



## HISTORY BYTES

*A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication*

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September - October 2018

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

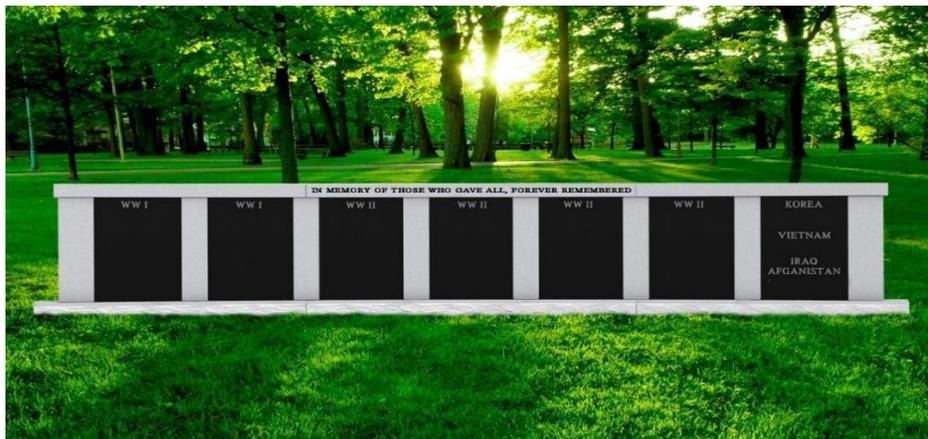
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### Scranton Veterans Monument and Memorial Update

By Pat Ahearn with Rick Sedlisky

The idea of a Scranton Veterans Monument and 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”



**Artist's rendering of the Scranton Veterans Memorial Monument  
Courtesy of Pat Ahearn**

Phase One of the project was recently completed. The initial phase consisted of a handicapped accessible ramp and sidewalks, footer for the monument and sidewalks around the footer, five branches of service flags, the American flag, an MIA/POW flag, as well as benches for sitting. A landscaper maintains grass areas that need re-seeding, as well as weed control. The cost of Phase One was approximately \$153,000. That amount was successfully raised.

Phase Two will include the monument with veterans' names and a learning place that includes information on the branches of service, as well as historical information on the United States and our defense of freedom. The cost of Phase Two will be approximately \$335,000, with the final cost of the project totaling approximately \$488,000.

The second phase of fundraising began on Sunday, September 16 at noon with a flag raising ceremony at the site. On Sunday, October 21, A Veterans Program will begin at 9:30am followed by an All Veterans Honor Run at 10am. The run and a two-mile walk will begin at the entrance to Scranton High School and will follow the Lackawanna Heritage Trail. To register, please visit [RunSignUp.com](http://RunSignUp.com)

More than 900 names will be recognized. Veterans named on the monument should have been Scranton residents or former Scranton residents and died in one of five wars, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq/Afghanistan. No death certificate is required, just a statement from a friend or family member verifying information. We also include Merchant Marines and veterans from Minooka. You can submit names by contacting us at [onestrongamerica@gmail.com](mailto:onestrongamerica@gmail.com)



**Artist's rendering of the Veterans Monument and Memorial Project  
Courtesy of Pat Ahearn**

# Rendham (Old Forge) Breaker Cyclone

By Carl Orechovsky

As treasurer of the Old Forge Historical Society, I've been scouring all forms of media for stories either forgotten or unknown by the current Old Forge population. The recent tornado that touched down in Wilkes-Barre prompted me to look for the Rendham (Old Forge) Breaker Cyclone on old hard drives, the Scranton Public Library microfilm collection, as well as the Newspapers.com website. Following is the story as it appeared in the Scranton Republican, 112 years ago, with the inclusion of two photographs.

## STORM CAUSED HAVOC

Scranton Republican, October 29, 1906

Miniature Cyclone Swept Through the Valley, Blew Down Breakers,  
Killed One and Injured Many.

## THROWS 5,000 OUT OF WORK

Over a million dollars damage, one dead and the total destruction of four valley coal breakers and injury to many, is the result of the miniature cyclone which swept through the valley Saturday night. For fully twenty minutes the wind blew at such a fearful rate that it was thought it would develop into a hurricane.

Up and down the valley and in some parts of the city it blew at a rate of from forty-five to fifty miles an hour. In some parts of the valley roofs of houses were torn off, trees were torn out by their roots, chimneys were blown off, stoops were carried away, and several frame houses were destroyed.

Perhaps the section hardest hit was Old Forge and surrounding boroughs. Thunder and lightning was followed by gale which played havoc with all the homes. Residents rushed to the streets for safety.

The Jermyn Breaker in (Rendham) Old Forge was blown down and made a pile of debris. The report of the fall was loud and heard for miles around. It was fortunate that the catastrophe occurred after those in the breaker had gone home. Engineer Thomas was the only one in the premise and he escaped with slight injuries.

The steam house several yards distant was also totally wrecked. Ten men were at work in the building when the roof was torn off. All but two of the men escaped without injury.



**Jermyn No. 1 Breaker Cyclone Damage**  
**Photo by Watson Bunnell, courtesy of Carl Orechovsky**

A house owned by John Applenap, near the Sibley Breaker, was completely wiped off the ground, the foundation only remaining. Fire somehow broke out at this place, but so strong was the wind that the flames could make no headway.

Of the twenty or thirty injured from the effects of the storm Mrs. John Agusinski is the only one that is hurt seriously, sustaining a dislocated hip and a fractured shoulder blade. She was struck by the wooden door of her home.

Fragments of glass falling from the windows of the breakers, residence and factories filled the air and were carried through the wind through the town. The gale was increasing steadily and many left their houses and ran into the street for safety. Many were thrown from their feet and carried a considerable distance.



**Another View of the Damage at Jermyn No. 1 Breaker  
Photo by Watson Bunnell, courtesy of Carl Orechovsky**

In Old Forge over a dozen trees were either broken or torn out with their roots. One man was injured by being hit with a tree. About an hour later, when the rain had ceased and everything had quieted down, it was found that not a window in a house in Old Forge was left unbroken. Over twenty people were injured and about a dozen horses were cut up and bruised by running away and dashing into various obstacles. The destruction of the Jermyn Breaker has thrown over 1,600 people out of work.

**Carl Orechovsky, in addition to being treasurer of the Old Forge Historical Society, scans information for the Society's archives and conducted video interviews for the "Old Forge, Our Town" project.**

**During the winter season, Mr. Orechovsky works with the No. 9 Coal Mine Tour in Landsford, PA as a track man. Under the direction of Zack Petrosky, Carl and others replaced 30 lb. rail with 40 lb. rail and leveled cross ties, a project that hadn't been touched since 1938. He also assists as motor man operating a battery powered mine motor car when the No. 9 Coal Mine Tour hosts special events.**

**Mr. Orechovsky is also the building and grounds manager for the Eagle McClure Hose Co., Old Forge, and is responsible for maintaining the Tri-Boro Soccer Association's playing field.**

**On his environmental side, he recently worked with the Lackawanna River Conservation Association to remove debris near the Lackawanna River's Green Ridge St. Bridge, using a large loader provided by the Eagle McClure Hose Co., OFFD.**

## 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

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$10	NAME _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$35	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$45	ADDRESS _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing	\$75	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$150	
<input type="checkbox"/> Silver Corporate	\$250	TELEPHONE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Gold Corporate	\$500	EMAIL _____

## Upcoming LHS Events

***Fridays, September 21 through October 26, 6:30 pm: Scranton After Dark***, haunted walking tours starting at the Catlin House, cost, \$15.

***Saturday, September 29, 2 pm: Uncovering our Anthracite Ancestors: A*** genealogical workshop focusing on new on-line resources at the University of Scranton Weinberg Memorial Library. The workshop will be led by Prof. Richard Healey. More details will be announced.

***Wednesday, October 24, 7 pm: A Scarcity of Caskets.*** A lecture about the 1918 Influenza Epidemic by Sarah Piccini at the Catlin House.

***Thursday, November 8, 6 pm: Annual Dinner with Julia Wolfe, Composer of Anthracite Fields*** at the Anthracite Center, Carbondale, details TBA.

***Saturday, November 10, 7 pm: Anthracite Fields Oratorio*** by Bang on a Can and Trinity Choir at Lackawanna College.

***Sunday, November 25, noon: Ornament Making Workshop*** at the Catlin House.

***Thursday/Friday, December 6/7, 7pm: Holiday Open House*** at the Catlin House.

***Sunday, December 9, 2pm: Pysanky Workshop:*** Details and fee TBA.

# NEPA Events

## Steamtown Marathon

The Steamtown Marathon is a Northeast Pennsylvania annual marathon that takes place on the Sunday before Columbus Day. This year, the 23rd marathon will take place on Sunday, October 7.

The marathon is a USATF-certified event and is also an official qualifier for the Boston Marathon. On average, between 22% and 25% of those who complete Steamtown qualify for the Boston Marathon.

Beginning at Forest City Regional High School and finishing at the Federal Courthouse in downtown Scranton, features of the point-to-point course include running through 14 communities, as well as 4.2 miles of paved rails-to-trails that parallel the Lackawanna River. Another feature is a net elevation drop of 955 feet.

The marathon begins in bucolic suburbs and solitary rails-to-trails and ends in an urban environment with thousands cheering runners to the finish line.



**Photo courtesy of Elaine Lagreca**

Although the course may be fast, it isn't easy. The reasons for this are the downhills in the first eight miles that can take a toll on a runner's quads. This results in a serious challenge in the last three miles where runners face three up hills that while not necessarily long or steep, can and often take their toll on runners who enjoyed the speed of the first eight miles and perhaps didn't factor in the hills towards the end. Once reaching the top of the third hill, named Cooper's Hill (most likely after the seafood restaurant that was the Erie Railroad passenger station), runners can see the finish line a few blocks downhill at the Federal Courthouse.

For additional information, please visit <https://steamtownmarathon.com/>

# Dunmore Cemetery Tour The Dearly Departed Players

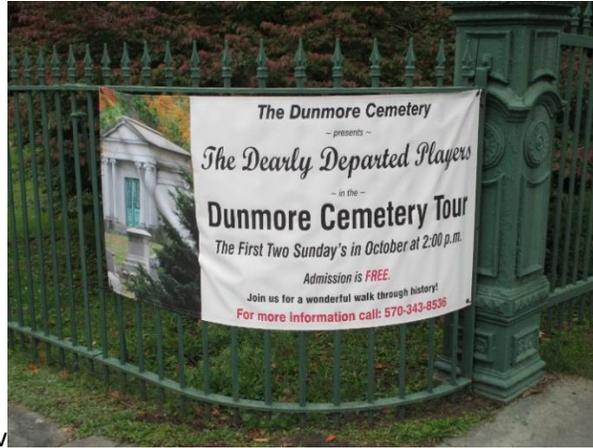


Photo courtesy of Elaine Lagreca

On the weekends of October 7 and 14, 2018 at 2pm, the Dunmore Cemetery Tour marks 21 years of introducing visitors to industrialists, politicians, people of lesser repute, criminals and others who “return” for a few minutes to tell their sides of their stories. They “return” in the garb of their times and speak in the English of their times.

The tour has become one of Northeast Pennsylvania’s featured autumn attractions and is presented by an acting troupe called The Dearly Departed Players. The troupe self-funds the two-weekend event. Actors receive no compensation and admission is free. Troupe members create costumes by going to yard sales to find fabrics, as well as sewing supplies and other items that become the costumes worn.

It takes a year of planning and costume-making for each tour to be presented. Actors rehearse from July to opening afternoon in October. All know their lines as each member of the troupe becomes the one who “returns” for a few minutes to tell about his/her life. For additional information, please visit the Dunmore Cemetery Tour Facebook page.

## Bonfire at The Iron Furnaces



A harbinger of autumn is the annual Bonfire at the Iron Furnaces that takes place on Saturday, October 20, from 6pm to 10pm at the Scranton Iron Furnaces. The festival combines exploration of Halloween Celtic culture, other cultural autumn festivals and the celebration of Northeast Pennsylvania's industrial past.

Tickets are \$15 online (online until October 19 at 5pm) and \$20 at the gate (free for children 12 and under), and include admission to the festival and \$5 in Bonfire Bucks. The Bonfire Festival is a fundraiser for the benefit of the Anthracite Heritage Museum.

The Historic Iron Furnaces site contains four large blast furnace remnants located on the site of the Lackawanna Iron & Steel Company plant. Operations began in 1840 and by 1880, 125,000 tons of pig iron were converted into T-rail and other products.

For additional information please visit <http://scrantonbonfire.com/> and also see the below link for a look at last year's festivities. Note: Dates and times in the video are from 2017. <https://vimeo.com/237400125>

## Anthracite Mining Heritage Month January 2019

By Bob Wolensky

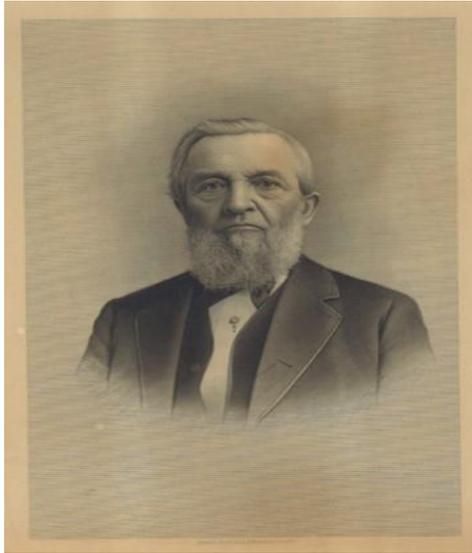
Planning is underway for the annual Anthracite Mining Heritage Month to be held at various area sites throughout January 2019.

Tentative topics include: "The Knox Mine Disaster," "The Meaning of Place in the Anthracite Region," "Anthracite Miners Speak," "Anthracite Region Photography," "Anthracite Literature," "Preserving the Regional Memory of the Anthracite Era," "Ethnicity in the Anthracite Region," and others.

Several local organizations, including the Anthracite Heritage Museum, will be among the co-sponsors. Please send proposals for program ideas to Bob Wolensky at [rwolensk@gmail.com](mailto:rwolensk@gmail.com).

## Person of Interest

### Historical Notes and Reminiscences of Early Scranton from Benjamin H. Throop, MD - Part II



By Michael A. Kashmer

#### **Dr. Benjamin H. Throop**

**Portrait courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society**

This article will delve into some of the projects Dr. Throop was involved in during the early settlement of the Lackawanna Valley. A pioneer physician, founder of Throop Borough and early responder for President Abraham Lincoln's call for trained Civil War medical staff, he had a special skill that endeared him to people up and down the Valley.

From the Scranton Brothers and their fledgling iron business and members of the Pennsylvania State Assembly to ordinary townsfolk, Dr. Throop was a man you could approach and ask for help without being turned away.

Before Dr. Throop arrived, the land from Scranton far into New York State was controlled by the local Indians known as the Six Nations. By 1754 these lands, in their entirety, were purchased by William Penn. Pioneers from New England streamed southwest looking for their future. The land was covered by immense forests with streams offering a variety of fish and all sorts of game. Lumber was highly prized and these settlers found solid hardwoods as far as the eye could see.

As late as 1820, in the early summer, the Oneida tribe from New York would come down the Chenango River to where it meets the Susquehanna River and stay for three or four months trapping, fishing and hunting. As winter approached they returned to their settlements up north.

The local Indian tribe, the Capouse, had inhabited this land for eons before the first white settlers arrived. During the 1840's the last remaining Capouse tribal campsites and graves could still be found. Unfortunately, robbing these sites of trophies and artifacts and selling the plunder, Dr. Throop explained how "the vandal hand of enterprise" worked to erase these final pieces of history. He reported that a well-known historian was among the repeat offenders. A sad commentary.

The mid-1700's in and around Scranton brought continued growth. The area's abundance of natural resources and the depletion of these resources back East led to a growth of entrepreneurs and the capital they required.

The Indian "issue" abated due to their move to New York State and the Connecticut claim to a wide swath of northern Pennsylvania was resolved (1772) in the Keystone State's favor. These two events made it easier to start a homestead or business in this new land and to reap its benefits.

There was finally some time to pursue more civilized and less disruptive pursuits. Dr. Throop was approached by a contingent of Providence and Scranton citizens to be their first Historian. It is especially nice to see this example of foresightedness that our local ancestors displayed.

Certainly it was a difficult, but exciting time to have pulled up stakes back East and moved lock-stock-and barrel to the Lackawanna Valley.

Most settlers were doing all they could to make a living and support their extended families and communities, but thought enough about the history of the Valley to formally appoint an Historian. It was Dr. Throop's first such honor. Providence was no longer called "Razorville" and Scranton abandoned the moniker "Slocum Hollow". The changes gave each municipality a more "grown up" name and reflected the vision and what the Valley would become.

It is remarkable that our Valley's first settlers had so many basic facts of life to worry about. How were they able to accomplish so much with so little?

Today, residents, many of us, enjoy reliving old times and long talks about how great the "good times" were. So many stories about the bakery on Providence Road, the butcher on Scranton's East Hill and that discount store in Blakely on the Scranton-Carbondale Highway. Don't forget downtown Scranton where crowds came to see the holiday window displays at The Globe and Scranton Dry, among others. And, most people came downtown via Scranton Transit Company buses.

There is a lot of interest in "the upper class life" of the Valley in the 50's and 60's but what about the real community concerns beyond that? The people who were fortunate to have the resources to make the right financial choices were well-off financially.

What happened to the vision for the community? All of us Lackawanna Valley and Lackawanna River folks continued to let the coal companies take advantage of us.

## History Time

It wasn't enough for us to see our fathers, grandfathers and even great grandfathers killed by the black lung disease and horrendous mine and breaker accidents. Getting laid-off in the event of a slowdown or strike was a constant threat. What was a family to do? Going back to Europe was rarely an option.

God forbid, if your husband was killed in an accident at work, all the widow got was (1) the body of her husband for all to see (including the father's children, neighbors, etc.) laid on the front or kitchen porch and (2) a pail full of anthracite coal. And, families took this on their chins and worked through the nightmare of keeping alive after the breadwinner was killed.

Throughout the Lackawanna Valley, north and south, giant mountains of mining waste burned for years caused by the indifference of the politically connected coal companies. The streets from Green Ridge heading towards Throop from Boulevard Ave. to Sanderson St. deserve special attention. The Scranton Transit Throop City Line bus route ran along this corridor.

I wonder if there has been any health problem follow up to see if these unfortunate residents that stayed in the neighborhood despite the smoke and stink that bellowed 24/7 from the burning piles nearby, looked into what their ongoing health issues were. A real Public Health project.

It makes you wonder. What happened during the 1940's -1960's to the pride of being a citizen of a town with such a progressive history?

### Providence - Dr. Throop's Observations

Providence, as a township, sat on both sides of the Lackawanna Creek. The stream cuts through the middle of the town. The land along the creek was loose (perhaps from constant flooding that washed away the topsoil). Beyond that, meadows and fields promised good land for agriculture until the fields came upon the mountains to the east and west. The range on the east was called Moosic and the mountains to the west, beyond the Lackawanna, were not used successfully for farming of any sort.

The landholders in Providence were men who worked the soil, built modest cabins and raised families. In the winter they "showed their devotion to the charms of lumbering", as Dr. Throop called it. Deer hunting was considered "more romantic" and the deer were plentiful along the forest ranges. The good Doctor had a way with words!

Other settlers turned to home repairs, specifically shingle weaving and another group enjoyed hanging out at the hotel bars spending time discussing politics and other issues of the day just to pass the time. The townsfolk observed the Sabbath except during haying and harvesting times.

During the harvest, farmers did not have to steer clear of worshiping congregations. The harvesters and their tools could be very noisy. Why you ask? In Providence there were no places of worship and no congregants to fill them!

The following paragraph is about religion in Providence at that time. Dr. Throop says a lot but doesn't show (me) what is really on his mind. Maybe it was a sensitive subject (even then) and you could give it verbose attention without really saying anything profound. What was swept under the rug remains there. Take a look.

About once a month a Methodist preacher would set up in an old schoolhouse of some sort, but would be careful not to disturb the overall quietness of the area. Advancing the idea of a God that ruled over all was looked upon as something new to consider in this bountiful land and if you thought about it long enough as well as enjoying a happy and virtuous life, this idea might be looked upon as an affront to citizens' vested rights. I think I know what Dr. Throop was getting at but honestly, I just couldn't follow the good Doctor's thoughts here.

Dr. Throop reported in the mid-1840's that there were a few Christians who practiced their religion and tried to show compassion and charity to all. However -- and this may be difficult for some of our readers to hear -- these people were looked upon as suspicious and were watched closely. Watched for what reason was not made clear.

There was a Catholic priest, Father Hunt, who arrived during the winter of 1840 and gave notice that he would deliver a sermon about temperance in the Providence school house. As night fell the elderly gent was in the front of a large room and had an audience of about twenty -- all men. Each man had a bottle of "Old Hang's Whiskey" to fortify themselves against the cold. Each time Fr. Hunt's sermon made a good point, each man would remove their bottle from its safe place, yank out the cork and take a swig. By the time the lecture was over "they were all lecturing on the same subject", Dr. Throop reported. I recall seeing a similar scene in a John Wayne western movie some time ago. I think Gabby Hayes had a starring role.

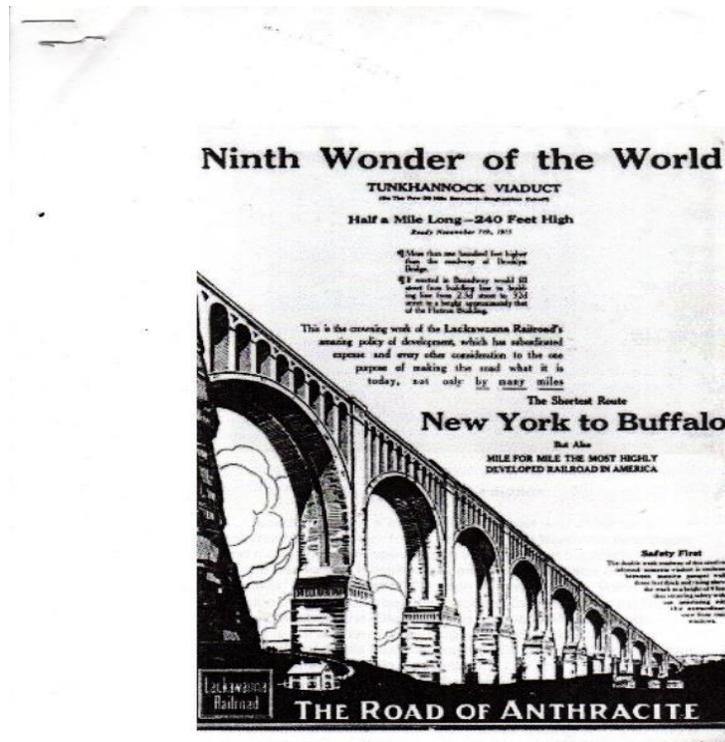
Thank you reading the two-part series about Dr. Benjamin H. Throop. Please forward your thoughts and questions at any time. If there was some special event that you know Dr. Throop participated in or a story about him that I missed, please let me know.

And lastly, if anyone would like to write an article about another Lackawanna County pioneer that was instrumental in getting our Valley off on the right foot, contact us at [lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)

**Michael A. Kashmer is from the Plot section of 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](mailto:mikeshashmer@aol.com)**

# Editor's Book Review

By Rick Sedlisky



## JACK SMILES

During September three years ago, the Borough of Nicholson removed all the stops and welcomed people from near and far to a weekend-long celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Tunkhannock Viaduct, better known as the Nicholson Bridge.

Nicholson's Main Street was lined with vendors offering a variety of items, including, among other things, food, arts and crafts and books. One of those in attendance offering his work, *Ninth Wonder of the World*, was author, Jack Smiles.

In *Ninth Wonder of the World*, the author focuses not on the construction of the bridge per se, but what it took to literally construct the bridge, and most of all, to capture what daily life was like in Nicholson while the bridge was under construction.

The Nicholson Bridge construction was a part of the Clarks Summit-Hallstead Cut-off project that was a part of a larger cut-off project of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (DL&W) to eliminate long curves and steep hills along its route in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Faced with fierce competition from the larger Erie, New York Central and Pennsylvania railroads, the goal of DL&W's cut-off project was to become the fastest route between New York City and the Great Lakes.

In its less-than 40 pages, *Ninth Wonder of the World* takes the reader on a journey from the construction of the New Jersey Cut-off to the construction of the Clarks Summit-Hallstead Cut-off and the Nicholson Bridge and the impact construction had on the Borough of Nicholson.

For the statistics buff, in Chapter 3: *Nicholson Bridge by the Numbers*, the author provides specs that offer a completely different view of the project. From the length and height of the bridge, to how many cubic yards of earth and rock were excavated, cubic yards of cement and tons of reinforcing steel used in construction, and the detailed specs of the double-ribbed, fully visible nine arches, the reader, having seen the bridge or not, is able to comprehend the sheer scale of the project.

The project's scale elevated the Nicholson Bridge to "celebrity status". Author Smiles tells of industry publications that ran feature articles and major daily newspapers worldwide that offered wire stories on the bridge's progress. Organizations as varied as the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine from California, to name a few, travelled to pay homage to the man-made marvel.

Numerous politicians visited the site as did famed evangelist and former Major League Baseball player, Billy Sunday, who had completed six weeks of revival meetings in Scranton. Visitors continued to arrive long after construction was completed. In June 1928, after having been grounded by fog and darkness on a flight from Detroit to Long Island, Charles Lindbergh took off from near Pittston and did a flyover of the bridge.

Construction took place from June 1912 to November 1915. The author states that it is estimated that the total cut-off labor force was between 4,000 and 5,000 people. When bridge construction began, Nicholson saw its population nearly triple from 900 to roughly 2,300. Author Smiles tells of immigrants' living conditions in bunkhouses that were rudimentary at best and also overcrowded.

The reader learns about townspeople who turned their homes into boarding houses, including one called "The House of Nine Beds". That house was not a house of prostitution, it was a place where men ending a shift and other men beginning a shift shared nine beds.

Not all townspeople benefitted financially from the project. Attention is paid to the plight of the farmers whose lands were traversed by the DL&W and how they fared in court against the railroad.

Mr. Smiles also states that many immigrants were not employed by the DL&W under their names, but were given a number and paid in cash. When fatalities occurred, either accidentally or not, the identities of some laborers remain unknown. One example is an

unknown man who was killed when he stepped in front of a train. He was described as, “evidently a Russian”.

The author also describes the role alcohol played in laborers’ lives and how it was the cause of many a fight, not to mention many a fatality brought about by over consumption.

Although later during the construction period when Nicholson voted to “go dry”, a few speakeasies called blind pigs (the vernacular of the day) set up shop in the borough. The author explains that booze was brought in from neighboring towns and that a newspaper reporter stated that there was more drunkenness in “dry” Nicholson than when it was a licensed town.

One hundred years later, the author reassures the reader that the Borough of Nicholson survived the three years of bridge construction and that the bridge remains structurally sound. The Nicholson Bridge is now used by the Norfolk Southern Railway.

In the introduction, Mr. Smiles states that his intent “was to try to capture what it was like in Nicholson on a day-to-day basis as the bridge was going up”. He succeeded in his effort.

*Ninth Wonder of the World*, by Jack Smiles, is a short and yet detailed read, one that belongs on the bookshelves of civil engineers, railroad historians, particularly those who study the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, students of immigrant history and those who are interested in Northeast Pennsylvania’s history and architecture.

*Ninth Wonder of the World* is available for purchase for \$5.00 plus \$2.00 shipping. For information please contact the author at any of the following:

Email: [jsmiles9@gmail.com](mailto:jsmiles9@gmail.com)

Phone: 570-693-4415

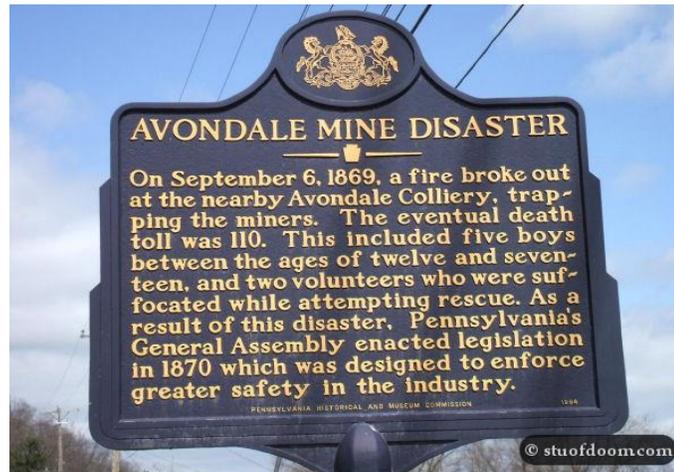
Regular mail: Jack Smiles, 221 Monument Ave., Wyoming, PA 18644

**Jack Smiles is an award winning writer and editor who specializes in history, baseball and short fiction. Historical pieces written by Mr. Smiles have appeared in a number of Northeast Pennsylvania and Southern New York publications. He is the author of three biographies of anthracite miners who became Hall of Fame baseball players: *EE-Yah, the Life and Times of Hughie Jennings*; *Big Ed Walsh: The Life and Times of a Spitballing Hall of Famer*; and *Bucky Harris: a Biography of Baseball’s Boy Wonder*.**

## Correction

In the July – August 2018 issue of History Bytes, *100 Years of Pennsylvania’s Northern Anthracite Coal Field* stated that Lehigh University is in Easton, PA and Lafayette College is in Bethlehem, PA. Lehigh is in Bethlehem and Lafayette is in Easton. We thank our readers for catching the discrepancies. We stand corrected. Thank you.

## Remembering Avondale



September 6, 2018 marked the 149<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disaster that took place on September 6, 1869 at the Avondale Mine, Plymouth, PA. One hundred and forty nine years later, the 110 men and boys, mostly immigrants, who gave their lives that day, continue to be remembered.

During the last number of years, much has taken place at the mine site and at Washburn Cemetery, West Scranton, where 58 are laid to rest. The Plymouth Historical Society, with the assistance of individuals and organizations, successfully closed the access road that was used by many for illegal dumping of trash near the Avondale Mine site. The access road was the right-of-way of the former Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad that became the Erie Lackawanna Railway. The well-manicured mine site is now a place for all to visit, reflect and offer thanks to those who gave their lives that day so that their descendants would live better lives.

In West Scranton, Washburn Cemetery is under new ownership. Lawns are mowed and the Avondale Section is taken care of.

At Washburn, because of time and weather, many of the Avondale markers have become virtually unreadable. A fundraiser that began more than two years ago came to a successful conclusion with the installation of a bronze marker listing the names of 54 laid to rest at the Avondale Section and four others elsewhere at Washburn.

Plans for the 150<sup>th</sup> Avondale remembrance to be held in September 2019 are underway. Please look for Avondale updates both in History Bytes and at the Plymouth Historical Society's website at <https://www.plymouthhistoricalsocietyluzernecopa.org/>

# Rite of Passage Revisited

By Rick Sedlisky

Each time I received the invitation to attend my high school class reunion, I said, “No, can’t make it”, or something like that.

Why? I don’t know. I just didn’t feel like returning home to spend a few hours with people who most likely forgot about me. I’m sure, they as I, had better things to do than to recall high school days.

A few months ago, another invitation to yet another chapter of my high school life arrived in my mailbox. This invitation was different.

This invitation said that this is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of us, the Class of 1968, who graduated from Scranton Technical High School, better known as “Tech”.



**Photo courtesy of Rose Sacchetti Bielawski**

Scranton Technical, a school with a very rich history, is a high school that no longer exists except for the two buildings that continue under a different name as a middle school. Scranton Technical and Scranton Central were consolidated a number of years ago to form Scranton High School.

Thanks to one of one of ours, on August 4, 2018 at the Waldorf Park German American Federation, East Mountain, Scranton, I returned home to be with mine and to recall a very special part of my life. One of ours crossed the continent from California to be with us on that Saturday in August. He, I and others who moved away “came home”.



**Photo courtesy of Rose Sacchetti Bielawski**

Fifty years? May 24, 1968? It's not possible that it's been 50 years since we 535 turned our red and white tassels and looked to the future. Like it or not, accept it or not, it's been a half century. If knowing that it's been 50 years since we left the doors of "Tech" at Adams Ave. and Gibson St. doesn't make you feel or think "old", nothing will.

On East Mountain that evening, no one mentioned age or old. Sure, we look our ages and yes, "older". That's life. We're not exactly how we used to be, but we're still us. We're still the "Red Raiders", proudly wearing our red and white.



**Photo courtesy of Diane Gaughan Nigro**

During the evening, we looked at our name tags that included our photographs from our yearbook and said, "Oh yes, I remember you". The longer we sat and talked, the years disappeared, at least for a few hours on East Mountain. For those of ours who are no longer with us, you were there. You are not forgotten, your names were spoken.

Classmate Lois Noto said, "I was thrilled to be able to attend, see so many of our classmates after 50 years, hit the dance floor and celebrate being healthy enough to enjoy our special night together". Her words said it all.



**Photo courtesy of Connie Valvano**

There are those of our 535 who years ago began and continue to keep our reunion tradition alive. Thanks for keeping everyone connected in the best way possible.

For everyone who graduated in 1969, 2019 will bring your 50<sup>th</sup> reunion. Be sure to attend. You'll remember it forever.

Every graduating class has a "class song". We, the Class of 1968, the year of civil unrest, opposition to war by many, and assassinations, have ours. Whoever chose our song had foresight, as with all of the anger at the time, the choice was, "A Place In the Sun (where there's hope for everyone)", by Stevie Wonder..

Please visit the link below to hear our class song, "A Place in the Sun". Click on the yellow-orange box on the upper left when you reach the link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8IVPMWLCBQ>



Photo courtesy of Rose Sacchetti Bielawski



Nick Fala Photography  
Photo courtesy of Lois Noto

# We Did It!

## The *Let's Get Wired* Capital Campaign is Closed!!

*On September 8th, the Lackawanna Historical Society received word from the Farkas family that they had established a planned gift by naming the Society as the primary beneficiary in an insurance policy valued at \$30,000. This gift covers the remaining balance of the LHS Capital Campaign to support the recent Electrical and HVAC upgrades at our headquarters, the Catlin House. We are most grateful to Dr. John Farkas and his son John Anthony for their support and will be planning a naming of a Society collection in appreciation for this gift.*

*Details will be announced soon.*

Thanks to everyone who has supported this campaign

# Lackawanna Historical Society

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## Business Hours

Tuesday – Friday, 10am – 5pm

Saturday, 12pm – 3pm

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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.