



HISTORY BYTES

A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication

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January – February 2019

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

Remembering Knox: 60 Years Later

Samuel Altieri

Dominic Kaveliski

John Baloga

Frank Orłowski

Benjamin Boyar

Eugene Ostrowski

Francis Burns

William Sinclair

Charles Featherman

Daniel Stefanides

Joseph Gizenski

Herman Zelonis

Listed above are the names of the 12 men who gave their lives on January 22, 1959 when the Susquehanna River broke through the roof of the Knox Mine.

Years before the Knox disaster, the Avondale Mine disaster in which 110 men and boys were killed, resulted in the enactment of mine safety laws by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Other states followed suit. Laws, however, do not necessarily overcome greed and are often ignored in the desire to squeeze every possible nickel of profit from an operation. In an effort to do exactly that, the operators of the Knox ignored “stop lines” and miners had no choice but to dig closer to the Susquehanna River bed.

Commonwealth law prohibits mining within 35 feet of a riverbed. The Knox men were roughly two feet from the Susquehanna when the roof caved in, trapping 74 men, 12 of whom were never found. Millions of gallons of Susquehanna River water flooded the Knox and in effect, ended deep mining in the Wyoming Valley and brought about unemployment for thousands of miners.

The Knox disaster brought to light the corrupt coal company officials, corrupt United Mine Workers officials, as well as mafia connections within the industry. Seven men

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were convicted of involuntary manslaughter and three also of conspiracy. Many were not surprised when all convictions were subsequently overturned.

For some who cared only about profit, the Knox was just business as usual. "Business as Usual" takes us to the present where across Northeast Pennsylvania, Anthracite Mining Heritage Month allows us to recall what happened at the Knox and why. The month-long event also allows us to appreciate and learn from those who have studied and documented our anthracite legacy.

Anthracite Mining Heritage Month

January 2019 marked 20 years of programs related to the region's anthracite history. Anthracite Heritage Month 2019 offered a variety of programs at a number of venues across Northeast Pennsylvania including:

Screening of the documentary film, *Centralia: Pennsylvania's Lost Coal Town, Anthracite Mine Workers Speak, The Lattimer Massacre of 1897: A Radio Broadcast, Pittston's Social and Industrial History, Episodes in Anthracite Labor History, Four Major Anthracite Mining Disasters, Coal Breaker Communities: Faded Memories, Major Environmental Issues in Anthracite Country, The Annual Knox Mine Commemorative Program -The 60th Anniversary, The Avondale Mine Disaster of 1869, and Writing Coal Country Literature: Commentaries on Fiction, Non-Fiction and Drama, and The Contributions of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration to Anthracite Mining (The Jeddo Tunnel, Scranton Mine Cave Problems, Wilkes-Barre Historic District Homes, and other topics).*

Anthracite Mining Heritage Month traces its roots to January 1999 and the 40th Anniversary program of the Knox Mining Disaster that was held at the Anthracite Heritage Museum in Scranton. By the mid-2000s, in addition to the annual Knox remembrance program, other anthracite-related presentations were held at different venues such as the Huber Breaker Society, Exeter Historical Society, and by 2007-08 the event evolved into Mining History Week because sessions were held during the week of the Knox anniversary.

Interest continued to grow and by 2011-12 programs were held across Northeast Pennsylvania. The series became known as Mining History Month. With continued expanding interest in anthracite and other areas of the region's industrially-related past, such as ethnicity, baseball and literature, in 2017 the name was changed to Anthracite Mining Heritage Month.

As a board member of the Anthracite Heritage Foundation and as a King's College History Department faculty member, Professor Bob Wolensky coordinates Anthracite Mining Heritage Month in cooperation with individuals at each of the organizations that sponsor programs.

In 2019, program sponsors included the Anthracite Heritage Museum, Anthracite Heritage Foundation, King's College, Wilkes University, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State University-Scranton, Lackawanna Historical Society, Luzerne County Historical Society, Plymouth Historical Society, Greater Pittston Historical Society, Huber Breaker Preservation Society, Knox Mine Disaster Memorial Committee, Boy Scouts of America-Northeastern PA Council, and the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration and its Pennsylvania Anthracite Section.

Dunn Colliery Coal Mine Disaster September 28, 1897

By Carl Orechovsky

Following is the official report from the 1897 Pennsylvania Department of Mines Inspector Report on the largest loss of life at one time in the coal mines of Old Forge as written by Mine Inspector H.O. Prytherch. The disaster occurred in the Jermyn No.1 Mine of the Dunn Colliery, owned by the John. J. Jermyn Coal Co. in the Rendham section of town. It is also recorded in the National Coal Mine Disaster Database.

Fire Boss **Issac Watkins**, while making his morning examination of the workings of the middle vein, Jermyn No. 1 Mine, discovered a fire in a chamber known as Apple's, off Davies old airway on the morning of September 21, 1897. Mining was suspended in that section of the colliery and every energy directed towards extinguishing the fire. The fire originated from a blower having been left burning at quitting time the previous day, and this in a short time communicated fire to the workings.

A line of water pipes was laid and properly connected to a pump, and work was commenced with the air current flowing in its usual direction. As the work progressed it was discovered the fire was closer to a cross-cut and had caused the roof to fall in a considerable distance. This fall had to be loaded out and the place re-timbered. It was decided by the mine officials, after a consultation, to change the direction of the air-current and reach the location of the fire with the view of quenching it, and so reduce the heat and smoke so the work of loading the debris would be facilitated.

The air-current was changed on the 28th of September about two o'clock, Mine Foreman **Johns** being in charge of the work. Sometime later Mine Foreman **Johns** and Fire Boss **Watkins** having found that the air-current was working successfully in the new direction, decided to go in to the location of the fire. They found the vicinity of the fire clear of gasses and concluded that it would be safe for the shift to go in and commence work from that end.

Issac Watkins, the Fire Boss, had charge of this shift consisting of **John Gallagher**, **William Franklin**, **William Tompkins**, and **Joseph Smith**.

About 3:30 PM, they went in after making arrangements with other men to later bring in mine rails. At 5:10 PM **George Shrives, Al Whyte, Thomas Curley, and John Conway** made their way to an airlock door with the rails. This door they found closed. They discovered the body of **Tompkins** on the other side and the bodies of **Franklin, Smith, and Gallagher** some distance inside. Later in the day, the body of Fire Boss **Watkins** was recovered from a point near the fire.

During the investigation and inquest that followed, it was determined the air-current around the location of the fire was intact, beyond a doubt, with no possible way by which it could reach the return, except by way of the fire. All doors, brattices and walls were undisturbed, and the fan was running at the usual speed.

The coroner of the county, assisted by the mine inspector, held an inquest over the remains of **Isaac Watkins** and the others on October 4 at Rendham. All available evidence was submitted.

The jury returned the following verdict: *We the undersigned jurors, after hearing the evidence submitted that the said **Isaac Watkins** and others, for some cause unknown, retreated to the bad air-current and met death as the result of breathing sulphurous gases. We further find that no blame can be attached to **Isaac Watkins** nor the other officials, **R.W. Reese, E.D. Owens, T.P. Crosgrove, F. Crosgrove, J. Nicholas and William Monroe.***

Update September 28, 2010: At the meeting of the Old Forge Coal Mine Historical Group, Joe Tedesco, a descendent of Joseph Smith, supplied additional information.

Joseph Smith's original name was Tedesco, his name was changed when he emigrated from the town of Felitto, Italy to America, to reside in the First Ward area of Old Forge. He was married when he died and had seven children. One of them was the father of Joseph Tedesco, who with his wife Clare, resides in Clarks Summit. Two of Joseph Smith's sons were also coal miners. James was reported to have been injured or killed when kicked by a mule, and another son, the oldest, was Anthony.

For additional information on the Dunn operation please visit Pennsylvania's Northern Anthracite Coal Field at <http://www.northernfield.info/>

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.

LHS Membership Information

2019 Membership Reminder

About Membership: Membership privileges include unlimited access to the Society library, 10% discount in our bookstore, advance notice, special discounts and invitations to all Society activities, members-only programs, the quarterly newsletter and the bi-monthly e-newsletter.

Attached is a membership form you can use to renew your membership or give to a friend who is interested in joining. Please return it to:

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

Lackawanna Historical Society Membership Form

// Student	\$10	Name _____
// Individual	\$35	
// Family	\$45	Address _____
// Contributing	\$75	_____
// Sustaining	\$150	
// Silver Corporate	\$250	Telephone _____
// Gold Corporate	\$500	Email _____

Following is a link to complete for membership payment if you chose to use it.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSep8tRxXJUut7McTh4g4StczVjC4HRJAXMDE-ztxEDCzLncvA/viewform>

Upcoming LHS Events

Sunday, February 17, 7pm: A Visit with Thomas Jefferson at the Tripp House (See P 21 for details).

Wednesday, February 20: Dine Lackawanna, Stirna's Restaurant, Scranton.

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Wednesday, March. 20: Dine Lackawanna, Terra Preta Prime, Scranton.

Sunday, March 24, 2pm: "War in Letters" Iwo Jima Program, Catlin House.

Saturday, March 30, 10am and 1pm: Pysanky Workshop by Tammy Budnovitch, Catlin House, \$20 for supplies (\$15 for members). Call 570-344-3841 to register.

Sunday April 7, 2 pm: Watres Armory Tour. \$20 donation benefits LHS. Registration required. SOLD OUT

Saturday, April 13, 11am: Vintage Accessory Sale, Catlin House.

Saturday, April 13, 7 pm: 15th Annual Grand Civil War Ball, Century Club, Scranton.

Sunday, April 14: Ragtime Brunch at Carmen's 2.0, Radisson Lackawanna Station, Scranton.

Remembering and Understanding The Heritage of Black Scrantonians

By Glynis M. Johns

In the literature available documenting Scranton's heritage, the African American diaspora and history is not easily accessible. The lack of visibility leaves many to assume there is nothing, and those who write history plant false ideologies about the black community's lack of historical importance. The lack of inclusion into Scranton's cultural network is seemingly evident. Of those who have attempted to investigate Scranton and its lineage of black people, most lack retraceable information.

In the introduction of Harry Bradshaw Matthews' *African American Freedom Journey in New York and Related Sites 1823-1870*, he specifically mentions Scranton as one of three sites worthy of investigation. Matthews felt it necessary to honor the African Americans who devoted their lives to the progression of their people. "By identifying them, their decedents have a greater opportunity to reclaim them as part of their respective ancestry" (Matthews 2008).

Scranton was not mentioned again beyond the introduction (for reasons that I believe were unintentional, due to unavailability of applicable records). Nonetheless, Matthews' fleeting reference may be an indication that an African American population existed and endured. This is one of many examples demonstrating the lack of historical documents focused on black bodies in Scranton.

The Black Scranton Project, a local heritage initiative and archival project, is that attempt at reclaiming our respective ancestry. I created the Black Scranton Project as an effort to counter these stigmas, stereotypes and false ideologies that keep the black

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community locked out of the ethnic landscape and state transiency. The Black Scranton Project is reconstructing social memory by preserving the inspirationally rich African American heritage in this city and to revive cultural empowerment into my community.

The Bureau of Census Data provided assurance that a population of African Americans has existed in Scranton for nearly two centuries. In Lackawanna County, only one “colored man, no aliens” were counted in census record between the decades of 1820-1840. By 1850 four colored residents in the city of Scranton were documented by the United States Census Bureau. Since the nineteenth century, Scranton, Pennsylvania has lauded itself for being a progressive city, one of racial acceptance, largely because of its affiliation with the Underground Railroad and the movement to abolish slavery. Northeastern Pennsylvania became home to many free blacks, due in part to the area’s role in the Abolitionist Movement and reputation of being a pathway and checkpoint along the Underground Railroad. Local archives are quick to bring up Scranton’s participation in the Underground Railroad, but are unable to explain in detail the role the city actually played.

In a 1913 local newspaper, *The Scranton Republican* remembered “*Scranton was never figured as a station on the old Underground Railroad, but up in Abington the Negro had many friends who were always ready to give him shelter.*” This historical resume can only justify outdated ideologies of racial tolerance and “equality,” before the minority group begins to recognize its subordinated position within the community. This is the crisis that I have recognized.

During the period of 1890 to 1940, many Black Scrantonians found themselves restricted to poor communities and menial jobs. Racial discrimination seeped through the labor market. The few employment opportunities available consisted of situations working in slaughterhouses, domestic work, shoeshine parlors, custodial, cooks, lawn help, laundresses, waiters, maids, and butlers, few possessed minimum wage jobs.

Many people often ask me about black labor in the coal mines. Were there black men working in the mines? The short answer is no. I have yet to discover concrete evidence of black miners in Scranton, specifically. “*The Negro is locked out of many of the most attractive occupations in the Commonwealth because white men do not wish to work with him solely because of his race*” (Negro Survey of Pennsylvania; the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare, 1928).

When we think of this in terms of individual narratives, it is often advantageous to reject particular details or entire accounts. History is habitually recorded in this way whereby narratives are selected, curated, or manipulated to frame the past in a particular light. The city of Scranton is suffering from false realism, insofar as a community we were actually wrong in our belief that African Americans have no claim to the historical foundation of this city. However, as the *Black Scranton Project* argues, there are in fact institutional mechanisms that produce, reproduce, and transform the network of positions to which its supposed members are dispatched and ascribed.

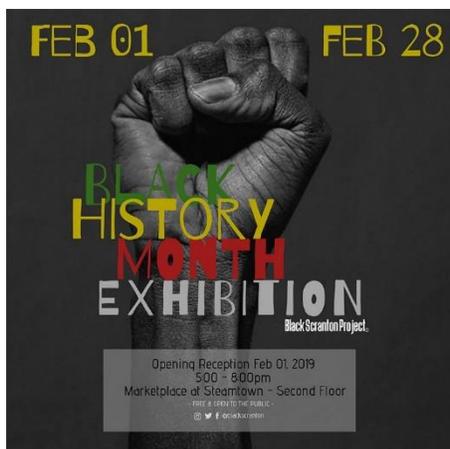
Let this be an introduction to an historical record of the African American community of Scranton, Pennsylvania. Their ancestry deserves to be honored. The Black Scranton Project is working to construct a new historical narrative, space, and programming dedicated to the black history and culture of Scranton.

No matter what your race, ethnicity or culture is, keep honoring it, because you cannot wait for anyone to notice your worth, or you will remain overlooked... Glynis Johns

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2019

As we approach Black History Month, when the contributions of black Americans take over national consciousness, we must also recognize our local black figures and black immigrants who risked their lives to be free persons in the northeast and establish a foundation, community, and resources for forthcoming generations in Scranton.

The Black Scranton Project will celebrate Black History Month with a month-long exhibit taking place at the Marketplace at Steamtown, 300 Lackawanna Ave., Scranton. We invite you attend “*Remembering and Understanding the Heritage of Black Scrantonians*”, which will open Friday, February 01 at 5:00 pm, with a gallery tour and a talk by the curator. The exhibit will be free and open to the public during the entire month of February.



For more information please visit
blackscranton.com/bhm

ABOUT THE BLACK SCRANTON PROJECT

The Black Scranton Project is a special collections archive dedicated to cultural empowerment and preservation of the rich Black and African American Heritage within the city of Scranton. In addition to the archival work, the *Black Scranton Project* is focused on showcasing the hidden histories and contributions of this city's *black* community. Our mission is to seek out and spotlight local talent while offering a platform for

conversation that gives voice and agency to marginalized and underrepresented groups in Scranton. The Black Scranton Project strives to promote multicultural education by creating spaces that educate, inspire, and stimulate dialog, but above all give recognition and reinstate two centuries of discounted contributions put forth by black residents. We invite you to follow the Black Scranton Project on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#), and explore our website. Contact: 570.871.0539 or E-mail: info@blackscranton.com

[***lackawannahistory@gmail.com***](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com)

Glynis M. Johns is a professor and researcher based in Scranton, PA with a primary focus on archiving local Black history and culture and curating space for emerging and POC artists, writers, scholars of NEPA and showcase their work. Since 2017, Ms. Johns has been organizing initiatives, most notably, a project to commemorate prominent figures of the Black community in the early 20th Century with a PHMC-issued historical marker. Most recently, she has been involved in leading and organizing the Scranton Region Complete Count Committee (SRSCCC) for the 2020 US Census campaign. She describes her work and advocacy as “a labor of love” adding, “I do this for the black and brown kids growing up in my city. They have a right to cultural capital. So I am harvesting it for them.”



Prof. Glynis M. Johns

Person of Interest

DONALD T. MURRAY

(1929 – 2018)

Minooka Pen & Ink Artist - Part 2

By Thomas W. Costello

Inspired by Nature



Don Murray

As I got to know Don, I came to see him as a visionary, a dreamer, a man who always had a new project brewing. His art emanated from his love for nature - in all forms, small and large, micro and macro - most evident in his nature photographs, landscape paintings, lunar photographs, insect and fossil collections, and wood carvings of birds.

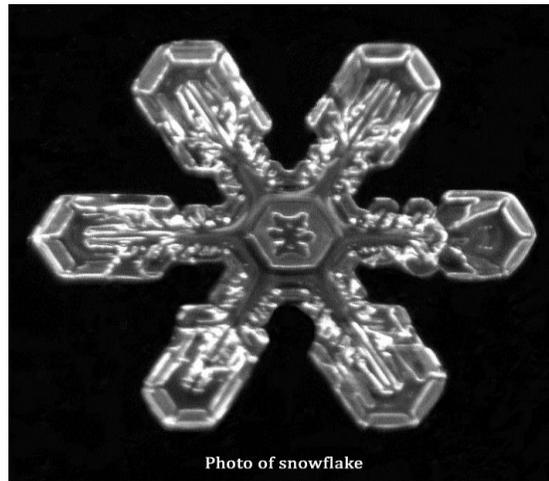


Photo of snowflake



Baby Spiders Climbing

Even his intricate drawings of buildings depict natural elements. Many of the actual buildings are made of stone mined from Scranton's West Mountain; of limestone from quarries in Indiana; Medina and Onondaga, NY; of brown sandstone, granite, brick, slate and copper. These natural

materials give each building a unique texture and color, captured by Don in pencil and watercolor.

In their size and grandeur, the Municipal Building, County Courthouse, Finch Building, Scranton Electric Building, Masonic Temple, Central High School and Scranton Prep, resemble formidable mountain facings seen in Yosemite, the Grand Canyon and Sedona, Arizona. These qualities are effectively reproduced in Don's drawings.

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This simple quotation (author unknown) had significant meaning for Don, who called it his “mantra.” “Nature has seduced me - she placates my soul.” In 1988, he expertly lettered it in calligraphy, with a large initial letter “N” in a medieval style, and added illustrations: a vine & flowers, bees, a beetle, spider, bird and butterfly. He framed and hung it near his desk, where it easily could be seen.

Don viewed all living things with reverence and curiosity. He found beauty in everything. Camera in hand, he would walk through fields in his neighborhood looking for insects and small animals to photograph. Sometimes they found him.

One day he showed me a photo he had taken on his side porch of a long line of tiny, yellow baby spiders climbing up a single silk thread in a perfect procession (see above). Another gem was his photo of a flag tail chipmunk, peering up at Don from the bottom porch step, anxiously awaiting a handout of sunflower seeds, part of a daily ritual. Don loved to take photographs of humming birds, finches, sparrows, cardinals and blue jays as they congregated on feeders outside his studio window.



Don devised an ingenious way to photograph snowflakes. Out in his backyard in the “wee hours” on a cold, snowy night, he would use a small paintbrush to “catch” and gently transfer snowflakes to a black velvet cloth. He would photograph them with a Nikon digital camera mounted on his microscope. In his photos, each snowflake looks like a uniquely-shaped piece of unpolished Swarovski Crystal, proof that no two are alike. To Don, a lost night of sleep was a small price to pay for rare photographs of an elusive subject.

Renaissance Man

John Nebesney, a Princeton artist and close friend of Don’s who worked with him at I.C.S. and Ingersoll-Rand, described him as a “Renaissance Man”. John marveled at Don’s ability to do anything – build an addition on his house, sculpt a bust of his son, carve and paint wooden figures of birds, make a grandmother clock, a wall clock, a

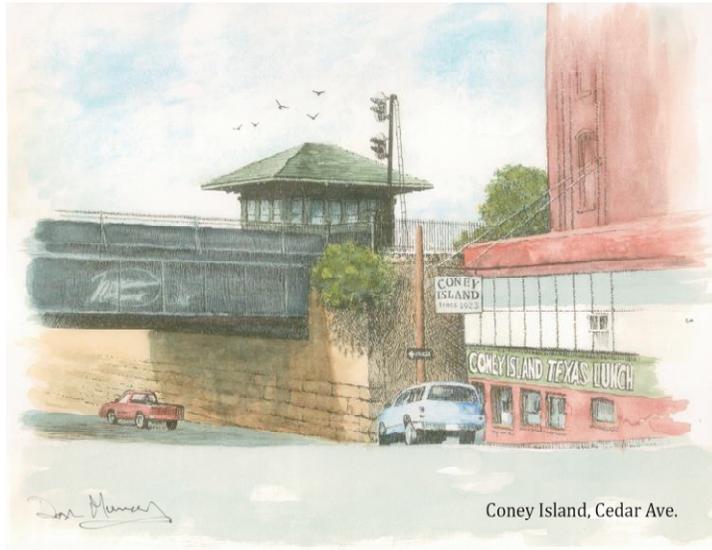
fireplace mantle and small tables and shelves. He wrote poetry and lettered elaborate documents in calligraphy.

He owned a large telescope and was a founding member of the Lackawanna Astronomical Society. He took many spectacular photographs of the moon, stars and planets. In 1973, Don and his astronomy club traveled by ship on a 17-day expedition from New York to Senegal, West Africa, to photograph a solar eclipse. "The big one", Don called it.

Don skillfully illustrated many landmark buildings in Scranton, and preserved others that were torn down and are now vacant lots. Quint's Army & Navy at Lackawanna and Franklin Aves.; the Order of Eagles Building in the 200 block of Wyoming Ave.; the Flat Iron Building on West Lackawanna Ave; the entire skyline of the southern side of the 400 block of Lackawanna Ave. (before Steamtown) are a few examples.

By creating illustrations of these and other buildings, an integral part of Scranton's history, past and present, Don Murray has done a valuable service for the community.





Coney Island, Cedar Ave.



Farm in Winter

More of Don Murray's drawings of buildings that have been razed or abandoned can be seen on this website:

https://www.lackawannapagenweb.com/PW_Costello/DonMurray1.html

Thomas W. Costello grew up in the Hill Section of Scranton. He has a BA from the University of Scranton and an MA from Seton Hall University. After teaching English and Speech Communication for several years in a prep school in Milton, MA, he worked for thirty years in pharmaceutical sales, sales management and managed care for Schering Corp. and Johnson & Johnson.

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For three decades, Tom has researched the life and art of his great-grandfather, P. W. Costello (1866-1935), a renowned Scranton pen & ink artist, engrosser and illustrator.

To further P.W.'s legacy, he offers slide presentations, writes articles, creates websites and organizes art exhibitions. He enjoys genealogical research and writing about other artists from Scranton. Tom lives in East Brunswick, NJ, and often returns to Scranton.

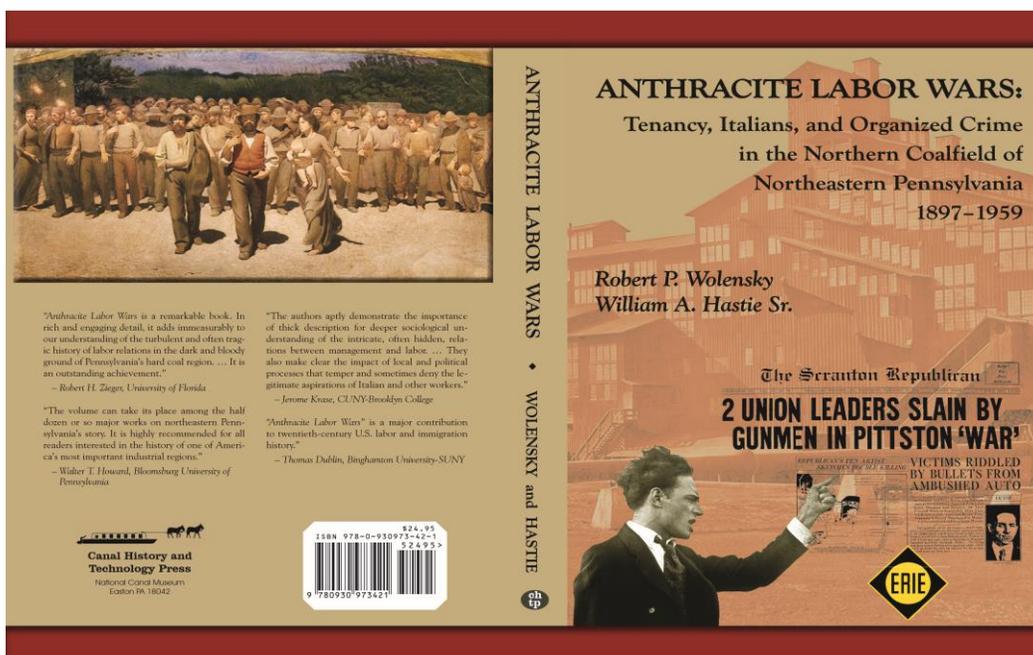
Editor's Book Review

By Rick Sedlisky

Anthracite Labor Wars: Tenancy, Italians, and Organized Crime In the Northern Coalfield of Northeastern Pennsylvania 1897 – 1959

By Robert P. Wolensky and William A. Hastie Sr.

Anthracite Labor Wars: Tenancy, Italians, and Organized Crime in the Northern Coalfield of Northeastern Pennsylvania 1897 – 1959, by Robert P. Wolensky and William Hastie, Sr. is a book of many stories, all intertwined. It tells about miners and



their attempts to confront and eliminate abusive labor practices. The work describes blatant corporate greed, union versus union, failed union movements, organized crime, politics, murder, and the contributions made by Italians to improve working and living conditions for anthracite miners and their families in Northeast Pennsylvania.

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The reader will learn about and understand the two forms of tenancy, leasing and subcontracting, and why they were major causes of labor unrest in the region. Miners' attempts to eliminate such practices continued for decades with the odds of a just victory stacked against them.

Two coal companies owned by the Erie Railroad were at the forefront of tenancy. The authors explain in great detail, the company's use of tenancy to maintain the status quo in order to ensure their goals of increased revenues, greater profits and a weakening of the union. The use of violence to maintain the status quo was not unusual.

Anthracite Labor Wars is the result of more than a decade of research. Authors Wolensky and Hastie dug deeply into Northeast Pennsylvania's history to offer the reader a detailed look at the complexities of and connections between ethnicities, corporate goals, unionism on many levels, as well as the role played by organized crime in the Northern Coalfield.

The authors thoroughly explain mineworkers' history versus mining history, the long-ignored and very important contributions made by Italians to Northeast Pennsylvania, and how, through their leadership, miners from 25 other ethnic groups joined the fight for just wages, fairness and improved safety standards.

Anthracite Labor Wars also allows the reader to understand not only the nature of the anthracite industry in general, but also the nature of a corrupt industry and how it affected the region's cultural life.

This well-researched, detailed work takes its place with similar books. It is highly recommended to anyone who wishes to gain a deeper understanding of what our anthracite ancestors endured so that future generations would live a better life.

Anthracite Labor Wars: Tenancy, Italians and Organized Crime in the Northern Coalfield of Northeastern Pennsylvania 1897 – 1959, is available for purchase at: Barnes & Noble, Wilkes-Barre, Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour, Scranton, Anthracite Heritage Museum, Scranton, Lackawanna Historical Society, Scranton, or by contacting Kathleen Hammerstone, Canal History Museum (publisher), Easton, at 610-559-6617.

Wall of Honor

A polished piece of black granite on which the face of an anthracite miner is etched stands in place at the Anthracite Miners' Memorial Garden located at King's on the Square, Public Square, Wilkes-Barre. Next to the black granite are kiosks containing plaques related to anthracite mining history. This is the home of the Wall of Honor.



Photograph courtesy of The Anthracite Heritage Foundation

The Anthracite Heritage Foundation continues to seek names of miners to be placed on the Wall of Honor. There is room for approximately 6,000 names. If you had a coal miner in your family, the Anthracite Heritage Foundation wants to hear from you. Please contact the foundation either via email at <http://ahfdn.org/> or at Anthracite Heritage Foundation, 69 Public Square - Ste. 709, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701.

Cornish Pasties (Pesties)



In the many forums, presentations and round table discussions held over the years, many aspects of anthracite miners' and their families' lives have been covered. It is a known fact that until labor laws changed and working conditions and wages slowly improved, life was not easy. Unlike those who resided in "progressive communities" such as Underwood Village and Concrete City, many, particularly those in patch towns, lived in substandard conditions.

What did miners and their families eat? It's probably safe to say that in many cases, the average diet was the proverbial "meat and potatoes" and probably in more cases than not, more potatoes than meat. Upon further research, courtesy of a woman who wishes to remain anonymous, we learned about Pasties also known as Pesties.

Pasties resemble empanadas, similar in form, but with somewhat different ingredients. Both have the “crust” along the edge, but the reason for the crust on miners’ pasties was while having lunch underground, finger nails embedded with coal dust wouldn’t touch the main part of the food.

Pasties originated in Cornwall, England. Another version originated in Ireland and travelled to Scotland where pasties became a staple in Scottish miners’ lunch buckets. The food found a home in Northeast Pennsylvania upon the arrival of people from the British Isles.

The woman who wishes to remain anonymous, shared the recipe she found, published in the September/October 1991 issue of Reminisce Magazine, page 37. It is the recipe she recalls as a child.

For all who enjoy experimenting in the kitchen, this one is for you. Give it a try and let us know your thoughts. Also, does anyone know where pasties can be purchased in Northeast Pennsylvania?

Recipe for Cornish Pasties

TOTAL TIME: Prep: 30 min. Bake: 55 min. Makes 12 servings

Ingredients

- 1 pound beef sirloin tip steak, diced
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and diced (3 cups)
- 3 green onions with tops, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- Dash nutmeg

Pastry

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- Pinch baking powder
- 1 cup shortening
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2/3 cup cold water
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tablespoon heavy whipping cream

Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the beef, potatoes, onions and seasonings; set aside. For pastry, in a large bowl, combine the flour, salt and baking powder. Cut in shortening and butter. Gradually add water, tossing with a fork until dough forms a ball.
 2. Turn onto a lightly floured surface. Divide dough into 12 pieces; roll each into 6-in. circles. Moisten edges with water. Place about 1/2 cup filling on half of each circle. Fold other half over the filling; press edges together with a fork to seal. Note: Dough should resemble the letter, "D".
 3. Cut several slits in each pastry. Place on a baking sheet. Combine egg and cream; brush over pastry tops. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350° and bake 40-45 minutes longer or until golden brown. Yield: 12 servings.
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If Cooking for Two: Freeze unbaked pasties on baking sheets until firm, then wrap and store in the freezer. When ready to bake, defrost and bake as directed above.

Originally published as Cornish Pasties in Reminisce, September/October 1991, p37.

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](#)

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- [Luzerne County Historical Society](#)
- [Wayne County Historical Society](#)
- [Susquehanna County Historical Society](#)
- [Monroe County Historical Society](#)
- [Wyoming County Historical Society](#)
- Archbald Historical Society: Contact Ed Casey (570) 614-3628
- Scott Township Historical Society: Contact Robert Vail (570) 254-9536
- Taylor Historical Society: Contact Christine Schaefer (570) 562-1225

County and Educational Partners

- [Lackawanna County](#)
- [Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#)
- [Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit](#)

Lineage Societies

Provided by Ted Bainbridge, Ph.D.

If you can trace one of your ancestral lines far enough back in time, and if you have acceptable proof, you might be able to join a lineage society. Here are links to the most popular ones. (You can find links to others by doing internet searches for descriptive words.) Links below include those for the organization's national headquarters web 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/>

in part by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Catlin House Memorial Trust, Lackawanna County and membership dues.

If you have anything to share that will add to the documentation of Lackawanna and Northeast Pennsylvania, please contact lackawannahistory@gmail.com and place *History Bytes* in the subject matter.



President Thomas Jefferson Visits the Tripp House

Join us on Sunday, February 17 at 7 pm for a wine and cheese reception and a visit with one of our favorite Founding Fathers.

Tom Fitz returns to Northeast Pennsylvania to portray our third president and mark President's Day. During the day he will ride the Stourbridge Line in Homestead on the 1 pm and 3 pm excursions to address the passengers. He will spend the evening greeting guests at the Tripp House and offer a special discussion on Taverns and Revolution. The reception is free and open to the public and presented in partnership by the Lackawanna Historical Society, The Scranton City Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society for the Preservation of the Tripp Family Homestead and sponsorship support from Toyota of Scranton.

lackawannahistory@gmail.com