



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

North Cambridge, Massachusetts is a blue-collar neighborhood outside of Boston. With a population of 11,908, it is only a little over two-and-a-half times the size of Sharpsville. Yet, since 2006, its citizens have published every quarter a 48-page periodical entitled *Growing Up in North Cambridge*. Its content consists of stories and reminiscences of the townsfolk, particularly tales from their youth.

Over 300 people have contributed articles—ranging from a couple paragraphs to a few pages—to this undertaking. Most stories are drawn from personal experience; others relate family lore from earlier generations.

Certainly, this is an ambitious undertaking and would be impressive for a town many-times the size of North Cambridge. But even if we don't match the scope of their effort, we here in Sharpsville should be able to preserve for posterity the tales of growing up here—whether in Depression or War, whether during the Eisenhower years or the 60s, or even in the decades since.

Maybe you feel you don't have much to say, but perhaps you have a neighbor or a favorite uncle who is just chock-full of stories. And even if you don't feel comfortable putting a pen to paper, a tape- or video-recording would be just as fine, if not better.

So, drop us a line—either by emailing us at sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com, or by calling a board member. We are anxious to hear your version of "Growing Up in Sharpsville."

Items for Sale

still available

Scenes of Old Sharpsville

a DVD slideshow featuring 100 photos of Sharpsville in years past—\$10

Test your knowledge of our town

Which Sharpsville resident was a Democratic nominee for Congress?

answer on back page

Upcoming Events

Bus trip to Seneca Niagara Casino
Wednesday July 10th

Bus trip to *The Beach Boys*
50th Anniversary Concert at Chautauqua
Friday August 9th

The opera *Rigoletto* at Pierce Opera House
August 15th and 17th

Bus trip to Rivers Casino, Pittsburgh
Wednesday August 21st

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

September 15th at Sharpsville VFW
Bring your antiques and collectibles for appraisal

Singer - songwriter - storyteller - comedian
ireland's "happy man"

cabal dunne

Saturday October 5th at Pierce Opera House

Items for Sale

2014 COMMEMORATIVE WALL CALENDAR

featuring twelve rarely-seen photos of old-time Sharpsville along with other nuggets of historical information.

Available at: Sharpsville Boro Building, A.J. Kovach Tax Office, Sharpsville Floral, Mela's Tax Service, Muscarella's, Lori Rollinson's Salon, Pizza Joes, Touch of Class Salon, Mehler Insurance

Cost \$10

More About

Rigoletto

With the Historical Society sponsoring the upcoming performance of the opera *Rigoletto* an introduction to the work and production is in order.

It was *Rigoletto* that first reflected the full power of the genius of Giuseppe Verdi, arguably the greatest of all opera composers. Premiering at Venice in 1851, *Rigoletto* has remained a perennial favorite and includes some of the best-loved arias in all of opera.

The plot revolves around the Duke of Mantua, an incorrigible rake, who is abetted in his conquests by his hunchbacked jester, Rigoletto. The malicious barbs of the jester have earned him the resentment of the noblemen who have been cuckolded by the Duke. Even as Count Monterone, whose daughter had been ravished by the Duke, arrives at the Court seeking redress, he is cruelly mocked by Rigoletto. As the Count is taken away by jailers for his impertinence, he utters a curse on the Duke and his jester.

We then find that Rigoletto's sheltered daughter Gilda has her head turned by a handsome stranger she had seen at church. The stranger is none other than the Duke, who in turn develops an eager interest in the beautiful Gilda. Meanwhile, with reports that Rigoletto has a mistress, the courtiers seek to abduct her and deliver her to the Duke, as part of their reprisal against the hunchback. They steal her away, only to discover she is actually Gilda. Despite the jester's pleas, the courtiers allow the Duke to carry out his conquest. A distraught father swears vengeance against his former patron.

Rigoletto thus employs an assassin, Sparafucile, who uses his voluptuous sister Maddalena to lure his victim to a place where he may be dispatched by her brother's dagger. Maddalena, however, falls for the Duke's charms and begs Sparafucile to select another victim. Overhearing this, and resolving to sacrifice herself to save the Duke whom she still loves, Gilda—disguised as a male—walks into the trap, where she is stabbed. Rigoletto, coming upon the body, at first thinks it is the Duke, but after finding it is his beloved daughter, realizes the Count's curse has been fulfilled.

The show, produced by Valley Lyric Opera, will feature a combination of local and New York talent, with all singing at a high level of virtuosity. Conductor will be Thomas Bo and stage director will be Jason Budd. The production will be enhanced by an orchestral accompaniment.

If your Italian is a bit rusty, English supertitles will be projected above the stage, making it easy to follow along with the singing and the plot.

The Pierce Opera House itself is worth the visit. This historic venue features beautifully restored woodwork, excellent acoustics, and a warm intimacy between the audience and the stage. Modern climate control and conveniences have been introduced to this 142 year old local treasure.

Tickets are available at Muscarella's, Sharpsville Floral, Mehler Insurance, Sharpsville Boro Building or by calling 724-962-5757 or by visiting our website.

Traces of Lost Sharpsville

The corner grocery store

For good or for ill, changing economic conditions and above-all the rise of the automobile have made American communities less self-sufficient. A glimpse at some of the Sharpsville business establishments in years past—here with a focus on food retailers—shows how different small-town life was then.

A 1919 City Directory lists an astonishing number of grocers—seventeen! This was before the era of the supermarket, when shopping was done within walking distance at a corner store. Ed Beil was at 1041 Ridge*, and Smith & Co. on West Shenango; Lewis Lakotosh's store stood on Furnace St.* Along Main Street were James Holland & Co. at 29 E. Main and Oren Law at 41 E. Main, then on West Main Arthur L. Warren at 46, Ludwig J. Zuschlag at 213,* Albert Roberts at 515, George Rosati at 614, Maurice Stigliano at 630, Charles Perfilio at 711,* and Arthur Radford at 967.* Gabor Nagy was on Park Way. North Mercer Avenue had Mrs. Hanna Hoban at 116,* John Mehl at 120,* Andy Fry a 224, and Carmello Palazzo at 352 N. Mercer.

Meat markets were a separate category of which we had five: Samuel Faber at 622 W. Main and John Lewis at 10 N. Walnut; Gajec Rada was at 218 and Jim Rose at 221 N. Mercer. Nagy's meat market was in a storefront next to his grocery on Park Way. Fruit dealers were Lawrence Canale, located at 115 W. Shenango, and Victor Palazzo at Main & Seventh. (Muscarella's on Walnut St. dealt strictly wholesale.) Bakers included George Achenbach at 603 Main* and Fred Engle at 11 N. Walnut.

And again, it is surprising to see what was then a town of 4,600 supporting seven confectioners. Esther Dunham was on North Mercer, Richard Patterson at 21 N. Walnut, and William A. Perrine at 66 Shenango. Main Street had S.L. Sandy at 52 W. Main, Mike Kulliper at Main & Fourth,* Martin Welsh at 404 W. Main (also selling cigars), and Charles Locke (also selling groceries) at 605.*

You might note that not a single chain store is included in the list, with each store simply known by its proprietor. The shopping process was also very different then, with the customer relying on an employee to retrieve goods from behind the counter. It was only after the publication of this 1919 directory that three major trends in food retailing developed in the United States.

While the 1916 opening of the Piggly Wiggly in Memphis inaugurated self-service grocery shopping, a number of years would pass before it would overtake counter service. The old method restricted the number of customers that could be served—especially, when the face-to-face interaction encouraged a chat between customer and merchant. Secondly, chain stores began to dominate American retail in the 1920s. Their

(cont'd. next page)

A Look Back

A Safe and Sane 4th

The danger presented by fireworks is readily apparent. However, the degree of mayhem they caused a century ago is nonetheless astonishing. According to statistics the *Journal of the American Medical Association* compiled from hospital admissions, the years 1903-1908 saw a total of 1,316 fireworks-related deaths, 2,197 cases of blindness or maiming, and 27,980 total injuries. Tetanus cases from the celebrations exceeded all cases from the rest of the year.

Sharpsville's role in promoting what was termed 'a Safe and Sane Fourth' centered around the figure of Thomas D. West. Arriving in Sharpsville from Cleveland in 1890, West became the pre-eminent authority on foundry practice, applying scientific principles to what had been a haphazard art of casting iron. His firm, the Thomas D. West Foundry, became the Valley Mold & Iron, whose ingot mold foundry at Sharpsville was at one time the largest in the world.

West was in the vanguard of Progressive Era causes: workplace and fire safety, the creation of a workers compensation insurance system, and labor efficiency. He founded at Sharpsville the American Anti-Accident Association in 1908, which, albeit briefly, was a national organization dedicated to various safety issues, among which was the regulation of fireworks. The A.A.A.A., as it was called, pioneered the Safety First movement, with many of its ideas outlined in books West wrote such as *The Competent Life* (1905), *Accidents: Their Causes and Remedies* (1908) and *The Efficient Man* (1914).

At the A.A.A.A.'s first national convention in New York City in 1909, among the speakers was Julia Rice, a wealthy New York socialite, in whom West found an ally on the firecracker issue. Two years earlier, Rice had founded the Society for the Prevention of Unnecessary Noise. Although it sounds like nothing more than a club for killjoys, she did count among its members archbishops and bankers, university presidents and sea captains, hospital administrators and even Mark Twain. Rice won the passage of legislation limiting the blasts of tugboat horns and was instrumental in establishing the now-familiar quiet zones around hospitals. She represented the confluence of interests that was forming at this time on the issue. Medical societies, newspaper editors, and women's clubs were all saying enough is enough to the Independence Day mayhem.

At the same time, the City of Cleveland responded to fireworks disasters in 1903 and 1907 with a first-in-the-nation ban on fireworks in 1908.

Thomas West regretfully took leave of his friends in Sharpsville in April 1909 and returned to Cleveland. Here he found the fireworks ban in trouble. Public outcry over the prospect of a somber Independence Day threatened repeal of the city ordinance. West saw that unless a substitute celebration were held, deadly fireworks would once again be the focus of the holiday. Despite a lack of interest from the City Council and only a few weeks before the Fourth, West organized a committee of private citizens and societies to arrange a city-wide celebration with parades, pageants, music, and a public fireworks display. The effort was a great success and was emulated by cities across the country. (The introduction of public fireworks displays also blunted the opposition of the fireworks industry who found they yielded greater profits than selling a string of firecrackers at a nickel apiece.)

The effectiveness of the 'Safe & Sane Fourth' movement is demonstrated by a continuation of the AMA *Journal's* statistics. The years 1911-1916 saw injuries and maimings only a quarter of the 1903-1908 level, and deaths at less than a fifth. Cities with stringent ordinances and enforcement saw deaths and injuries virtually disappear. Much of the credit belongs to Thomas D. West and his unflinching devotion to safety.



This turn of the century postcard depicts an old-fashioned 4th of July celebration. The Society for the Prevention of Unnecessary Noise did not approve.

Traces of Lost Sharpsville (Continued)

purchasing power offered economies of scale, even when the local outlets remained smaller, counter service stores. (The A&P and Kroger that were here in the 20s, 30s and 40s are examples.) Finally, the 30s and 40s saw the beginning of the Supermarket which consolidated meat, produce, and baked goods along with dry grocery items under a single roof.

While these 20th century developments radically changed grocery distribution and resulted in the demise of the corner store, reminders of the old merchants remain. The asterisked buildings in the preceding list of stores—while all repurposed, usually as dwellings or apartments—still stand.



Then, as now, summer recreation often meant being around water. Above are swimmers at Sandy Beach along the Shenango River. Below a crowd of men and boys are fishing at Lake Julia in Buhl Park. Both photos are from around the 1920s.



With Gratitude

We thank the following page sponsors of our calendar:

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Borough of Sharpsville Winslow Engineering

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Donaldson-Mohney Funeral Home Moore's Auto
Jerry's Tavern Waltz Consultants Rita Sloan
Hornak's Sales & Service Bob Piccirilli
Lock, Stock & Barrel Augie's Barber Shop
Donald McCamant Family Denstry D'Onofrio's

Engaging the Community

The local community was once again brought together by our annual Ice Cream Social, with this year marking our first Outstanding Citizen Awards. Honored were:

Virgil Rossi and Angelo Picirilli

Thanks to all who helped make the event a success, especially:

Bruster's Ice Cream D'Onofrio's
South Py Dairy Queen Sharpsville Police Department
Sharpsville Borough Street Department
Hannah Piston Marie Lineberger Susan Woge
Susan Piccirilli Jim Kerr Zachary McMullen
Lydia Chlpka Brittany Best Justin Ray

Contact Us

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 Mailing address: 955 Forest Lane, Sharpsville, Pa. 16150
 Meetings are held the First Monday of the Month
 at 7:00pm at our headquarters

Answer to quiz question: Pete Joyce, Sharpsville mayor for several terms, who ran in 1962, losing to James Weaver