



# SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

**W**elcome to the inaugural issue of our newsletter. We want it to keep you informed about the Society's activities as well as to share with you items of interest from Sharpsville's history.

Feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who might like it. We, of course, encourage anyone with an interest in local history to consider joining the Historical Society. Or, if you come across this newsletter and would want future issues sent to you directly, let us know. We are currently distributing in electronic format only, at no charge. A quarterly publication schedule is planned.

### Upcoming Events

Cleveland Trio concert at Pierce Opera House  
May 20<sup>th</sup>

Gambling Spree Bus Trip to Casino Niagara  
June 6<sup>th</sup>

Annual Ice Cream Social at Mahaney Park  
June 24<sup>th</sup>

Bus trip to Peter, Paul & Mary Concert at Chautauqua  
July 27<sup>th</sup>

The opera La Traviata at Pierce Opera House  
September 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>

These are important fundraisers for the Historical Society as well as enjoyable events. Please support them.

### Test your knowledge of our town

Sharon, Pa. claims its share of "World's Largest" establishments—candy store, shoe store, women's fashion store. Sharpsville was once home to a "World's Largest" as well. Do you know what it was?

(Answer on last page.)

### A Look Back

#### The Bottomless Pit

is how a Sacramento, Calif. newspaper of June 1882 headlined its report of the problems on the New York, Pennsylvania, & Ohio (NYP&O) railroad outside of Sharpsville.

Then, as now, items of curious interest would be picked up by newspapers across the country. The trouble started around January 1882 when the NYP&O tracks began sinking into the "Tamarack Swamp" about four miles north of Sharpsville (a little below the present Chestnut Run Swim Beach, now flooded by the Reservoir). This swamp had caused a great deal of trouble to the workmen who first built the line in 1875, necessitating 90 foot pilings to be used. Now the piling had collapsed, sinking the track. Load after load of slag was dumped into the bog in an attempt to build a causeway through it, yet each day's effort was found the next morning to have been swallowed by the swamp.

By May, local newspapers were excited over the prospect that an expert from the oil fields of Venango County had been contracted to sink 32 pounds of nitroglycerine into the bog and to detonate it by running a current along a platinum wire, in the hopes of blasting away the boggy matter and leaving firm ground. After weeks of anticipation, and the forecast of an immense crowd of spectators, the expected Vesuvius—to the bitter disappointment of the editors—turned out to have been a hoax.

As summer came, the stubborn efforts of the NYP&O were the subject of ridicule in newspapers from Kansas to Minnesota to California where it was pointed out that only a short detour would be required to bypass the swamp. The chief engineer of the railroad was forced to respond in print; he claimed the effort was less expensive than driving new pilings or re-routing the track.

In the end, following nine months of work, the causeway was at last completed, but only after an immense amount of cinders, from the furnaces of Sharpsville and Hubbard, were used—over 5,500 railcar loads, about 73,000 yards in all.

## Volunteer Opportunities

In cooperation with the Mercer County Historical Society, we plan to underwrite completion of a project to microfilm and digitize the editions of our town's newspaper, *The Sharpsville Advertiser* (1870-1918), held by both historical societies.

Volunteers are needed to photograph the newspapers using the apparatus at Mercer. No special skills are required.

If you are interested in helping to make accessible this important historical resource, please contact us.

## Building Update

Generous donations as well as the revenue from fundraising events have allowed us to begin restoration of the Historical Society's headquarters at 131 N. Mercer Avenue, built in 1884 as the First Universalist Church of Sharpsville.

Last year saw both installation of laminated glass storm windows to protect the original stained glass windows plus to provide energy savings, as well as replacement of the badly deteriorated original roof with synthetic slate shingles in the original Victorian black and red color scheme.

For 2012, we plan to follow up on these two major projects with the following interior renovations:

1. Re-routing of heating ductwork—*completed*
2. Refinishing and repairs to front doors
3. Electrical upgrades
4. Plaster repairs and repainting of interior walls
5. Refinishing of wood flooring

We are close to having the funding to complete all these projects and would appreciate any support to put us 'over the top'.

Future plans involve repair and repainting of exterior wood trim and restoration of the stained glass windows.

## Genealogical Notes

An interest in local history is often connected with an interest in one's own family history. Indeed, the majority of inquiries we receive are from family history researchers. While the Historical Society's collections are of limited use for genealogy research, the following items can be helpful:

**1900 Federal Census for Sharpsville:** fully transcribed and available on our website

**City Directories:** 1919, 1930, 1942, 1947, 1948, 1951, 1956

**Sharpsville Class Yearbooks:** 1940, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 59, 67, 68, 70

**Sharpsville Class photos:** many years and grades, most are uncaptioned, however.

## From Our Archives

### A list of past and present Clubs & Organizations in Sharpsville

	Formed
Adonirum Lodge No. 739 Independent Order of Odd Fellows	1870
Sharpsville Lodge No. 517 Free & Accepted Masons	1872
Sharpsville Lodge No. 71 Ancient Order of United Workmen	1874
Sharpsville Council No. 27 Royal Templars of Temperance	1879
Sharpsville Post No. 234 Grand Army of the Republic	1881
Sharpsville Numismatic Society	1883
Sharpsville Circle No. 3 Protected Home Circle	1886
Tempo Lodge No. 163 Knights of Pythias	1887
Sharpsville Cornet Band	before 1888
Sharpsville Union No. 359 Equitable Aid Union	before 1888
Sharpsville Dramatic Company	before 1896
Current Topics Club	1901
Sharpsville Rebekah Lodge No. 110	1902
Endeavor Rebekah Lodge No. 367 of Sharpsville	1909
High School Alumni Association	1912
Societa Italiana di M.S. Generale Gustave Fara (Italian Home)	1913
Sharpsville Sunshine Society	1917
Sharpsville Order of the Eastern Star	1917
American Legion Post No. 162	1919
Sharpsville Beagle Club	1919
Khlit Sanctorum, No. 179	1920
Sharpsville American Legion Post No. 162 Women's Auxiliary	1921
Progressive Sisterhood Dames of Malta, No. 223	1922
Pythian Sisters	1923
Varsity "S" Club	1923
Sharpsville Motor Club	1924
South Pymatuning Homemakers Club	1927
The Burroughs Garden Club of Sharpsville, Pa.	1930
Sharpsville Council of Republican Women	early 1930s
Sharpsville Service Club	1932
Sharpsville Athletic Club	1933
The Pioneers of Sharpsville	1934
The Sharpsville Independent Club	1935
Parkway Social Club of Sharpsville	1935
Italian American Republican Club of Sharpsville, Pa.	1935
First Ward Social Club of Sharpsville	1936
Sharpsville Women's Club	1937
Sharpsville Rifle Club	before 1938
Northside Social Club of Sharpsville, Pa.	1942
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 6404	1946
Blue Star Mothers of America, Chapter No. 4	before 1950
Sharpsville Businessmen's Association	1950
Degree of Honor Lodge No. 75	1951
Ladies' Auxiliary of Sharpsville Post 6404, V.F.W.	1953
Sharpsville Golden Age Club	1953
The Kiwanis Club of Sharpsville	1956
The Couples Club of Sharpsville and South Pymatuning	1957
Sharpsville Lions Club	before 1959
The Gay Square Dance Club	before 1959
Sharpsville Booster Club	1973
Sharpsville Association of Businesses	1991
The Sharpsville Area Historical Society	1995
Area Community Theatre of Sharpsville	2010

Please let us know of any additions or corrections

Shenango St. looking west from  
First National Bank Building  
about 1888



From this ca. 1888 photo, you can see a glimpse of the Pierce Mansion to the extreme right. In the center is the steeple of the First Baptist Church (now Pentecostal Holiness). To the extreme left on the hill is the steeple of St. Bartholomew's first building. Behind the commercial building in the foreground is the Pierce House, originally the home of Jonas Pierce, then for many years a hotel, and later the Parkway Apartments. Behind it is the steeple of the First Presbyterian when it was located on Main St. The first and third buildings, on Shenango Street, both built 1885, were standing until the Urban Renewal of 1971-2.

## Collections Update

The following have been recently added to our collections

**Dolores Rossi** donated school newspapers and yearbooks from the 40s, class photos, newspaper clippings, Depression-era and WWII memorabilia.

**Bill Schell** donated class photos from the 20s & 30s, school & lodge memorabilia, and a WWI keepsake

**Ange Garofali** donated two 1888 *Sharpstown Advertisers* and a 110 year-old sign from the old Erie R.R. station.

**Borough of Sharpstown** allowed us to make digital copies of the photographs in the council chambers

**James Lawton** donated a collection of over 100 photographs and newspaper clippings dealing with various aspects of Sharpstown history

The 1924 **Sharpstown Golden Jubilee Supplements** to the *Sharon Herald* and *Sharon Telegraph*—originally donated to us by **Don Coryea** in 2010—have been digitized with the *Sharon Telegraph* supplement available on our website.

We are appreciative of all contributions to preserving and understanding the history of Sharpstown and the surrounding communities. Remember we are happy to scan your old photos if you wish to keep the original.

## Items for Sale

**Scenes of Old Sharpstown**—a DVD slideshow featuring 100 photos of Sharpstown in years past—\$10

**Coverlet**—with images of 12 historic buildings of Sharpstown—\$50

**Commemorative Plate**—glass plate with laser etched images of historic buildings—\$18

**Map**—reproduction of 1901 Bird's Eye View of Sharpstown—\$15

Please see our website for photos and ordering information.

## With Gratitude

The following donations were received the last six months from  
**William Jackson & family in memory of Charles Jackson**  
**Erie Insurance Exchange**  
**Ralph & Carol Mehler**

We also wish to recognize the advertising sponsors in our events programs

**Donaldson-Mohney Funeral Home**  
**Sharpstown Floral & Gift Shop**  
**Mehler Insurance**  
**Bob Disko**

Finally, we would like to thank  
**Zac Coryea and Boy Scout Troop #45**  
for rebuilding the stone retaining wall at our headquarters

## Feedback

What would you like to see in future issues of this newsletter?

What sort of events would you like to see  
the Historical Society sponsor?

## Contact Us

website: [www.sharpsvillehistorical.org](http://www.sharpsvillehistorical.org)  
email: [sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com](mailto:sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com)  
or see our website for officers' phone numbers

Headquarters: 131 N. Mercer Ave., Sharpstown, Pa.  
Mailing address: 955 Forest Lane, Sharpstown, Pa. 16150  
Meetings are held the First Monday of the Month  
at 7:00pm at our headquarters

Answer to quiz question: The Valley Mould & Iron plant was at the time the largest ingot mould foundry in the world.