



# SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

Nostalgia, is an interesting and, at times, a problematic emotion. A Presidential candidate recently posted on Twitter: “Do you remember when you were growing up, do you remember how simple life was, how easily it felt? It was about faith, family, and country. We can have that again, but to do that, we must vote out [the candidate’s putative opponent].” Responses to the tweet, ranged from along the lines of “I grew up in the 60s [or 70s or 80s], and it wasn’t that great” to “yes, a time when women, blacks, and gays were treated as second class citizens.” Other responses were more philosophical but equally dismissive of the candidate’s premise.

The local newspaper *The Way It Was* is widely read throughout the Valley and provides valuable historical information for this Historical Society. Yet, nostalgia is its main selling point. Its editor Eric Bombeck has done important original reporting—such as interviews with mobsters about their casino in Hubbard or the Air Force pilot who accidentally strafed the Sharon Steel complex in 1953. Yet, the articles that elicit the most response are of the variety, “I remember that” or “Too bad, they tore it down.” (This is followed next by cringing at photos of clothing and hair styles popular in our youth.)

Our Society’s main goal is to spur an interest in local history. And nostalgia—reclaiming the time one remembers from one’s youth—is an important driver for participation in our Society’s projects. Yet, we remain committed to providing a true history of Sharpsville, warts and all. Past issues of this newsletter have tried to give a realistic look at our town’s past. For example, the years 1917-1920 saw five murders here. The “good old days” also included startling high levels of childhood mortality, or with workplace death or maiming common. Still, the good outweighs the bad, and where pride in Sharpsville’s past is merited, we want to shine a light on that. It is our shared story that strengthen our community’s ties.

Perhaps, the history of a town should thus be treated much like family stories. Most of us are proud of our families, even it might include an Uncle Harry who gambled and drank or the black-sheep cousin who had his scrapes with the law. Some details might need to be kept from the kids until they are old enough and a generation may need to pass before some pains are forgiven; nonetheless, what is usually passed down to children are stories of joys and overcoming adversity, accomplishment and affection, but with those few family blemishes thrown in.

So, while nostalgia is, on balance, a positive emotion, do not let it lead you into cynicism and despair. (After all, your opinion of whether or not “everything’s gone to hell” oddly seems to coincide with whether a member of your political party occupies the White House.) Instead, consider the wise assessment of nostalgia given in last month’s newsletter in Mary E. Oakes’ reminiscence of growing up in Sharpsville. She offered: “Perhaps we only remember the good things and forget the bad. Perhaps we place importance on that time because it was a period of our lives without responsibilities, when the main function was just growing up.”

### Upcoming Events

#### GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIPS

Jacks Casino Cleveland  
September 20<sup>th</sup>

Call 724-813-9199 for info



#### Sharpsville 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

#### CAR SHOW

September 17<sup>th</sup> Noon to 4:00  
Sharpsville Plaza  
Live DJ, Food and Craft Vendors

#### 5K RUN & WALK

September 28<sup>th</sup> 5:30  
[runsignup.com/Race/PA/Sharpsville/SharpsvilleHomecoming5k](https://runsignup.com/Race/PA/Sharpsville/SharpsvilleHomecoming5k)

### Contact Us

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

*September meeting will be on the 11<sup>th</sup> due to  
Labor Day*



## **A Look Back**

### **The Shenango Dam**

Sixty years ago, construction was well underway for the Shenango Dam, which would provide long-needed flood control for Sharon, but is perhaps now best known for the recreational opportunities opened up by its creation of the Shenango Reservoir. Included here are some photos relating to the Dam in the Society's collection. This page shows its construction.







## Collections Update

Through the kind intervention of Betty Zahniser of the Mercer County Genealogical Society, the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor donated to the Society a large collection of glass plate negatives. (Before photographic negatives were made of plastic film, they were on 3"x 5" or 5"x7" glass plates. They need to be handled carefully not only because they are glass, but because the silver-gelatine emulsion which captures the image is exposed on the glass surface.)

Five cartons containing perhaps 200 images were donated. They were marked as relating to Sharpsville. Based on a cursory review, many seem to be portraits of individuals, but some are of events in Sharpsville like the parade photo above.

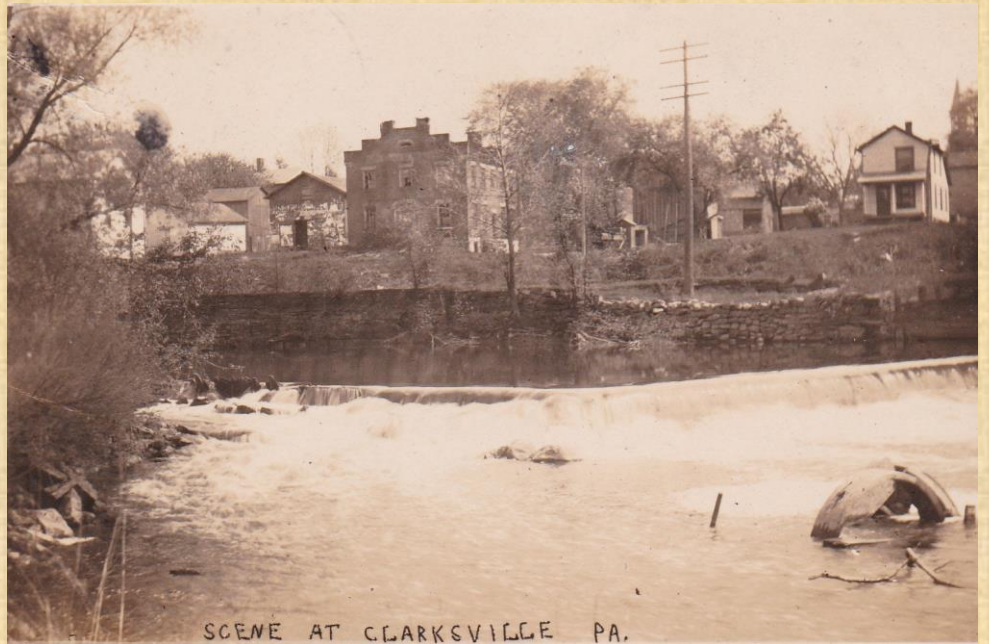
The Youngstown Center said the photos were taken by W. P. Snyder. This is apparently the William P. Snyder, who was founder of the Shenango Furnace Company. This captain of industry apparently had an enthusiasm for photography since part of collection of photos we were given previously shows him behind a camera stand. (This collection included scans of the Shenango Furnace complex around 1908 and were shared with us by then YSU grad student Clayton Ruminski. Since the Youngstown Center said they were retaining negatives of local blast furnaces, our initial assumption is that negatives given to us are part of that same collection.)

It will take some time for us to catalogue and identify these fragile artifacts (with even more fragile paper casings). Afterwards, high quality scanning of the negatives will need to be sought.

Shown above is a rough scan of one of the negative, which appears to be on Ridge Avenue, apparently newly paved with brick. (Other negatives alongside definitely place the event in Sharpsville.) Marshalls are leading an unidentified marching band. If you zoom in, you can see the group behind, as well as a streetcar. The leading banner appears to represent the Blessed Virgin Mary, followed by some young girls (perhaps in their Communion dresses), and then men we guess from the Italian Home, with a device in the center of what seems to be the Italian tri-color carried alongside the American flag. Clues from another negative from the same set indicate the parade was in 1916.



## Shenango Dam, cont'd



SCENE AT CLARKSVILLE PA.

Much of old Clarksville was submerged by the dam, with the present-day Borough of Clark moved or rebuilt at higher ground. The top view is from a postcard postmarked 1909. The bottom view is from the same set, while the church appears to be from that era as well.





## Shenango Dam, cont'd

Most photos of the Dam are from the overlook and show its front side. Here is the back-side after its completion but before the reservoir was filled.



The view here is of the recently completed Dam as seen through the concrete culvert where Pine Run empties into the bed of the Reservoir.



Another casualty of the construction of the Dam occurred when a three-mile section of the Pennsylvania Railroad line had to be re-routed. Their small station called "Roemer" stood in this area, about 120 yards before the culvert. It was at this point that the double tracking ended. This station was closed in 1955 when this section was converted to single-track (thus eliminating the need for an attendant at the switch).



## Shenango Dam, cont'd



It should not be forgotten that the Dam was built largely through the efforts of George D. Mahaney. For decades he lobbied for its construction as he saw it as a benefit to Sharpsville (for which he served as Burgess for five terms) and to the Valley. He is here posed for a 1962 newspaper article holding plans for the Dam's construction.

Groundbreaking for the Dam occurred on July 19, 1960. Here, at that event are Dr. Maurice K. Goddard, State Secretary of Forests & Waters, Mahaney, U.S. Representative Carrol Kearns, and Col. W. W. Smith of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Before serving eight terms in Congress, Kearns was Superintendent of Farrell Schools. He was instrumental in pushing the funding for the Dam through Congress.



Shown here is the September 17, 1965 ceremony dedicating the Dam. Speaking at the podium is Dr. Goddard. The State Park surrounding Lake Wilhelm was named for him. The event was attended by about 700 persons, including the Secretary of the Army.