



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

A recent magazine article, titled “The Death of Brown Furniture,” reports on the recent collapse in the market for antiques. (“Brown Furniture” is a catch-all trade term for traditionally styled furniture, usually a reproduction, in walnut, cherry, or mahogany.) This trend has been going on for a few years and is hardly news to those who regularly buy and sell antiques. The cause is attributed to a generational change in attitude, with the Millennials, as in most things nowadays, to blame. (To be fair, the upcoming generation is usually treated with scorn—50 years ago they were being told to “Get a haircut!”) Some theorize that Millennials are less concerned with acquiring possessions because of student debt or because they are less certain of reliable economic prospects. Some say they would rather spend money on experiences than things.

But does this mean, as the article suggests, a decline in interest in old things, and even a waning interest in history? After all, visits to historical sites and monuments have declined significantly since the early 1980s (though the data is a less conclusive for history museums).

On the other hand, interest in genealogy (which is a subset of history) is at an all-time high. And book sales in the history non-fiction category are strong, topped only by the mystery/thriller genre.

Perhaps the key here is that we still want to hear the *story* that history can tell and, more so, we want that story to be relevant to our own lives and identity. (Relevance also needs to take into account an increasingly diverse population.) Understandably then, a building will be visited or a museum artifact lingered over if it can be incorporated into a compelling narrative. We are well aware of this here at the Historical Society and hope to soon revamp our displays to better tell the story of Sharpsville: because they are relevant to where *you* live.

By the way, we don’t want your parents’ brown furniture either. But, if buried among an accumulation of possessions, is a photo or artifact that relates to the story of Sharpsville, the Historical Society would be definitely be interested in adding it to our collection.

Upcoming Events

GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIPS
 Seneca Allegany Casino, Salamanca October 16th
 Pittsburgh Rivers Casino, November 13th
Call 724-813-9199 for info and reservations



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

The classic family musical:

October 18th - 20th and 25th - 27th
 Pierce Opera House
 call 724-815-4388 or go to actsharpsville.org

Items for Sale

NEW ITEM!



Shirts are \$10 each. Several colors and sizes are available.
 Call 724-962-2392, or email
sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com for your t-shirt.

A Look Back

Go! Blue Devils Go!

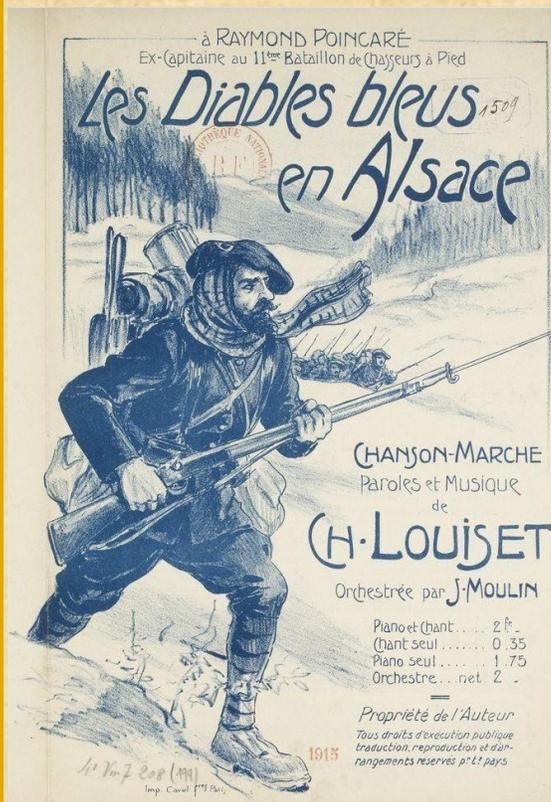
Blue Devils, the name adopted for Sharpsville High's mascot, students, and alumni, is so ingrained in the town's common identity, that it is hard to imagine it has not always been used. Though certainly played before 1921, but sometimes intermittently and not always with the sanction of the School Board, scholastic sports at Sharpsville are recognized as beginning in that year. These early teams were local powerhouses and with Sharpsville sports heroes going on to earn national laud at the collegiate level. Throughout this time, they were known as the "Blue & White".

Using a school's colors to identify its sports team dates back to the beginning of intercollegiate sport. The Harvard Crimson or a derivative like the Syracuse Orangemen reminds us of this old practice. Nicknames such as Tigers for the orange and black stripes on the Princeton uniforms arose later, but 'Handsome Dan' an English Bulldog brought out to the games, was the first actual mascot for a college team, the Yale Bulldogs. Still, local sportswriters, perhaps out of entrenched habit, were slow to use the mascots and continued to mainly refer to the teams by their colors.

"Blue & White" was asked to do a lot of work during these early years. It was also the name of the school newspaper as well as the yearbook, until "Devil's Log" was adopted in 1950.



Thrown into the home-side crowd by the cheerleaders in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, these advertising giveaways were a favorite of Blue Devil fans.



The subject of romanticizing and song in France and the U.S., the *Diables Bleus* are celebrated in this sheet music copy.

In any event, the school held a contest to adopt a new team name in October 1934. Suggestions were dropped into a box and from them the faculty selected a list of 14 names. Voting was held the morning of October 25, 1934 in the home rooms, with "Blue Devils" chosen as the winner. "Blue Raiders" was the runner-up.

"Blue Devils," it turns out, was the suggestion of one of the cheerleaders, who had family in Durham, North Carolina, home of the Duke Blue Devils. In 1922, Duke University first used the name for their sports teams after an elite French Alpine corps, nicknamed *les Diables Bleus*, esteemed for their valor and resourcefulness in the First World War, and known in America for their tours in support of war bonds and the Red Cross. (Some in this country parrot the caricature that the French are poor fighters, giving the example that, though defiant, they capitulated early in the face of the Nazi blitzkrieg. This was then employed for the rank political purpose of undercutting France's prescient opposition to what turned out to be the folly of the Iraq War. What is forgotten here, but is hardly forgotten a century later in France, is their valor, skill, and sacrifice in the First World War. An unimaginable two-thirds of their mobilized force of 8,410,000 was killed or wounded in their ultimate victory.)

The day after the voting, the announcement of the new Blue Devils name was made at a pep rally in preparation for Saturday's big football game against our arch-rival, Sharon. Sharpsville's new football stadium

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had opened at the beginning of the season (see the article in the May 2015 edition of this newsletter), and a crowd of 3,000 was expected. Heavy rains, however, created “one of the worst football days in recent years” with a turnout of 2,200 loyal fans who braved the weather “to see the lads paddle about on a mud soaked field.” In this first game played as “Blue Devils”, Sharpville won, 6-0, as a result of a goal-line fumble in the first three minutes. The rest of the game consisted of a defensive struggle and punting duel. Led by an unyielding defense that allowed only 12 points all season, the team finished the season 9-0-1, winning the Mercer County championship.

The Blue Devils name is shared by at least 168 high schools across the country.

This license plate holder dating to at least 1949 is another early Blue Devil artifact.



Building Update



Recently completed at our headquarters building was the long-overdue re-pointing of the original brickwork. The source of water infiltration to the interior has been found to be due to rainwater sheeting down the exterior walls and finding its way into gaps in the mortar. The re-pointing will prevent this as well as ensure the continuing integrity of the building’s masonry. (Re-pointing involves chipping out the old mortar and replacing it with new. A reddish tint was mixed in with the new mortar to match the original.) Work was being done by master mason Phil Bertelli.

With Gratitude

We received a generous donation from

Ann Morris

The cost of the t-shirts shown for sale on page 1
were donated by:

Laurel Alexander & Lindell Bridges



This building on Park Way is here being torn down in 1972 as part of Urban Renewal. Built before 1873, the spaces on the first floor were home over time to a number of commercial occupants: A dry goods & grocery store, a barber, a tailor, various offices, a cobbler, a pool hall, and an early nickelodeon.

The second floor was a meeting hall for various organizations including the G.A.R. and the Knights of the Golden Eagle fraternal club. The American Legion met there before they built their own building. It also hosted impromptu meetings such as an 1899 meeting of striking furnacemen.

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:

Michael & Mary Jane Roth Ed Volansky

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

**Joy Cone Sharon Dairy Queen
Sharpsville Borough Street Department
Sharpsville Volunteer Fire Department**

and performers:

Karen Elder's Y's Guys & Gals Marie Lineman

as well as donations of supplies from:

Petie Zipay Laurel Alexander

Please patronize the following businesses who donated items for our Chinese Auction:

**Valley Silk Screening
First National Bank (Sharpsville Branch)
Area Community Theatre of Sharpsville**

Volunteers Needed

Our headquarters building is open for visitors the first and third Saturday of the month from 1:00 to 3:00. One or two volunteers are needed to greet visitors. A script describing the building's architecture is provided. Visitor traffic is steady but light, so you won't be overwhelmed.

If you can help, please call 724-962-2392 to get on the schedule.

Collections Update

Dan & Beverly DeSantis donated a display cases, signage from the Emporium store and a chandelier from the Colonial Theatre.

The Estate of Jeff & Mary Ann Bryan donated memorabilia from the Sharpsville Centennial, a postcard of Sharpsville during the 1913 flood, and a pennant from the High School Class of 1923.

Tony & Mary Liscio donated a loom that was used by Mary's mother in the 1930s as part of a home-based industry making rugs.

Contact Us

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

see our website for officers' phone numbers

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

*Our September meeting will be held on the 9th on
account of Labor Day.*