



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

The articles contained in this newsletter are sometimes the result of inquiries, including the obvious questions that seem to come only from schoolchildren—such as the article in our last issue of why Sharpsville’s sports teams are called the Blue Devils. A narrative for most articles, however, results only after accumulated facts and details are gleaned from the many donations of documents the Society receives as well as the increasing trove of historical publications made available by online digitization. Remaining, though, are some interesting nuggets of quaint and curious forgotten lore that are not likely to find their way into a larger story. Here are a few samples:

☞ In 1893, James Bentley claimed that gold has been found in large quantities in the sand-bank on his farm in South Pymatuning. As no gold-rush ensued, we must presume, he didn’t quite find as much as he thought.

☞ In 1895, the game of “golf” was described as a popular fad among society people in the East. A description of the unfamiliar game was given along with the suggestion of opening a “putting ground” somewhere about Sharpsville to “introduce this excellent game to our young people.”

☞ Also in 1895, E.M. Seamans, motorman on the street railway, will walk a tight rope, stretched from the Shenango House to the opposite building, in Sharon, at 3 o’clock on the afternoon of the Fourth of July. The rope will be about 50 feet above the ground.

☞ In 1901, a conviction and sentence was handed down for the keeping of a bawdy house in Sharon. No record of such an establishment has been found in Sharpsville, but we guess that’s just Sharon for you.

☞ Citizens were warned of the provisions of a new 1909 state-wide tax on dog owners. Payment of the tax was evidenced by a dog-tag. However, if the dog owner did not respond to a notice of an untagged dog with ten days, in a pointlessly cruel measure, the constable was authorized to kill the dog.

☞ In 1913, the kidnapping of the “Belle of the Italian settlement” here was reported. A newlywed, Giavania Rose Desanto, was grabbed by two men and given to a third man who once lived in her family’s household. At the time, her husband was in Toledo buying furniture for their new home.

Upcoming Events

Join in the Holiday Spirit at the

Historical Society’s
Christmas Celebration

Featuring beloved hymns and carols played on our
1881 POMPLITZ PIPE ORGAN, the Lakeview Concert
Choir, and a sing-a-long of favorite carols
Wednesday December 11th

Free will offering



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

An annual holiday event:

**THE MANY MOODS OF
CHRISTMAS**

December 20th through 22nd
call 724-815-4388 or go to actsharpville.org



Save the Date!

A tribute to the King
of Rock ‘n Roll
Las Vegas Entertainer

MICHAEL KENNEDY

February 14th-15th 2020
St. Bartholomew’s
Center, Sharpsville



Engaging the Community

The Sharpsville Historical Society is planning a major project to beautify the borough and which incorporates our history. Discussions are ongoing for a large mural depicting a panorama of scenes of Sharpsville's history to be painted on a Main Street property. As details are being worked out with the artist and property owner, the main issue is funding. While a grant is being applied for, it would require at least a 50% match of the estimated cost of \$6,000 to \$10,000. Besides a direct donation, one way to support this project is to purchase a commemorative brick. Any unused funds would be directed toward the approximately \$55,000 needed to complete the restoration of our historic headquarters building.

A 4" x 8" brick with three lines of inscription is available for \$75.

An 8" x 8" brick with up to six lines of inscription may be purchased for \$125.

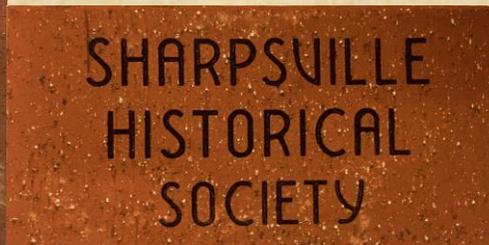
The bricks would be placed around the Shenango Furnace Ingot Mould in the town park.

Please consider an "In Memory of" or "In Honor of" brick for a loved one. Maybe they worked at the Shenango, maybe they are a service member stationed overseas, maybe you want to honor your parents who contributed to the town in their quiet way, maybe you want to recognize a civic organization or High School Class, or maybe you want to memorialize a Sharpsville family name.

Order forms available on our website: sharpsvillehistorical.org



An 8" x 8" brick sample and a 4" x 8" sample



Where the bricks would be placed



Tony Liscio (r) is here presenting Bob Rannard of the Society with a rug loom. The home-based rug-making manufacture was conducted in South Pymatuning by the parents of Tony's departed wife, Mary Polochak Liscio.

A Look Back

Other Industries

Famed for its blast furnaces and ingot mold foundries, Sharpsville was also home to a variety of other manufacturers and processors.

In 1870, it was noted that the “thriving village of Sharpsville has 353 inhabitants and 13 manufacturing establishments employing 154 men and a capital of \$492,800.”

The feed mill harkens back to Sharpsville’s oldest “industry”. In 1825 by the town’s namesake, James Sharp, built his first gristmill. About eleven years later, a flood destroyed the brush dam that supplied the water for his millrace. He replaced it with a more substantial dam, and built a new grain- and saw-mill on the site of the current Feed Mill. In 1847, financial difficulties forced Sharp to forfeit the mill and leave town, with the mill passing through several hands during the 19th century. In the year 1900, John H. Miller erected the present mill structure on the site of the old one. The old millstones were replaced with an up-to-date roller mill, as well as a plan sifter, where horizontal layers of oscillating sieves separated the ground grain into various grades. Its elaborate system of chutes can still be seen. Likewise, the stone foundation of James Sharp’s 1836 mill remains visible.

Older yet was the mill at Orangeville (on the South Pymatuning side). In 1798, Jacob Loutzenhiser, first settler of the village, erected a saw- and grist-mill. Built of hewn logs and powered by a huge under-shot wheel, twenty-five feet in diameter, the mill was sold to Adam Haun in April 1802. He carried on the operation for many years, before being sold to George Hendrickson, followed by Mr. Fells. It continued operation into the 20th century. A woolen-mill was also a feature of that village’s early days; the works built by George E. Hull, though, burned down April 3, 1838.

Similarly dependent on nearby farms, a cheese factory once stood on the South Pymatuning side of Orangeville, on the former Orangeville-Greenville Road. During the 19th century it was built as a cooperative by local dairy farmers as an outlet for surplus milk. John Cook was its first cheesemaker and came to Orangeville from Andover, Ohio. Biggin & Sons later purchased the facility and installed a pasteurizing system. Biggins produced a wheel type cheddar cheese here in the early 1930s before they moved their operation to Sharon. This factory is likely the scene of an 1875 drama of crime and punishment that was reported in the newspapers:

Some tramps broke into a cheese factory near Sharpsville the other night and skimmed all the milk and carried off all the cream, together with a considerable quantity of cheese. The tracks of a wagon were discovered near the factory the next morning, and a party starting after, overhauled the thieves in an out of the way place. As the dairymen were exceedingly lenient, as farmers and dairymen are too apt to be, they agreed that the offenders might depart upon their promising to come up to the captain’s office and settle for what they had had, but from that time to the present they have heard nothing of their nocturnal customers.

The present-day milk processing plant of Dean Foods, off Seneca Road in South Pymatuning is a far cry from the Orangeville cheese factory. It currently employs around 300, relies on dairy farms in a 250-mile radius, and delivers to grocery stores in about a 200-mile radius. Dean, the present owner, expanded facility after its purchase from Hawthorne Melody, which had, in turn, purchased what was originally the Brookfield Dairy, which the Yourga family had moved to South Pymatuning in 1935.

Makers of carriages and buggies, like the old water-powered grain mill, are artifacts of by-gone days. Joseph Byerly, “manufacturer of wagons, carriages, and sleighs,” was located ½ mile west of Sharpsville at what is still known as Byerly’s corners (the intersection of Buckeye and Ivanhoe). Moving there in 1859 after operating in Sharon for four years, Byerly worked as a carriage-maker as late as 1918



Joseph Byerly residence and carriage works, 1876

Other Industries, cont'd.

before retiring. A competitor, J.W. Dickinson's Carriage and Wagon-Works was located at Sharpsville in February 1882. General blacksmithing and horseshoeing were adjunct operations. The Dickinsons, Sr. & Jr., had previously worked in Clarksville, and considered themselves as the successors of the Eagan Bros. firm. "Eagan & Bro., carriage makers and blacksmiths," is listed on Furnace Street in a 1879-80 City Directory. Dickinson's shop was described as a two-story 70' x 30' foot shop; the outline of such a substantial building, labelled "Dull & Eagan Carriage Works" is shown on Furnace Street in an 1873 map.

An 1872-73 directory lists on High Street an L. Batherst, Founder, of which little is known. A more substantial establishment, though was Geddes, Ainsworth & Co., established in 1868 as an iron and brass foundry and machine shop. The company subsequently reformed as Geddes, Pierce & Co., Geddes, Young & Co., and finally a partnership between William Geddes and Daniel Eagan in 1876. (The cast iron front of the Pierce Opera House is marked as made by Geddes, Pierce, & Co., 1871.) By 1882, the plant had expanded to six buildings on Shenango St. and had developed an extensive trade across several states. The following year, Eagan sold his interest and moved to Sharon, where he held an interest in the Sharon Machine Company and Sharon Steel Castings Company. The latter firm made the first steel in Sharon and was eventually acquired by the American Steel Castings Company of which he was first vice-president. By 1895, the plant is labelled the E.W. Bailey Foundry & Machine Shop. Two years later, though, the occupant was now the Sharpsville Foundry & Machine Co., reorganized with George W. Johnson, and Eagan, again, purchasing an interest. This was short-lived since, in 1897, the venture was placed in receivership. By 1891, further west around the present address of 140 W. Shenango Street, is the D.R. Inglis Machine Shop. David R. Inglis' business continued until around 1912.

With Gratitude

Rod Alexander made a significant contribution toward trimming our large sycamore tree whose overhanging branches was endangering our headquarters building.

Collections Update

Jennifer Wallitsch donated several class photos from the high-school class of her great-uncle and grandfather from the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the associated class reunion photos.

Bob Verholek donated a promotional corkscrew from H.M. Thompson, Wholesale Liquor Dealer from the early 1900s.

Lorraine Mondich donated a framed decorative 1915 wedding certificate of a Sharpsville couple.

Membership Report

The following new members have joined since the last newsletter:

Altha Graham, as a lifetime member

The support of our new, renewing and lifetime members keeps the Society running and is greatly appreciated.

Volunteers Needed

Our headquarters building is open for visitors the first and third Saturday of the month from 1:00 to 3:00. One or two volunteers are needed to greet visitors. A script describing the building's architecture is provided. Visitor traffic is steady but light, so you won't be overwhelmed.

If you can help, please call 724-962-2392 to get on the schedule.



In addition, various projects call for a couple hours of work just once, twice, or three times a year. If you want to help the community but are hesitant about making a large time commitment, let us know and we can find a project to match your time and inclination.

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

Other Industries, cont'd.

Woodworking was initially the province of Thomas G. Robinson and his sons. A planing mill was built some time during the 1860s by Robinson and John Cooke. Robinson was also a building contractor and used the output of the mill to construct wood frame buildings here, including the original First Methodist, First Baptist, and St. Bartholomew's churches. At some point Cooke sold his interest to J. Taylor of Greenville, who later moved to Sharon. The mill was located alongside the river, across the canal from the Sharpsville Furnace. After canal traffic ceased, this section of

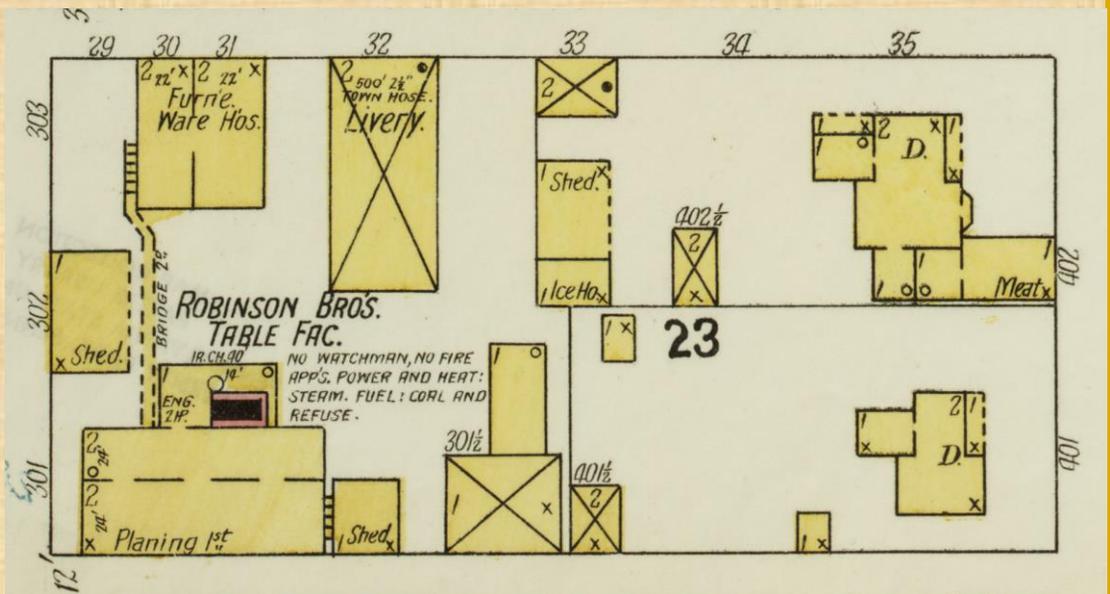


An 1873 map shows the location of Robinson Cooke Planing Mill (left) and Dull & Egan Carriage works (center right).

the canal would follow the bed of the Sharon Railway (which would soon become part of the Atlantic & Great Western and eventually the Erie Railroad). As a result, Robinson sold the property to the railroad. The building was moved to Byerly's Corners, where it became part of Joseph Byerly's carriage works. That building was torn down in 1947. The equipment was sent to Grinnell, Iowa where it was used in the manufacture of grain harvesting headers. Robinson helped set up the machinery, staying in Iowa for a few years.

After his return, about 1880, Robinson set up a furniture factory and show-room in a two-story 20' x 50' building. They later erected three more buildings and a connecting bridge in the northern half of the block between N. Second and N. Third Streets. He dealt in parlor organs and sewing machines, and possibly in furniture items other than those he made. (Interestingly, this was part of an unlikely combination with undertaking, as an 1881 newspaper advertisement announces: "Furniture and Undertaking—T.G. Robinson—Dealer in Furniture, Sewing Machines and Organs. Repairing furniture a specialty. Undertaking in all its branches, promptly attended to." We do not know whether the factory also made coffins.) By 1895, the facility had expanded and was now termed the Robinson Bro's. Table Factory. By then, T.G. Robinson's

boys had taken over the business: Scott, Charles, William, Harry, and Frank. Beyond their regular line of work, other wooden items they manufactured included the steamer *Oneida* that travelled to Trout Island, as well as the rowboats available there for visitors. The versatile Robinson brothers then purchased the Sharpsville Electric Co. in 1897. Frank was electrocuted at the plant in 1899. Scott took over the undertaker trade as well,



Layout of the Robinson Bros. Table Factory from the 1900 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

until 1904 when he started selling real estate and insurance. Ads from the mid-1890s show the continuation of the retail sales with a funeral parlor: "S.A. Robinson, Sharpsville Furniture & Undertaking Rooms." The table factory continued—described in 1908 as manufacturing extension tables—seems to have closed by 1913. Thomas G. Robinson died in 1890, and his wife Jodi "Ma" Robinson in 1920. She was known for sitting on her front porch, smoking her corn-cob pipe.

Other Industries, cont'd.

The building at 29 N. Second Street, until recently occupied by Cattron Communications and now by Webb Winery, is a remnant of the manufacturing complex.

Another planing mill appeared by 1905, operated by Erastus Gaines. By 1909, E.L. Gaines & Son, had grown to employ twelve workers, and in 1912, the saw and planing mill also included a shop making doors and sashes. It stood about where the Sharpsville V.F.W. is now.

A pallet factory in South Pymatuning continues Sharpsville area woodworking. Johnson Industries originally operated in Orangeville, Ohio but in April 1966 was forced to relocate due to the construction of the Shenango Valley Reservoir. The new site was located in South Pymatuning along State Line Road. The plant continues operation under the name of Limpach, Inc. who acquired it in 1987.

The ill-fated elastic enamel plant was located along the Erie & Pittsburgh rail line and was profiled in the March 2015 issue of this newsletter.

Industries dependent on the blast furnaces and ingot mold foundries here included a slag company. Standard Slag was organized in 1912 and then sold to Cambria Slag in 1937. They processed and sold the slag from the Shenango Furnaces. In addition, Sharpsville Slag Company operated near the Claire Furnace. The output of their crushing plant was mixed in a slurry and pumped in a pipe to the hillside across the river. General Woodcraft, at least for a time, and Sharon Pattern Works, when they moved here from Sharon around 1973, made wooden patterns for the ingot molds. Clarksville Sand Company supplied sand for the ingot molds. Today, Development of Sharpsville Furnace, Ltd. occupies the land once owned by the sprawling Shenango Furnace complex. A crushing plant processes not only the old furnaces' slag that has been mined there, but also trucked-in construction debris to serve as base for road and construction fill.

Some manufacturers are known only by a brief mention in a newspaper. Their presence here may have been fleeting. A broom factory here is noted in 1878. In 1888, the nail factory was reported as shut down. That same year, The Sharpsville Boot and Shoe Company, Ltd. was likewise dissolved. (In an 1887 newspaper, a Humeston, Iowa merchant advertised a full line of goods for ladies, misses and children made by the Sharpsville Shoe Co., every pair of these goods are fully warranted.") It was located on Shenango Street, in the middle of the block between Mercer Avenue and the town park. We are informed in 1909 that Allie Bolton sold his ice cream factory at Sharpsville to Messrs. Reimold and Buchannon. Further traces of this manufacturer have not been found though.

Another short-lived firm was a wire goods factory. In February 1899, it was reported that the Wire Novelty Works will be removed to Sharpsville where the citizens have taken \$30,000 in stock in the concern. Three months later, the firm, apparently re-named The Shenango Specialty Works, Limited, announced the establishment of an export trade with Germany and Austria. It was expected that this new industry in Sharpsville "is likely to become an important factor in the manufacturing line and may grow to be an extensive establishment." Their 52-page catalogue listed a wide variety of wire goods including produce baskets, floor mats, stair treads, flower stands, hammocks, and fencing. A map dated January 1900 places what is termed Sharpsville Specialty Works locates the manufacturer on Mercer Avenue in what is now a vacant lot at the corner of High Street. It was not in the 1905 edition of the map.

A brick works was located here in the early to mid-1880s, supplying the bricks for the First Universalist Church and Mercer Avenue (later Deeter) School building. It is not known whether this was the same brickyard reportedly operated at the East End, in the area of Twitmyer and Covert Avenues. This East End or Irishtown brickyard may also have supplied the infamous "soft brick" that necessitated tearing down St. Bartholomew's Church building in 1907, just 20 years after it was built.

A.M. Smith & Son, appears in a 1908 City Directory. The firm was described as an "artificial stone manufacturer," which was the term at the time for cement block. It was located on Walnut Street, across from Erastus Gaines' planing mill. In 1912, the firm was now known by Karl Smith (the "& Son"), and is described as a cement block factory. Another cement block factory, Valley Supply Company, located near the old Claire Furnace, began production in 1945.

Wilbert J. Vath started a shop fabricating grave stones and memorials in 1920. Vath Monument Works was located on

WE ALSO SELL THE

"Buffalo Boot,"

WHICH IS THE BEST FITTING, BEST WEARING AND CHEAPEST BOOT FOR THE MONEY WE EVER OFFERED. WE ALSO CARRY A FULL LINE OF GOODS FOR LADIES, MISSES AND CHILDREN, MADE BY THE

Sharpsville Shoe Co.,

EVERY PAIR OF THESE GOODS ARE FULLY WARRANTED. IN ADDITION TO THESE LINES OF GOODS WE HAVE MANY OTHER LINES OF GOODS TO SELECT FROM. OUR BOOT AND SHOE STOCK IS THE LARGEST OF ANY IN THIS PART OF THE STATE, AND WE WILL AT ALL TIMES GUARANTEE GOODS AS REPRESENTED AND AS CHEAP AS THEY CAN BE BOUGHT ANYWHERE.

The 1887 Iowa newspaper ad for Sharpsville-made shoes

Other Industries, cont'd.

Ridge Avenue, with W.J. Vath learning the trade from his father Louis, who had for years fashioned monuments in Sandy Lake. He was succeeded by his son Lewis C. Vath who continued the business until around 1940. A competitor, Parsons-Muster Monument works started around 1924 and was located at 500 W. Main Street. H. Roscoe Parsons partnered with John Muster who had apprenticed as a monument maker in Germany. By around 1937, Muster left the firm which closed about three years later.

The D'Julia Statuary Co. was run by James DeJulia and later his son Louis, from about 1951 until 1978. They made decorative and religious plaster statues and wall reliefs eventually moving their facility from South Pymatuning to 19 N. Second Street (which was once home to Angel's Casino).

In the old machine shop of the Claire Furnace was Arjay Manufacturing, which did shearing and slitting of steel bars and sheet. It was first organized in November 1947 and employed 16 men by 1950. Successors at this location (between High and Canal Streets) included two steel fabricators—JEB Fabricating, Inc. (from 1981 to 2000) and Integrated Fabricating (from 2000 to 2014). The building is now occupied by a secondary smelter of metal alloys, Davis Alloys.



Vath Monument Works

Another firm involved in steel sales and processing, Shenango Steel Co., was founded in 1947. Located in the commercial building at the west end of Hickory Street, it moved to Masury after its founder John Clarke died in 1962.

Located on Canal Street, Chautauqua Fiberglass began in 1963 as a manufacturer of fiberglass hulls for racing-class sailboats. Beginning in the 1970s, they transitioned toward making fiberglass components and containers for industrial applications involving corrosives and chemicals. In 2000, they greatly expanded their plant and currently occupy 35,000 square feet. The firm's name was changed in 2013 to Advanced Fiberglass Services.

After the Shenango Valley Racquet Club on High Street closed, it was occupied from 1989 to 1994 by Pyramid Fitness, a manufacturer of weightlifting equipment. Bennington Furniture moved there in 1999 before closing in 2010. The building is now occupied by a manufacturer of concrete and asphalt additives, Right Pointe, LLC.

The preceding summary of course includes some salient omissions: John W. Jackson's oil-can shop was featured in the March 2016 issue of this newsletter. The Sharpsville Boiler Works (later renamed the Sharpsville Steel Fabricators) along with Catron Group, Inc. will be topics in upcoming newsletters.

In an expansive survey such as this, errors and omissions are to be expected. If you have anything to add or correct please let us know at sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com

In Memoriam

Judy Watson Grandy served as board member and treasurer of the Sharpsville Historical Society from its founding to 2009. She ably guided the Society through a period of thin financial reserves.

Her passing on September 9th is deeply mourned. Despite the challenges of physical disability, Judy always brightened the room with her sunny disposition.

She is survived by her husband Pete, son Michael, two granddaughters and a brother.

In Memoriam

Francisco Casanova, operatic tenor, who had sung to acclaim at the principal opera houses of Europe and the Americas, died in Rhode Island on September 26th.

He performed in, directed, or helped produce six operas that were staged by the Historical Society in 2009-2013. Born in the Dominican Republic and a childhood friend of Dr. Francisco Cano, it was through Dr. Cano that the New York City-based maestro came here to share his talent.

Always cordial and engaging, he took a genuine interest in developing the arts and culture here in Sharpsville.