One of our members, Bill Jackson, has recently completed an ambitious project, overlaying the outlines of buildings and structures from the 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Sharpsville onto a current aerial photo of the town. Even with Bill’s expertise in digital mapping, it took many hours to properly size and situate the structures from the thirteen pages of the 1912 map. He even set up a website—www.1912sharpsville.com— whereby you can examine the project in close detail.

You may not know it, but a number of our townsfolk are likewise working on other historical research projects: One is writing a history of the Pierce family, another is researching the history of the Sharpsville Steel Fabricators, and two are working on projects to catalogue the past businesses of Sharpsville and Sharon.

This shows a strong interest in local history and adds to the work we are trying to do at the Society. One resource we are anxious to make more of is the oral history interview. If you have any elderly relative, consider taking the time to ask about “the old days,” and to record the informal interview. It is often the first step in preserving your own family’s history, as well as contributing to a better understanding of our shared history.

Collections update
The following have been recently added to our collections

- **Greg Perrine & Bob Rannard** donated a scrapbook page with photos and an account of the 1908 wedding of Kate Pierce & Dr. Allan Hyde.
- **Dave Nickle** allowed us to make digital copies of 1890 stereoptic slide views of Sharpsville, the 1929 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Sharpsville and a home movie with scenes of the Shenango Furnace from the last 1950s.
- **Chuck Flynn** donated copies of a large collection of photographs, mainly from the 1910s.

We are appreciative of all contributions to preserving and understanding the history of Sharpsville.

Engaging the Community
Sharpsville High School Junior Brittany DeCarmine was the winner of the Society’s inaugural History Prize. Open to all Sharpsville High Juniors and Seniors, the prize was awarded for submission of a written or audio/visual project relating to the history of the Sharpsville area.

Brittany’s project was a paper on Gen. James Pierce with an accompanying power point presentation.

Below, Society President Greg Perrine presented Brittany with the prize and as well as a lifetime membership in the Sharpsville Area Historical Society.

Upcoming Events
- **Bus trip to Mountaineer Casino with a stop at Fiesta Ware China Factory & Outlet**
  Wednesday May 22nd
- **Annual Ice Cream Social at Mahaney Park**
  June 23rd
- **Bus trip to Seneca Niagara Casino**
  Wednesday July 10th
- **Bus trip to The Beach Boys 50th Anniversary Concert at Chautauqua**
  Friday August 9th
- **The opera Rigoletto at Pierce Opera House**
  August 15th and 17th

Test your knowledge of our town
Prior to the construction of the High School on Ridge Ave., where did Sharpsville High School basketball teams play?

answer on back page
Traces of Lost Sharpsville
Rural school houses of South Pymatuning & Clark

Key, with name of school
1. Sunnyside*
2. Dawes
3. Pleasant Valley*
4. Fairview*
5. Lone Star
6. Union*
7. Phoenix
8. Clarksville
9. Hazel Dell*
*This building still stands. (Pleasant Valley has since been converted into a dwelling, and Hazel Dell into a storage building.)

The locations are marked on this Topographic Survey map published in 1908. Of course, the map was drawn long before the construction of the Shenango River Dam and the resulting areas flooded by the reservoir. It also predates the December 7, 1914 partition of South Pymatuning from Pymatuning Township, and the creation of the current borders of Clark Borough.
A Look Back

Did the Lincoln coach end up in Sharpsville?

In February 1861, after the secession of several slave-states, and with the nation on the brink of war, Abraham Lincoln boarded a train at Springfield, Illinois en route to his Inauguration in Washington. During his journey—with stops in Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and again Pennsylvania—Lincoln was met by cheering throngs, in contrast to the South’s contempt and insurrection.

Assassination threats were publicly made and in this era before the creation of the US Secret Service, Pinkerton Detectives provided armed escort during this journey to Washington. Pinkerton’s men uncovered the details of a plot in the planned stop at Baltimore whereby agitators would stir the crowd sure to surround Lincoln when he transferred between stations in that town and allow a number of assassins to beset the President-elect. Lincoln was warned upon arrival Philadelphia, but he refused to cancel his appearances there and in Harrisburg. He did consent to wearing disguise while travelling and to travel secretly to Baltimore where the perilous transfer was made under cover of darkness.

Did one of these rail cars—particularly the coach from either the Harrisburg-Philadelphia or Philadelphia-Baltimore-D.C. leg of the journey—end up in Sharpsville?

In a story that ran in The New York Times as well as in papers all over the country, we read that on February 3, 1909:

The historic “Lincoln coach,” in which President Lincoln is said to have ridden to Washington for his Inauguration, was destroyed in a fire in Sharpsville. It was the sole passenger equipment of the little Sharpsville railroad, running between that town and Wilmington Junction. One-third of its length was partitioned off for baggage, while seats for passengers were run along the sides of the car. It was covered with sheet Iron, put on before Lincoln made his famous ride, and was supposed to be bullet proof.

The Sharpsville Railroad originally linked the valuable block coal mines in Hickory Township with the growing number of blast furnaces in Sharpsville. A junction at Sharpsville with the Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad provided a further outlet for this celebrated species of coal, where it fetched a high price at the docks of Erie. Passenger service was begun in the 1870s with the line eventually reaching New Wilmington.

Local papers, however, ran a follow-up story that noted “some of the old railroad men in this vicinity” doubted the connection between Lincoln and the burned railcar. The Sharpsville coach was definitely not, as some claimed, the car that conveyed Lincoln’s body back to Illinois after he was assassinated, since photographs show that to be an ornate, wooden affair. The research of the late C.H. Peters was also cited to deny a connection with the Inaugural coach.

On the other hand, the legend had its start somewhere and seems to have been fixed in the town’s popular imagination. The car’s iron cladding was a curiosity in its day and gives credence to the idea of it being “bullet proof”.

The coach may have had an afterlife as well. In a 1930 account, shortly before the railroad’s final run, the coach was said to be rusting away, having been converted to a switchman’s shanty after the fire.

Traces of Lost Sharpsville

From this newspaper photograph of the Free Methodist Church from 1924, you can see it is the same building still standing at 934 Ridge Avenue, long since converted into apartments. However, not only did this building once have a completely different purpose, it once stood in a different part of town.

The church was first organized in 1886, meeting in various homes as well as a tent on Furnace Street, before erecting this building in 1888. It originally stood at 36 Furnace Street. In 1906, the congregation moved to Ridge Avenue, taking its building (in two pieces) along with them. A parsonage was added in the rear in 1927. The congregation disbanded around 1962, with the United Brethren occupying it for about two years in the mid-1960s. The Faith Temple Apostolic Church was the last congregation to call the building home, from about 1970 to 1977.
This photo or cabinet card is from a yet-to-be identified house in Sharpsville. It dates from perhaps the 1880s. If you think you know where the house is, or who the family is, let us know; we are most eager to hear of it. Most remarkable about the view are the wooden sidewalks. These predated the stone sidewalks in the older parts of town, which of course were later superseded by concrete.

Then, as now, if citizens in one part of town received an improvement, their neighbors would soon be petitioning the Borough Council for a similar benefit.

On July 11, 1881, a petition for a footwalk along the west side of 7th Street was made. A four foot wide walk of 2 inch planks was approved.

The next month, petitioners from the other side of 7th Street got their turn.

On May 15, 1882, a group asked for a sidewalk from Main up 3rd Street to the Catholic Church.

Two months later, a sidewalk on the north side of Main Street was petitioned for and approved.

Perhaps tiring of these requests, the following Spring, Council created the position of Street Commissioner empowering him to examine all side walks, streets, alley, bridges, and culverts and to effect any necessary repairs. Beginning in 1884, property owners were made responsible for the repair of and installation of sidewalks with the assessment of cost plus 10% if they did not comply.