



HISTORY BYTES

A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication

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March – April 2018

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

A Message from the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *History Bytes*, a bi-monthly e-newsletter published by the Lackawanna Historical Society.

History Bytes is a supplement to the Society's "*Journal*" quarterly print publication. Content includes articles written by contributing authors that are historical, current and from time to time, genealogically-related, as well as stories about those who made Lackawanna County and Northeast Pennsylvania their home. Also included are a list of Lackawanna Historical Society events and information about other Society business.

History Bytes includes Internet links to sites related to Lackawanna County and Northeast Pennsylvania, as well as *Editor's Book Review* where readers are introduced to books written by authors from or originally from the region.

On a periodic basis, a special edition of *History Bytes* that offers stand-alone, in-depth articles will be presented. As a complement to the first issue of *History Bytes*, we include as our first special edition, a paper written by Susan Boslego Carter about Soo Hoo Doo, a man from China who made his way to Scranton in the 19th Century. His story is one of many immigrant stories, but yet unique.

History Bytes not only offers a look at our past, but also a look at Lackawanna County and Northeast Pennsylvania in the 21st Century. Who are we now? How do we embrace those who came before us and those who are newly arrived? Anyone who wishes to offer what you know about Lackawanna County and Northeast Pennsylvania, contact us at lackawannahistory@gmail.com and place *History Bytes* in the subject matter.

Rick Sedlisky is from Dunmore, PA, currently living in New York City. He is a graduate of Scranton Technical High School, Lackawanna College and New York University where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. He was the editor of *GRSNP eZine*, an e-newsletter published by the Genealogical Research Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania until the closing of the Society in November 2017. In addition to careers on Wall Street and New York City government with mayors Giuliani and Bloomberg, he is a free-lance copy editor, proofreader and author of the forthcoming book, *Underwood Village: A Progressive Community*.

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Scranton's Co-Operative Farmers Market – Part I

From the Farm Direct to You

By Michael A. Kashmer



Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

The first part of this article about the Co-Operative Farmers Market of Scranton will look at the history of this institution, a history of the market's neighborhoods, past and present and how it developed into a showcase for a healthy diet.

The Market's first year was 1939, August to be exact, at the height of the growing and harvesting season. First located where Memorial Stadium stands, across from the now-demolished Scranton Transit Garages, the 4:00pm opening ceremonies attracted quite a crowd, showing support for the new farmers market. Little did people realize that the market would outgrow its space.

There had been a market known as the Mifflin Avenue Curb Market, which had become very crowded with vendors, their wagons and stands, and shoppers from all over town. As you probably know, just east of the Memorial Stadium location, Mifflin Avenue is across the Lackawanna River, at the top of the bluff heading east towards downtown.

The 1920's and 1930's were prosperous times for that area of town. Mulberry Street, just over the bridge, which had two lanes reserved for Scranton Transit trolley cars, bustled with activity. The eastern end of Mulberry Street had a very different look compared to the section that crossed Mifflin Avenue. The eastern end, heading towards Nay Aug Park and East Scranton, was primarily residential and held many large, multi-family homes. Many of these homes, subdivided further, still remain.

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Nearby, just a few blocks away, there is an area called Pine Brook, one of the oldest parts of Scranton. Located there were an abandoned coal mine (Pine Brook Shaft) and some sturdy, squat buildings that look like they had been built for some kind of steelmaking.

The architecture was different in this small neighborhood with no-frills, one or two story homes, a covered front porch and a street level that might have been a store of some kind at one time. The building material of choice was red brick with natural stone foundations. Sidewalks of flagstone or brick were very narrow and there were not many people around (1960's). The ground floors of these structures extended to the sidewalk.

Back to Mifflin Avenue. There were a number of large factories stretching along the avenue, including a bakery (Williams) and a wooden window factory (PA Paper) that lasted until the 1970's. The area around Mulberry Street housed an assortment of bars, restaurants, boarding houses and all sorts of shops and stores.

Penn Avenue was just a short walk away and housed wholesale dry goods establishments. Further down Penn Avenue were hard goods wholesalers that had display windows filled with restaurant supplies and home goods.

Penn Avenue was also the site of the remaining vaudeville and motion picture theaters. Vaudeville was just about over (1930's) and the remaining vaudeville houses converted to either showing films only or a combination of films and stage acts. The last of the stage performances closed about 1950. A few old venues were the Ritz, the Star and the Capitol.

So, if you are at all familiar with this area you can imagine how it became one of the busiest in the city. Workers from the factories, patrons of the shops, bars and stores went to Mifflin Avenue for the fresh fruit and vegetables.

Public transportation made this area a magnet for townfolk. Numerous trolley and bus lines made getting from Providence, Petersburg, as well as other parts of Scranton relatively easy.

The new Farmers Market location along Providence Road had enough space to handle the growing market. But in 1949, the Market Association decided that they should relocate. There was an increased interest in fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, baked goods, jams and jellies, cut and potted plants, etc., all at good prices.



Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

Topographical maps of the area in the 1840's showed some trees along the banks of the winding Lackawanna River, which was close at hand. The area beyond the river was mostly meadows and a large forest could be found near where Bancroft School stands today.

Each farmer in the association contributed the capital (at no interest) to buy four acres from the city for their new market. The new site was located just off Providence Road and Albright Avenue in a neighborhood called "The Plot". The additional capital and space allowed the association to pave the midway, construct forty stalls, a food concession stand, restroom facilities and a large, flat parking area.

People came by car from far and wide. Residents of the Weston Field and Plot areas could easily walk over. Having grown up in this area, it was hard to find a household that did not make the weekly trip to the market for fresh produce and other treats.



Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

In the 1950's and 1960's there were still some manufacturing, storage and distribution facilities nearby. A few examples of the companies that were in the neighborhood were a large maker of high-end women's lingerie (Jaunty Co.), a warehouse that held all sorts of consumer products (Quackenbush Warehouse) and the company that delivered canned and packaged food to all A&P stores in the area, using a fleet of red, special

extra-length Federal Trucks. Public School #34, George Bancroft, is still situated on Albright Avenue and continues as a grammar school.

The main reason for visiting the market was to buy fresh food, especially whatever was in season, all at a good and fair price. Another reason, I think, was that customers could get ideas about how to properly store and cook some of the lesser-known produce. I recall going with my grandfather who enjoyed talking to the farmers about their crops, the amount of rain needed and other simple, yet appealing conversations.

My main interest was to see if the cider stand was up and running. If it was, the cider was served in triangular shaped paper cups at the price of 5-cents. The cider man would say to each little kid, "Now don't squeeze the sides too hard or the cider will come running out", or something like that.

As a child I remember the farmers (men, women and children) as being very kind and generous. A kid could get a sample taste anywhere along the midway. The folks that worked there had a very easygoing interest in their customers, always taking time to talk with you to make sure that you were happy with what you bought. It was a slower pace from how we kids were growing up and I found it very welcoming. I think my grandfather did too. In his case, I think the atmosphere reminded him of his life on a farm in Lithuania some years ago. That may be a stretch, but I do know that he really enjoyed going there and I did too.

In Part II, we will look at what's happening at the Farmer's Market today and meet the farmers, some of whom have been members since 1949.



Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky

If you have any questions or comments please send them to: mikeshashmer@aol.com

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 mikeshashmer@aol.com

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Incident at Sterrick Creek

According to the Wilkes-Barre Evening News in an article published June 18, 1910, the body of a woman was found at the bottom of the Sterrick Creek mine shaft in the Peckville section of Blakely, PA.. The shaft, according to the engineer, was not a place where anyone could enter. If that's the case, why was she found at the bottom of the shaft? Did someone throw her into the shaft or did she decide to end her life for whatever her reasons?

Read the newspaper report including words from an "Italian" as the media at that time called him. Was Mrs. Michael Bolovics demented or was she murdered or both?

The report is transcribed verbatim from the newspaper article to fit *History Bytes'* format. The original report is available at *Newspapers.com*

BODY WAS FOUND IN A SHAFT SUMP

Mutilated Remains of Peckville Woman

Found by Workman

May Be Suicide.

WOMAN WAS DEMENTED

Battered and broken the body of Mrs. Michael Bolovics was found yesterday at the bottom of the Sterrick Creek mine shaft at Peckville. Considerable mystery surrounds the case and the mine officials are at a loss to explain how the woman got into the shaft opening as the gates have been locked since the breaker burned. Murder is also suspected, owing to the fact that an unknown Italian informed the husband of the missing woman that a woman had jumped down the shaft.

The finding of the body was accidental as owing to the destruction of the breaker some time ago by fire only pump runners are employed in that section of the mine. Yesterday morning Thomas Cowley, while walking through a portion of the mine where he seldom visited, came across the body. The shaft is 515 feet deep and the fall had resulted in the breaking of the woman's back, tearing off the rear portion of her head and the fracture of a number of other bones.

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From all indications she fell into the opening at a time when the carriage was at the bottom of the shaft, and struck on the top of the cage after which the body rebounded to a loaded mine car and from that point to the ground.

An element of crime enters in to the case by reason of the fact that sometime on Thursday, when Billovics (spelled as appeared in the article) was searching for his wife, an unknown Italian who he accidentally ran across, told him that a woman had jumped down the Sterrick Creek shaft. How this unknown Italian knew of such a happening is not explained. Billovics (spelled as appeared in the article), following this clue, had gone to the engineer of the shaft and had been told that there was nothing in the unknown Italian's story and that, as a matter of fact, it was impossible for anyone to jump down the shaft, owing to safeguards placed over the opening.

The police will investigate this phase of the tragedy. It is possible, they say, that a crime may have been committed and the body afterward thrown into the shaft. Mrs. Bilovics (spelled as appeared in the article) had acted strange lately, and was thought to be demented. She may have committed suicide.

Lackawanna Historical Society News and Events

LHS Receives Support

In December 2017, the Lackawanna Historical Society received word that it has been approved to receive a grant in the amount of \$2,766.00 from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The grant is administered locally through the Pocono Arts Council.

The Society was also pleased to learn that grant funding from the Lackawanna County Arts & Culture Community grant program will be continue through 2018. The Society is most grateful to Lackawanna County Commissioners Patrick M. O'Malley, Jerry Notarianni and Laueen A. Cummings for their continued interest and support.

“Let's Get Wired!”

Commit now to keep the Catlin House wired! The cost of the Catlin House electrical and HVAC upgrades is \$463,180. Please join us in taking care of one of the area's architectural treasures and make your commitment today.

Please use the form below to make your pledge. Please make checks payable to the LHS Restoration Fund and return to:

Lackawanna Historical Society, 232 Monroe Ave., Scranton, PA 18510

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

**LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Capital Campaign Pledge Form**

I am pleased to support the Lackawanna Historical Society with my contribution indicated below to upgrade the Catlin House electrical and HVAC systems:

Please Print	<u>Levels of Giving</u>
_____	// Amps \$3000 or more
Name(s)	// Ohms \$1000 - \$2999
_____	// Joules \$500 - \$999
Address	// Watts \$100 - \$499
_____	// Volts Under \$100
City	State Zip Code

Phone (Day)	Phone (Evening) Email

The Lackawanna Historical Society is a 501 (C) (3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible in accordance with Pennsylvania state law. Your check is your receipt.

LHS Membership Information

2018 Membership are now due!

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 and the quarterly newsletter. Attached is a membership form you can use to renew your membership or give to a friend or neighbor who is interested in joining. Please return it to:*
The Lackawanna Historical Society at 232 Monroe Avenue, 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 _____

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Below 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

APRIL CIVIL WAR WEEKEND EVENTS:

New This Year: Wednesday, April 4, 7pm – 9pm: Vintage Dance Lessons.

Two dance workshops will be offered before the Civil War Ball.

Location: The Leonard Theater, 335 Adams Avenue, Scranton.

Singles \$10; Couples \$15.

Please RSVP at [570-344-3841](tel:570-344-3841).

Friday, April 13: Titanic Dinner at the ***Frederick Stegmaier Mansion***, 304 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre.

Doors open at 6:30pm. Dinner served at 7pm.

\$79 per person.

For details and reservations, please call [570-332-4250](tel:570-332-4250).

Saturday, April 14, Noon to 2 pm: Vintage Clothing/Accessories Sale at The Catlin House, open to the public.

Saturday, April 14, 7 pm: Civil War Ball at Century Club, 612 Jefferson Avenue.

Dancing to the music of Spare Parts begins promptly at 8pm with the Grand March.

Singles \$35; Couples \$60.

For details please visit www.scrantoncivilwarday.com or call [570-344-3841](tel:570-344-3841).

Sunday April 15, 11 am - 2 pm: Ragtime Brunch with period dancers and live music by Spare Parts at Carmen's 2.0, Radisson Hotel at Lackawanna Station, 700 Lackawanna Avenue, Scranton.

\$31.80 per person

For Brunch reservations please call [570-558-3929](tel:570-558-3929).

For special LHS seating please call [570-344-3841](tel:570-344-3841).

Wednesday, April 18 (You choose the time): Dine Lackawanna fund raising event will take place at the Marzonis, 26 Montage Mountain Rd., Moosic [570-342-7027](tel:570-342-7027).

Thursday, April 26, 5pm Curators and Cocktails Join us for a Curator's Talk to learn more about the history of the Hotel Casey on Thursday, April 26 at 5 pm at the William J. Nealon Federal Building and Post Office followed by a happy hour with a special theme cocktail and snacks at P.J.'s 1910 Pub at the Hilton Hotel.

Saturday, May 5, 6pm: You Live Here: You Should Know This! A local history game show at the Lodge at Montage. Doors open at 5:30pm. Games begin at 6pm. \$5 for students; \$10 for adults.

Wednesday, May 9, 7pm: Historic Moxie Mamas at the Catlin House.

Wednesday, May 16: Dine Lackawanna at New Café at Greystone Gardens.

Friday, May 18, 6 pm: An Evening of Wine and Whimsy at 612 Clay Avenue, Scranton.

Wednesday, June 20: Dine Lackawanna at 3 Jacks Burger Bar.

Saturday, July 14, Noon: Children's Day at the Catlin House.

Wednesday, July 18: Dine Lackawanna at State Street Grill.

Visit our Facebook page or website for upcoming Civil War Roundtable topics!
Visit www.lackawannahistory.org up-to-date listings of all activities! Also, like us on Facebook.

Peoples Street Railway **By Tony Ranella, Jr.**

The story begins with the Pennsylvania Coal Company (PCC) and its Gravity Railroad and how it helped to form a connecting railroad about a mile in length. The Gravity Railroad operated from 1850 to 1885 with coal as its main revenue source, but also transported farm goods, construction materials, merchant goods, machinery and animals. On August 1, 1874, it was announced in local newspapers that the Gravity Railroad would officially begin passenger service from Dunmore to Hawley, PA and back with stops, including Jones Lake (now known as Lake Ariel), a popular destination point for company employees, company picnics, fishing and other activities.



(Late 19th Century Erie & Wyoming Valley Railroad Station at Jones Lake, now known as Lake Ariel. Photo courtesy of Tony Ranella, Jr. Collection)

During my years of research, I've come across information stating that the Gravity did indeed have passenger service going back to the very early days of operation, but not on a large scale. The late Mary Theresa (TC) Connolly mentioned in her book about the Gravity having now and then passenger service in the 1850's and 1860's. My guess is

that the service was for politicians and company executives wanting to get to Hawley, where at the time, the shops and offices were located, as well as the D&H Canal.

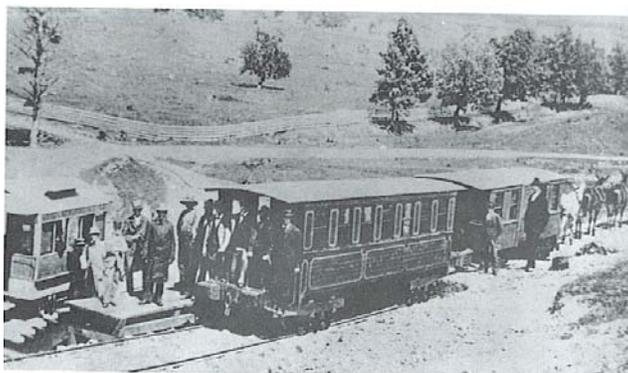
In 1865, the City of Scranton had a small trolley system that went from central Scranton and extended into Dunmore by way of Green Ridge St. Each trolley was pulled by horses. It was named the Peoples Street Railway. Many years later the system was greatly expanded covering almost every section of Scranton and Dunmore as well.

By the 1870's the trolleys made their way into Dunmore from another route. Leaving downtown Scranton, the tracks made their way across Quincy Ave. to Poplar St. to Clay Ave. and then to South Blakely St., where the track started to curve at the intersection of Cherry St. and continued up South Blakely St. to Dunmore Corners.

At the intersection of South Blakely St. and Cherry St., the Peoples Street Railway would let passengers off who would continue their journey on the Gravity Railroad either to Jones Lake or to Hawley. The only problem was that people who got off the trolley had to walk almost a mile to the Gravity's #6 passenger station to continue their journey.

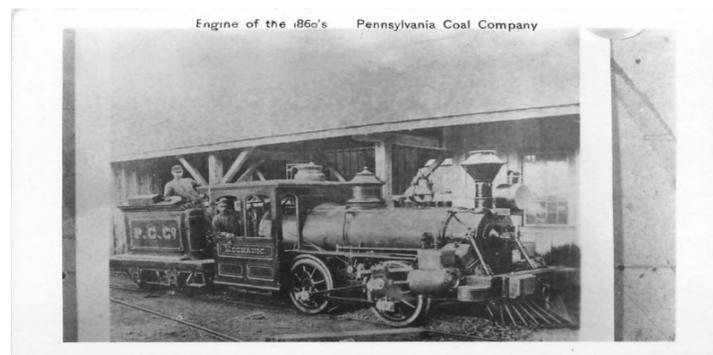
After a few years of walking from the trolley line to the #6 Station and back on the return trip, folks started to complain to the Peoples Street Railway and to the PCC that the walk was long and difficult especially in inclement weather, and if the trolley ran late, people would miss the passenger train leaving on the Gravity.

As more and more complaints came in to the PCC, they responded by building a connecting rail line and station from the intersection of South Blakely St. and Cherry St. to the #6 Gravity Station. The track line was at a 45-degree angle facing the Bunker Hill section of Dunmore until it reached Cross St. (Third St. in Dunmore and Wheeler Ave. in Scranton). It then it went straight up the middle of Butler St. to Chestnut St. where it crossed Mill St. to the #6 Station. The line was built in the late 1860's or very early 1870's. The PCC supplied two Gravity passenger coaches pulled by horses to transport people from the trolley line station to the #6 Station.



(Station at Cherry and South Blakely Sts., Dunmore. Note Peoples Street Railway car on the left. Photo courtesy of Tony Ranella, Jr. Collection)

The connecting line experienced a big change in 1880. John B. Smith, Superintendent of the PCC had designed and built a three cylinder steam “Lokie” that was used in place of the team of horses to pull the two coaches from station to station. The original reason the “Lokies” were built was to shunt mine cars from the coal breakers to the mines and move freight in and around the yards.



(“Lokie” at the South Blakely St. and Cherry St. station, Dunmore. Note the addition of a roof over the platform. Photo courtesy of Tony Ranella, Jr. Collection)

It should be noted at this time that John B. Smith was not only the Superintendent of the PCC, but was also a director of the Peoples Street Railway, which was chartered in 1865. The connecting rail line was built because John B. Smith listened to the people.

About eight years ago there was a mine subsidence caused by a water main break in front of 508 Butler St., the home of the late Tom Fidiam. The hole was near the side of the street and was about fifteen feet in diameter and about twenty five feet deep. The next day I was talking to Tom as we both looked into the hole. By now the water had been turned off by the water company and the hole was roped off by the police.

Tom and I started talking about the Erie Railroad. He retired from the Erie's Susquehanna Depot Yard. I mentioned to him that under Butler St. there were railroad tracks of narrow gauge, the same as the tracks in the mines. He looked at me and said, “What are you talking about? I've lived in this home all my life and never heard of tracks on Butler St.” I told him about the connecting rail line built by the PCC to transport people from one station to the other. I got the impression he didn't believe me.

A few days later the hole was filled in and the area re-paved. I went to the area to see how it looked and Tom came out to greet me. He said as the water company started digging around the area of the cave in to access the water pipes more towards the center of the street to repair them, the backhoe started to uncover rails and wooden ties as they were digging. Tom and the crew were in awe. He looked at me and smiled. He believed me. I asked how far down were the tracks. “About eight or ten inches below the pavement, he said and if I didn't see it with my own eyes I would never have believed it.”

The next day I was walking to my mom's house, which is one block up from my home and as I crossed Butler St. I looked to the right of me and I saw something lying near

the curb. I walked over to the spot and I froze. I saw a rail spike in nearly perfect condition, rusty, but not bent or twisted. I bent over, picked it up and looked at it.

The heavens for the train gods blessed me with a gift from a hundred plus years ago. One of the water company guys probably saw it in the dirt and just tossed it to the side of the road for me to find and what a find. I showed it to Tom. He smiled, looked at me and said, "Well you were right about the tracks on Butler St. and we both saw the proof."



**(Railroad spike found at Butler St., Dunmore.
Photo courtesy of Tony Ranella, Jr. Collection)**

The connecting rail line was no more after the Gravity Railroad was abandoned in December 1885. The Erie Railroad constructed the Erie & Wyoming Railroad (Erie's Wyoming Division) in 1883 and after 1886, people would use the Erie & Wyoming Valley to travel to Lake Ariel, Hawley and beyond.

(Tony Rannella Jr. is a Northeast Pennsylvania historian who focuses include the Gravity Railroad, the Erie Railroad, the Pennsylvania Coal Company and the effects they had on his home city of Dunmore. The link below offers readers an insight to the degree of his and his Uncle Sal Mecca's dedication to document and preserve one more piece of our region's history)

<http://thetimes-tribune.com/news/local-historians-preserve-gravity-railroad-history-1.2078238>

Lackawanna History Remembering Pancoast April 7, 1911

The Pancoast, also known as Price-Pancoast, was Northeast Pennsylvania's third major anthracite mining disaster in terms of lives lost (1911; 74 dead) that took its place with Avondale (1869; 110 dead) and Baltimore Tunnel (1919; 92 dead).

Pancoast operations began in 1881. The majority of the miners at Pancoast were immigrants, mostly from Hungary and Poland. The operation was served by the New York, Ontario & Western Railway and the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad.

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It was a dark day in the Borough of Throop, as residents gathered on April 7, 1911 to witness 74 bodies (including, according to newspaper reports, two non-miners) recovered from below. Church bells rang for days as all 74 were laid to rest. According to newspaper reports, one can only imagine the wails of 5,000 family members and friends crowded along the security ropes as the men were brought to the surface.

The fire began around 8:30 that morning in the mine's engine house that was not constructed of non-combustible materials, but of wood supported by a flooring made of yellow pine plank. The fire was initially considered to be a nuisance and it wasn't until two hours later that the men were told to evacuate. It was too late.



Today, a visual remembrance of Pancoast is a Commonwealth road sign, located on Olyphant Avenue near Sanderson Street, not far from the mine site. Although it was one of the region's smaller operations, Pancoast takes its place in Northeast Pennsylvania's anthracite legacy. Those who worked Pancoast and those who lost loved ones and friends are recognized as all are remembered in 2018.

For a report broadcast on WYOU TV22 on April 7, 1985, please visit the link below to see and hear descendants of those who lost loved ones share their recollections.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JviuQ4rJ6k>

For additional information on Pancoast, please do a Google search on Pennsylvania's Northern Anthracite Coal Field website at <http://www.northernfield.info/index.php> and click on the blue "P" for either Pancoast or Price/Pancoast.

(Editor's Note: The editor's grandfather, born in 1897 and at age 14, was one of the 5,000 who stood behind the security ropes to see the bodies brought to the surface. At that time he, as others, left school (he at age 10) to work the mines. He worked with his father, an immigrant from the Czech Republic, at the Marshwood Mine. The rest of his mining career took place at Underwood, which, for its time, was considered "progressive" in terms of construction and treatment of workers)

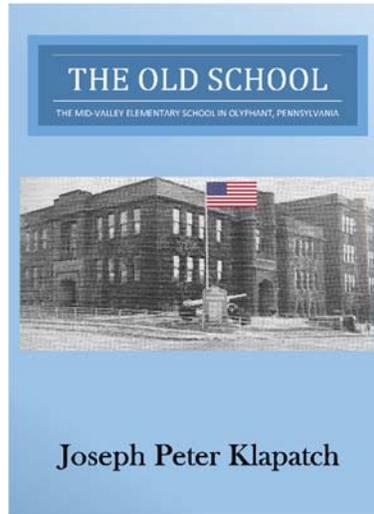
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Editor's Book Review

By Rick Sedlisky

The Old School

By Joseph Peter Klapatch



Through legislation passed in 1961 and 1963, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania forced the consolidation of school districts across the state. Consolidation legislation began well before 1961. In 1911 “unions” were offered as an incentive to combine districts, but the effort was cumbersome and largely ineffective. The process was streamlined in 1937 with the introduction of “merged” districts, however, by 1960 only 131 union or merged districts had been formed. Through forced consolidation, the 1960s saw a drop in the number of school districts in Pennsylvania from 2,277 to 669. The number of districts continued to decline in the 1970s and 1980s to 501. In 2018, there are 500 school districts across the commonwealth.

In his book, *The Old School*, author Joseph Peter Klapatch, a native of Olyphant, PA, discusses the schools of the former Olyphant School District and the consolidation of his home borough’s district with those of the neighboring boroughs of Throop and Dickson City that formed the Mid-Valley School District. The district became official with the beginning of the 1969-70 school year.

While Mr. Klapatch shares his experiences at schools in Olyphant, Dickson City and Throop are by no means ignored. His work invites readers to experience the growing pains of the consolidated district that inherited at least two condemned school buildings, poor conditions in others, half-day school sessions, fierce opposition by some to the construction of new schools and the eventual successful construction of new buildings. The book consists mainly of two parts, *History and Memoir*.

In *Part I: History*, the author takes readers to the beginning and the separation of Olyphant and neighboring boroughs from Blakely Township beginning in 1867 when the Borough of Blakely became an independent jurisdiction. Olyphant, Throop, Dickson City, Archbald, Jermyn and Winton (Jessup) soon followed. By the late 1870s, Blakely Township ceased to exist and the newly-formed boroughs were on their way to self-identity and formation of their own school districts.

When Olyphant was still a part of Blakely Township, author Klapatch tells of a one-room school house that was constructed on a tract of land in 1855. A graded school called the Olyphant Central School was constructed in 1883. As Olyphant grew, largely due to the booming anthracite coal industry, it became necessary to build more schools to accommodate the increasing student population.

As Klapatch explains, mostly one-room structures were constructed in various neighborhoods, as well as one each in the communities of Underwood Village and Marshwood that were located a few miles southeast of downtown Olyphant. One-room schools were eventually replaced by larger structures.

Klapatch is fortunate to have family members and others who shared their experiences of seeing some of the schools built and also attending them. Through descriptive narrative accompanied by many photographs, readers experience the evolution of a town and its school system that was similar to many others across the United States.

Not only large cities had events that are remembered generations later. Most everyone knows of The Boston Tea Party, but how many know of The Olyphant Coal Party that took place in 1922 and why?

Part I: History also contains a chapter called, *Sundry Items*. Usually, sundry items are those that don't have enough information to become a separate chapter, but not including such snippets would be a disservice to the story. Author Klapatch piques readers' curiosities with tidbits that include Slavic immigrants learning English at night, commencement exercises held at an opera house, and why in 1958, 67 of 72 seniors at Dickson City High School went on strike.

Author Klapatch takes us forward from the 1930s when Scranton had a larger population than Miami to the 1950s and the steady decline of the anthracite industry. Northeast Pennsylvania's population dropped as people moved elsewhere for jobs, resulting in empty classrooms in schools that were once too small for a growing student population. Consolidation was on the horizon.

In *Part II: Memoir*, Klapatch delves into his life as a student. He takes the reader on his journey from Kindergarten to the first year of the newly-formed Mid-Valley School District and explains the atmosphere that existed and the odds the new district faced.

The odds the author describes were numerous. There was much to do. School buildings were old with at least two condemned because of things such as wooden, oiled floors

where should a fire occur, the odds of escaping were not good. There were other issues such as the lack of maintenance, among other things.

Readers will also learn that not all in the three boroughs were in favor of consolidation. Klapatch talks about people he considered to be “the obstructionists”. The author explains in detail those who furiously opposed the construction of new schools, those who spread false rumors, those who made school board meetings appear to be anything but civilized and law suits that caused much time and money to be wasted.

The Old School by Joseph Peter Klapatch is a story about a topic that some may think is boring. It is anything but boring. Through his combination of numerous photographs, a complete list of school buildings that existed in the three boroughs, the names of people who played roles both educationally and administratively, and people from the three boroughs who stood together against many odds to make Mid-Valley a success, readers will find all components of the story tied together through well-written narrative.

In the end, author Klapatch waves a red flag. He states that roughly 70 years from now, Mid-Valley school buildings will have to meet future standards. He asks that his book be used as a reference tool so that those in the future do not repeat mistakes of the past.

For those interested in public education, local politics, Northeast Pennsylvania history in general, and in particular, students and graduates of Mid-Valley High School who are unaware of Mid-Valley’s three predecessors, this detailed, comprehensive work deserves its place on your bookshelf.

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.

The Old School is available for purchase through the following sources:

Print copies (ISBN: 9781633187276) are available through The BookPatch <http://thebp.site/57084>, as well as Magdon Music, Lackawanna Avenue, Olyphant.

eBook (ISBN: 9781310503733) is available through Smashwords <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/595951>

Smashwords made it available through Apple <http://itunes.apple.com/us/book/isbn9781310503733>

Barnes and Noble <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-old-school-joseph-peter-klapatch/1123058414?ean=2940152490923>

Inktera <http://www.inktera.com/store/title/47635ffd-574b-4cb5-8903-17b3488b4810>

Kobo <https://store.kobobooks.com/en-us/ebook/the-old-school-the-mid-valley-elementary-school-in-olyphant-Pennsylvania>

The eBook is available in libraries using OverDrive <https://www.overdrive.com/media/2510838/the-old-school> (Los Angeles, CA and Austin, TX to date).

Print copies are in the collections of the following libraries: Mid-Valley School District libraries, (Throop, PA); Lackawanna County (PA) libraries; and Atlantic County (NJ) libraries, as well as Library of Congress (Washington, DC); State Library of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, PA); University of Scranton, Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Memorial Library; Pennsylvania State University Libraries, Worthington-Scranton Campus; and Cornell University, Industrial and Labor Relations Library.

For a list of libraries where the eBook edition is available, please click on the link to Mr. Klapatch's blog post below.

<https://jpklapatch.weebly.com/blog/the-old-school-ebook-at-libraries>

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](#)

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

- [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.suvvw.org/>
Pennsylvania <http://pasuvvw.org/>

lackawannahistory@gmail.com

- The Northeast Pennsylvania Genealogical Society, Inc. (NEPGS):
Local NEPA <http://www.nepgs.org/>

The Lackawanna Historical Society 2018

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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.

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