



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

John Tyler was born in 1790 and served as President from 1841 to 1845. Amazingly, he has two grandsons who are still living! Besides ranking as an outstanding bit of trivia, this is a striking reminder of how connected we are to the past: Not just the past of Pac-Man and leg warmers, or shag rug and leisure suits, or bouffants and The Twist—but the past of a century or more ago. An 86-year old lady from North Carolina still receives a pension from the Department of Veteran Affairs for her father's Civil War service. Still standing in Sharpsville are structures built by B.B. Vincent; he would have known his grandfather, born the same year as Martha Washington. These ever-present connections are famously evoked in William Faulkner's oft-quoted phrase, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

For conflicts that date from centuries-long grievances or the consequences of injustices like Jim Crow laws, the past remains a looming shadow. Yet, even on a personal level, the past is a constant, though often unperceived, companion. If you were lucky enough to know your grandparents (or even great-grandparents), part of their experience shapes your life—and their experience, in turn, includes the memories transmitted by their grandparents. In most cases, this means that living memory encompasses well over a century. As Emerson observed, "every man is a quotation from all his ancestors."

So, the half-forgotten stories from Sharpsville's past that we tell in this newsletter aren't just of academic interest. We hope you find in them a connection to life in here today. Such a connection may be seen in the story of how nearby fields of block coal and the inventiveness of furnacemen built Sharpsville, yet how their very success made us a one-industry town that left us vulnerable to economic change. Or, it may be the simple reminder that the all-too-human folly or pathos residents here experienced 100 years ago is still with us today.

Upcoming Events

GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIPS

Rocky Gap Two-Night Trip, Sept 29th-Oct 1st
Seneca Allegany Casino October 19th

Call 724-813-9199 for info and reservations



Please also support the quality productions, showcasing local talent, of Area Community Theatre of Sharpsville



Pierce Opera House September 16th - 25th
call 724-815-4388 or go to actsharpsville.org



A new group is being formed, dedicated to performing a high level of classical music

The Pierce Theatre Players *Chamber Orchestra*

Join them for their inaugural concert featuring works of Mozart, Beethoven, and the classical canon

Pierce Opera House October 8th
call 724-815-4388 or go to actsharpsville.org

Volunteer Opportunities

Workers are needed to run the Historical Society's concession stand at *Nunsense*.

We are also looking for volunteers to conduct Oral History interviews. No special skills needed other than being comfortable talking with people.

Contact us at: sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com

Traces of Lost Sharpsville

A Faithful Friend

During a recent tour of Oakwood Cemetery sponsored by the Sharon Historical Society, the sad tale of little Chloe Quinby and her dog was told.

In 1904, Fred Quinby was one of three confectioners in town. Actually, he sold both candy and tobacco which—why not?—was considered a natural combination at the time. Fred was born in 1875 and came from one of Sharon's founding families (who frequently spelled the name Quimby). His shop was located at 5 W. Shenango Street, next to the original Odd Fellows Temple (which stood catty-corner from the Pierce Opera House). Fred, without doubt, entered the trade at the urging of his stepfather, James P. Clark, who had owned a billiard hall and tobacco shop in Sharon before moving to Sharpsville that year to take over management of the Pierce House Hotel (which was later remodeled into the Parkway Apartments). Clark, likewise, came from an old family; the town of Clarksville was named for his grandfather.

In February 1904, while visiting her grandmother, Rebecca Clark, who was wintering in Florida at the time, Chloe, the three-year old daughter of Fred and Elizabeth Quinby, died. Amidst their grief and with the confusion of accompanying little Chloe's body on the long rail journey back from Florida, her parents left behind the family dog who had been Chloe's boon companion.

In an example of canine instinct and devotion, nothing short of astonishing, this very dog appeared at the door of the Quinby's candy store, almost a year after his daughter's death. It was overcome with exhaustion and the pads worn off its bleeding feet. Despite the care the Quinbys gave the dog, the 1,000 mile journey was too much—as was perhaps the heartbreak at finding he would not be reunited with his little playmate—and the dog died soon afterwards.

Nearly a year later, Chloe's grandmother, Rebecca Clark, had a New York foundry cast an iron statue of the dog and placed it across from Chloe's grave in Oakwood Cemetery. A 1967 article noted that over the years, corrosion and a fallen tree had broken parts of the statue. Vandals caused further damage the following year, and as the monument's condition continued to deteriorate it was finally removed in the 1980s. Yet, for the decades the statue was standing, it was scrambled over by the children of the cemetery's neighborhood—the faithful dog beloved in memorial as he was in life.



Chloe's grave today, with the monument to her canine friend from a 1967 newspaper article.



An iron statue of a dog has overlooked the grave of a little girl at Sharon's Oakwood Cemetery for six decades. Ordered by the girl's grandmother, the dog figure was cast in New York City.

A Look Back

Safety First!

Even today, factory and construction work remains dangerous. In 2014, there were 2.3 deaths annually per 100,000 in manufacturing jobs (though the rate was 5.1 in primary metal manufacturing) and 9.8 deaths per 100,000 workers among the construction trades. Yet this hardly compares to the dangers of manual labor over a century ago. In 1895, American trainmen were killed on the job at a rate of 645 per 100,000 workers (double the rate in Britain) and in 1907 in the iron and steel industry, the fatality rate was 140 per 100,000. In 1906-07, Allegheny County alone averaged 44 on-the-job deaths *a month*.

As the power and speed of machinery increased, so too did the dangers. While differences in employee turnover and technology offer a partial explanation for the large disparity in the accident rates between American factories, mines, and railyards and those of industrialized Europe, the main factor was our Employer's Liability law. Legal doctrines of assumption of risk and contributory negligence made it exceedingly difficult for the widow of a worker killed on the job to recover a settlement from the employer. Even when the suit was successful, the damages paid were pitifully low.

Statutes regulating safe working conditions were slow to be enacted over the 19th century, often had ineffective enforcement, and were mainly a side-effect of a larger concern with *public* safety—such as regulation of steam boilers and passenger trains. Labor in that era almost never called a strike over working conditions, and the attitude of the poor was resignation that accidents or other misfortune was their lot. To be sure, some employers were concerned with the safety of their workers out of humanitarian considerations. But without an economic incentive, workplace safety was far down the list of concerns. Popular wisdom held that “a mule was worth more than a man.” As one miner described the attitude, in the days before the workers compensation law, of his superintendant hurrying down after an accident with the mine tram to ask whether any mules or men were killed, “We used to have to buy another mule; it cost us \$250, [the man] didn't cost nothing, we just hired another man.”

Sharpsville was likewise home to dirty, dangerous jobs in its furnaces, foundries and railyards and was consequently the scene of tragic deaths and maimings. While it neither includes the disabling accidents which often left men permanently unemployable, nor is it by any means complete, the dolorous litany that follows shows how common the sudden, untimely workplace death was. Let it also be a memorial to those perhaps forgotten names who lost their lives in honest labor.

August 9, 1869, C. Maloy, railroad laborer, killed by train backing over him at Sharpsville.

April 12, 1872, Jonathan Dunham crushed by dumping car at the Sharpsville Furnace.

April 23, 1873, John Dale and Harry Stitt, suffocated by gas at the Spearman Furnace; not found until the next morning.

June 17, 1882, Timothy M'Carthy, killed in a hand-car accident on the Atlantic & Great Western Railroad near Sharpsville.

October 20, 1882, Benjamin Franklin, brakeman on the Sharpsville Railroad, was killed in the Sharpsville yard by falling from a locomotive and run over.

December 24, 1886, Lewis Hofius died in a fall from a trestle at the Sharpsville Furnace.

June 24, 1895, William Jones, foreman of the Gemmill Boiler Works, was killed instantly when he fell from the hoist at the Spearman Furnace.

June 22, 1896, Joseph Clark buried under two tons of pig iron at the Spearman Furnace, likely fatal.

December 27 1901, in an incident widely reported across the country, Martin Clary, Howard Dickson and James Bartlett were burned to death following an explosion at the Old Sharpsville Furnace.

January 13, 1902, Lorenzo Cartamone killed by a collapsing pile while shoveling ore at the Shenango Furnace.

December 29, 1902, George Sibbo was overcome by fumes from the stoves at the Alice Furnace and found roasted to death.

July 29, 1904, in a collision between a passenger train and an empty engine, the engineman was killed and the fireman fatally injured. Three other trainmen injured.

March 5, 1906, Lewis Markoris, neck broken and skull fractured at West Foundry.

June 2, 1906, Roscoe Williams fractured spine at West Foundry and died.



The Urban Renewal projects of 1972 saw large swaths of the commercial districts along Shenango Street and Walnut Street torn down. Here, we see the demolition of the Parkway Apartments.

Prior to being part of the apartment block, the end section shown was the Pierce House, a hotel and saloon. Before that it was the residence of Jonas Pierce from 1864 to 1868.

Items for Sale

Natural Stone Drink Coasters
featuring lithographed scenes of old
Sharpsville ~ 17 different choices
\$8 each, any 4 for \$30

available at Mehler Insurance or through our
website at www.sharpsvillehistorical.org



still available

Scenes of Old Sharpsville

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

With Gratitude

In July, the local community was once again brought together by our annual Ice Cream Social, with a continuation of our Outstanding Citizen Awards. Honored were:

Judy & Pete Grandy
Rod Alexander

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

Bruster's Ice Cream **Dean Dairy**
South Py Dairy Queen **Joy Cone**
Sharpsville Borough Street Department

and performers

Joey Lynn Tomko's Hoops 'n Stuff
Gary Sass and Hermitage Martial Arts
Karen Elder's Y's Guys & Gals

Collections Update

Howard Jones donated a jumpsuit uniform and helmet from the Cold-War era South Pymatuning Civil Defense Auxiliary police.

Bob & Gail Mahaney donated an important collection of photos, documents, and artifacts relating mainly to the Knapp House hotel and George Mahaney, Sr. (Burgess and father of the Shenango Dam).

Contact Us

website: www.sharpsvillehistorical.org
email: sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com

see our website for officers' phone numbers

Headquarters: 131 N. Mercer Ave., Sharpsville, Pa.

Mailing address: 955 Forest Lane, Sharpsville, Pa. 16150

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

**SEPTEMBER MEETING ONLY: CHANGED TO
SEPT. 12TH DUE TO LABOR DAY**

Safety First!, cont'd.

October 23, 1906, Thomas Shea, iron molder killed by rail cars.

November 4, 1906, Bert Laycock died after being run over by a railcar in the Pennsylvania R.R. yard.

July 1909, Charles Carbon and July Jolitia fatally injured by ore cave-in at Sharpsville Furnace; George Lowzer and Mike Colitia seriously injured.

December 27, 1911, Richard Cutler, crushed by ore while oiling the ore bridge at the Shenango Furnace.

August 28, 1915, Nicholas Ivanhoff struck in head and killed at Valley Mould & Iron when drop-hammer used to break up scrap sent piece flying.

February 19, 1916, Joseph Meier, Jr. run over by overhead crane and fell 30 feet at the Valley Mould & Iron.

April 18, 1917, Samuel Moure, broke neck and died while filling his wheelbarrow at Shenango Furnace Co.

January 14, 1918, Steve Schonkey, killed by being hit on the head with a crane at Valley Mould & Iron.

July 12, 1918, Savo Isakov killed instantly after being hit on head at the Alice Furnace.

September 30, 1918, Pietro Divico crushed between freight car and castings at Valley Mould & Iron.

July 9, 1920, in an explosion at the Valley Mould & Iron, Lory Burick was killed and John Hilman died from his burns eleven days later.

November 16, 1934, Joseph Shillito overcome by smoke when a fire broke out at the water house of the Shenango Furnace.

August 8, 1939, Edmond Drummond died in the hospital from injuries received while working at the Shenango Furnace.

Sept. 29, 1943, Clyde A. Woods of Sharpsville and James Crawl of Greenville crushed in a blower cylinder at Shenango Furnace.

Sept. 30, 1943, Charles W. Anderson of Sharpsville burned to death when molten iron ignited his clothes at Shenango Furnace.

While any passing is sad, these untimely deaths were often followed by scenes of almost unbearable sorrow. As James J. Davis relates in his autobiography *The Iron Puddler: My Life in the Rolling Mills and What Came of It*, dealing mainly with his youth in Sharon in the 1880s:

For three years after we came to Sharon I went to school, and in my spare time worked at my shoe shining and other odd jobs. We had bought feather beds again and our little home was a happy one. By hanging around the depot spotting traveling men who needed a shine, or their grips carried, I got acquainted with the telegraph agent. And so I got the job of telegraph messenger boy.

Few telegrams were sent, and then only when somebody died. So whenever I carried a telegram I knew that I was the bearer of bad news. Accidents happened in the mines and iron mills. And when a man was killed, it often meant his wife and babies would face hunger, for the jobs were not the kind for women and children; muscular men were needed. Aside from the occupation of housewife, there was nothing for a woman to do in those days except to take in washing or sewing.

Of the many death messages that I bore to the workers' homes in Sharon, few found a home that was able to last a day after the burial of the bread-winner. He had failed to make provision for such an accident,—no savings in the bank, no life insurance. As soon as the worker was stricken his children were at the mercy of the world. I saw so much of this, that the pity of it entered deep into my boy-heart and never afterward could I forget it.

I talked with the station agent, the banker and the hotel keeper. The station agent had money in the bank which he was saving to educate his boy to be a telegrapher. He also carried life insurance. "If I should die," he said, "my wife would collect enough insurance to start a boarding-house. My boy would have money enough to learn a trade. Then he could get as good a job as I have." The hotel keeper told me that if he should die his wife could run the hotel just the same, it being free of debt and earning enough money so that she could hire a man to do the work he had been doing. The banker owned bonds and if he died the bonds would go right on earning money for his children.

These men were capitalists and their future was provided for. Most of the mill-workers were only laborers, they had no capital and the minute their labors ended they were done for. The workers were kind-hearted, and when a fellow was

cont'd. on page 6

Safety First!, cont'd.

killed in the mill or died of sickness they went to his widow and with tears in their eyes reached into their pockets and gave her what cash they had. I never knew a man to hang back when a collection for a widow was being taken. Contributions sometimes were as high as five dollars. It made a heartrending scene: the broken body of a once strong man lying under a white sheet; the children playing around and laughing (if they were too young to know what it meant); the mother frantic with the thought that her brood was now homeless; and the big grimy workers wiping their tears with a rough hand and putting silver dollars into a hat.

With this money and the last wages of the dead man, the widow paid for the funeral and sometimes bought a ticket to the home of some relative who would give her her “keep” in return for her labor in the house. Other relatives might each take one of the children “to raise,” who, thus scattered, seldom if ever got together again. When I became an iron worker there were several fellows in our union who didn't know whether they had a relative on earth. One of them, Bill Williams, said to me: “Jim, no wonder you're always happy. You've got so many brothers that there's always two of you together, whether it's playing in the band, on the ball nine or working at the furnace. If I had a brother around I wouldn't get the blues the way I do. I've got some brothers somewhere in this world, but I'll probably never know where they are.”

Then he told how his father had died when he was three years old. There were several children, and they were taken by relatives. He was sent to his grandmother, whose name was Williams. That was not his name. Before he was seven both his grandparents died and he was taken by a farmer who called him Bill. The farmer did not send him to school and he grew up barely able to write his name, Will Williams, which was not his real name. He didn't even know what his real name was.

“Probably my brothers are alive,” he said, “but what chance have I got of ever finding them when I don't know what the family name is. Maybe they've all got new names now like I have. Maybe I've met my own brothers and we never knew it. I'd give everything in the world, if I had it, to look into a man's face and know that he was my brother. It must be a wonderful feeling.”

These things are the tragedies of the poor. And although such a misfortune never happened to me, this problem stared me in the face when I began carrying those fatal telegrams. I tackled the problem with a boyish mind. I soon resolved it into these propositions:

When a laborer dies his little children are scattered to the winds. Brothers and sisters may never see one another again. When a man with property dies, his children are kept together. Their future is made safe by the property.

Labor provides for to-day. Property provides for to-morrow.

That truth was driven into my mind when I saw one family after another scattered by the death of a laborer. A merchant in Sharon died, and his children, after the funeral, kept right on going to school. There was no doubting the truth of my rule: Labor makes the present day safe—but the present day only. Capital safeguards the future.

From that day on, I argued that we should buy a home and save a little every day for capital. It was our duty thus to protect ourselves, should our father die, against being scattered among strangers.

Against such death and misery which lay at the doorstep of Industry throughout the remaining decades of the 19th, and which became even more dire in the first decade of the 20th, the American Anti-Accident Association was formed, here at Sharpsville on January 22, 1908. As a national organization with its headquarters in our little burg, the A.A.A.A., or 4 A's, as it was called, enjoyed an outsized importance in town lore and in earlier histories of Sharpsville. The brainchild of Thomas D. West, whose ingot mold foundry became the Valley Mould & Iron, the association included, besides West as its president, other Sharpsville worthies: vice-president was Samuel Dunham of the town's oldest family; treasurer was Frank Pierce who headed the bank; and secretary was Rev. Clarence D. Harris, the pastor of the First Universalist Church here. Its aims were developed and outlined in West's earnest and prolific writings—*The Competent Life* (1905), *Accidents: Their Causes and Remedies* (1908), and *The Efficient Man* (1914) dealt specifically with improving safety and eliminating waste. His other books were on foundry practice, of which he was acknowledged as the pre-eminent expert.

West's interest in safety and the betterment of the workingman were not new. Shortly after he came to Sharpsville in 1890, one old-timer recalled, he called the men together from the plant: “When we kill a mule in this plant some one gets fired. But when a man is killed it is considered a matter of course. The widow and orphans are those who suffer. From now on we are going to try and protect the men and make things safer to work.” Throughout his writings as well as in the twenty-four fundamental principles of the A.A.A.A., West showed he was squarely within the ethos of the

Safety First!, cont'd.

Progressive Era by advocating a broad range of improvements: not just workplace safety, but public and fire safety, temperance, public sanitation, abolition of dangerous toys, regulation of fireworks, discouragement of smoking, and putting an end to injuries from sports and college hazing.

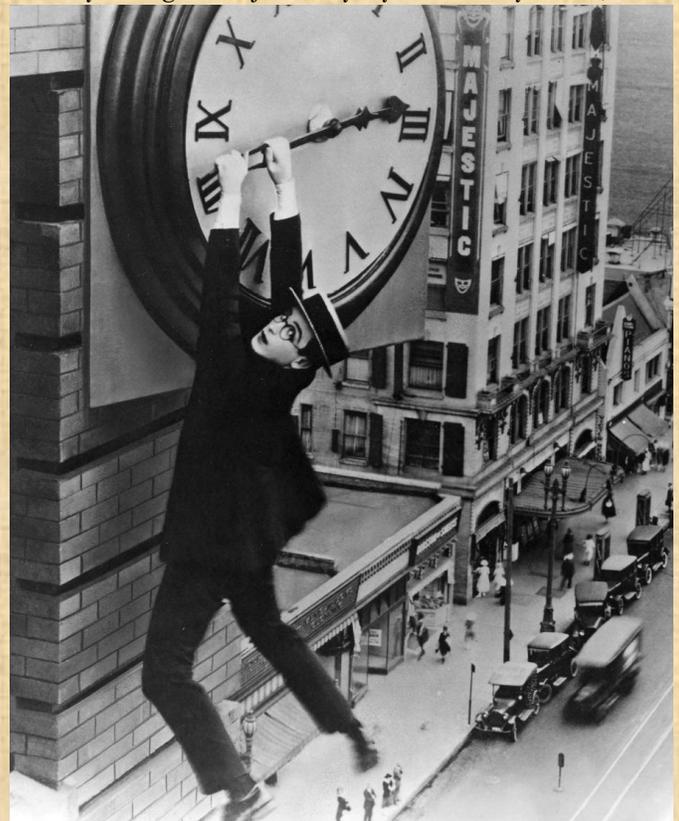
Following the inaugural meeting of the 4 A's, West spoke in several cities on safety and helped set up local chapters. A meeting of the A.A.A.A. in Manhattan on February 11, 1909 attracted attention, but ultimately the organization's actual impact was limited because it was so short-lived. West's abrupt decision to leave Sharpsville for Cleveland in April of 1909 soon brought an end to the 4 A's. This did not, however, end his devotion to the cause of safety. As noted in the July 2013 issue of this newsletter, upon his arrival in Cleveland West at once set to work to see that the city's newly enacted fireworks ban was upheld.

Many trace the origin of the modern workplace safety movement to a May 1906 meeting U.S. Steel's chairman had with company managers followed by the formation of a Committee on Safety in March 1908. Certainly, as the nation's largest corporation at the time, the actions by U.S. Steel had a wide influence. Yet this, like subsequent efforts at other companies that used U.S. Steel's safety work as a model, were safety efforts within a private firm. The A.A.A.A., in contrast, was formed in the public interest. (Moreover its founding pre-dated the institution of U.S. Steel's safety committee.) A similar organization, the American Museum of Safety Devices and Industrial Hygiene, was founded around the same time, but West's claim that his was a pioneer organization in the field, is backed by an August 1908 review of his book *Accidents: Their Causes and Remedies*. "For, that one particular citizen of an unknown little Pennsylvania hamlet has had the courage to stand up alone and try to inaugurate the upbuilding of the public sentiment needed to remedy the present shameful sloth of the American people on the subject of the prodigal but preventable waste and accidents in this country." The National Safety Council—which exists today and is known for its familiar green cross logo and which has had more durable influence—was founded five years after the 4 A's.

An enduring legacy of Sharpsville's A.A.A.A., though, is the safety movement's slogan, "Safety First!" which originated here in 1908. While it does not appear in West's writings of that year, he did post Safety First signs all over his plant. Before then, the phrase's use was usually in the context of a bank safeguarding your deposits. While others have claimed authorship of the motto, its adoption as a motivational watch-word or slogan belongs to our town. As a gauge of how quickly it spread through popular culture, it was already being used jocularly by 1914. By 1917, one commenter claimed, "So far as I have been able to ascertain, there has been no saying, slogan, by-work or catch phrase which has lasted as long as the phrase, 'Safety first.'"

The decades-long shift from the blue-collar jobs to white-collar and service occupations of course underlies much of the 20th century's reduction in workplace injuries. Yet, even among hazardous occupations, the decline in accident rates is startling. While, state and federal regulators, and later union demands, deserve much of the credit, the chief contributor, at least at the outset, was the enactment of Workers Compensation laws. With their price signals reinforced by the adoption of experience rating and of schedule credits for installation of safety equipment, they gave employers a direct economic stake in a safer workplace. This is not to say, however, that the role of safety organizations was negligible. Not only did they, like West, advocate the adoption of workers compensation laws, but they provided the statistical research and technical expertise which heretofore had been largely non-existent.

As for Thomas D. West, he died in 1915 in Cleveland under perhaps the most ironic circumstances imaginable. While alighting from a moving streetcar he ignored the warning of the motorman and carelessly stepped into the path of an automobile. The streetcar bore three signs urging "Safety First, Wait Until the Car Stops."



Evidence of the pervasiveness of the slogan "Safety First!" is shown when it is humorously invoked in the title of the popular Harold Lloyd film of 1923, *Safety Last!*