the School District Reorganization Act of 1961, the School District Reorganization Act of 1963, and the School District

Reorganization Act of 1968. As a result, for the 1969-70 school year there were 669 school districts in Pennsylvania.

Locally, among many jointures, the 1969-70 school year was the first for the Mid-Valley School District, which consolidated the former Olyphant, Throop and Dickson City school districts. Even though the district is Kindergarten through 12th Grade, each borough continued to have its own elementary school. The former Dickson City Junior High School became the Mid-Valley Junior High School for students in grades 7 through 9. The former Olyphant Junior High School became the Mid-Valley Senior High School for students in grades 10 through 12.

One of the anticipated advantages of mergers that the study mentions is the need for fewer superintendents and other key positions. At first, the superintendent of the former Olyphant School District, John Metrisko, became the superintendent of the newly established school district. The former Throop School District superintendent, Edward Prokop, and the former Dickson City School District superintendent, Joseph Tylenda, became assistant superintendents. For the 1973-74 school year, Dr. Thomas McDonnell became the superintendent; there were no assistant superintendents. Currently the Superintendent of Schools is Patrick J. Sheehan.

Similarly, the principal of the former Olyphant High School, Stanley Kucab, became the Mid-Valley Senior High School principal. Frank Rolka, who was a science teacher, became the senior high school assistant principal. Edward Munley was the principal of the former Dickson City High School. Joseph Regenski was the principal of the former Throop High School. Mr. Munley became the Mid-Valley Junior High School principal. Mr. Regenski became the junior high school assistant principal.

For the 1973-74 school year, Daniel Donovan became the secondary school principal for both the junior and senior high school with his office was in the senior high school. Before this he was a Social Studies teacher at West Scranton High School. Robert Warzecha became the junior high school vice principal in the school in Dickson City. He started his teaching career in the 1970-71 school year as a Social Studies teacher in the Mid-Valley Junior High School. Gerald Luchansky became the senior high school vice principal in Olyphant. He began teaching English at the Dickson City High School during the 1968-69 school year, and continued at the Mid-Valley Senior High School. He was the Guidance Counselor during the 1972-73 school year. Currently, Jeffrey Kovaleski is the Secondary Center Principal, and Michelle Higgins is the Secondary Center Vice Principal.

The report points out that the consolidations facilitated the creation of full-time elementary school principal positions which improved supervision. Before the jointure, and during the early years, there were no formal elementary school principals. Each elementary school had a head teacher. This was a teacher who performed additional duties that would normally be performed by a principal. The head teacher for the Throop Elementary School was John Luchansky. For the Olyphant Elementary School, it was James Liparulo. For the Dickson City Elementary School, it was Ann Kachmar. Later, John Luchansky became the elementary school principal with

jurisdiction over the three elementary schools, but the head teachers remained. Currently there is one elementary school in the district. Carlos Lopez is the principal, and the vice principal is Michael Piercy. There are no longer head teachers.

Another anticipated advantage is the “need for fewer buildings.” Because all secondary students were attending schools in Dickson City and Olyphant, no secondary school students attended classes in the former Throop High School. It became the Throop Elementary School. The Washington School in Lower Throop, which had served as an elementary school, was closed.

In 1977, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry condemned the Olyphant and Dickson City elementary schools because they were in violation of the Fire and Panic Act. For the 1981-82 school year, students in grades seven through twelve began to attend classes in the newly-built Mid-Valley Secondary Center; the Elementary Center opened for the 1989-90 school year.

The report mentions that in consolidated school districts, there can be a better allocation of teachers to offer additional courses. Immediately before the jointure each high school had graduating classes ranging from about thirty to fifty students. For the most part, students had the same English teacher for all three years, the same social studies teacher for all three years, etc. The consolidated district had graduating classes of over one-hundred students. Because of this, instead of having a science instructor who taught Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, there were a Biology teacher, and Chemistry teacher, and a Physics teacher. Students did not have the same teacher for a particular subject three years in a row.

In the beginning, the transition was not very smooth. Some students, teachers, and administrators still held on tightly to their previous affiliations. In the years immediately before the jointure, none of the three districts had a football team. For the 1969 season, there was the Mid-Valley Spartans junior varsity team. The following season, there was a varsity team. This helped unite the student body.

As students progressed from elementary school to secondary school, and had no previous first-hand experience in the predecessor secondary schools, integration of students from the three boroughs was less difficult. Now that there is only one elementary school for the entire district, borough identity has much less relevance in school life. Overall the consolidation was a big success. It is hard to imagine the school experience if there was no consolidation.

Pennsylvania School Boards Association, Education Research & Policy Center entitled “Merger/Consolidation of School Districts: Does it save money and improve student achievement?”

<http://mrea-mt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PA-psba-merger-consolidation.pdf>

Bridging the Present with the Past

<https://jpklapatch.weebly.com/>

Joseph Peter Klapatch – Author
<https://www.facebook.com/strippens/>

Joseph Peter Klapatch is a resident of Galloway, NJ. He grew up in the Grassy Island Heights part of Olyphant, PA, and in his early years delivered newspapers in that part of Olyphant and also in parts of Jessup. He began his study of Electronic Technology at the Lackawanna Vocational Technical School – North Center. He is a 1982 graduate of Mid-Valley High School. He received his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Pennsylvania State University in 1986 and in 1992, received his Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering from Wilkes University.



NEPA Events

Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Avondale Mine Disaster

By Bob Wolensky

Anthracite's worst mining tragedy occurred on September 6, 1869, at the Avondale Colliery in Plymouth Township where 110 men and boys lost their lives to asphyxiation following a below-ground fire. An investigative committee called the disaster an "accident", but many contemporary observers and subsequent historians have pointed to the suspicious nature of the blaze. Whatever the cause, Avondale still stands as the deadliest mining disaster in anthracite history.

The 150th Anniversary of the Avondale Disaster will be commemorated with three events during the weekend of September 6, 7, and 8, 2019. The first will be an educational program held at the Anthracite Heritage Museum in Scranton on the evening of September 6th and continuing during the day of September 7th. The second will be a commemorative ceremony at mid-day on September 7th at the Washburn Street Cemetery in Scranton where 58 of the Welsh-ancestry victims were buried. The third event will take place in the late morning of Sunday, September 8th, at the disaster site in Plymouth Township.

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Featured speakers will include Prof. William Jones of the University of Cardiff, Wales, and Prof. Richard Healey of the University of Portsmouth, England. Both have done extensive research on the disaster and anthracite mining history and culture.

The co-sponsors to date include the Anthracite Heritage Museum, the Lackawanna Historical Society, the Plymouth Historical Society, the Luzerne County Historical Society, the Pennsylvania Labor History Society, and the St. David's Society.

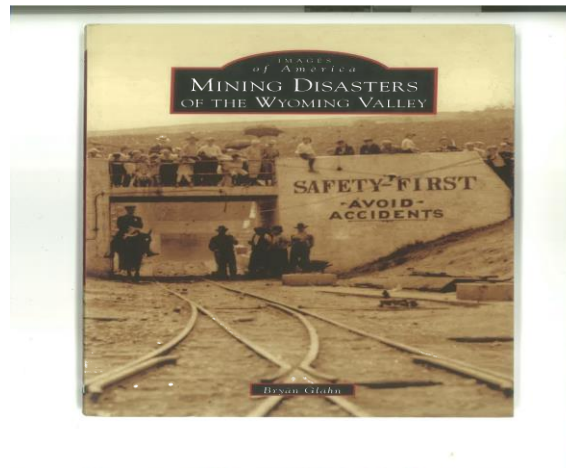
The public is cordially invited to attend all events. Watch for upcoming announcements regarding the anniversary and its programming. For further information, please contact Mary Ann Savakinus, Lackawanna Historical Society at lackawannahistory@gmail.com

Editor's Book Review

By Rick Sedlisky

Mining Disasters of the Wyoming Valley

By Bryan Glahn



Mining Disasters of the Wyoming Valley, by Bryan Glahn, with its strong link between narrative and photographs, doesn't begin where many authors choose their starting points. Mr. Glahn rewinds the clock to more than 200 million years ago to a time when, as he states, "The Susquehanna River has been an integral part of the Wyoming Valley longer than the Appalachian Mountains that rise on either side of it."

The statement is the author's invitation to travel with him from the time when the first people called anthracite, "the burning rock", to the arrival Europeans who were told by the first people about "the burning rock".

Mr. Glahn guides readers through the 18th Century when the first mine was established in Pittston through the 19th and 20th centuries to experience the rise and fall of the burning rock that fueled the industrialization of the United States.

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The author's work offers an understanding of components of anthracite mining. He explains, among other things, the mechanization of mining and its effects on miners, four examples of "damp" that ended the lives of many miners, ventilation techniques and how miners' injuries were treated. He tells why mules were considered a more valuable asset than human beings, as well as the meaning of mining terms such as breaker boys, nippers (door boys), laborers and professional miners.

He shares little known anthracite facts. What happens to bananas when taken underground? Was the miner's wife able to remove the underground odor from her husband's lunch bucket? It is a well-researched work that includes such minor footnotes about an industry that affected so many.

Mr. Glahn takes readers to his primary focus, "The Big Four": Avondale (1869); Twin Shaft (1896); Baltimore Tunnel (1919); and Knox (1959). They are the four major mining disasters that not only affected the Wyoming Valley, but also Northeast Pennsylvania as a whole. Only Pancoast (1911) in Throop, where 73 men died, fits that category.

The author offers a detailed description of the Avondale disaster in Plymouth (September 6, 1869) that claimed the lives of 110 men and boys. He presents the aftermath that includes some sobering words about the suffering Avondale men and boys endured as well as the cause of the disaster, which remains in dispute.

The author's inclusion of photographs and sketches adds depth to his words. Mr. Glahn points out that 150 years later, Avondale remains the worst anthracite mining disaster in United States' history.

At 3:00am on June 28, 1896, Pittston residents were awakened by vibration and the sounds of an explosion. Residents experienced the sounds of the cave-in at the Twin Shaft Mine where, as Author Glahn, states, "58 men and boys were permanently entombed 434 feet underground." He adds that because of miners' intimate knowledge of the mine, they were aware of the distinct possibility of a cave-in. The chapter on the Twin Shaft cave-in describes what was done by the company to avoid such a collapse, but also asks, "Were the actions taken the correct actions and who was to blame?"

In his discussion about the Baltimore Tunnel explosion that took place in Wilkes-Barre on June 5, 1919 and ended the lives of 92 men, the author offers a description of technological improvements and efficiencies. According to the author's description, the Baltimore Tunnel operation was one that allowed men to ride mining cars that also carried black powder, and although not illegal at the time, the practice led to laws prohibiting the transportation of miners and powder on the same train.

Author Glahn's words that describe what happened are graphic, but graphic words are necessary if the reader is to gain a full understanding of what those who perished and those who attempted to help their dying co-workers endured. The inclusion of photographs on pages 102 and 103 showing the words, "Safety-First" and "Avoid Accidents" are in the case of Baltimore Tunnel, an oxymoron.

Readers reach the author's final destination to learn about what had become an illegal mining operation and why. On January 29, 1959, waters from the ice-swollen Susquehanna River entered the workings of the Knox Mine, Port Griffith.

Author Glahn explains the "why" of the disaster. The combination of the author's narrative and photographs allows readers to gain an understanding of the severity of the disaster and how the Knox disaster ended deep mining across Northeast Pennsylvania.

It is well known that Northeast Pennsylvania history is virtually no longer taught in regional schools. As a teacher at Northwest Area School District, author Glahn shared his research with Northwest Area middle and high school students who became fully involved in his project. His project became their project, and together, the project became not just a book, but a research tool and an educational experience.

Mining Disasters of the Wyoming Valley deserves a place on your bookshelf. Whether you are a researcher or wish to know about anthracite mining in the Wyoming Valley, you will find author Glahn's work well-researched and well-written.

Mining Disasters of the Wyoming Valley, by Bryan Glahn, is available for purchase at Barnes & Noble, Amazon, Cooks Pharmacy, Kingston, the Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour, Scranton, Library Express at the Marketplace at Steamtown, Scranton, and the Anthracite Heritage Museum, Scranton.

Bryan Glahn, a grandson and great-grandson of coal miners, was born in Kingston, PA. He currently resides in Dallas, PA with his wife, Jennifer, and sons Connor and Chase. He received a Bachelor's Degree in English from Wilkes University in 2000 and completed graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania, King's College and Wilkes University. He has been teaching middle and high school social studies at the Northwest Area School District since 2002. His love of the past, its connection to local history, and his students inspired him to write. His second book, *Hurricane Agnes in the Wyoming Valley*, is also available for purchase. Mr. Glahn continues to conduct research on additional topics. His primary focus of research is the industrial history of Northeast Pennsylvania and the American Revolution.



Internet Links

Historical Attractions

- [Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority](#)
- [Steamtown National Historic Site](#)
- [Anthracite Museum and Iron Furnaces](#)
- [Electric City Trolley Museum](#)
- [Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour](#)
- G.A.R. Memorial Association Museum: Contact Joseph Long, Jr. 570-457-8438

Cultural Partners

- [Albright Memorial Library](#) and the Lackawanna County Library System
- [The Everhart Museum](#)
- [Scranton Cultural Center](#) at the Masonic Temple
- Scranton's Annual [Civil War Weekend](#) Events
- Scranton Times-Tribune's [Pages from the Past](#)
- [Pocono Arts: Where Culture Builds Community](#)

Anthracite Research

- [Pennsylvania's Northern Anthracite Coal Field http://www.northernfield.info/](#)

Historical Societies

- [Carbondale Historical Society](#)
- [Dunmore Historical Society](#)
- [Luzerne County Historical Society](#)
- [Wayne County Historical Society](#)
- [Susquehanna County Historical Society](#)
- [Monroe County Historical Society](#)
- [Wyoming County Historical Society](#)
- Archbald Historical Society: Contact Ed Casey (570) 614-3628
- Scott Township Historical Society: Contact Robert Vail (570) 254-9536
- Taylor Historical Society: Contact Christine Schaefer (570) 562-1225

County and Educational Partners

- [Lackawanna County](#)
- [Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#)
- [Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit](#)

Lineage Societies

Provided by Ted Bainbridge, Ph.D.

If you can trace one of your ancestral lines far enough back in time, and if you have acceptable proof, you might be able to join a lineage society. Here are links to the most popular ones. (You can find links to others by doing internet searches for descriptive words.) Links below include those for the organization's national headquarters web page, their Pennsylvania page, pages for

selected local components, locating individual chapters, information about joining, and contacting the organization.

- The General Society of Mayflower Descendants:
National <https://www.themayflowersociety.org/>
Pennsylvania valcullen@comcast.net
- The Daughters of the American Revolution:
National <http://www.dar.org/>
Joining <http://www.dar.org/national-society/become-member/how-join>
Locations <http://www.dar.org/national-society/become-member/chapter-locations>
- The Sons of the American Revolution:
National <https://www.sar.org/>
Pennsylvania <http://www.passar.org/> and ehtroutman13@gmail.com
- First Families of Pennsylvania:
Pennsylvania <https://genpa.org/first-families-of-pennsylvania/>
- The Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution:
Pennsylvania <http://amrev.org/>
Lancaster <http://amrev.org/about-the-society/lancaster-chapter/>
Joining <http://amrev.org/becoming-a-member/overview-instructions/>
- The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War:
National <http://www.suvcw.org/>
Pennsylvania <http://pasuvcw.org/>
- The Northeast Pennsylvania Genealogical Society, Inc. (NEPGS):
Local NEPA <http://www.nepgs.org/>

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The Lackawanna Historical Society is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization, which is dedicated to keeping vital the history of Lackawanna County. The society is supported in part by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Catlin House Memorial Trust, Lackawanna County and membership dues.

If you have anything to share that will add to the documentation of Lackawanna and Northeast Pennsylvania, please contact lackawannahistory@gmail.com and place *History Bytes* in the subject matter.