



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

In 2012, a diverse group of organizations devoted to Public History started the History Relevance movement. (Public History entails all manner of engagement with history outside the classroom or lecture hall.) Your Historical Society has long considered the relevance of the town's history to our everyday lives integral to our mission. The artifacts and texts we preserve are not an obscure and oddball collection, unconnected to your life today. They point to places still here, events that still cast their shadow, and people and decisions of long ago that continue to affect our lives. They contain memories that you share with your neighbor, like it or not, by virtue of you both living here.

We have endorsed the History Relevance movement's "Value of History Statement":

TO OURSELVES

IDENTITY » History nurtures personal and collective identity in a diverse world. People discover their place in time through stories of their families, communities, and nation. These stories of struggle and achievement, exclusion and assimilation, setback and prosperity, shape people's personal values that guide them through life.

CRITICAL THINKING » History teaches vital skills. Historical thinking requires critical approaches to evidence and argument and develops understanding of context and perspective. It encourages engagement with concepts like continuity, change, and causation, and the ability to interpret and communicate complex ideas clearly and coherently.

TO OUR COMMUNITIES

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES » History is the foundation for strong, vibrant communities. A place becomes a community when wrapped in human memory as told through family stories, local traditions, and civic commemorations as well as discussions about our roles and responsibilities to each other and the places we call home.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT » History is a catalyst for economic growth. Communities with cultural heritage institutions and a strong sense of historical character attract talent, increase tourism revenues, enhance business development, and fortify local economies.

TO OUR FUTURE

ENGAGED CITIZENS » History helps people envision a better future. Democracy thrives when individuals convene to express opinions, listen to others, and take action. Weaving history into discussions about contemporary issues clarifies differing perspectives and misperceptions, reveals complexities, grounds competing views in evidence, and introduces new ideas; all can lead to greater understanding and viable community solutions.

LEADERSHIP » History inspires leaders. History provides today's leaders with role models as they navigate through the complexities of modern life. The stories of persons from the past can offer direction to contemporary leaders and help clarify their values and ideals.

LEGACY » History, saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. Historical knowledge is crucial to protecting democracy. By preserving authentic and meaningful documents, artifacts, images, stories, and places, future generations have a foundation on which to build and know what it means to be a member of the civic community.



*Always...
Patsy Cline*
See pg. 3 for info

Remember our historic headquarters building, with its displays of Sharpshville history, is open 1:00 – 3:00p.m., the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month.

A Look Back

Anniversary Celebrations

The town's anniversary celebrations—1924, 1949, 1974, and 1999—have each reflected their era, plus whatever else it appears the organizers could scrape together to make a proper show. As the first two celebrations fade from living memory, they are worth recording here.

1924 Golden Anniversary

In 1924, three days of celebration were held for Sharpsville's first recognized anniversary, marking fifty years since its incorporation as a borough. The inauguration of the festivities was announced on Monday June 9th by "Bombs, Bells and Whistles." For some reason, the ungodly hour of 5:30 a.m. was chosen for this ruckus.

Athletic events played a prominent part in the agenda. They included a "Marathon" starting in Clarksville and ending at the town hall. At four or so miles, this would be a little more than the typical 5K of today. The "Town Lot" was scene of a firemen's water battle, a track and field meet, and a tug-of-war between the single and married men, attracting over 50. This is the only occurrence we have found of a term for that locale. Since the 13th Street field and the town park are listed as venues for other events, the "Town Lot" must have been elsewhere. Our best guess is what is now the practice field/softball field next to the football field. Two baseball games were also scheduled: Married Men vs. Single Men and Sharpsville vs. Hughes A.B.C.

Both the first and third days of the celebration would feature parades. Entertainment would include a Community Dance at the Odd Fellows' Temple, a Tuesday concert at the town park featuring the Community Chorus, and another musical program there the next day. "EATS", presumably a community pot-luck, was held on Wednesday from 4 to 6:30 p.m. on the grounds of the High School.

In an era when it drew crowds, oratory was part of the program. Ernest Nemenyi, columnist and later editor of *The Youngstown Vindicator*, and with immigration then as today a "hot-button topic," he spoke on, "Relations of Foreign People to Their Town." Charles A. Leedy of *The Youngstown Telegram* and an officer of the American Humorist Association then gave what was likely a more light-hearted talk. As a prelude to Tuesday's choral concert, Mrs. Carbaugh recited her poem "Sharpsville". Unlike the many treasures of the past now effaced from our memory by time and happenstance, Mrs. Carbaugh's poem somehow survives. Before she gets into the particulars of life here since "ninety-two," the first two stanzas of her poem give a flavor of her versifying:

Sharpsville's Golden Anniversary that we now celebrate
Brings to mind past memories that inspire me to relate
Some of my experiences as I see the old town grow;
I will be as brief as possible in telling what I know.

I have noticed many changes, improvements quite a few,
Though I've only lived in Sharpsville since year of ninety-two;
I was here a very short time when the trolley line went through;
Do you wonder I remember now as I am telling you?

These tiresome rhyming couplets would continue for another 31 stanzas, enough to take up her allotted 15 minutes on the program. Though, before we are too hard on Mrs. Carbaugh, the chief merits of "Our Town" written for the anniversary by Mrs. Oran Stewart and "Sharpsville" reprinted from an earlier published book of poems by Rev. L.L. Hager are their comparative brevity.

Like today, fireworks closed out the festivities. The earlier of the two shows, at 1:30 in the afternoon, we may presume were decidedly less impressive.

1949 Diamond Anniversary

Sharpsville's 75th Diamond Anniversary was much expanded from the events of twenty-five years prior, with now nine days of activities ending on the Fourth of July. At least to kids, the most memorable part was likely the carnival mid-way on the lawn of the Pierce Mansion everyday but Sundays.

Cont'd on page 3

Anniversary Celebrations, cont'd.

The town was subjected to four days of parades: county veterans' organizations marched on Tuesday; Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 4-H Clubs on Wednesday; a fireman's parade on Saturday; and a "Parade of Progress" on the final day.

Athletic contests were curtailed from 25 years prior, to just one baseball game as well as youth games and contests. Interestingly, a boxing match was added—though it must be remembered this was a time when certain months saw boxing aired on television every weekday night.

Street dances were held on four of the days, from 10:00 p.m. to midnight. The last day feature also featured a "Queen's Ball" at the High School.

The first full-day of the festivities included a sight-seeing tour. (It would be interesting to know the sights the committee considered worth seeing.) The obligatory fireworks were displayed at the Athletic Field on Saturday evening following the baseball game.

The era's public piety is reflected in the religious services which were incorporated throughout the week.

An "orange crate derby" was held on Seventh Street hill, though the organizers perhaps had some later regrets. Collision of two orange crate race cars resulted in a cut nose; a car that swerved out of control hit a spectator, fracturing her ankle.

A new introduction to the festivities, and perhaps their highlight, was a dramatic pageant "A Salute to Sharpsville" held for four days at the football field. Like a similar pageant put on in 1974, the staging was produced by a firm that went town-to-town organizing historical pageants. Some scenes could apply to almost any small town's history: "Ballet of the Wilderness," "Typical Pioneer Family in Western Pennsylvania," and "The Gay Nineties—A Fourth of July Picnic." Others, however, were adapted specifically to Sharpsville: "Phineas Dunham surveys the future site of Sharpsville," "James Sharp—Mrs. Sharp and son inspect Brush Dam," and "The Shenango Line Canal Boat arrives with cargo."

While *The Sharon Herald* published articles about the jubilee's goings-on along with a few historical reflections and captioned photos, no special supplement outlining the town's history and progress was issued, as was done 25 years earlier. On the other hand, the "History of Sharpsville" booklet was significantly expanded from the 18-page 1924 edition to the 1949 edition's 35 pages. The latter publication was written by Orvis Anderson, Nelson Brayer, and Thomas Lally.

Upcoming Events

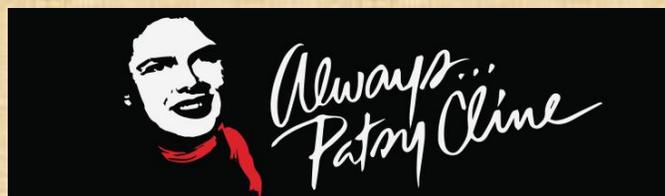
GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIPS

Hard Rock Casino, Northfield, OH, January 16th
Rivers Casino, Pittsburgh, TUESDAY February 19th

Call 724-813-9199 for info and reservations



A LOVING, DRAMATIC TRIBUTE TO HER LIFE AND MUSIC



March 8th ★ 9th ★ 10th

St. Bartholomew's Center, Sharpsville

Starring Roxanne Chapman & Tina Greig

Directed by Maria Ackley

Dinner Catered by Rita Sloan

Tickets \$35

Available at www.sharpsvillehistorical.org or call
724-962-5757



Please also support the quality productions, showcasing local talent, of Area Community Theatre of Sharpsville.

The beloved Broadway spectacle:

Brigadoon

March 22nd – 24th and 29th -31st

Pierce Opera House

call 724-815-4388 or go to actsharpsville.org



COMPLIMENTS OF
JOLLY BOYS' DANCING CLUB.

Yourself and Ladies are respectfully invited to attend a

Select Social Party

—AT—
McFARLAND'S HALL,

Friday Evening, January 12th, 1883.

GOOD MUSIC WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE.

NO GENTLEMAN ADMITTED WITHOUT A LADY.

FLOOR MANAGERS:

G. N. Jaxtheimer,

G. F. Dawes.

Today, bars and nightclubs might offer reduced drink prices or no cover charge for females to even out the ratio of male and female clientele. Here, we see the equivalent in 1883 with “No Gentleman Admitted Without a Lady”.

The venue of the soirée, McFarland’s Hall, was located in Orangeville.

Newspaper notices from the time indicate a number of short-lived or impromptu clubs such as the “Jolly Boys”. Without today’s bars or dance spots to meet, young men and women would have needed semi-organized clubs to arrange periodic social events. An accompanying letter from F.B. Hum of New Hamburg to Reuben Hum of Sharpsville urges him to invite all who would be likely to attend.

Volunteer Opportunities

As an all-volunteer organization, we rely on members of the local community to help fulfill our various missions. Even if you have just a couple hours to spare a few times a year, we can use your help. Depending on your inclination, please consider the following:

- 1) Our historic headquarters is open twice a month and receives a steady flow of visitors. Hosts are needed on the first and third Saturday from 1:00-3:00. Materials on the building’s history are provided.
- 2) Light cleaning or groundskeeping at our headquarters that can be done on an as-needed basis.
- 3) Fundraising events such as our concession stand at ACTs performances, and our upcoming Patsy Cline show and Quilt Show always require volunteer help.

In Memoriam

Donna Jewell Murray was a founding member of the Sharpsville Area Historical Society, served on the Board for most of our existence, and was instrumental in the Society’s many accomplishments. Her passing on November 12, 2018 is deeply mourned. Even in her later years, she remained energetic with a personality far outsize her petite frame. Deeply interested in improving Sharpsville and the Valley, whatever she was proposing to you, Donna almost always got a “yes”. She will be missed.

Collections Update

Jill Lanich donated a 1963 copy of the revived *Sharpsville Advertiser*.

Patty DeJulia donated school class photos from 1939 and the 1940s as well as a 1939 “Blue & White” yearbook.

Sue Scott donated a program from the 1956 banquet of the Alumni Association with a list of graduates along with a 1990s brochure from the Sharpsville Association of Businesses.

Skip Hittle donated local correspondence from the 1890s, a photo of Mahaney Park from the 1950s, several newspaper clippings, and the above invitation.

The Society also acquired early postcards of the Canal Lock and an interior view of the Pierce Opera House.

Contact Us

website: www.sharpsvillehistorical.org
email: sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com

see our website for officers’ phone numbers

Headquarters: 131 N. Mercer Ave., Sharpsville, Pa.
Mailing address: 955 Forest Lane, Sharpsville, Pa. 16150

Meetings are held the First Monday of the Month at
7:00pm at our headquarters

Traces of Lost Sharpsville

Travel and Adventure

International tourism, as a widespread middle-class phenomenon in America, can be attributed to two factors against a backdrop of increasing mid-twentieth century prosperity. Paid vacation became increasingly common from the 1920s onward. Yet, travel to Europe aboard a steamship was too slow for a two-week vacation. Thus, any transformation in mass tourism also required the post-War improvements in commercial air travel. So, disregarding migrations of necessity which have always existed, before this period, overseas leisure travel was the province of the upper-classes.

Passport records bear this out. A review of passports issued before 1925 shows a large majority of those born or living in Sharpsville went to visit the Old County and family there, or else to return here after a few years' absence living on their native soil. The only true example of overseas tourism in these records and confirming reports is that of the Pierces. While some were well-off in turn-of-the-century Sharpsville, only the Pierces were truly rich. As examples, James B. & Albertina Pierce returned home in 1892 after several months in Cuba. Their niece, Chloe, had spent that winter studying in Dresden, Germany. Passport records before a certain date don't list the destination, but list applications made in 1902, '04, and '06 for James and Albertina, and 1900 for nieces Alice, Mary, and Kate, and in 1909 for their daughter Pauline. Many of these applications show they were embarking on tours arranged by the Thomas Cook Company, the English firm that pioneered mass tourism.

A few of these passports, though, were obtained in connection with a traveler's business or occupation. Though he was a native of New York at the time, one intriguing instance of such travel is Sharpsville native Frank Luce's 1915 trip to Australia as part of a theatrical production. More common, though, were several instances of local ironworkers being called to Sakchi, India to help the Tata Iron & Steel Co. establish a plant there. (Tata remains prominent in the worldwide steel industry.)

John M. Thornton, from Sharpsville, likewise brought his engineering expertise to the construction of railroads in Mexico and Guatemala. In 1895, on his way from San Francisco to Guatemala, accompanied by his sister-in-law aboard the steamer *Colima*, his ship, perhaps overladen, capsized under heavy seas. The wreck happened off the coast of Mexico with 178 of its 214 passengers and crew lost. Thornton was among those originally feared dead, but, along with five other stragglers, he showed up clinging to a piece of wreckage the next day. The sister-in-law and her travelling companion, though, were drowned. Undaunted by the calamity, John and his brother Charles continued with the railroad project and eventually acquired real estate in Central America.

(Of course, the tried-and-true way to "See the World" was to join the military. But the visits Sharpsville boys made to exotic Pacific isles, scenic Italian hill towns, or Normandy in June don't exactly qualify under this article's title—at least in the early to mid-1940s.)

An early example of travel for adventure—and not leisure, business, or necessity—though belongs to Edwin Twitmyer. He was principal of Sharpsville High School, but moved to Seattle around 1891 where he was appointed principal of that young city's high school. (Edwin's brother was Dr. John H. Twitmyer, after whom the street is named.) In July of 1891 Edwin and his party ascended Mt. Rainier, reaching Gibraltar Rock, a promontory at 12,400 feet where many climbs ended; a smaller contingent made it to the summit.

The 1897 news of a gold strike in the Klondike set off a frenzy, with thousands from all corners of the country—and most completely unprepared for the privations of the Arctic—embarking for the mining camps along the Yukon. Many were encouraged by promotional literature such as the booklet "Official Guide to the Klondyke Country" advertised in Sharpsville's newspaper. In January of 1898, a meeting at Sharpsville of several local prospectors included Nathaniel McClure of Sharon, J.H. Quigley of Shenango Township, and Sharpsville's A.W. Warren and Grant C. Miller. A route via the Chilkoot Pass and an absence of two or three years was planned. Some did strike it rich, such as Prof. T.S. Lippy of Warren, Ohio whose gold prospecting reportedly made him a millionaire. Most did not fare as well. Grant C. Miller and A.L. Warren had both set out February 1, 1898. Warren returned the fall of that year having made it only about half-way on the overland route. Miller returned in July of 1899; he met many hardships and fell ill, but survived, unlike some of his party. Arthur Notman also went to the Klondike but returned with little success. William Keefer of Five Points came back but the ordeal in the Yukon had driven him insane.

Few from here, though, can match the harrowing adventures of Alfred Bragg. An Orangeville native and later Sharpsville resident, Bragg travelled the Pacific as purser of the liner *S.S. President Hoover* in the 1930s. Over a 21-day passage in 1935 from San Francisco to Kobe, Japan, 18 of those days were in the midst of a typhoon. A fire at sea and the severe leg

Travel and Adventure, cont'd.

injuries Bragg suffered when he was nearly swept overboard figured as part of this voyage. In August 1937 during the onset of the Sino-Japanese War, on a mission to evacuate U.S. nationals from Shanghai, his ship was bombed by Chinese aircraft which had mistaken it for a Japanese troopship. Later that year, the ill-fated *President Hoover* was caught in a terrific South China Sea typhoon, before being wrecked off Taiwan. Following the shipwreck, Bragg was reported lost at sea and presumed drowned, but later rescued. January of 1938 found him recuperating from a fractured shoulder in Pago-Pago suffered during the hunt for the lost Pan-Am flying boat the *Samoan Clipper*. In a well-written book of verse, *Farewell to Paradise!* Bragg's adventures at sea are recounted on the dust jacket. The poems themselves were composed in such exotic locales as Bombay, Ceylon, Alexandria, Marseilles, Bolivia, Fiji, and Havana. (Two were also written at Sharpsville, two at Sharon, and four at Orangeville.)

Yet among these adventurers, perhaps only Sharpsville's Harold G. McCrillis can claim to have gone to the actual ends of the earth. As part of the U.S. Navy's "Operation Deep Freeze", McCrillis served as a Seabee constructing the research station at the South Pole in 1956.

Building update



The summer of 2017 saw the replacement of the badly-deteriorated front steps of our headquarters building with sandstone slabs in concordance with the original construction.

While the original building did not have handrails, they are of course a modern necessity. (Later "improvements" added cheap, ordinary railings.) We chose the ornate cast iron newel posts and balusters to echo the prevailing Victorian aesthetic.

The finished product is the workmanship of general contractor Joe Fuoco of Respond Enterprises and Troy McDonald who was able to do the tricky steel-to-cast-iron welding.



Supporting the Community

The inaugural concert of our recently restored 1881 Pomplitz pipe organ was held December 19th. In a Christmas Celebration, organist and conductor Joseph Bandi played beloved carols, accompanied by the impressive talent of his Lakeview High School Chamber Singers. The 75 in attendance then joined in a sing-a-long of favorite Christmas songs. This free event was our thanks to the community and many donors who helped make our \$19,000 organ restoration a reality.



With Gratitude

Our appeal for donations toward restoration of our headquarters building's historic pipe organ continues to generate response. Since the last newsletter, we have received a significant grant from:

The Strake Foundation
of Houston, Texas

We have also received the following sponsorships:

Gold Level
James Landino

Bronze Level
Virginia Lange

We have also received the general-use donations from the following:
Nancy Gealy, George Footman, Jan Catron, Ann Morris, and Patricia Carnes

We should also mention the candy bar sales spearheaded by **Petie Kelly-Zipay**. Profits to the Society from her project have totaled \$1,000 for the year and \$5,191 cumulatively since 2011. Pick up one or our delicious Philadelphia candy bars where you see them sold.