



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Pessimism and anxiety about the direction of both our nation and our local community seems to be a predominant theme for 2017.

Yet, in the Shenango Valley we have 318 registered non-profits. Adding in the number of organizations who have not bothered to register with the IRS or who have let their registration lapse, this total is undoubtedly much larger.

We see, however, the union-scale millworker who once could afford to give \$10 a month to a local charity being replaced by the minimum-wage earner who needs to scrape an extra \$100 just to pay this month's utility bills. As a consequence, local charities, too, are struggling. The beneficence of the Buhls excepted, the Shenango Valley does not enjoy the luxury of endowments funded by great industrial fortunes of the past, like Pittsburgh—or even Youngstown or Erie. So, local organizations that help the poor, the hungry, the homeless, unwanted pets, those that enhance the educational, recreational, and spiritual needs for our youth and adults, and those groups that enliven our area with art, music, drama—and, yes, a shared sense community through an appreciation of local history—are in need of help.

Most local non-profits, like our Historical Society, are run by dedicated volunteers and, with little overhead, return an overwhelming percentage of donations and fundraising proceeds to their programs.

If you are reading this newsletter, you probably have an interest in preserving and sharing local history. Do, however, consider not just our organization but other local charities to share your time, talent, and treasure. The future of the Shenango Valley lies in those whose hope sees a vibrant future for our community.

If you are inclined to further support the Sharpville Area Historical Society—but are wondering about volunteer opportunities or the purposes a donation would be used for—please contact us at 724-962-9919 or sharpvillehistorical@hotmail.com.

Upcoming Events

GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIPS

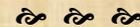
Seneca Niagara Casino July 19th

Mountaineer Park August 23rd

Three days/two nights

Seneca Niagara and Seneca Allegany Casinos
September 19th – 21st

Call 724-813-9199 for info and reservations



ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL

AT MAHANEY PARK

Including a free Kiddie Ferris Wheel this year!

Sunday July 16th



AN EVENING OF THE MYSTERIOUS & UNCANNY EDGAR ALLAN POE'S SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

Friday the Thirteenth, this October
Sharpville Historical Society Building

Items for Sale

Natural Stone Drink Coasters

featuring lithographed scenes of old Sharpville

17 different choices

\$8 each, any 4 for \$30



Scenes of Old Sharpville

DVD slideshow featuring 100 photos of Sharpville in years past

Volume 1 and Volume 2 available--\$10 each

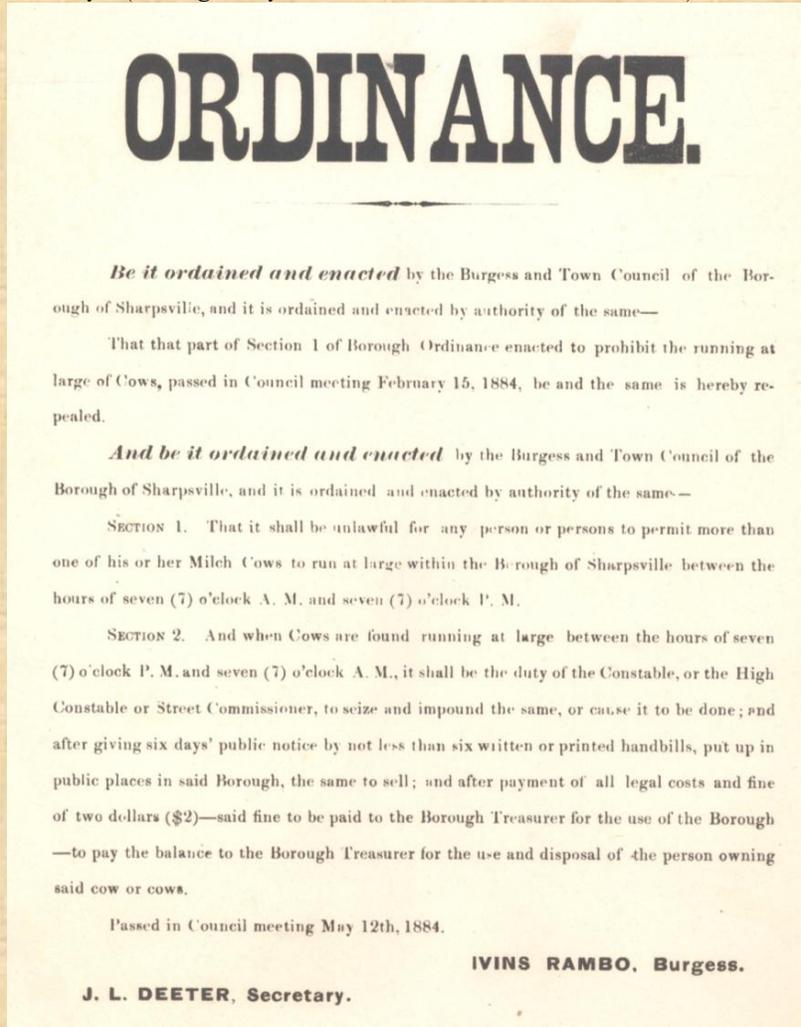


available at Mehler Insurance or through our website
at www.sharpsvillehistorical.org

A Look Back

Cows Running At Large

Within a book of Borough Council minutes, salvaged from the demolition of the Pierce Mansion, is found this copy of an 1884 Borough ordinance—a handbill to be posted in public places— notifying the populace that the running of cows at large would no longer be tolerated (at least between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.). As Sharpsville developed from a sparsely populated crossroads to a burgeoning industrial site to a proper town, removing vestiges of a rougher, less-organized past became a necessity. (Enlarge on your browser to better read the text.)



Seemingly akin to “Wanted” posters from the Old West, the font used for the words “Ordinance,” is merely an artifact of the slab-serif typefaces that were popular during the 1830s. The term “Milch Cow” is a holdover from the Middle English “milche-cow” and survived much longer than the transition from “milche” to “milk.” (Though milch is still used, somewhat archaically, as an adjective meaning milk-giving.) It was only in the 1950s that occurrences of “milch cow” were equaled by “milk cow,” and not until the 1970s that use of the older term began to wane.

The 1884 ordinance, though, tightened up an exemption given the cow in an 1871 Pennsylvania state statute. That earlier law forbade the running at large of cattle, horses, mules, sheep or hogs on the public roads or highways in Mercer County, though it specifically excepted the milch cow. Numerous petitions against this exception for the cow were presented to State Representative Nathan Morford (who is memorialized in a stained glass window at the Historical Society’s headquarters). Contending parties, on the other hand, appealed to consideration for the “poor man’s cow.”

With fencing beyond the means of most householders, and town lots too small in any event to serve as effective pasture, the family cow was turned loose on one of the many vacant lots of Sharpsville’s early days. The practice was overdone, though, and a wandering, obstinate cow was trouble both to carriage traffic and the neighbor’s kitchen garden: hence

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Uniquely Sharpsville

The Coffee Stir

The Coffee Stir, a Sharpsville original, was enjoyed by young and old alike for generations at the corner drugstore's soda fountain. Now it is not quite so readily available, but is always a welcomed treat, especially among homecoming Sharpsville expatriates.

What is the coffee stir? A fountain drink consisting of coffee syrup, vanilla ice cream, and soda water. Unlike an ice cream soda, the concoction is blended like a milkshake. Unlike a milkshake, soda water replaces milk as a liquid. As any in town will tell you, it is uniquely refreshing.

The coffee stir originated in the drugstore of Frederick K. "Skip" Reichard. Skip opened the store about 1915 at the Southwest corner of Mercer Avenue and Shenango Street in the former Odd Fellows Temple there. We do not know exactly when a soda fountain was installed or when the drink was first concocted, but it is thought by the mid-20s. Many associate the coffee stir with the drugstore's longtime "soda jerk," Tommy Guyton.

With sackfuls of sugar and coffee piled on the pharmacy's wooden floors, Skip's wife, Alice Gertrude Knapp Reichard would use a great glass funnel to drip strong coffee upon white cane sugar, creating her coffee-flavored syrup. She would later make the syrup in her home.

After Skip's death in 1939, Gert operated the drugstore until she sold it to Graaf Oberrender "Obie" Cricks in 1952. She continued to make the syrup until her death in 1953.

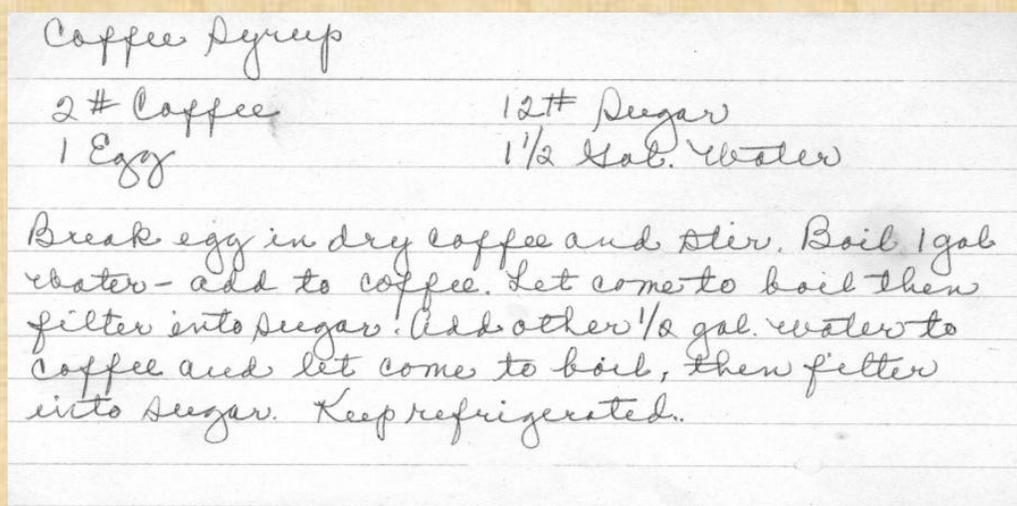
Few in Sharpsville escaped the coffee stir's beckoning. Blacksmith Pat Joyce drank *three* stirs a day. In fact, Pat was so fond of them that he was anxious about not having the drink on his upcoming trip to Ireland, so Obie sent him off to the Emerald Isle with a bottle of coffee syrup. All he'd need to rustle up over there were ice cream and soda water.

Cricks' pharmacy, in a new building which replaced his space in the old Odd Fellow's Temple in 1960 – but on an opposite corner of Mercer and Shenango Streets — was modern and bright. The fountain's oak and twisted iron seating also featured a miniature table and chairs, a treat for the kids.

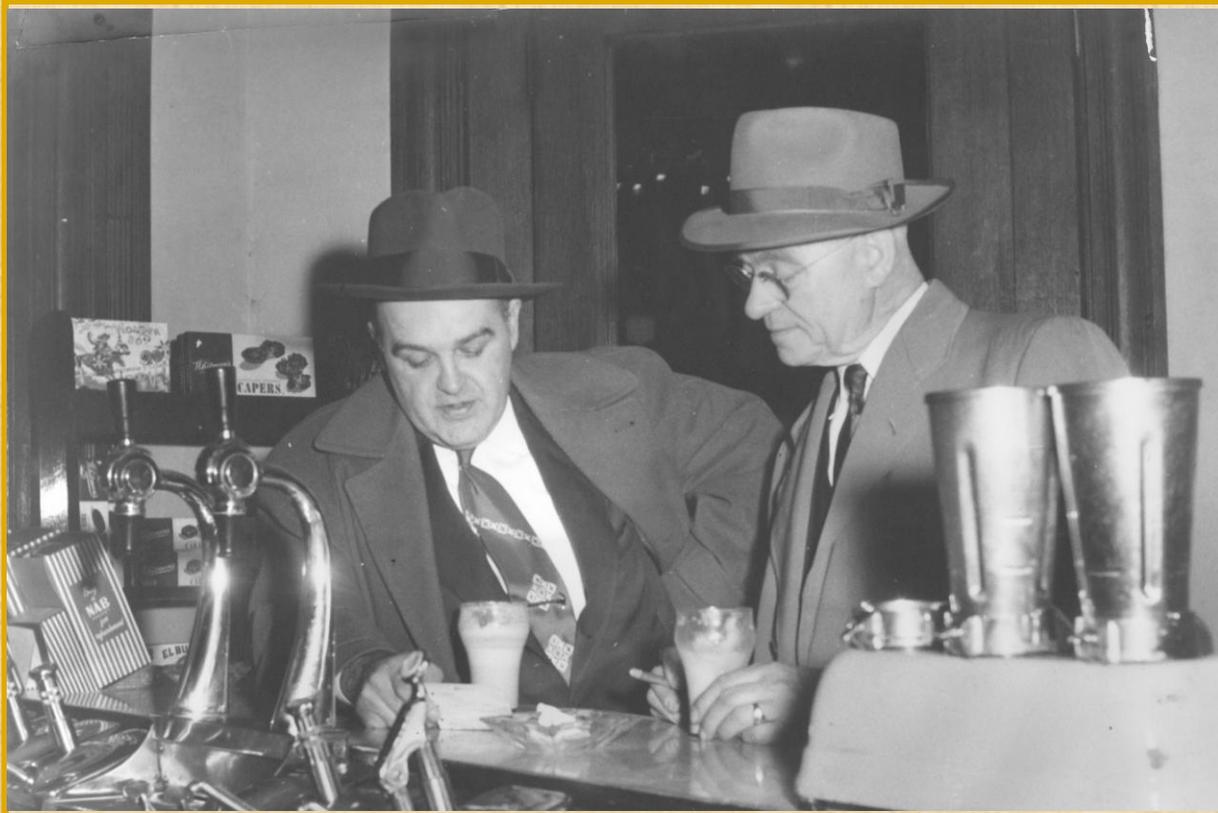
While the local area identifies the drink with Sharpsville, is it unique to here? Our best evidence leads to that conclusion. A manual for soda fountain operators, *The Dispensers' Formulary* (4th edition, 1925), lists recipes for over 2,200 fountain drinks. None is remotely similar to the coffee stir.

How do you make the coffee stir? Blend 2 tbsp. of coffee syrup with 2 or 3 scoops vanilla ice cream in a blender. Add some club soda and blend.

Here is the true recipe for the syrup, handed down through the Knapp descendants:



If you are not quite so ambitious to make the genuine syrup for a true coffee stir, here is a simpler method with instant coffee (likewise through a Knapp descendant): Mix 1 1/2 cups water with 2 1/2 cups sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, then cool. Mix 1 cup Instant Coffee with enough water to make a paste; combine it with the sugar syrup and store in a cool area.



George Mahaney, Jr. and Sid Owen are seen here enjoying coffee stirs at Cricks' soda fountain in 1953. Hardly just a treat for kids, as you can see by Sid's casual hold of his cigarillo, the stir was often an afternoon accompaniment for the businessman. (The photo, somewhat staged, was taken by a national magazine in their article about the Sharpville Service Club's Santa Claus visits.)

Cows Running At Large, cont'd.

the action by the Borough solons. Famed sportswriter Chilly Doyle in his reminiscences of a Sharpville boyhood (reprinted in full in the September 2013 edition of this newsletter), fondly describes the perils of the occupation of "cow minder."

It usually fell to a boy, more interested in a pick-up game of baseball or going for a swim, than actually watching the family cow. The bovine was supposed to be tethered to an iron stake, but at times the stake would not hold, or else the boy would neglect even this simple assurance that the cow stay put. Since stray cattle would be impounded with the owners fined, the cow minders were always on the look-out for the Constable, strict in his observance of the Council's 1884 decree.

Yet even as Sharpville became more densely built, with commercial blocks erected, sidewalks built, and streets paved, there remained one artifact of our agrarian past: the backyard chicken. Roaming at large by this bird, as well as other members of the poultry tribe, was forbidden by a town ordinance from 1915. Ordinance No. 138, passed in Council this fourth day of May, A.D. 1915 declared it "unlawful for the owner or keepers of any geese, chickens or other poultry to allow the same or any of them to run at large in the Borough." Violators would face a fine of not less than \$1.00 and not more than \$5.00, plus court costs. Nonpayment of the fine would result in imprisonment in the Borough lock-up for up to five days.

Collections update

Ed Getway donated an important collection of 38 editions of *The Sharpville Advertiser* newspaper, dating between 1894 and 1917 as well as a poster of the Shenango's Great Lakes ore ship *William P. Snyder, Jr.*

Rosemary Willams Stump donated several class photographs and other school memorabilia, dating from 1928-40, belonging to her aunt Louise Williams Saborsky.

Ronnie Fustos donated a black felt fedora hat from the 1950s labelled and sold by Bloch Bros. clothing store in Sharpville.

Lois Jean Tego donated a panoramic photo of Sharpville High School Students, class of 1930 on a class trip to Washington, D.C.

Michael Wilson donated items found his restoration of the Pierce Opera House, including a vulcanite usher's flashlight and coin-bank as well as brass push plates and padlock.

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

Building Update

This year's Restoration Plan continues with three major projects slated to be completed during the construction season.

Joe Fuoco of Respond Enterprises, having completed the painting of the exterior woodwork on the lower portion of our headquarters building, is now finishing the repainting the steeple area. A significant amount of the woodwork will need to be replaced as well.

Todd Sommerfeld Masonry is rebuilding our front steps. This not only addresses a safety concern but will reuse and replicate the original sandstone (much of which is rotted). While the building's steps did not originally have handrails, they are, of course, a modern necessity. Cast iron newels and railing, appropriate to the period, will be installed.

Completion of these projects will mark a significant step forward in the ongoing restoration of our headquarters, built in 1882 as the First Universalist Church of Sharpsville. An architectural treasure, the building is recognized by the National Register of Historic Places as the fullest expression, locally, of High Victorian Gothic architecture and as a nationally significant example of the Akron Plan of church design. Other work for which we are seeking funds includes restoration of the pipe organ, brick repointing, electrical updates, and remodeling of the basement for expanded displays.



In addition, J.M. Holtz Company, master art glass artisans, is working toward the restoration of the two large memorial quatrefoil stained glass windows. Here, two broken (and crudely repaired) lobes, right and bottom, have been replaced with ruby glass matching the original and with painted decoration of a descending dove, also recreating the original composition. The broken or weathered perimeter panes will soon be cleaned or replaced. Similar work is being done on the Nathan Morford Memorial Window on the opposite side of the building.

Supporting the Community

The Historical Society recently conducted our second annual tour of historical sites in Sharpsville for the seventh grade class of the Sharpsville Middle School. Eleven sites were visited, with many providing an opportunity to discuss broader historical themes with the students. We were heartened that some of the classes followed up with the students producing their own brochure-type or Powerpoint renditions of the tour.

We look forward to working with the School District to provide additional ways to incorporate local history into the curriculum. We can only accomplish the Society's mission—to strengthen a sense of community by connecting the people of the Sharpsville area with their shared past—when the upcoming generations can be part of a common knowledge and shared vocabulary about what happened in their town.

With Gratitude

Our headquarters was opened up to our second annual Quilt Show which was again very well attended.

Much thanks to the quilters who brought 38 quilts for display and congratulations to Delani Diatko who won best-in-show. We would like to especially thank Jeannie Goodhart who organized the event and donated a quilt for our raffle and the best-in-show prize.

Membership Report

The following new members have joined since our last report:

Robert Mancini
Alice Brant Geri Anderson
Ann Becker Tom Goodhart

The support of our new, renewing and lifetime members keeps the Society running and is greatly appreciated.