



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Over the past three years, Rod Alexander has taken on the mission to save the historic Kelly Road Bridge from demolition. Built in 1897, this bridge is a significant example of an early and complete pin-connected, Parker through-truss bridge. Of this type, only three 19th examples survive in Pennsylvania. While not a project of the Historical Society, we support Rod's efforts.

He is now reporting good progress as he makes his way through the tangled thicket of red tape from PennDOT and other agencies.

In conjunction with building a new bridge across the river, PennDOT—after months of steadfast opposition—is now agreeing in principle to preserve a 34 foot section of the span and place it on a foundation in the adjacent park area. The cast-iron dedicatory plaques at both ends of the bridge would be saved.

While nothing is yet set in stone and much work remains, thanks to Rod's perseverance, the chances are good for at least a partial preservation of this historic

Upcoming Events

**Gambling Spree bus trip to Lady Luck Casino
at Nemaquin Woodlands Resort**
May 14th *with a second trip* June 18th

**Three-day/Two night Gambling Spree bus trip
to Soaring Eagle Casino, Mt. Pleasant, Mich.**
August 6th-7th- 8th

Call for 724-813-9199 for info and reservations



Annual Ice Cream Social at Mahaney Park
Sunday June 22nd

Collections update

The following have been recently added to our collections:

Leilani Pennington donated two photographs of the Anchor Hilltop drug store on State Street in Sharon

Gregg Smith donated a laminated reproduction of the 1901 Birds' Eye View map of Sharpsville

Petie Zipay donated photographs of the demolition of the Shenango, Inc. plant in 2002

Mark Gill and Richard Gross donated two Prohibition-era Whiskey bottles described on page two of this newsletter

Tim Schell donated items from the estate of his recently departed brother, Bill: two diplomas and a large 1887 illustrated Bible with tintype family portraits

Al Clary allowed us to scan a wonderful scrapbook kept by his grandfather Franklin Clary who was postmaster at Sharpsville during the 1920s and early 30s

Marsha Moyer donated uniforms and a banner from the marching band of the old 13th Street School.

Kevin Walko donated a 1941 Sharpsville Yearbook, a 19th century photo of a house on 7th Street, two class photos from the 1930s, and a 1971 Army Corps of Engineers flyer and map of the Shenango Reservoir

The Society also acquired an 1881 stock certificate of the Sharon Railway (which had tracks in Sharpsville) and a 1913 postcard with a view of the stations of the Pennsylvania Railroad and Sharpsville (B&O) Railroad.

Test your knowledge of our town

What were the Kiondashawa, Fearless, and Oneida?

A Look Back

"This dog of dogs"

In showing us the scrapbook kept by his grandfather, Franklin, Al Clary told us a story about his grandfather's dog that epitomizes the charm of small-town life.

Back in the 1920s, Sharpsville Postmaster Franklin Clary's dog, "Black Tiger," was a great favorite of the townsfolk, especially the children. The dog was usually at the post office and so was known to almost everyone, so much so that he was somewhat of the 'town pet'.

During this time, the Post Office was in a space behind the bank in Pierce's Block (the building where the Opera House is now and, until recently, the PNC Bank), with Clary living in an apartment above. Reichard's Drug Store stood catty-corner (i.e., across Mercer Avenue from the present drug store). Sharpsville's famous coffee stir originated at Reichard's.

Almost every afternoon Franklin Clary would cross the intersection for a coffee stir. (He wasn't the only Sharpsvilleite to make this a daily habit.) Black Tiger would come along for his own treat of an ice cream cone. Now, from time to time, when postal duties would prevent Clary making it to the soda fountain, the dog of course thought it unfair that he should be denied his treat. So, at the usual hour, he'd wait until someone would open the Post Office door, and dash over to Reichard's. There the soda jerk would give the pooch his ice cream. He was said to be the only dog to run a tab.

Within Clary's scrapbook is pasted this sad notice:

Disturbed

KIDDIES MOURN FOR "BLACK TIGER"

"Black Tiger," famous mail carrying dog, owned by Postmaster Clary, was killed yesterday afternoon when struck by a street car on Main street.

Besides the Clary family many children mourn the loss of this dog of dogs. "Tiger" was a familiar figure in front of the post office when the children, of whom he was a great pet, were going and coming from school. "Black Tiger" was perhaps the most intelligent dog in town and carried many special delivery letters and other pieces of mail.

Postmaster Clary was on the street car going to Sharon and "Tiger" saw him and followed the car. The dog ran from behind the one car in front of another car on the switch at Main and First streets.

How Black Tiger knew where to deliver the letters remains a mystery.

From the Collections

"For Medicinal Purposes Only"

Another recent gift to the Society was found in Mark Gill's garage on Mercer Avenue by Richard Gross, whose firm was doing remodeling there.

Hidden in the rafters were several empty bottles of whiskey. While perhaps not so unusual (this is Sharpsville, after all), what was remarkable is these liquor bottles date from the Prohibition Era and were labelled "For Medicinal Purposes Only".

Today, the phrase "For Medicinal Purposes Only" is meant only as a wisecrack, but at one point doctors prescribed alcohol and such medical uses were one of the exemptions under the Volstead Act that implemented Prohibition. One of the bottles in our collection is still labeled with the prescription from Dr. Benjamin Frye and was filled by McFarland's Pharmacy on Main Street. We do not know the patient's illness, though it must have been chronic since several bottles were found. We can, moreover, surmise that the condition was also quite grave, since the bottles were hidden in the rafters so as not to alarm the wife.



While pressure from patients and the enticement of profit may have prompted some doctors to write suspect prescriptions, whiskey was viewed at the time as having a legitimate therapeutic use. A remedy for toothache and cough is understandable. Less obvious applications of liquor's antiseptic qualities were in the treatment of anemia, typhoid, tuberculosis, pneumonia and high blood pressure. Parallels with today's debate over medical marijuana are brought to mind.

Sharpville Inventors

Helen Blair Barlett

Helen was born in Sharpville December 14, 1901, a daughter of Oliver and Grace (Miller) Blair. She was the sister of former Sharpville Mayor Eugene Blair.

Valedictorian of her Sharpville High School Class, she taught in country schools for three years to raise enough money for one year's tuition at college.

Helen graduated from Ohio Wesleyan in 1927, first in her class, with a B.S. in geology. (This was no new interest. As a little girl, she didn't collect dolls; she collected rocks and charged the neighborhood children a penny to see her collection.) Helen went on to Ohio State where she received a Ph.D. in mineralogy in 1931. After graduation she worked for the AC Spark Plug Division of General Motors

There she did important work on high alumina ceramics, and advanced the development of spark plug insulators. Throughout her career, she received seven patents and published a half-dozen academic papers.

During World War II, Helen took temporary leave from AC Spark Plug to work on the Manhattan Project at MIT, where she developed a porcelain membrane used for the construction of the atomic bomb. While much of the Manhattan Project remains classified even to this day, it seems this work with porcelains was one of the methods used to create a semi-porous barrier used in the gaseous diffusion method of separating fissionable Uranium 235 from the more common isotope Uranium 238.

After the war, she returned to GM where she held various research positions, becoming the supervisor of ceramic research in 1956. She retired in 1966 and moved with her husband to Southern Pines, North Carolina, where she died three years later. References to 'Women in Science' frequently mention Helen. A member of a number of learned societies, she was often the only female attending American Ceramic Society technical sessions. Helen was also the first woman to obtain a top technical position at General Motors.



The K-25 plant at Oak Ridge, Tennessee where the Helen's research was utilized in separating the U-235 isotope in the production of the atomic bomb. When built in 1943, it was the largest building in the world.

Her husband, Theo A. Barlett, was also a native of Sharpville. He was born November 14, 1901, a son of George and Jennie (Healey) Barlett. A graduate of Ohio State in Electrical Engineering, he, too, went to work at the AC Spark Plug Division. He is credited with a patent for a voltmeter.

Theo's contribution to the war effort included work on an automatic sight for B-24 bombers and a gunsight for fighter aircraft, as well as serving as project engineer for the radar system of the "Skysweeper" anti-aircraft gun. He died in 1968.



In the spring, a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of . . . baseball, to paraphrase Tennyson, and we see here a game played in the 1920s before a large grandstand. You might notice in the background the clubhouse of the Sharon Country Club, which places the diamond where the Country Club's No. 1 Hole is now. Indeed, during this time the Country Club had just a 9 hole course, with the part across Thornton from the clubhouse a section of Buhl Park labelled Athletic Field and Public Playground. The ballfield area was later incorporated into the "Dum-Dum" public golf course. In 1938, the Buhl Trustees donated this section of Frank Buhl's bequest to the private club so it could expand to 18 holes.

Volunteer Opportunities

For members and non-members alike, if you are interested in lending a hand, we could use help in the following areas:

Maintenance & improvements to our historic headquarters

- Groundskeeping
- Interior building maintenance and cleaning
- Restoration Projects

Fundraising Events

- Hospitality at events we sponsor
- Planning and ideas for future fundraisers

Archives & Displays

- Planning and arranging displays
- Newspaper scanning project
- Help in tracking down photos and artifacts to add to our collection
- Contribution of articles to this newsletter

With Gratitude

Our concession stand at Area Community Theatre of Sharpsville's recent performance of Les Miserables at the Pierce Opera House was a significant fundraiser for the Society. We are grateful to ACTS for their cooperation and support and to all the volunteers who worked the concession stand.

We also received a monetary donation as well as a gift of emergency exit lighting from:

Mike Wilson

Contact Us

website: www.sharpsvillehistorical.org
 email: sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com
 or see our website for officers' phone numbers

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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: they were the names of steamers that took passengers up the Shenango from Sharpsville to Trout Island