



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Where do you fit in?

Local history, or more broadly *public history*, as practiced by the more than 10,000 local museums, archives and historical societies in this country serves a variety of audiences. Among the interests that prompt people to contact us, we see:

- **Nostalgia**—probably the most popular motivation is a chance to recall those nearly-forgotten people and landmarks from one's youth.
- **Genealogy**—those researching their family tree will often find it intertwined with local history, allowing discovery of a fuller picture of the lives of one's ancestors.
- **History**—meant here as a more general interest both in the way people lived in the past and how broader national trends were reflected in local events.
- **Architectural Preservation**—for some, the appeal of old buildings, their bygone styles and craftsmanship, and their restoration is most important.
- **Civic Pride**—even those who don't have a strong interest in the past, out of love for their hometown, want to know what makes it unique.

Again, where do you fit in? There is, of course, no "right" answer, and for many people, their interests will overlap one or more categories. Here at the Sharpsville Historical Society, we are trying to serve all of above aspects, both in what we collect and how we present them to the public. In future issues of this newsletter we will examine more closely each of these aspects, while noting the most pertinent of the Society's holdings (including gaps in the Society's collections) as well as ways we can tell the story of our town more fully and to more people.

In the meantime, we are eager to know of ways we can involve *your* interests in what the Historical Society does.

Test your knowledge of our town

Sharpsville once had three railroad stations. What lines did they serve and where were they?

Upcoming Events

Gambling Spree bus trip to Presque Isle
Casino, Erie

Wednesday April 2nd

Call for 724-813-9199 for reservations



Please also plan to attend the quality productions of
Area Community Theatre of Sharpsville (ACTS),
showcasing local talent

The smash Broadway hit

Les Misérables

March 14,15,16,21,22,23,28,29,30

Fri. & Sat. shows at 7:30pm; Sun. at 2:00pm

Pierce Opera House

Items for Sale

ONLY A FEW LEFT
2014 COMMEMORATIVE
WALL CALENDAR

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

Cost \$10



also still available

Scenes of Old Sharpsville

a DVD slideshow featuring 100 photos of
Sharpsville in years past

Cost \$10

A Look Back

When the French aviators landed in South Pymatuning

On October 10, 1927, French pilots Dieudonné Costes and Joseph LeBrix sped down a Paris runway in a Breguet 19GR open cockpit biplane to begin a round-the-world tour. Their aircraft was named the *Nungesser-Coli* in honor of two of their countrymen who perished earlier that year in an attempt at the first Paris-to-New York flight. (The enduring mystery of their disappearance—two weeks before Lindbergh's famed solo flight eastward—continues to fascinate many.)

Costes' and LeBrix' route took them to Senegal, and then Brazil in the first nonstop aerial crossing of the South Atlantic. Every country in South America was visited before they headed north to the United States. Journeying from New York to Detroit in March 1928, blizzard conditions forced the pilots to land at John Maciejewski's farm on Seneca Road in South Pymatuning (at the present site of Dean Dairy).

The pair were soon treated to a stifling measure of small-town hospitality. Cecile Grafe of 111 Main Street, a French war bride who had married her husband Clarence in Costes' hometown, was summoned to the field where the plane landed. She served as interpreter to a crew of volunteers in a first attempt to get the engine running again. Sharpsville Postmaster Franklin Clary later escorted the fliers to his home, where he was able to place a long-distance call on their behalf to the French Consul in New York. The pair were then taken to the Post Office and able to behold such local wonders as the automatic letter cancelling machine (450 mailing pieces per minute!); for some reason (probably just because it was next door) a visit to Bloch Bros. Clothing Store was also included.

Trouble getting the motor from freezing up, and a wait for an engineer in the employ of the aircraft's engine maker to arrive from New York, resulted in a second night's stay, with rooms provided by the Standard Hotel in Sharon. "Several feminine guests at the hotel were honored with the fliers' autographs." Curiosity seekers followed the pilots throughout town, with photographs taken whenever possible.



An honorary luncheon was held and the Sharon American Legion presented the pair with emblems and a proclamation. Westinghouse engineers hosted a dinner for the Frenchmen at the Del-Sur Club on Prindle Street, Sharon.

Leonce Brunet and his daughter Lucy arrived at the field as emissaries from Farrell. A native of the south of France like Costes, Brunet heard from the pilots details of the flight and their thoughts on differences between life in France and America.

A Greenville delegation was headed by Luther Kuder, who had picked up the language while serving in France (in the Balloon Corps no less!) He invited them to be a guest of the Greenville Legion and stay in that town for the night. By now, the aviators had learned to say they needed their rest and politely declined.



Volunteers helping to restart the engine the day after the emergency landing

From the Collections

Autograph Albums

The Society's archives include two Autograph Albums, belonging to Cora Daniels Jennings (1870-1927), a donation from her grandson Bud Hazlett. An intriguing glimpse into a girl's daily life during the Victorian Era, a good illustration of the custom is contained in Laura Ingalls Wilder's book, *Little Town on The Prairie*:

In Laura's package was a beautiful small book, too. It was thin, and wider than it was tall. On its red cover, embossed in gold, were the words, Autograph Album. The pages, of different soft colors, were blank. Carrie had another exactly like it, except that the cover of hers was blue and gold.

"I found that autograph albums are all the fashion nowadays," said Ma. "All the most fashionable girls in Vinton have them."

"What are they, exactly?" Laura asked.

"You ask a friend to write a verse on one of the blank pages and sign her name to it," Ma explained. "If she has an autograph album, you do the same for her, and you keep the albums to remember each other by."

Though similar to the later custom of inscribing school year-books, the entries in these Autograph Albums, dating from 1882 to 1889, reflect the formality and literacy of a by-gone era—even when stock rhymes are employed.

Many of the pages were decorated with glue-on stickers such as those reproduced in the margin below, though perhaps more striking are the many wonderful examples of penmanship.

While some pages merely contain autographs (often arranged in a sort of crazy-quilt), most include a sentiment in verse.



Among the entries in these books held by the Society, we find the poetic:

To Cora: In the casket of memory, Drop a pearl for me — Orrie Downing Jan 6, 1884

Dear Cora, To twine around thy bower, To Flourish around thy cot. Please twine for me that little flower They call for-get-me not. from friend, Anna Hoover Dec. 27, 1882

The pious:

Miss Cora, May we ever endeavor to live as our Maker hath directed. Take His word for our guide, and at the end of life's journey, we will win the crown. Truly, Franc Weakley, Grove City, Pa. 9-23-1886

The uplifting:

Miss Cora— "Oh, think of the pleasures we all shall receive, Employing for good every hour; Give heed to instruction and make her your friend, Remember that knowledge is power" Your friend, Emma Deeter 3-3-1883 [She was the teacher for whom Deeter School was later named.]

Keep pushing! tis wiser than sitting aside, And sighing and watching and waiting the tide. In life's earnest battle they only prevail, Who daily march onward and never say fail. Chas. Roberts April 12, '89

And schoolgirl verse:

Dear Cora, Remember me when far away and only half awake, Remember me on your wedding day and send a slice of cake. Your Friend, Lula H. Jan 30th 1886

But perhaps the sweetest entries came when a dozen or so years later, Cora's daughters, Hilda and Freda came across their mother's albums and found a blank page here or there and wrote things like this:

Dear Mamma, Good God! to think upon a child, That has no childish days, No careless play, no frolics wild, No words of prayer & praise. Freda A. Jennings, Sharpsville, Pa. Aug. 10, 1903 [age 11]





Despite the bitter cold of this year's winter, the Shenango River has not frozen over. Back around 1910, when this photograph was taken, the river regularly froze allowing ice skating, as seen here. While winters were colder then, the freezing was more of a function of the still water created by the old Slackwater Dam at the entrance to the Canal Lock. The Pennsylvania Railroad line (where the walking trail is now) can be seen on the bluffs in the background.

French aviators, cont'd.

The day after the landing, "thousands" of spectators had gathered at John Maciejewski's field. On the morning when the plane finally took off, another 1,000 had come, though this time the farmer decided to charge a 25¢ admission.

The excitement was slow to subside, with follow-up articles appearing in *The Sharon Herald* for nearly a week. Local dignitaries, as is their wont, felt compelled to spring into action. Sharpsville businessmen met to consider the urgent need for an emergency landing strip, while Farrell's Borough Council proposed building an airfield in that town.

In resuming their trip, Costes and LeBrix flew across the country, where their plane was loaded on a ship in San Francisco and taken to Japan. (The first nonstop trans-Pacific flight would not take place until four years later.) From there they resumed their circumnavigation returning to Paris on April 14, 1928 where they were greeted by the French President and a crowd of 100,000.

Costes subsequently set two distance records, and in 1930, he, along with co-pilot Maurice Bellonte, would become the first to successfully make the westward North Atlantic crossing.

The plane that landed in South Pymatuning, the *Nungesser-Coli*, currently sits in the Air & Space Museum at Le Bourget airport, outside Paris.

With Gratitude

A significant donation that will allow us to continue with interior restoration of our historic headquarters was made by:

Ralph & Carol Mehler

Answer to quiz: The Erie R.R. station was along the present tracks across Mercer Ave. from the Feed Mill. The Pennsylvania (Erie & Pittsburgh) station was behind the Country Fair, and the Sharpsville R.R. station was across from the Penna. station behind the Post Office.

Contact Us

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Meetings are held the First Monday of the Month
at 7:00pm at our headquarters