



## HISTORY BYTES

*A Lackawanna Historical Society Publication*

Vol. 3 No. 2

March – April 2020

Rick Sedlisky, Editor

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### *A Message from the Executive Director*

Dear Friends,

I wanted to take a moment to update you on LHS. We will remain closed to the public until April 30. Our staff is busy working from home. We will check email and telephone messages daily and respond as needed. Please note that we have decided to cancel the following events:

- Dine Lackawanna**, Wednesday, April 15 at Harvest Seasonal Grill and Wine Bar
- Meet the Generals**, Saturday April 18 at the Marine League Museum
- Grand Civil War Ball**, Saturday, April 18 at the Century Club
- Ragtime Brunch**, Sunday, April 19 at the Radisson Lackawanna Station

And to postpone:

- Recycling lecture** by Joyce Hatala on Wednesday, April 22 at the Catlin House
- Genealogy Forum**, Wednesday, April 29 at the Catlin House. Date and details TBA
- For the Least of Them** on May 1 and 2 at the Lackawanna County Courthouse

The local history game show is slated for late May as part of the Lackawanna County Fair. More details will be announced.

We thank LHS member Scott Herring for his recent offer to match any donations during this time up to \$1000 and to Chester Kulesa, Ella Rayburn, Bob Savakinus, Chris Posly, John Farkas and John Farkas Jr. for their contributions. The Farkas' donated in memory of Nancy Farkas.

Thank you for your continued interest and support. Please stay healthy, safe and positive!

Mary Ann Savakinus

### *LHS Zoom Meetings*

Since you can't come to us, we'll bring our programming to you! Beginning this Friday, the Lackawanna Historical Society will be hosting weekly historical programs via Zoom.

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

Join us this Friday, April 3 at 2 pm for the very timely "A Scarcity of Caskets: The 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic in Scranton" with Sarah Piccini. We will also record the session and post it to our YouTube channel later. To join, use the meeting codes or link below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/610581909?pwd=ZVBtZUYrTXdNVIROZFNEaFk0U3pzd09>

Meeting ID: 610 581 909

Password: 021884

Stay tuned next week for a program on Italian festivals with Stephanie Longo, and Scranton's Architectural Heritage with Mary Ann in the future.

## ***LHS Facebook Page***

Sarah Piccini started a Daily Diversions post on our Facebook page to provide interesting tidbits about our collection. We hope they bring a smile and spark a conversation in your house! You can find us at:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Lackawanna-Historical-Society-59246803810/>

## ***LHS Online***

As we continue to adjust to the new normal, the LHS staff has been busy updating our online presence. Below are two new efforts we have developed to continue our mission to document, preserve and interpret Lackawanna County history.

Please know that we will continue working to provide you, our members, with interesting and educational local history programs and to document this never before moment in history. Check our website, [lackawannahistory.org](http://lackawannahistory.org) and daily Facebook posts for more details on future projects.

## ***LHS COVID-19 Archive***

History happens every day; some days are more historic than others. Right now, we're certainly living through a bit of history that will undoubtedly be studied by scholars in the future. To make their job easier, we're excited to unveil the LHS Covid-19 Archive project, a virtual "instant archive" for your thoughts and reactions to the pandemic.

We'd love to hear from you: Use the link below to complete our survey or upload your journal entries, and thank you for helping us preserve history!

[www.lackawannahistory.org/LHSCovid19ArchiveCollecting.html](http://www.lackawannahistory.org/LHSCovid19ArchiveCollecting.html)

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## ***LHS Online Local History Curriculum Guide***

Exciting things are happening: If you have kiddos at home who are interested in history, we have made our Scranton local history curriculum guide available online! There are some discussion questions to get started, and other online resources to help, too.

The curriculum is geared to middle school students, but younger kids will enjoy the local history coloring book available on the site as well! Find them on our website or through the link below!

<http://www.lackawannahistory.org/LocalHistoryCurriculum.html>

Like us on [Facebook](#).

## ***UK Industrial History Tour Postponed***

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The UK Industrial History Tour, originally scheduled for June 25 – July 6, 2020, has been postponed until June 2021. Please stay tuned for updates. Thanks and be well.

Bob Wolensky

## ***In Memoriam***

Richard "Skip" Bovard passed away on March 7, 2020. Skip was appointed a Trustee of the Lackawanna Historical Society in 1993. In 1996 he was elected to serve as 2nd Vice President of the Society and eventually rose to position of 1st Vice President, which he held until 2011. His leadership and support to the LHS helped the organization thrive.

With then President Alan Sweeney, he assisted in revising the organizational By-Laws and participated in all of our fundraising programs. He also helped the LHS improve our finances in assisting with income development goals and working with fellow trustees improve our investment strategies.

In 2013, when Skip informed the Board that he could no longer actively serve as a Trustee, he was unanimously elected to the Emeritus position. Although in recent years he spent much time away from NEPA, he remained informed and often called or checked in when he was in the neighborhood. He was a true gentleman and will be greatly missed.

## ***LHS 2020 Membership Information***

**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>

### ***Editor's Note***

The COVID-19 virus is a pandemic, the size of which hasn't been seen in roughly 100 years. It is our sincere hope that this issue of History Bytes will temporarily take you away from any anxieties or concerns you may have. Our sincere thanks to all who contributed to the issue. As always, your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Rick Sedlisky,  
Editor

### ***Dine Lackawanna***

Numerous restaurants support LHS through participation in Dine Lackawanna. Until we return for an evening out at their establishments, we don't have to miss the aromas and tastes of the cuisine each offers. Give your taste buds a treat by supporting the chefs and staffs through requests for delivery or purchases of gift cards.

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## **Abingtons**

### **Clarks Summit**

Camelot                      The Nyx  
Formosa                     State Street Grill  
The New Cafe

### **Chinchilla**

Armetta's

## **Upvalley**

### **Carbondale**

Kol at Hotel Anthracite

### **Jermyn**

JW's Pub

### **Eynon**

Pasquale's  
Tiffany's

### **Simpson**

Frank's Place

## **Mid Valley**

### **Dickson City**

NOSH  
Texas Roundhouse  
Colarusso's Coal Fired Pizza

### **Olyphant**

John Pierre's

### **Jessup**

Café Colarusso

## **Scranton**

Ale Mary's  
AV Scranton  
Back Yard Ale House  
Cafe Classico  
Carmen's  
La Cucina  
Mansour's

Market Street Grill  
Pizza by Pappas  
Posh at the Scranton Club  
Sidel's  
Stirna's  
Terra Preta Prime  
Trax

## **Downvalley**

### **Moosic**

Marzoni's

### **Old Forge**

Dooley's

## **Dunmore/North Pocono**

### **Dunmore**

3 Jacks Burgers

### **Moscow**

Van Brunt Grill

### **Springbrook Twp.**

Olde Brook Inn



***Lackawanna River Named  
2020 Pennsylvania River of the Year***



**Image courtesy of the Lackawanna River Conservation Association**

The Lackawanna River has been named 2020 Pennsylvania River of the Year. The river won the annual contest capturing 40% of the votes cast.

With a record 21,369 votes submitted, the official results are:

**Lackawanna River:** 8,506 (40%)  
**Buffalo Creek:** 7,460 (35%)  
**Brandywine Creek:** 3,049 (14%)  
**Connoquenessing Creek:** 1,718 (8%)  
**Ohio River:** 636 (3%)

The Lackawanna River flows for 60 miles through Susquehanna, Wayne, Lackawanna, and Luzerne counties and for approximately 200 years was negatively impacted by a combination of urban and industrial development, the anthracite coal industry and railroads. Following the demise of anthracite in the 1960s and the implementation of sanitary treatment facilities, the river staged a remarkable return to life.

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Improvements during the last three decades saw the river rebound from being known as a polluted waterway to a recognized fishery and recreation destination. In the river's middle and upper reaches, the Lackawanna sustains a vibrant cold water Class A fishery, and is now part of a developing, extensive river trail and greenway system. In 2015, the Lackawanna was named by Trout Unlimited as one of North America's top 100 trout streams.

Because the Lackawanna is this year's contest winner, sponsor Lackawanna River Conservation Association (LRCA), will receive a \$10,000 grant to fund river activities throughout 2020. Events include a river sojourn, paddling trips, a speaker series, clean up days, photography contests and raising awareness of the Lackawanna's environmental, recreational, tourism and heritage values.

As sponsors of the annual contest, the Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will work with LRCA to create a commemorative poster celebrating the Lackawanna as Pennsylvania's 2020 River of the Year.

For Information on Lackawanna River events during 2020, please visit the Lackawanna River Conservation Association at [www.lrca.org](http://www.lrca.org)



Decades ago, the Lackawanna named as Pennsylvania's River of the Year? Such a thought was perhaps a dream, if that. Michael A. Kashmer, Paul Kowalski and Joe Rudzinski, three contributing authors to History Bytes, offer their memories of the river, memories that in 2020 are virtually unthinkable.

## ***River Recollections Scranton's Plot Section***

***By Michael A. Kashmer***

Here are some of my memories of growing up just a stones-throw from the polluted waters of the Lackawanna River in the 1950's and 1960's. My area of interest is the downriver section between the Green Ridge St. Bridge and the area just south of the Albright Ave. Bridge in the Plot Section of North Scranton where Sweeney's Beach stands today.

My earliest memories of the "Lackie", as it was called by neighborhood kids, start about 1948. My initial impression was not good. The Lackawanna was a stinking, putrid mess

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which was made worse, 24/7, by a large minimally treated sewerage outflow just north of the Albright Ave. Bridge.

The city sewerage outflow was loaded with human waste, garbage and anything else that could be flushed down a toilet. The constant outflow joined the filthy and smelly up-river water that contained fertilizer runoff, chemicals, dyes and debris.

The polluted water that came from the outflow continued its journey south eventually reaching the Susquehanna River near Pittston and continued to the Chesapeake Bay. In this mid-city stretch there was no aquatic life in the river and even birds avoided it.

The banks of the Lackawanna were partly covered with a variety of leafy trees and bushes. The seeds of this fast growing ground cover came downstream over the years and thrived in the nutrient rich soil. The trees and plants would trap and hold the debris and anything else that floated by. The river bank soil runoff combined with warm household and industrial liquids coming from the outflow made the river-garden a bright spot one enjoyed at a safe distance. Even during cool fall evenings and early winter cold spells, the warmer water kept the river banks leafy and green, and provided steam clouds near the outflow.

Farther downstream in Old Forge, mining outflow pumped thousands of gallons of contaminated mine water into the Lackawanna that colors the water and banks a bright orange. The orange color came from the high concentrations of iron and other minerals. This old mining outflow continues to this day. The river above the outflow has become a trout fishing haven which is a major accomplishment. This task took years to finalize. A job well done.

Why was the Old Forge mining outflow built in the first place? Who planned, approved and paid for this scheme? Additional research is needed to uncover the business interests and individuals who benefited.

You have to wonder what the downstream communities thought about the smelly and slimy orange, iron-infused water, flowing continuously through their towns. I think there must be a hefty trail of court papers in each downstream locality that saw their shellfish and recreational fishing decimated.

Back to the Upper Lackawanna. Illegal dumpers added to the flow and in the end, the river bank was chock full of life's detritus. This debris lasted until the next flood when the junk and garbage were washed away only to be replaced with a new supply in full view when the flood waters receded. During a flood, anything that floated, like discarded lumber and tree branches would get stuck at the low-clearance Albright Ave. Bridge. That bridge and the Poplar St. Bridge, the next downstream bridge, fell into the low clearance category, but the much higher Green Ridge St. Bridge was not affected by the rising water.

In the early 1950's, the Albright had a paved roadbed and concrete sidewalks on both sides. Large water mains clung to the sides of the bridge and disappeared underground



as soon as they cleared the bridge. This type of construction did not provide much space between the flooding river and the bridge's lower sections. During a flood, residents would come down to see how high the river was and to commiserate with their neighbors about the rising water. As the river flooded up to the bridge, tree limbs piled up against the structure and forced the swirling water to breach the river bank and flood nearby properties.

The pressure of the water was enormous and you could see the water back up as it assaulted the steel bottom of the bridge. The swell created by the trapped water was strong and easily topped the unreinforced banks. This was a terrifying thing to see and everyone who did witness this force of nature ran towards their homes in the hope of getting to safety.

You can't help but wonder what these, rain-soaked residents were thinking as they ran, as best they could, through the rising waters toward their homes. Were other family members outside and in danger as well? Where could they be, what was their fate? A sinking feeling of being in the clutches of the floodwaters led residents to a higher level of dread as neighbors reported water rushing into their basements.

Meanwhile, the piles of branches and debris pressed against the bottom of the bridge would make an ominous groaning and cracking sound joining the noise of the flood waters swirling around the debris. The swirling water and its cargo of debris, bubbled and gurgled as though impatient to get past this temporary stop on the journey south.

It was anyone's guess how far down in the river the marooned branches went. Anything making it under the bridge could be heard sliding and grinding against the underside until it would pop out on the other, downstream side. Sometimes firefighters tried to pry and pull some branches off the swirling and noisy pile that stretched for 50 or so feet upstream from the Albright. It took a ton of effort on their part and was very dangerous work. This effort was on the whole, unsuccessful.

People would say that this time the city would use dynamite to loosen the mass of timber pushing against the bridge. Sounds like an idea put together in haste with a dose of wishful thinking, but in retrospect, the unintended consequences could be disastrous. I never saw explosives used.

Some homes and businesses were built on a slight rise that made them just a few inches higher than their neighbors. Some properties had no basement or just a partial basement. During a flood the sewers would back up and the man-hole covers would spurt water like fountains. Residents were cautioned not to step on the covers because they might come off. Most people moved their cars to higher ground. Providence Road was higher than the Plot Section so the area near Bulls Head was filled with vehicles.

Once the floodwaters broke over the banks the water would run quickly through the streets, eventually going over curbs and on to private property. The surging water would make a bee-line towards Weston Field and the Farmer's Market which were slightly

lower. When the floodwaters subsided the water retreated along the same course from which it came, leaving deposits of garbage and lots of black, smelly mud.

I recall my family following city orders to boil tap water before using. One time instructions were given to add a drop or two of Clorox to each glassful. Bottled water had not yet become popular, but we had to purify the city drinking water somehow. During a mid-'50's flood we had to go to Weston Field and get a free typhus vaccination as a precaution.

As time went on the floods got worse. There was a very destructive flood that nearly destroyed the low-lying South Side just below downtown Scranton. The downtown was higher and safe from the rising waters. The northern valley suffered greatly, especially Carbondale and to the south as far as Scranton. Any low-lying neighborhood was easily claimed by the flood. I remember seeing parts of Olyphant, near the Lackawanna Ave. Bridge, under water.

At about this time the area along the Scranton-Carbondale Highway, today's Business Route 6, started to be developed. Most of this land had been used as a dump for low-grade coal and left over rock. This was especially true of the western side of the three-lane highway. As the land was prepared for development, strip mine coal and rock were pushed aside and trucked away. To make the building lots larger, tons of dirt were carved from the western mountainside. Plants and trees that had held the water were removed leaving the water no place to go except downhill towards the Lackawanna.

People who lived cheek-to-jowl with the river hardly mentioned the stench or color. They just didn't look and gave up complaining about it. I do not recall a discussion of ongoing health issues or dealing with the contamination that poisoned the river.

As previously mentioned, people who lived along the river, knowingly or unknowingly added to the waste. I recall, more than once, dozens of long fluorescent bulbs floating down the river. Where did they come from? No one knew or asked. The floating florescent bulbs were a source of fun and adventure for neighborhood kids. As the bulbs drifted by we would throw rocks from the river bank sinking all or most of them. We would keep track of how many bulbs were sunk.

Remember, the time was the late 1940's through the 1960's. It was a time of industrial decline in the Valley, threatened bankruptcies (Scranton Lace Co and Scranton Transit Co. among others), and people moving out of the region to areas with companies that were hiring. The Valley population dropped by about 40% during this time.

Without the Lackawanna River being used to dump personal and industrial waste, I have to imagine what the local economy would have looked like without this decades old dumping ground. Where would all this junk and raw sewerage have gone? Technology had yet to catch up with the Valley's environmental needs and the economy, which seemed to be in chaos, needed all the support it could get. Where else would the towns find new companies to employ idled workers?

Some counties southeast of the Valley, like Lehigh County, lost some old-line anchor industries like steel, truck assembly and other heavy manufacturing companies. The work force in Lehigh had, generally speaking, more advanced skills that could be transferred to new, developing industries. These jobs generally paid better than the more labor intensive mining business. Mining was backbreaking work and had been left to newly-arrived immigrants for decades.

A younger generation of men preferred to steer clear of these jobs that promised only terrible working conditions, constant exposure to deadly coal dust (black lung disease) and companies that were used to selling and merging assets without any consideration for the workers. Mining outfits tried to play one nationality against another. This tactic must have been easy to ignite and was effective. The workers were exploited and kept off-balance. Working tomorrow or not? Mine to lay-off or close, maybe. When the mines were idle, the whole family suffered.

The counties that attracted new businesses had a history of unionization and this exposure led to better wages and more modern jobs, which resulted in a positive attitude about the future.

Returning to the Lackawanna River, I recall with great clarity the dyes that colored the river. There was a carpet factory on North Main Ave. next to North Scranton Junior High School. Periodically the carpet factory, I was told, discharged the leftover fluid after dying the fabrics. The discharge made the river every color of the rainbow and then some. The colors were so concentrated that the pigment lasted on the surface of the river past the Albright Ave. Bridge. Dyes included red, green, blue, plus more exotic hues in vogue at that time like silver, pink, grey, beige, etc.

Is it any wonder why it took so long to see a real, live fish in the river? The buildup of toxic waste on the river bottom, as well as the river bank has affected the entire ecosystem and will continue for some time. That being said, the middle and upper reaches of the river have become a trout fishing haven, which is a major accomplishment. This task took years to finalize. A job well done.



**Lackawanna River**  
**Sweeney's Beach, Scranton's Plot Section, September 2019**  
**Photo courtesy of Rick Sedlisky**

Michael A. Kashmer is from Scranton and currently resides 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 [mikekashmer@aol.com](mailto:mikekashmer@aol.com)

## ***River Recollections Olyphant***

***By Paul Kowalski***

As kids, we played baseball in Brown's Field, an empty lot across from the river on North River Street. When a ball was hit over the relatively high embankment into the river, it had to be retrieved with a stick or bat, because no one wanted to enter the polluted water. The field also was the practice field for the Olyphant HS football team. The players and coaches would walk there from the junior high school, about four or five blocks away. The school was their locker room.

The field was also host to many firemen's carnivals and guess where the "carnies" did their duties? Yes, the river. There were no "porta pods" in those days. I belonged to Boy Scout Troop #34, which was sponsored by St. Michael's Church. We had annual encampments on the dry side of the river embankment that would last for one week. Guess where we did our duty as well? The toilet paper would be thrown into the river and washed downstream. I can't imagine how polluted the river was at that time compared to what it looks like today with great trout fishing and boating. Oftentimes, we would find dead fish in the river because they couldn't survive. The only survivors were rats and unfortunately, we didn't think anything was wrong because the mines polluted the river as well.



Scrantonian Photo,  
**FLOOD'S END IN OLYPHANT**—Its streets piled high with debris and lime, Olyphant yesterday afternoon bravely went into the task of rehabilitating itself. Chief of Police Joseph Michalik estimated the borough's loss at over \$500,000.

**The Scrantonian, May 24, 1942**

**Photo courtesy of Joe Rudzinski**

Following Christmas, we would collect used trees that were put out for garbage collection. We would create a fort of trees near the river banks and develop snowball fights with kids from other sections of town. Following about a week or two of this we would set the trees on fire, throw them into the river, and then head downtown to the Lackawanna Avenue Bridge to watch the armada flow into town. No one stopped us from doing that, including the police department. It was a means of getting rid of the

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trees. We never knew where they ended, possibly on other towns' river banks. We never asked or cared about the results because we were having fun.

The river in those days was all different colors, green, black, brown, grey, etc., because of all the pollution. Never was there any clear water. I recall one winter morning before classes began at St. Michael's Elementary School on the corner of Church and River Streets, a group of us boys were on the river bank sliding down to see how close we could come to the water. A boy named Richard Felchuck (sic), I'll never forget his name, was wearing a heavy fur coat and fell onto the river's edge. We ran to the school. He eventually showed up in his very heavy fur coat that smelled and in fact, stunk. The principal did not allow him to attend school that day and sent him home. Poor Richard.

I also remember Kaplan's Meat Processing Plant. Saul Kaplan, the owner, was also the longtime president of the Olyphant National Bank, which was located a few blocks away on Lackawanna Ave. He was very well connected in the community as was his father, Isadore, the founder of the company.

Kaplan's was located on Hull Avenue, which is about two blocks south of Lackawanna Avenue and was at a dead end (play on words). The blood and guts from the cattle were deposited into the river. The smell was disgusting and you could hear the animals crying. It was not a pleasant place to be either near or to live by.

**Paul Kowalski was born and raised in Olyphant, PA. He is a graduated of Scranton Central High School. He received an Associate Degree from Keystone Junior College and served in the US Air Force for three and a half years. Paul's careers covered 40 years in various sales and marketing positions in the health care industry. He currently resides in Moscow, PA.**

## ***River Recollections Throop***

***By Joe Rudzinski***

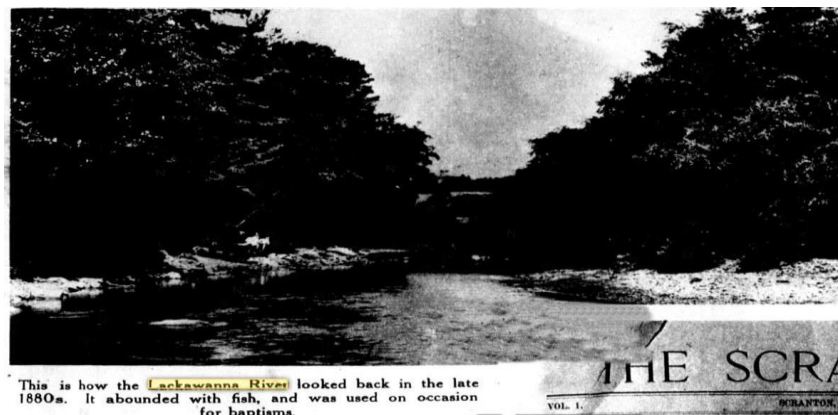
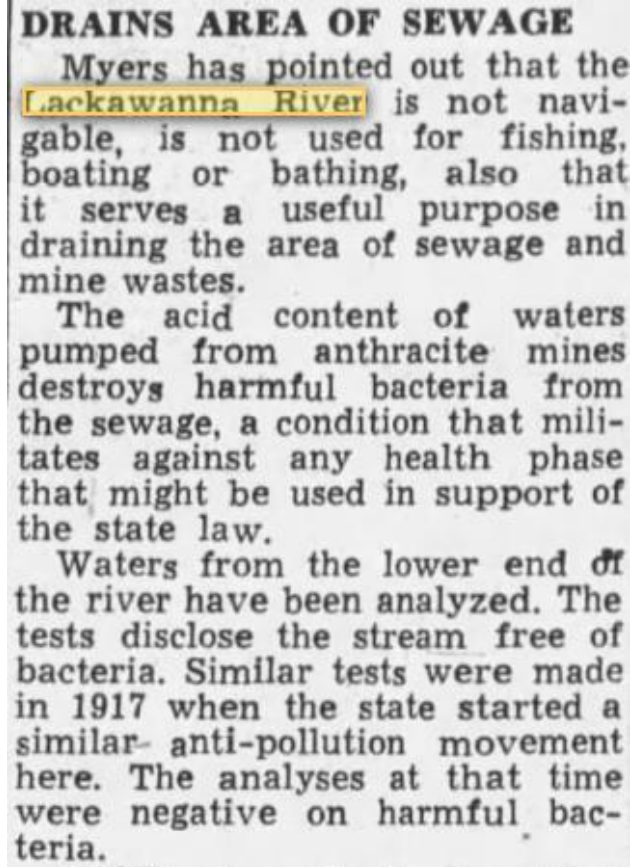
My earliest recollection of the Lackawanna River dates to 1945-6. At the time, we lived in Throop at 174 Boulevard Avenue, and the river was no more than 200 feet away. I remember that the color of the water was black, and the smell was terrible. Untreated sewage, mine wastewater and other industrial waste was discharged into the river throughout the valley without any regard to the impact on the environment. In addition, there were many places where trash was dumped on the banks of the river. This was the case in lower Throop.

At the time this did not seem to bother us kids in the least and we played along the river pretty much every day. When you got any river water on your clothes there was no doubt where it came from. The color and smell were unmistakable.



I also remember that the river would often flood the towns up and down the valley leaving behind piles of silt and trash. Curious about this, I searched [newspaper.com](http://newspaper.com) for information about flooding and found numerous articles. 1942, 44 and 48 were years when significant flooding occurred and while reviewing these articles, I found several that spoke to the pollution of the river. To my surprise the prevailing opinion was that there was no bacterial pollution of the river because the highly toxic mine waste (Sulphur) killed it. The article cited was taken from the Scrantonian of 25 January 1944 and is one among several articles and editorial opinions taking the same position. It appears that even local government viewed the highly toxic mine waste as a good thing. I found another article that cited another benefit, the tax burden to treat sewage would be significant therefore the highly toxic waste was a good thing.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to visit the area and go down to the river area where I played at as a child. What a surprise, the river is almost unrecognizable. The banks are tree lined and the water looks very clean. If I was not very familiar with the area, I would have trouble identifying it. A special Kudos to everyone involved in the process of cleaning up the river and lobbying to adopt all of the flood control measures. It does demonstrate that community involvement does pay off. There are many areas in towns along the river where you might think you are in a mountain retreat. The Lackawanna deserves to be named 2020 Pennsylvania River of the Year.



The Scrantonian, August 30, 1932. Image courtesy of Joe Rudzinski



The caption accompanying the above photo from the August 30, 1932 edition of the Scrantonian reads, "This is how the Lackawanna River looked back in the 1880s. It abounded with fish and was used on occasion for baptisms."

Joe Rudzinski was born and raised in Throop where he attended St. Anthony's Elementary School and Throop High School, graduating in 1957. He then joined the U.S. Navy where he served in the Naval Security Group in Hawaii and Taipei. He subsequently returned to Throop to marry his high school sweetheart, Barbara Kashmer. In 1962, the couple moved to Arlington, VA and for the next 12 years, Joe's work with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) took him on several assignments overseas. Resettling in Sterling, VA in 1973, he continued working at CIA headquarters. After retiring from the CIA in 1989, Joe worked with General Electric, Lockheed and Quest Communications as a Senior Systems Engineer before retiring in 2000. Joe is an avid genealogist and has researched their families for more than 30 years.

## ***Anthracite Heritage Foundation***

### ***A Message from Mike Korb***

The Anthracite Heritage Foundation Facebook page that I administer at <https://www.facebook.com/Anthracite-Heritage-Foundation-108465204037223/> (the number on it at the end is because there was a site set up previously that is still active) has been up for about six weeks, and has 121 LIKES, 127 followers. There were 4,626 visits to it this past week.

We have been running a series of articles on mine rescues in the anthracite region, looking at any that occurred on any day, and the past week or so, there have been articles on the Porter Tunnel Disaster March 1, 1977 and the rescue and recovery effort that occurred for the next 28 days. We will run the first story on a Carnegie Medal awardee, Edward Eugene Carey, who died in an unsuccessful Rescue attempt on **March 12, 1946**. Carey was awarded the Carnegie Medal posthumously <http://mychfc.org/Awardee.aspx?hero=40639>

This is an attempt to build up support for whatever we decide to do for the Anthracite Heroes - Carnegie Heroes and other successful rescues and rescuer deaths - stories that started in February, and will wrap up during Anthracite Mining Heritage Month 2021, where we might unveil whatever we decide to do on the Wall of Honor.

Any suggestions/criticisms, etc. will be appreciated. If anyone else wants to be involved in administering the Facebook Page, let me know.

Mike Korb  
570-233-2191

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***In The Mines***  
***The Daily Diaries of Thomas J. Goblick***  
***Anthracite Coal Mine Motorman***

***By Carl Orechovsky***

Thomas J. Goblick worked in the mines as a motorman. A motorman operates an electric or battery-powered mine motorcar to haul trips (trains) of cars, loaded with timbers, rails, explosives and other supplies, into a mine.

Mr. Goblick lived in the Austin Heights section of Old Forge. A friend was removing items from Mr. Goblick's house and came upon his work diaries that cover six years, extending from 1938 to 1944. The owner of the house didn't want the diaries.

As one who documents Old Forge history, I accepted the diaries that are smaller sized, spiral bound notebooks. After enlarging the notebooks through scanning, they were re-typed. The correct spellings of names included in the entries can now be confirmed by descendants of the miners who live in Austin Heights.

The enlargements were assembled into standard sized notebooks. The originals and standard sized notebooks were subsequently donated to the Old Forge Historical Society. Most entries pertain to Old Forge and I have permission to share the contents.

In this issue, we continue with Mr. Goblick's August and September 1938 entries.

**August 1938**

**The Volpe Coal Co, Sibley Colliery, Old Forge, 1938: Barrier Section.**

August 1. Swiss started in Sibley. Joe Pahusky.

August 2. No entry, worked. (While Thomas made no entry, he worked a 7-hour shift)

August 3. Repairing inside of my house.

August 4. 3 day shift cars buried in No 8 place. (The face of coal in a chamber a miner was assigned to)

August 5. No entry, worked 7-hour shift.

August 6. Colliery Idle, Redman's Excursion.

August 7. Sunday.

August 8. Motor broke down.

August 9 - 12. No entry, worked 7-hour shift.

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August 13. Colliery Idle, Pay Day.  
August 14. Sunday.  
August 15. Polish holiday, Colliery Idle.  
August 16. Francis Cichy Brakeman in Barrier section.  
August 17. Cool day.  
August 18 - 20. No entry, worked 7-hour shifts.  
August 21. Sunday.  
August 24 - 27. No entry, worked 7-hour shifts.  
August 28. Sunday.  
August 29 - 31. No entry, worked 7-hour shifts.

## **September 1938**

### **The Volpe Coal Co, Sibley Colliery, Old Forge, 1938: Barrier Section.**

September 1. Colliery Idle. Tooth ache. Clam bake.  
September 2 - 3. No entry, worked 7-hour shift.  
September 4. Sunday. Clam bake, Gambles farm.  
September 5. Labor Day, Colliery idle.  
September 6 - 10. No entry, worked 7-hour shifts.  
September 11. Sunday.  
September 12 - 13. No entry, worked 7-hour shifts.  
September 14. Engine broke down.  
September 15 - 17. No entry, worked 7-hour shifts.  
September 18. Sunday.  
September 19 - 20. Rain, worked 7-hour shifts.  
September 21. Rain, Cave on old Mooney Road.  
September 22. Cool. Worked 7-hour shift.  
September 23 - 24. Wheel broke, colliery idle.  
September 25. Sunday.  
September 26. Jewish New Year. Worked a 7 ½-hour shift.

September 27. No entry, worked a 7 ½-hour shift.

September 28. Cave in No. 5.

September 29. No entry, worked 8-hour shift.

September 30. Pay Day, worked 7-hour shift.



**Sibley No. 3 Colliery Air Fan House  
Bunnell Photos, Steamtown National Historic Site Archives Group 1  
Photo courtesy of Carl Orechovsky**

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. 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.

## ***The Coal Trade Journal***

The Coal Trade Journal was a periodical based in New York City that reported on the coal industry and remains a valuable research tool. Begun in 1869, it ceased publication with Volume 68 on September 9, 1937. In the below article, *Who Is The Coal Baron?* which was published in 1906, the author (name unknown) offers a comparison between the Feudal system and miners' unions and leaderships. For the record, the definition of a coal baron in U.S. English is: *A wealthy and influential mine owner or business magnate in the coal industry.* The term, coal baron, originated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

### ***Who Is The Coal Baron?***

Many people have been flippantly referred to, in print, as barons. Let us ponder the case for a few moments.

A recent writer stated: "The miners' unions are completely under the domination of their executive board, which has a way of 'standing pat' on a proposition just as long as it suits them to do so, and then making a sudden shift. Francis L. Robbins told the joint conference at Indianapolis just what he thought, and it was the truth, without any bluff attachment, when he said that the miners presented an argument and coupled it with an impossible condition, which is that every section must sign the agreement before any agreement can be effective in any section."

#### **FEUDAL SYSTEM.**

Vassal to, and allegiance bound for war  
If called on by superiors. The next in order:

Lord of the Manor. He, in turn, was to follow  
the banner of the:

Knight or Esquire. These are under the:  
Baronets, who took orders only from the:

Baron, supreme or over-Lord, whose will  
was law and whose orders were final.

No Baron of old ever ruled over so vast a number of people, none ever, in his descent upon a neighbor's Property was so bold, none had such powers for ill, as the present Over-Lord of the coal trade.

#### **ORGANIZATION.**

The Rank and File: The members of the  
little local, obeying the order to strike, if  
called upon to do so, by the next:

Presidents of the Locals, who, in turn,  
receive their orders from and are subject  
to the:

District Presidents, subservient to the:  
Executive Committee of the National  
Organization, under control of, and  
acting with the:

President of the National Organization,  
who has the deciding power to make or  
mar.

## ***How Long Have The Trains Been Gone?***



### **Erie Lackawanna Railway**

It has been 50 years since the last scheduled passenger train arrived and departed Scranton's Erie Lackawanna Station that has new life as the Radisson Hotel at Lackawanna Station.

On January 4, 1970, both sections (No. 5 and No. 6) of the Erie Lackawanna Railway *Lake Cities* traveled from Hoboken to Chicago and Chicago to Hoboken via Scranton for the final time, marking the end of commercial rail passenger service to the Electric City.

Erie Lackawanna was not the only carrier that sought to end intercity passenger service across its system. Citing declining revenues, a powerful truck lobby in Washington, DC, as well as increased competition due to federally-funded construction of airports and the Interstate system, railroads nationwide found it difficult to compete. Unlike airports and Interstates, the backbone of American transportation was not federally-funded and had to, in effect, fend for itself.

Facing mounting red ink on income statements, railroad companies looked for ways to stem the tide. Many opted to defer infrastructure and rolling stock maintenance as a way to save money. Others such as Erie Lackawanna faced enormous debt payments on the horizon, payments that would not allow for the future purchase of new engines to replace aging equipment.

In reality, railroads were not necessarily opposed to ending passenger service. It was another way to save money. Many changed schedules that had trains arriving and departing in the middle of the night or at the crack of dawn. Delays were common. Some went so far as to not provide basic services such as clean bathrooms. Actions such as these made "riding the rails" unattractive to even the most ardent supporters.

Scranton and Wilkes-Barre were home to a number of railroads that provided intercity rail transportation. Scranton was served by the Erie Railroad, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (the two became Erie Lackawanna in 1960), the



Delaware & Hudson Railway, Central Railroad of New Jersey and the New York, Ontario & Western Railway.

Wilkes-Barre was served by the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Central Railroad of New Jersey, the Lehigh Valley Railroad, the Delaware & Hudson Railway and early on, the Wilkes-Barre & Eastern Railroad that connected the Diamond City with Stroudsburg over a single-track, mountainous route.

Well-known trains such as Erie Lackawanna's *Phoebe Snow* and Lehigh Valley's *Black Diamond* were just two of the many trains that traversed Northeast Pennsylvania.



**Phoebe Snow**



**Black Diamond**

**American-Rails.com**

During its decades of development, Northeast Pennsylvania had a network of rails that served not just intercity passengers, but commuters as well. A combination of electric interurban and electric trolley systems offered people a means of travel by rail from Carbondale in the north to Hazleton in the south, Stroudsburg in the southeast and Montrose in the northwest.

In addition to electric trolley systems, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre were served by the interurban Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley Railroad, better known by its nickname, Laurel Line. Service was electric, fast and made stops at Pittston and other points in between. There was also a branch to from Scranton to Dunmore. The Laurel Line planned to eventually reach Carbondale, but that never happened.

The Scranton, Montrose & Binghamton Railroad (better known as Northern Electric) was an interurban that connected downtown Scranton, the Abington suburbs and Montrose with the ultimate goal of reaching Binghamton, NY, a goal that for a number of reasons was never met.

The Wilkes-Barre & Hazleton Railway interurban line connected those cities and towns in between. The WB&H was roughly 30 miles long and operated from 1903 to 1933. It had a tunnel that went through the Penobscot Mountains between Warrior Run and Nuangola and was also known for its uniqueness as a system with no grade crossings

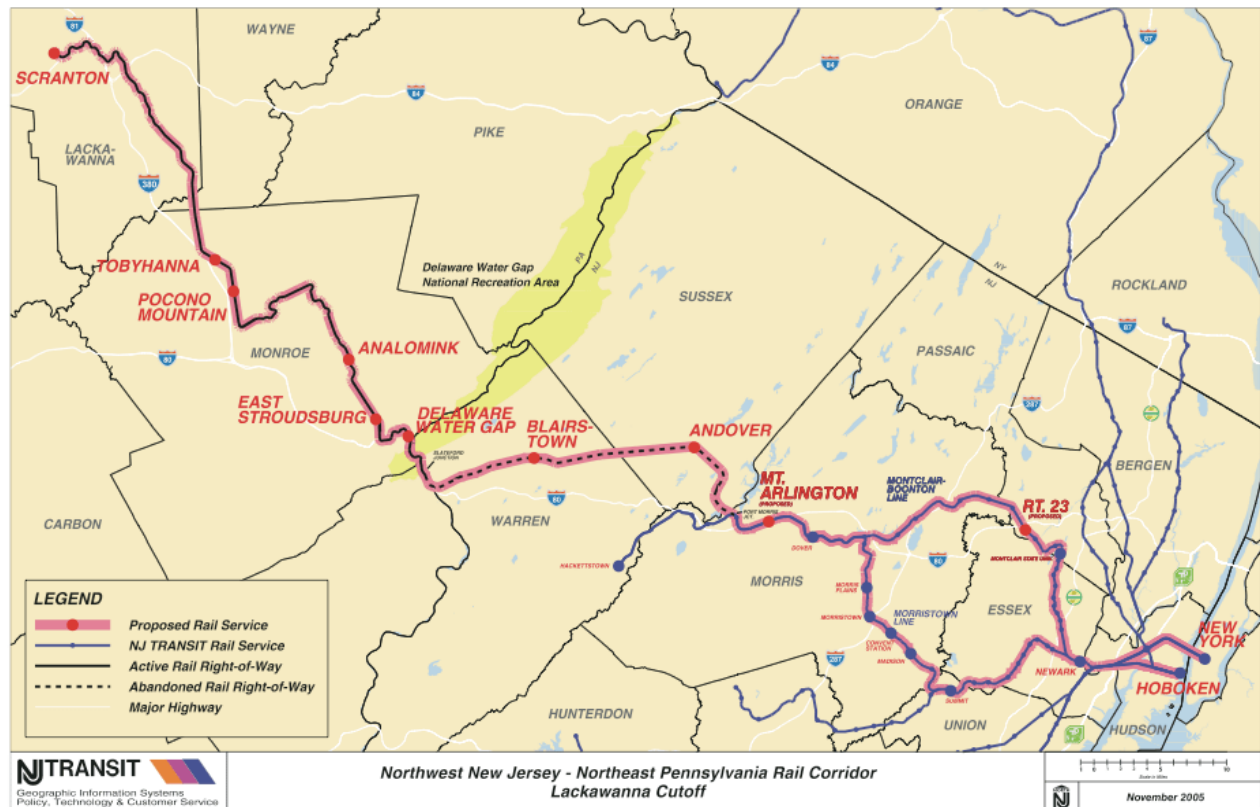
These and other interurban systems and electric trolley lines will be discussed in subsequent issues of History Bytes.

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In the ensuing half century since Northeast Pennsylvania had passenger rail service, there has been much discussion about service restoration. In 2019, talk of service between Wilkes-Barre and Philadelphia was announced, but currently, there are no firm plans in place.

Plans continue to be in the works for service from Scranton to New York City that would be provided by New Jersey Transit, but for a variety of reasons progress is slow. The most recent update from early March 2020 puts the estimated cost at about \$290 million, lower than the 2006 estimated cost of \$550 million, but that does not include all cost components of the 28-mile Lackawanna Cutoff Project, including replacement of 21 miles of missing track between the Delaware River and Andover, NJ.



Will Northeast Pennsylvania see the return of commercial passenger rail service? Only time will tell. Stay tuned for updates.

## ***After The Train Was Gone The Name Carried On***



**Phoebe Ann Laub**

Born in New York City, Phoebe Ann Laub (July 17, 1950 – April 26, 2011) lived in a musical household where Delta blues, Broadway show tunes, classical and folk music, and Dixieland jazz were the norm.

Raised and educated in Teaneck, NJ, as a college non-graduate, Ms. Laub carried her acoustic guitar from club to club in Greenwich Village performing at amateur nights. She became best known for among others, her hit songs, *Poetry Man* and *Harpo's Blues*.

When she attained fame, the singer-song writer performed around the world, but not under her given name. Ms. Laub took her stage name, *Phoebe Snow*, from the fictional character used in print ads by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad that pictured an elegant woman dressed in white. A woman wearing white in the ads emphasized the cleanliness of the railroad's passenger trains that burned smokeless anthracite rather than bituminous coal that produced greater quantities of soot.

As a child, remembering *Phoebe Snow* in letters five to six feet tall on the sides of boxcars in train yards near her New Jersey home, she said, "When I grow up, I'm going to be using that name!" She did indeed.

Please visit the link below for *Poetry Man* performed by Phoebe Snow in 1989.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OxTVxGhHFM>

## ***Remembering Pancoast April 7, 1911***

The Pancoast Mine, 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).

Located in Throop, operations began in 1881. The majority of the Pancoast miners were immigrants, mostly from Hungary and Poland. The operation was served mainly by the New York, Ontario & Western Railway and the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, and to a lesser degree by the Delaware & Hudson Railway.

The fire began around 8:30 am on April 7 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.



**Pancoast Breaker  
John Stellwagen Collection  
Photo courtesy of Frank P. Adams**

According to newspaper reports, one can only imagine the cries of 5,000 family members and friends crowded along the security ropes as the men's bodies were brought to the surface. Church bells rang for days as all 74, including two non-mine workers, were laid to rest.

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 2020.



**Pancoast Breaker Foundation, May 2007**  
**Photo courtesy of Frank P. Adams**

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 either the green or blue "P" for Pancoast or Price-Pancoast.

## ***History Bytes: Three Years and Counting***

The first issue of History Bytes was published in March 2018. Introduction of the new e-newsletter, began with the following:

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 other information. History Bytes not only offers a look at our past, but also a look at Lackawanna and Northeast Pennsylvania in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Who are we now? How do we embrace those who came before us and those who are newly arrived?

You are the reason History Bytes has been well-received. It's you who research and write articles, you who offer suggestions for stories, you who write expanded stand-alone pieces for special editions, you who offer photographs, you who write books about our region that we review, you who collaborate together, and you who read each issue and offer your comments.

You are the historians. Because of you, History Bytes continues to excel and our region continues to be well-documented.

***Thank You!***

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## ***Subscribe to History Bytes***

A subscription to History Bytes is free. If you would like to receive future issues of our bi-monthly e-newsletter in your inbox, please contact the Lackawanna Historical Society at [lackawannahistory@gmail.com](mailto:lackawannahistory@gmail.com) and place History Bytes in the subject matter.

## ***Share Your NEPA Stories with History Bytes***

If you have any Northeast Pennsylvania-related stories to include in History Bytes, please contact the Society at the above email address. Please include your name, email address and a brief description of your story.

## ***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](#)
- [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

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## **County and Educational Partners**

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

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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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