



HISTORY BYTES

A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication

Vol. 2 No. 4

July - August 2019

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

Scranton Veterans Memorial Park and Monument

By Pat Ahern with Rick Sedlisky



Scranton Veterans Memorial Park and Monument Site
Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

During early summer, the Scranton Veterans Memorial Park and Monument moved closer to becoming a reality with grants received from the Robert Y. Moffat Family Charitable Trust, as well as state and other funding.

The additional funds will be used to install a granite monument that will include the names of all Scranton residents who gave their lives in combat in all conflicts from World War I to the present. Also to be included are more than 900 veterans' names that do not appear on any existing monument or memorial located within the city.

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The final cost of the project is \$465,000. The project is scheduled for completion during the summer of 2020.

The idea of a Scranton Veterans Memorial Park was conceived by 14 veterans after reading the inscription on the plaque at the base of the flagpole inside Scranton Veterans Memorial Stadium. The stadium was dedicated:

“IN MEMORY OF ALL FORMER STUDENTS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM”



Scranton Veterans Memorial Park and Monument Site
Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

Upon completion, the inscription on the new monument will read:

“THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR ALL, FOREVER REMEMBERED”



Artist's rendering of the Scranton Veterans Memorial Park and Monument
Rendering courtesy of Pat Ahern

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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.

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

Friday - Sunday, September 6 - 8: Avondale Mine Disaster 150th Anniversary Remembrance, times and 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. See below for details.

Friday - Sunday, September 27-29, Wedding Dress Exhibit and Program at POSH, Scranton. See below for details.

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

Wednesday, October 16, Dine Lackawanna, Sidel's, Scranton.

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Saturday, October 19, Time TBA: Finding Families & Founding Families Genealogy Workshop, Fuller Overlook Estate. See below for details.

Friday, October 4, 11, 18, 25, various locations; **Saturday, October 26 at 7 p.m.** at the Catlin House, **Scranton After Dark Returns!** \$10 for members, \$15 for nonmembers. See below for details.

Through the Photographer's Lens: A Photographic Tour of Northeastern Pennsylvania Beyond the Studio in the 1800s

On Sunday, September 22 at 2 pm, John Revak of Simpson will share photographs from the 1800's from his private collection of Lackawanna, Luzerne and Wayne counties and discuss the challenges photographers faced in going "beyond the studio". Mr. Revak will point out details in the photos that may have escaped notice.

Mr. Revak will show images from the 1860s through 1900s to provide an opportunity to compare photos taken at different times by different photographers of the same site. The program will offer a variety of images showing construction and destruction, and even encourage a little "CSI investigation" in identifying a disaster photo from 1879.

Photographers whose work will be shown include Thomas Johnson, Louis Hensel, William Schurch, E. A. Heermans, E.W. Beckwith and others. Mr. Revaks hopes that his presentation will provide some insight into the photographic history of Northeastern Pennsylvania and a better understanding of the art, and maybe just a little humor.

Say Yes to the Dress: Wedding Trousseau Past and Present

Join us September 27-29 at POSH @ the Scranton Club for a unique event celebrating Scranton brides and historical wedding traditions, from the all-important dress to the wedding cake.

The weekend begins with a "*Rehearsal Dinner*" cocktail party on Friday, September 27 at 7 pm to *unveil* a special exhibit highlighting more than 140 years of wedding fashions from Scranton's "First Ladies". The exhibit includes Scranton family wedding dresses, including the 1835 dress worn by Jane Hiles, wife of city founder George Scranton, as well as more modern dresses of the wives of Scranton's recent mayors.

Traditional wedding gifts will also be displayed, as well as invitations and other wedding mementos from the Society's collection. The exhibit will be open on Saturday, September 28 from 11 am - 5 pm with a "Meet the Curators" Q&A at 1:30 pm.

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On Sunday, September 29, Maureen Hart will discuss the cultural and stylistic history of wedding dresses during a brunch tea that begins at 11am.

For reservations, please call the Society at 570-344-3841. Ticket for the *Rehearsal Dinner Cocktail Party* on Friday, September 27 at 7pm are \$40 per person. Tickets for the *Prenuptial Brunch* on Sunday, September 29 at 11am are \$30 per person.

Finding Families & Founding Families: A Genealogy Workshop

The Lackawanna Historical Society is pleased to announce plans for a Genealogy Workshop to take place on Saturday, October 19 at the historic Fuller Overlook Estate, Dalton, PA.

In 1920, Edward and Helen Fuller purchased 320 acres along Lily Lake Road and commissioned the Olmsted brothers to design their summer retreat, a project that lasted almost 30 years. More than a century later, their great-grandson, Mort, and his wife Sue, have worked to restore the property with assistance from Mort's sisters, Pat and Fay, to honor their family's legacy.

In addition to sustainable farming, their mission includes celebrating the site's cultural heritage. By hosting the workshop at the site, the Society will highlight how one of Lackawanna's founding families has preserved not only the homestead, but also their story, thus offering an excellent example of how researching our past can contribute to our future.

The workshop will provide the basics of starting a genealogy project, discuss current trends, including DNA testing, and how to make the most of online resources. In addition, a variety of community organizations will be present to offer information about local resources and how to access them.

The program will be held at the Overlook's Education Center that houses an excellent genealogy exhibit on the Fuller Family. The day will also include a lunch and a tour of the historic Fuller Trophy House.

Registration details will be announced in September.

Scranton After Dark Returns

Our popular *Scranton After Dark* haunted walking tours return on Friday evenings during October. Learn about the architecture of downtown buildings, as well as spooky stories about haunted happenings, both past and present.

Tours will take place on Friday, October 4, 11, 18 and 25, as well as on Saturday, October 26, at 7pm at the Catlin House. Tickets are \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Tours sell out quickly. For reservations, please call 570-344-3841.

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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 to be held at the Anthracite Heritage Museum in Scranton on the evening of September 6 and continuing during the day of September 7.

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, anthracite mining history and culture.

The second will be a commemorative ceremony at mid-day on September 7 at the Washburn Street Cemetery in West Scranton where 58 of the Welsh-ancestry victims were buried.

The third event will take place in the late morning of Sunday, September 8 at the disaster site in Plymouth Township. The ceremony will follow a 10am service at the First Welsh Baptist Church, Plymouth.

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. For further information, please contact Mary Ann Savakinus at lackawannahistory@gmail.com

(Ed. Note: The September – October 2019 issue of History Bytes will be dedicated to the men and boys of Avondale and their descendants. The issue, which is scheduled to be released approximately a week before the Avondale weekend, will include a detailed list of presentations at the Anthracite Heritage Museum, as well as a registration form)

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A Unique Man



Lt. Ezra S. Griffin
Photo courtesy of Nicholas E Petula

One hundred fifty-five years ago on July 11, 1864, Lt. Ezra S. Griffin died. The 29-year old's death was the result of being struck by a "rebel bullet ball". Lt. Griffin didn't have to join the Union Army. Because he was a man of education and wealth, he could have been a "copper button man", a man who could have paid someone else to take his place and wear the uniform with copper buttons. Instead, Lt. Griffin enlisted, fought and gave his life to preserve his country.



The above image above shows the American flag with 35 stars. During the Civil War, flags containing 33, 34, 35 and 36 stars were flown, but the 35-star flag was the one most commonly flown and the one that Lt. Griffin most likely saluted.

Griffin could have easily been forgotten had it not been for Nicholas E Petula, a former West Scranton High School history teacher. Mr. Petula wanted to learn more about his

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boyhood neighborhood, Bulls Head-Park Place, North Scranton, where Griffin lived more than a century before.

In honor of 155th anniversary of the passing of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin, the Editor's Book Review offers a review of *Forgotten Hero: The Life, Letters & Diaries of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin*, by Nicholas E. Petula.



Resting Place of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin, Dunmore Cemetery
Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky



Dunmore Cemetery, Left: Obelisk in memory of Lt. Griffin; Right: Inscription at base
Photos courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War - Ezra S. Griffin, Camp #8 was named for Lt. Griffin. It is located in the basement of City Hall, North Washington Ave., Scranton.

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For information and visiting hours, please visit <http://ezrasgriffin8.org/>



The above poster represents a chronology of Lt. Griffin's life in the Grand Army of the Republic and the injury that resulted in his death.

Editor's Book Review ***By Rick Sedlisky***

Forgotten Hero: The Life, Letters & Diaries of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin

***By Nicholas E. Petula
Scranton, PA 2017, 164 pp***

Forgotten Hero: The Life, Letters & Diaries of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin, by Nicholas E. Petula, almost didn't happen. While researching material for a book about his boyhood home, *Pioneer Neighborhood: A History of Park Place and Bull's Head*, author Petula wanted to include memorable residents who lived in his neighborhood.

Research about early settlers eventually led Mr. Petula to the Griffin family of Providence Township and in particular to Ezra S. Griffin, born in 1835 and who at age 29, gave his life during the Civil War. Researching a man who left 155 years ago proved to be extremely difficult because there is literally no one left speak about him and thus, very little information from which to tell his story.

The author states that he is a collector or an accumulator of things found at flea markets and other places. Was it as the author states, a stroke of luck, serendipity or something else that a purchase of papers, bills, and other documents brought letters written by Lt. Griffin to the author?

Was it also serendipitous that a man from Philadelphia found 13 letters and two diaries written by Lt. Griffin and forwarded them to The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

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Camp 8 in Scranton that carries Lt. Griffin's name? Whatever or whoever brought the information to the author, gave him the resources necessary to finally tell the story of Ezra S. Griffin.

The early part of the book introduces the Griffin family, who dating back to the late 18th Century, were among the early settlers of what is now the Park Place-Bull's Head part of North Scranton. Land ownership, census information and locations of Griffin family members' homes during the 19th Century at a time when city directories were not address specific are discussed. The reader will find the inclusion of early maps of the neighborhood a good supplement to the narrative.

On Page 12, the reader learns more about Griffin, including speculation about his level of education and why, when upon entering the service of the Union Army, he was appointed second lieutenant of his company.

The 143rd Pennsylvania Volunteers Infantry Regiment was the unit that Griffin, his friends and others from Luzerne County joined. In this chapter, names of many who appear in Griffin's diaries are introduced. The journey through muster, training and stationing of the 143rd near Washington, DC, is discussed in significant detail and offers the reader a first glimpse at his military experiences.

The chapter about the 143rd could be considered a synopsis of Griffin's time of service during the Civil War. However, by including snippets of his service time at this point in the book, the author offers just enough to entice the reader to turn the page and continue to the soul of the book, the diaries and letters of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin.

Author Petula allows Lt. Griffin's diaries and letters to speak for themselves. The diaries are meticulously written and offer the reader a detailed look at a painful and violent period in American history through the words of a man who lived the pain and violence of that period.

The reader experiences different aspects of Griffin's day-to-day military life and there are many. His entries offer other comments and observations, such as his February 1, 1863 entry, "Saw yesterday at President's Levee 'Old Abe', shook hands with him". This entry is one of many that bring the period and historical figures to life.

The diary entries about battles and skirmishes in which Griffin participated, will have the reader feeling as though he/she is there. His July 1 – 5, 1863 entries about the Battle of Gettysburg and its aftermath and his descriptions of the slain, the suffering of the wounded, emotional stresses experienced and the eventual Confederate retreat, bring the historic battle to life in a way that television documentaries cannot. Lt. Griffin's emotions are raw and detailed.

The more than 40 letters written by Griffin to his family are of a tone that is different from his diary entries. While the letters describe his day-to-day military life, they also offer a good look at his civilian life.

The reader learns in detail about things such as sending money home to take care of his debts, his concerns about deserters, receiving letters, newspapers and packages

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from home, offering advice about the family business, expressing concerns and curiosities about certain family members, as well as a peek at the personal side of this well-educated, well-spoken man.

Who was Ann C. Spaulding aka A.C.S.? How important was she in his life? An entry on Page 35 offers a hint.

One thing missing from letters to his family is any in-depth discussion of his wartime experiences. Perhaps as the author suggests, it was Griffin's way of shielding his family from the pain, viciousness and brutality that accompany war.

The author complements the life of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin through the inclusion of numerous supporting documents, photographs and letters, all of which in their own ways, add interesting details and yet ask questions.

Why was Scranton Post No. 139 named after Lt. Griffin? What prompted the move of Griffin and his family members from their resting places at Griffin Cemetery to Dunmore Cemetery?

Letters from military officers and official military documents underscore Lt. Griffin's loyalty to the country. His last will and testament is also included. Letter #49, written by his brother, D.W. Griffin, who was with him in Annapolis, MD, at his time of death is extremely moving.

For anyone who traces genealogy, surnames are numerous. For those interested in the early history of Northeast Pennsylvania cities and towns, you will find names such as Hyde Park, Providence, Scranton, Dunmore, Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne and more.

Lt. Griffin's diaries and letters will have students of the Civil War and all readers feeling that you are with Griffin from the time he began his service with the Union Army to the day he was struck by a rebel bullet ball that subsequently ended his life.

This well-researched and well-presented piece of history is the result of one man, who through his desire to know more about his boyhood home, found Lt. Ezra S. Griffin. Thanks to author Petula, Lt. Ezra S. Griffin, a neighborhood ancestor, is not only remembered, but recognized as the hero he is.

Forgotten Hero: The Life, Letters & Diaries of Lt. Ezra S. Griffin, by Nicholas E. Petula, is available for purchase through the Lackawanna Historical Society, either via email at lackawannahistory@gmail.com or via phone at 570-344-3841.

Nicholas E. Petula was born and raised Scranton's Park Place-Bulls Head part of the city's Providence section. He taught history for 35 years at West Scranton High School and has written a number of books about Scranton including: *Brewed In Scranton: A History of the Brewing Industry in Scranton, PA; A History of Scranton Baseball, 1865-1953; Pioneer Neighborhood, A History of Park Place and Bull's Head; A History of Public Schools in Scranton; and Scranton Once Upon A Time.*

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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/) <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

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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/>

The Lackawanna Historical Society 2019

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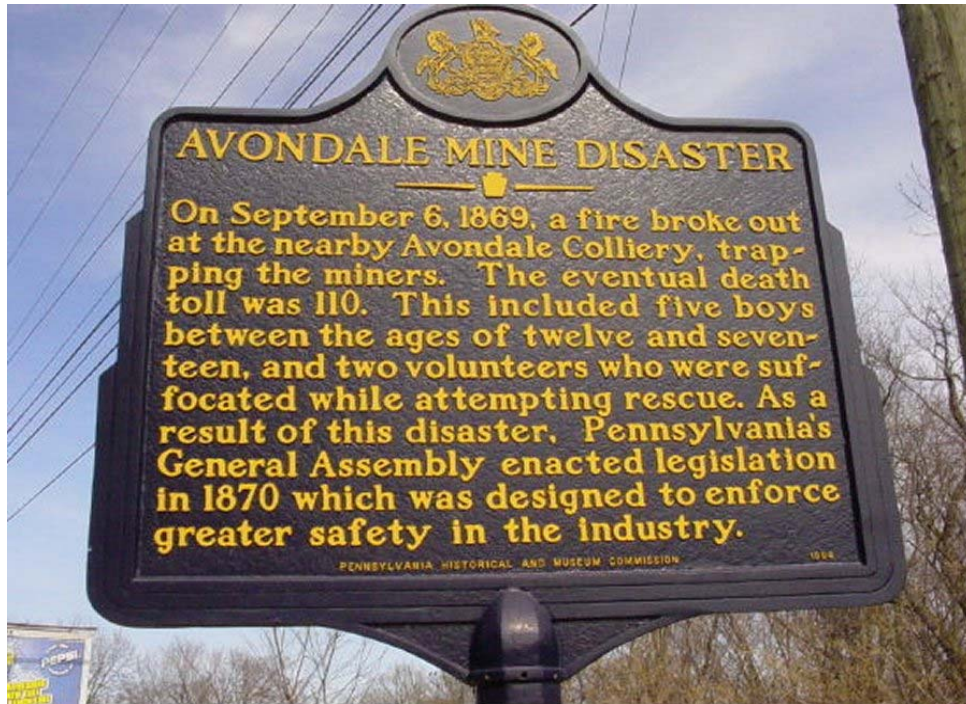
e-mail: lackawannahistory@gmail.com

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.

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Avondale
September 6, 1869 – September 6, 2019



Commonwealth Road Marker, Plymouth



Washburn Cemetery Marker, Scranton
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