



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Plans are firming up for Sharpville's Sesquicentennial Celebration—our 150th Birthday Party! In September, a very successful Car Show was held at the Sharpville Plaza. Over 110 classic-car owners participated, and an estimated 500 spectators attended. Food trucks, craft tables, a DJ, participation from the Sharpville Fire Department, Pack #45 of the Cub Scouts, and the Sharpville Band made it a festive occasion. Thanks must be given to all who worked on the event, but especially to Cathy Womer who organized it. Also in September, a 5K Run was held; despite the rain, dozens of runners participated. Now that word is out, a much larger group is expected for next June's 5K. Appreciation is owed to Laura Stigliano Fette and a crew of volunteers for staging the event. At the School Homecoming game, T-shirts sold for the 150th made the stands a "Sea of Blue." Finally, October saw a "Beep-Beep" in-car Bingo held at the Sharpville Plaza. All four events raised significant funds towards the upcoming celebration next June. (Fundraisers mean fewer tax dollars will need to be spent.)

This all goes to show that an active group of community-spirited citizens is hard at work preparing for next year's celebration as well as organizing fun-filled fundraisers in the meantime. Sharpville's prior anniversaries—1924, 1949, 1974, 1999—each had similar involvement with *all* of Sharpville. If you've been thinking about how to help, or maybe you're just finding out about the Sesquicentennial, please attend a monthly meeting of the 150th Committee, held on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:00pm at the Borough Building. You may contact Tammy at the Borough building to be put on an email list for notifications. There is a Facebook page under Sharpvilles150thBirthdayCelebration to keep you updated.

Next up is the All-American Male contest. This fun-filled revue will feature local men—many you likely know—competing in fashion, and what is bound to be the most entertaining—a talent segment. (You might recall the Sharpville Woman's Club held similar revues in the late 80s and early 90s.) Food stations and beverages are included.

The Borough's annual Christmas parade, scheduled for November 29th, is likely to be expanded in recognition of the upcoming 150th.

Additional events are being planned for early 2024, to culminate with the big celebration in June.



At the Society's November meeting, Nan C. Cataldi will return to her hometown to discuss her career as a Children's & Young Adult author, as well as the books she has written. The program will interest both adults and young readers. A reception will be held afterwards. Note the 6:00 p.m. start time, rather than our usual 7:00 p.m.

Upcoming Events

At our November meeting
Presentation by Noted Children's &
Young Adult author

Nan C. Cataldi

Historical Society Headquarters
November 6th 6:00 p.m.



GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIP

Rivers Casino Pittsburgh
November 15th

Book your Reservations Now!
Call 724-813-9199 for info



Sharpville 150th Anniversary

ALL-AMERICAN
MALE

November 11th

Doors Open 6:30 Show Starts 7:30

St. Bartholomew's Center, 321 W Ridge Ave

Tickets at Joni's Styling Salon, Sharpville
Boro Building or call 724-813-9090

A Look Back

Mrs. Pinch

This article was written by Robert Sheasley and published in The [Sharon] Herald in 1979. It was titled “Mrs. Pinch, 87, one of the first women drivers in valley.” In 1916, she would indeed have been a local pioneer as a female driver; after all, in that year there were 37 persons for every motor car in Pennsylvania. Yet, even into the 1980s, stale jokes about “women drivers” persisted.

More than 60 years ago, the old Oakland Motor Car Company advertised its showroom beauty as “the car with a conscience.”

That claim was certainly a bit overstated, but the public conscience, at least was awakening to the automobile craze. The passion has grown since with feverish intensity as gasoline prices have climbed from a dime to \$1 a gallon.

Among new car buyers in the Shenango Valley was a young, newly married redhead. Back in 1916 Hazel Hurl, now Hazel Pinch of Koehler Drive, Sharpsville, was a proud owner of a shining new Oakland.

Now in those days, automobiles were almost exclusively the playthings of men and women drivers were few and far between. To buy a car that year wasn't unusual; sales were soaring as the “fad” took firm root in American life. But a woman driver?

Mrs. Pinch, 87, was one of the first in the valley. She had no intention of conceding the driver's seat exclusively to her husband.

“I don't know if men resented women drivers or not,” Mrs. Pinch said, but I sure caused quite a bit of consternations. The men would stare at me as if I were some kind of monstrosity.”

Picture the following scene on a hot and steamy afternoon, many years ago: An attractive young woman stalls her car as she's driving up Silver Street. She begins to feel frustrated and frantic.

A man pulls up alongside her. Wallowing in male arrogance, he says sarcastically, “Why don't you put a dime in it, honey?” To which the young lady blurts back instantly and ominously, “And why don't you go to hell!”

“Now I never was a swearing woman,” Mrs. Pinch remembered, “but it was a hot day and that really bothered me.”

Mrs. Pinch was self-made driver. Her maiden attempt at driving wasn't preceded by countless hours of painstaking instruction, nor by careful drilling by a stone-faced state policeman. The state didn't demand it.

Her teacher wasn't even flesh and blood—she learned from a drivers' manual that came with the car.

It purported to contain everything a prospective driver would need to make the switch from horse to wheels. Mrs. Pinch poured over that manual from cover to cover, matching the drawings with the gadgets on the dashboard.

Her driving skills have improved immeasurably since that morning, years ago, when she plopped behind the wheel of her new Oakland, shoved the gear shift forward—and backed into a potato patch. “That was my first lesson in driving.”

Mrs. Pinch still drives about the valley in her 1971 Chevrolet, but she'll be the first to tell you that today's congested streets are a far cry from the past.

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This advertisement for an Oakland Six is similar to Mrs. Pinch's first car.



This photo of Sharpsville Railroad workers, proudly holding their shovels and sledge hammer, dates from around the 1890s. John Clendenen is second from the left.

While nowhere near the number of blast furnace laborers working here, the 1900 U.S. census lists a surprising number of men working on the railroad: 109. Their occupations included brakemen, conductors, locomotive firemen, laborers, engineers, clerks, ticket agents, foremen, yardmaster, watchman, and targetman.

Mural Update

In 2019, though interrupted by COVID, the Historical Society embarked on a project to highlight the History of Sharpsville with a collage of scenes and images from our town's past. It is to be painted as a mural on the east wall of the fire house on Main Street. We are happy to say that sufficient funds have now been raised for us to proceed with the project. Painting of the mural will be done over the winter on metal panels which will then be attached to the fire house wall next spring. (The metal panels will allow better durability.) While we are still looking for donations, we give much thanks to those who have participated in our buy-a-brick campaign, and especially to the following mural sponsors:

Petie Zipay
 Cathy Womer of Golden Caregivers
 Lori Rollison Hair Salon
 Joni's Styling Salon
 The Wickerhams
 Patrick Zoccole of DSF Aggregates
 Sharpsville Booster Club
 Lock, Stock & Barrel
 Deena Grandy
 Leonard Grandy
 Fred W. Sloan, Sr. Memorial Fund
 Valley Silk Screening
 Cynthia Alexander
 Sharpsville Service Club

Contact Us

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 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

Note 6:00pm start for our November meeting

Collections Update

Dan Maurice donated wide-mouth pint milk bottles from the Homestead Dairy, Sharpsville

Dorothy Bieber donated a scrapbook she kept from her school-days, her 1949 Sharpsville yearbook, and a set of calling-cards from all her '49 classmates.

We also received a collection of artifacts and mementos from Sharpsville's 1974 Centennial celebration.

Mrs. Pinch, cont'd

Those were the days when many still regarded motoring as a passing fad, while other extolled the clattering machines as a godsend to solve urban congestion and pollution.

She remembers a time when no stop signs or flashing lights regulated traffic; indeed, there was hardly any traffic to speak of. "The first car at an intersection," she said, "was the first one to go."

Mrs. Pinch bought her new Oakland at a Sharpsville garage on Main Street and paid all of \$850 for it. Cars were cruder and lacked refinement then. Power steering was undreamed of—for driving ease, steering wheel were much larger than today. There were no power brakes or automatic chokes. Windshield wipers were operated by a small hand crank.

Nevertheless, Oaklands were at the height of their popularity in 1916, and the company even installed an innovation—the V-8 engine, one of the first on the market. The Oakland didn't lose momentum until General Motors brought out its Pontiac model about 10 years later. Mrs. Pinch's Oakland, with its open carriage, side curtains, and wide, flaring fenders, was painted basic black. Most cars then weren't available in the sundry bright colors of today. But it was handsomely trimmed in chrome, one of the first models to offer that luxury.

Each running board was bedecked with a spare tire, and not just for decoration. Mrs. Pinch has patched and replaced her share of flat tires during her many years on the road. At that time, tubeless, trouble-free tires weren't even a dream in an engineer's head.

Flat tires and mechanical problems were more common in the early days of automobiles, Mrs. Pinch said. "If you went somewhere and nothing went wrong, you were really lucky." Once, she said, her husband borrowed one of her hairpins to make an engine repair. But overall, she remembers her Oakland as being "as sturdy as an oak," a claim she can't make for modern cars.

Mrs. Pinch's Oakland was followed by a succession of other cars, including a number of Cadillacs, one of which was painted orchid purple. She still like to drive, but her enthusiasm has faded as automobiles have lost their novelty.

"I don't get the kick out of driving now that I did then," she said. "I was young and determined, I suppose. I used to have fun when cars would pull up to pass me. I'd just step on the gas! I never let them pass me."

But Mrs. Pinch has maintained a safe driving record. When William Scranton was governor, Mrs. Pinch received a "Golden Wheel Award," which recognized drivers who had proven their ability to safely handle a car.

And surely no-one can say Mrs. Pinch can't handle a car. Years of driving have taught her the ways of the road. One day, some 60 years ago, a Pittsburgh policeman threatened her with a fine for driving the wrong direction on a one-way street. Her innocent response: "But I'm only driving one way!"

Without a doubt she's learned much since then.

Items for Sale

Natural Stone Drink Coasters

Featuring Lithographed
scenes of old Sharpsville

T-Shirts with Historical Society Logo

Several colors and sizes are
available

Scenes of Old Sharpsville vols. I & II

DVDs each containing 100
captioned photos of
Sharpsville in years past

Also Cat's Meow, Commemorative Medallions, and Christmas Ornaments

Commemorative Bricks, installed at the Town Park, can also be ordered to honor or memorialize a loved one.

See our website for prices and ordering information

Old Sharpsville

The water works

It was recently announced that the Borough will be tearing down the original water works building. Built in 1898, it stands along the railroad tracks behind the feed mill and has been in a state of disrepair for many years. For decades, it has only been used for miscellaneous storage. An attempt will be made to preserve the keystone, bearing the date of construction.

Some brief notes about the beginning of Sharpsville's water system follow:

In 1897, two bond issues of \$14,000 each were approved for the construction of the plant, which was completed the following year. "In the beginning, the water was used principally for sprinkling, and there was very little used for homes. During the first year, there were about 150 consumers, which number had doubled by 1900." "Sprinkling" appears to refer to keeping down dust in the streets. A sanitary sewer system was soon seen as a necessary adjunct to a municipal water system. It was established in 1903. By 1924, about 1,000 homes were connected to the water system. The initial charge of a flat rate proved to be unpopular, so meters were introduced in 1911.

In a 1924 account, the plant was considered "the pride of the town" with its pure water "free from all germs." It also recognized Sharpsville as one of the few municipalities in the district that owned its own water works.

Despite the original plant's proximity to the river, it did not supply water to the town. Instead, three wells, 200 feet deep were drilled here.

The earliest mention of Italians in Sharpsville was in a report from 1898 about "trouble at Sharpsville" on account of immigrants—the first arrivals from Italy here—being employed for the construction of the new water works. "Six citizens have been arrested for interfering with them."

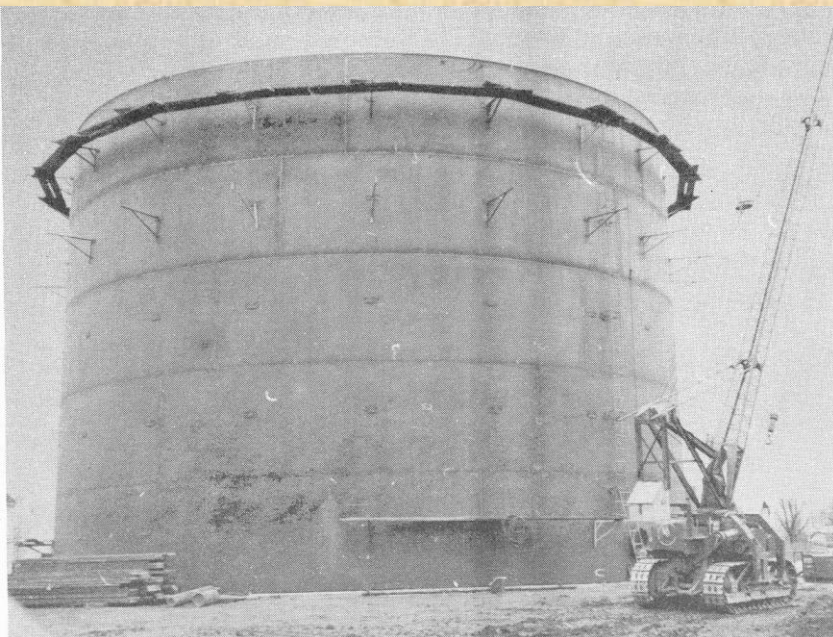
A Central Sewage Treatment Plant was built in 1938 and was located across the river in Hermitage, down the hill from the car wash in South Py. This replaced the original sewer plant which was down the hill from the terminus of 6th Street on the Sharpsville side of the river. Additional sewage capacity was provided by the



The original plant, ca. 1906.

Knight Annex Sewage Plant which was located down in Thornton Hollow, off the 18th Street end of Hall Avenue. Both plants are now defunct, with sewage now processed in Sharon. (The land where the Knight Annex plant stood, is still owned by the Borough, even though it is located in Hermitage.)

A new water treatment plant was built in 1954, along the river behind the original plant. This marked the change from using well water to water from the river. That year, a storage tank was erected off Mercer Avenue (past Hazen Road on the Hermitage side). The Quarry Way storage tank was built in 1961. Two other standpipe storage tanks had stood on Quarry on the west side of Charles Street, and were only recently torn down. They dated from prior to 1924.



The 1961 water tank on Quarry Way, under construction.