



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

To mark Sharpsville's 150th Anniversary, as with earlier commemorations, the Historical Society is publishing a history of our town. Unlike the past histories which were pamphlets or booklets, this will be a complete 455-page book. Moreover, each of those earlier booklets were largely expanded reprints of earlier editions. This new book, in contrast, will have all new material.

While the text of the historical vignettes contained in the volume have, for the most part, appeared over the past dozen years in this newsletter, new entries are included. Other articles have been expanded either to include new material that has since come to light or since they no longer need to meet the confines of the newsletter format. With space less of a premium, illustrations are more copious than when then articles appeared here, and compared to prior anniversary booklets, current printing technology allows for much better reproductions. In addition, a new feature is the inclusion of chapter endnotes. More than just an academic nicety, the endnotes serve the vital purpose of allowing a reconstruction of the research. The references given will perhaps lead the reader to other avenues of inquiry. In other cases, in a space that does not distract from the main narrative, the endnotes allow an evaluation of unclear or contradictory claims or the inclusion of interesting material that is tangential to the narrative of the main article.

Despite the number of pages, it remains an easy read. Within each of the twenty chapters are several articles, so it can be browsed through with a couple or half-dozen pages read at a time. With the endnotes taking up about a quarter of the pages, those can be glanced through, though we encourage you to still look at them for the interesting nuggets they contain.

The cost of the book is \$35. Production standards, including a professionally-designed softcover, are high: something you will be proud to own yourself or give as a gift. Once the books are printed, we will announce places to purchase. Pre-orders can be placed at sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com.

Upcoming Events

Tour of historic Riverside Cemetery

Learn about Sharpsville's cemetery and the interesting lives of some who are buried here. Saturday, May 18th
2:00p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Enter at the North Gate.

Rain-date Sunday, May 19th



GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIPS

Seneca Allegany Casino, March 21st

MGM Casino Northfield, April 18th

Hollywood at the Meadows Casino, May 22nd

Call 724-813-9199 for details



Sharpsville 150th Anniversary

Spagetti Dinner

March 3rd 1:00 – 5:00 St. Bart's Center

Watch for details on these and other events in the lead up to the June celebration.

Open House

As a reminder the Historical Society is open
the first and third Saturday of the month
from 1:00p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Come see the unique architecture of our historic building and a large display of our artifacts, documents, and photos of Sharpsville history.

Around Town

How well do you know your hometown?

Can you identify these sights around town? (Answers are on the last page—don't peek!)



How well do you know your hometown?

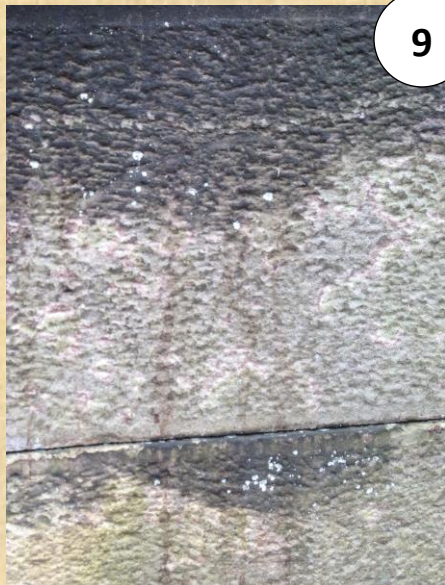
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Greetings from Sharpville, Penna.
The Claire Furnace. When she "slipped."

This postcard in the Historical Society's collection shows an opportune capture by the camera lens of an event here on September 15, 1899. The Claire Furnace stood around the current bend of Canal Street, where Davis Alloys is now. Normally, the layers of coke and ore within a blast furnace, the charge, will compress in an orderly fashion as the coke burns and the ore melts. A "slip" in a blast furnace is caused when there is some sort of hang up and the charge falls suddenly. Emission of a large cloud of soot is the main result, though here "quantities of coke, ore, limestone and scrap were hurled through the explosion doors scattering over a radius of 460 feet." Luckily, no one was injured by the red-hot projectiles and the proper working of the explosion doors prevented damage to the furnace. Upon hearing a rumbling sound at the furnace, Engineer Strawn of the nearby Sharpville Water Works was able to grab a camera and record the event. It was published by at least two postcard vendors, as well as appearing in the trade press of the iron and steel industry.

With Gratitude

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

Ralph & Carol Mehler

Joyce White donated various items belonging to her aunt Margaret Cameron regarding her membership in the Rebekah's Lodge here—certificates, membership cards, and books outlining their rituals.

Contact Us

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

see our website for officers' phone numbers

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

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

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

A Look Back

In places like small-town Western Pennsylvania, which has seen substantial losses in population and prosperity since the 1980s, expressions of discouragement and pining for how things once were, are common, if not expected. History teaches us, however, that the feelings of today are not unique to the present times, but are shared with past generations. In a letter written to the Greenville, Pa. paper The Shenango Valley Argus, February 3, 1875, the correspondent who signed it as "Squint Eye," decried the decline of prosperity of once-bustling Clarksville (now Clark). Whether or not his analysis is correct, his solution—Buy Local!—resonates today.

This place being small, and as there is not much stir in the way of business, you will have to bear a little with me. Many times I am compelled to join in with "Edward Young," [an English poet, when familiarity with poetry was commonplace] and take up his thought and say

What shall I write. Thalia tell!
Say, long abandoned Muse; What field of fancy shall I range
What subject shall I choose?

Well, I will endeavor to show some to the causes why our village, which was years ago in the advance, has not kept pace with her sister towns. In the first place I will show that it is not on account of the country surrounding us, for Clarksville is pleasantly located along the banks of the Shenango, nestled in that portion of the Valley, which for beauty and fertility of soil is not surpassed. Skirted upon the one side with gently raising hills, and many of the hillocks have hid within them the black diamonds [coal] that will, at least in the future, if not in the present day, pour wealth into the laps of some enterprising persons. True, the old canal has been abandoned [five years prior], and the iron track upon which speeds the locomotive, is not through our village, but it is less than one-fourth of a mile from the limits of our Boro. At that point lies land in idleness which time and again iron masters have conceded it to be the best point in the Valley for the location of iron works. And now for the reasons that have retarded our growth.

In the first place, before there was the least idea that the canal was to be abandoned, and when iron was king, our village was frequently visited by men of capital and energy who were anxious to engage in the manufacture of iron, then our owners of real estate asked such an enormous price for land that was favorably located that would cause the stoutest heart to quail, while in other places citizens were offering property free and even subscribing liberally. Another cause is that those of our citizens who have been enriched by the selling of merchandise have moved away and others, who have gathered in dollars by the thousands as royalty upon coal, that would still lie dormant in the bowels of the earth, had it not been for the late Gen. Pierce and others who were men of energy, these lucky parties who have been enriched by the go-aheadness of others instead of investing a portion of their riches at home, which would have given life and energy to the place, they preferred investing in government bonds, western lands, gold mines, etc., which as yet, have not proved as valuable as the coal beds of the Shenango. Another reason is that a good many of our citizens show by their little actions that they are jealous of the success of others, and will, if possible, ferret out some plan by which they may gain some temporary advantage over their neighbor, they will seek some other place to spend their money. This turning of backs upon enterprising dealers at home, not only injures the party slighted but in turn inflicts just as deep a wound upon the ones that desert their own place in purchases of merchandise by making the property of the place less value. Going elsewhere to make our purchases we take money belonging to our village, and thus create a drain upon its resources. It is so with a Nation that does not protect its own home industries, as we diminish the trade of a place, we contribute to the depreciation of property interests. There is no surer plan of breaking down a place, that for its citizens to say, "Well, I want such and such an article and I know I can get just what I want at home, but then I ain't a going to patronize them." It will act upon them in time, just like an unskilled farmer who sells all the hay, grain, and straw that the old homestead produces, but never rendering anything in return to the farm in the way of fertilizing, etc., and as the harvests come and go the yield is lessened until the old farm is worn out, and the swift decay of buildings and fences is inevitable result.

How well do you know your hometown?

Answers:

- 1) Bell from the original First Baptist Church building, now in front of their current church, 1872.
- 2) One of the ore bins of the Old Sharpsville Furnace, off High and Walnut Streets.
- 3) Culvert and fill which replaced the bridge over Thornton Run (where Ridge Ave. turns into Hall Ave., Sharon), 1924.
- 4) Speakers stand at Riverside Cemetery, erected "In memory of John A. Jackson, a Disciple of Good-Will," 1957.
- 5) Gable decoration with dogtooth carving, First Universalist Church of Sharpsville, 1884.
- 6) Date marker stone from foundation of railway turntable, New York, Pennsylvania & Ohio Railroad (later the Erie Railroad), across the river from the canal lock, July 1887.
- 7) Plaque at base of scoreboard at the football field, memorializing the Sharpsville men and women who gave their lives during the Second World War, 1953.
- 8) Cornerstone of St. Bartholomew's Church, 1908.
- 9) Stone wall with chisel marks of Lock #10 of the Erie Extension Canal, 1839.
- 10) Hitching post in front of the what was originally the Pierce Block (a/k/a the Pierce Opera House a/k/a the Iron Banking Company building), Mercer Avenue at Shenango Street, 1871.
- 11) Underside to the Walnut Street bridge (Sgt. David W. Wallace III "Walleye" Memorial Bridge), built 1986.
- 12) Doorway to 1929 gymnasium addition to the old High School (originally built 1920). The building was later the William P. Snyder Middle School, and is now the Trailblazer Building.
- 13) Star bolt or anchor on the front of the Chris Baker Builders building, formerly the Sharpsville Roofing building, and originally built as a commercial building, the Fish's block, 1873.

Items for Sale

**BUY A
BRICK**

*Please consider an "In Memory of" or
"In Honor of" brick for a loved one.*

4" x 8" bricks with three lines of
inscription—\$75

8" x 8" bricks with six lines of
inscription—\$125

The bricks will be placed in the town park.

Scenes of Old Sharpsville vols. I & II

DVDs EACH CONTAINING 100 CAPTIONED PHOTOS OF
SHARPSVILLE IN YEARS PAST \$10 EA.

Natural Stone Drink Coasters

FEATURING LITHOGRAPHED SCENES OF OLD SHARPSVILLE
\$8 EACH, ANY 4 FOR \$30

CAT'S MEOW

ART PORTRAITS OF THE HISTORIC FIRST UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OR THE JONAS PIERCE HOUSE \$10

COMMEMORATIVE MEDALLIONS

FROM THE 1974 SHARPSVILLE CENTENNIAL \$5

Christmas Ornaments

FROM THE 1999 125TH \$1

T-Shirts with Historical Society Logo

SIZES S-M-L \$12; SIZES XL AND ABOVE \$15