



SHARPSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Sharpsville's 150th Anniversary will be here next year! Plans are already underway to mark the celebration. A broad cross-section of citizens has met twice recently, in sessions organized by Borough Manager Ken Robertson. While plans are still preliminary, what is being discussed is a parade, possibly followed by family entertainment and bands, and capped off by fireworks. A 5K race the evening before is in the works. Bringing back some form of the beloved Carnival is also being investigated. The School District will organize projects to help our students learn of the town's history. The Historical Society will also look for ways to include our information about Sharpsville's past in the commemoration.

If you want to get involved, or just see what is going on, check out the Facebook page "Sharpsville's 150th Birthday Celebration" for news about upcoming events. If you want to be included on emails about future meetings and other communication, you may contact Tammy at the Borough building (tgarrett@sharpville.org).

These events will, of course, cost money. A rough budget is currently at \$30,000. So, fundraisers leading up to the main event are also planned: a basket raffle in August, possibly a car show later this summer, a 5K race and a night-at-the-races in the fall, as well as other events. Merchandise—t-shirts, hats, porch flags, and the like—will be available. Sponsorships will also be sought to help underwrite the activities.

If you have a good idea to incorporate into the celebration, or else for a fundraiser, let the 150th Committee know. (Anything of significance should include a commitment to head up the project.) Ideas for a 150th logo and slogan are also welcome.

Besides money and ideas, what we need most of all are volunteers to help run the events and fundraisers. So, as plans become more finalized, it would be most appreciated if you can commit time and energy.

Let's make 2024 not just a year to look back with fond memories, but an opportunity to strengthen our sense of community by connecting us with each other and our shared past.

Upcoming Events

GAMBLING SPREE BUS TRIPS

Seneca Niagara, July 26th

Live! Casino Greensburg, August 23rd

Two-Night Getaway

**SOARING EAGLE
CASINO**

With optional side trip to
Frankenmuth, Mich.

October 3rd - 4th - 5th

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



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.

Commemorative Bricks

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 would be placed in the town park.

Stop at Mehler Insurance or call 724-962-2392 or email sharpvillehistorical@hotmail.com

A Look Back

Downtown Sharpsville, 1926 to 1940

This reminiscence was published around 1973 and in all likelihood written by Mary E. Oakes, Sharpsville Class of 1939

I drove through Sharpsville the other day and suddenly was overwhelmed with a sense of nostalgia—a feeling of days and time lost, never to be found again.

I have been following with interest the continuing story of the Central Area Renewal Project for the town, of the buildings to be torn down and the plans for up-to-date housing and shopping areas.

But those were all just words on paper. I'd read them and think to myself, "It's about time they do something."

Then I saw the results of the wrecking crews and the bulldozers and suddenly it dawned on me that the area in which I had grown up would be no more.

It is said you never can return to your childhood, but how many of us, especially as we start adding birthdays, don't look back upon that time as the best years of our lives?

Perhaps we only remember the good things and forget the bad. Perhaps we place importance on that time because it was a period of our lives without responsibilities, when the main function was just growing up.

Even when you leave your hometown, it still remains "your" town, and you never lose your interest in its people and happenings.

In a town the size of Sharpsville, practically everyone knows everyone else, and this is especially true when you are growing up.

My family lived for over 14 years at 35 East Main St., a stone's throw from the business district on the Walnut St. now bending to progress. I started to school in the, even then, old Mercer Ave. Building across the street, graduating from the high school on Ridge Ave.

And the center of that hub was George Mahaney's clothing store for men and boys. If one had to pick Sharpsville's most prominent and respected citizens of all times, it would have been the late Mr. Mahaney.

No one was more keenly interested in the town and its people, whom he served for many years as burgess.

His store was a beehive of activity, and Mr. Mahaney could generally be found sitting at his old-fashioned roll-top desk at the back of the store, always impeccably dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and the inevitable bow tie.



George Mahaney at his desk with his trademark bow-tie



Urban renewal on Walnut Street, 1973. What was the Knapp Hotel is still standing here. Mahaney's store was on the first floor at the corner.

On the southeast corner was the red brick two-story building housing Clair Shannon's Hardware Store. Mr. and Mrs. Shannon lived in an apartment over the store, which was a big high-ceilinged room filled with all sorts of hardware items.

In the back of the store, suspended on creaky old chains, was a roomy wicker swing, enjoyed both by the Shannons and their customers.

Life then went at a more leisurely pace, and one took time for such things.

The two-story building on the northeast corner served many purposed during its lifetime, and was a favorite gathering place for teen-agers during its "Blue Room" period.

Up a long, steep flight of old wooden stairs could be found the Bell Telephone exchange, with its busy operators.

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Construction of the Shenango Dam and Reservoir resulted in the flooding of much of Clarksville, displacing 110 households. While some found other homes, others had their dwellings moved uphill to land newly annexed to the Borough, or else out of the Borough. Here, the home of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Gollner and their four children is being transported along Route 18. The family even slept in the house one night while it was parked alongside of the highway. Only after the pressure of newspaper publicity did the state grant the permit for the building to be moved on the highway. The family and their house ended up along Route 18 near Rutledge Road.

With Gratitude

Recently, the Historical Society sponsored the production of the poignant comedy *Belles*, which attracted large crowds and made the event a fundraising success for the Society.

We are very thankful for the hard work and talent of director Maria Petrella-Ackley and her Blacksheep Players Theatre Company: actors, Susan Woge, Missa Eaton, Beth Michael, Dori Yez, Sarah Puhala, Catherine Patterson, and Zac Sartori. Miranda Woge handled sound, John Ackley lighting, Dan DeSantis costuming, and Don Shumaker props and stage crew.

We much appreciate the First Presbyterian Church of Sharon and their maintenance staff for the use their hall for the performance.

Generous donations toward the cost of production were made by:

Lindell Bridges Suzanne Long
Jeannie Goodhart Rita Sloan

Engaging the Community

The Historical Society recently conducted our annual tour of historical sites in Sharpsville for the seventh-grade class of the Sharpsville Middle School.

Contact Us

website: www.sharpsvillehistorical.org
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

Downtown Sharpsville, 1926 to 1940, cont'd.



Tracks and station of the Pennsylvania R.R. (behind the present-day Sharpsville Plaza). To the left is Mrs. Shannon on the swing in their store.

Today a brick building on Main St., between Walnut St. and Mercer Ave. contains the apparatus that handles calls—efficiently but impersonally.

Several professional men also maintained offices on the second floor, and a trip to the dentist was approached slowly and hesitantly up the creaky old steps.

Also gone is the busy traffic that kept the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad bright and shiny. What a thrill it was to stand at the old freight and passenger station off Walnut St. and wave at the crews of the big, black, coal-fired locomotives which belched smoke and soot as they whistled their way to exciting distant places.

I lived in a metropolis!

The streetcars ran in front of our home and the trains in back . . . and the town was the center of my universe.

If I had a penny or a nickel to spend, I like every other child in town would head straight for Mrs. C.N. Oates' store on Walnut St. It was a paradise, filled with windowed cases containing all the goodies to delight a childish heart.

How we must have tried Mrs. Oates' patience, for our selection took forever. After all, a decision like this could not be taken lightly. Should we buy the big red jawbreakers that kept changing color as they slowly dissolved, leaving only a sweet remembrance?

Maybe licorice sticks would be better, or the tiny little sugar confections that dotted long strips of paper in pinks, yellows and blues?

The main intersection of town, the hub of Sharpsville has always been the four corners of Main and Walnut Sts.

The old brick school, later renamed the Deeter Building in honor of Miss Emma Deeter, has been standing vacant and forlorn for many years, and the old high school is now the junior high school.

Do I date myself? Well, this is the time from 1926 to 1940 when the big weekend thrill was taking in the latest feature at the Ritz Theater on Main St., complete with the newest chapter in the current serial.

Remember when Gene Autry and Champion were trapped in a secret gold mine, or when Buck Rogers was lost in space? You couldn't wait for next week's chapter.

Remember C.E. Gable who owned the theater? He was the uncle of movie star Clark Gable, and the two men



The streetcar at the corner of Mercer & Shenango, ca. 1930.

Downtown Sharpsville, 1926 to 1940, cont'd.

shared the same “Cable ears.” Somehow, he always managed to keep order when the film would break, as it often did, and the audience would begin whistling, hand clapping and foot stomping.

Remember the old streetcars which traversed the valley?

They were noisy, marvelous cars with their clanging bells and their woven wicker-type seats that always had a most “distinctive” odor when damp from rain-soaked passengers.

They stopped at every corner, and at the end of the line, on North Mercer Ave., the motorman would take the black token box to the other end of the car, reverse the trolley pole and begin the return trip.

Then the streetcars were a thing of the past. The track torn up and the bells silenced. We had instead snub-nosed yellow buses without any of the personality of the old streetcars.

The remaining corner was occupied by an A&P store, managed by Bill Thomas, a friendly man with a ready smile for those whom he served. I can still see the clerks in their white shirts, starched stiff as boards, and black leather bow ties.

Next door was McFarland’s Drug Store, complete with soda fountain and little booths in the back—the perfect setting for a luscious soda and girlish exchange of confidences.

Across a little creek that cuts under Main St. was Angus LaMont’s Meat Market. The other meat market in the business area was on Walnut St., run by Louis Burckart.

What fun it was to run an errand to one of the butcher shops, for the butcher generally gifted you with a mouth-watering wiener, cut from a long string of wieners hanging from a meat hook.

Just up the hill on Main St. was a wallpaper store operated by the Misses Margaret and Minnie Robinson in the old Dickson Furniture Store building. The choice of a pattern was most important, for you lived with the design for many years.

In the same building was the small, cluttered office where Dave Miller conducted his official duties as justice of the peace.

Two jewelry stores were located on Walnut St., one owned by C.D. Shaner and the other by W.A. Graber. Mr. Shaner’s store windows were always fascinating to see with their bracelets, beads and diamond rings, a dream for the future.

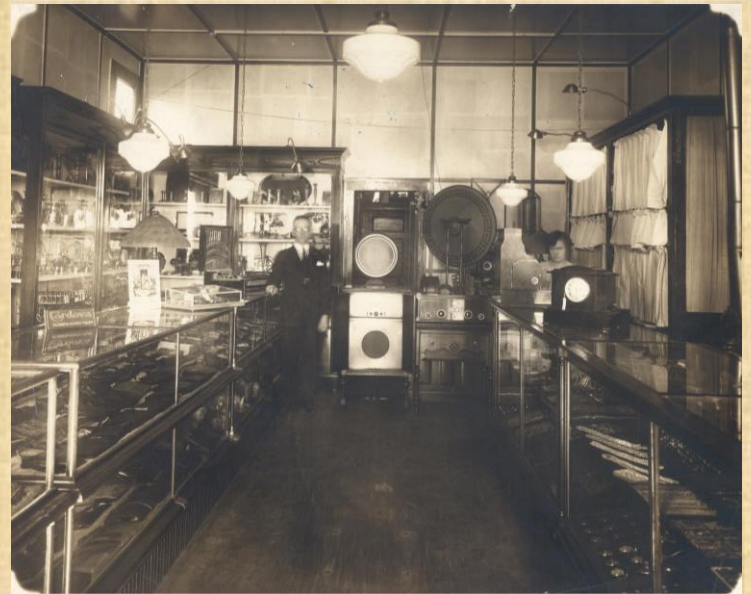
Mr. Graber was a talented man in repairing watches and clocks, treating each with the love of a skilled craftsman. I remember too he owned a rather large dog, and every evening, as regular as his timepieces, he would take the dog for a walk up Main St. hill.

Another fascinating place was Davey Davis’ tailoring shop, with its big steamy presser and bolts of varied materials. A tape measure around his neck seemed as much a part of Mr. Davis as did his cross-legged sitting position while sewing.

Next door was Nick Mehler’s barber shop, where most little girls were sent by their mothers with the instructions, “Mama says to trim my bangs, and cut the sides till the tips of my ears show.” Oh those fortunate friends with natural curls.



Lamont's Meat Market



C.D. Shaner Jewelry Store, 1924

Downtown Sharpsville in the 1926 to 1940, cont'd.



Mehler Barber Shop, Nick and Dutch, 1923



View of Walnut Street, looking East, Spring 1949



View from E. Main St., looking toward Walnut, 1957

In the same area was a fruit stand operated by Tom Muscarella and Joe Mitchell, people with the sunny dispositions of their native country.

The Misses Julia and Josephine Minnehan owned a dry goods store on Walnut St., where in their 'gentile' manner they provided sewing needs to local women and sold other small articles.

Walnut St. also boasted a Kroger store, Paul Buchanan's Men's Store, Foster's Dress Shop, a print shop, small restaurant, variety store and a very special place—Pat Connelly's bicycle shop.

The last was especially important, for what teen-ager had a car? Use of the family sedan was permitted for very special occasions only.

Also giving way to progress is the building on Mercer Ave. which was the home of John Jackson's tin shop, where Mr. Jackson made his nationally-known oil cans.

The old James Holland home at 29 East Main St., next to the former Grace Evangelical and Reformed Church, is a heap of rubble. But, in my mind's eye, I can still see two little girls sliding down the banister.

There have been other changes in the face of Sharpsville. The old Presbyterian Church on Main St. is now apartments. The E.A. Turner home has been razed and a branch office of the First National Bank of Mercer County has taken its place. Reichard's Drug Store, home of the famous coffee stirs, is gone.

These changes were worked over the years and were easy for the mind to accept. But the destruction of an entire business district and nearby homes, while necessary for progress, is a rather sad thing to see.

I'm sure if you live, or ever have lived in Sharpsville, your memories will differ from mine. For this is the marvelous thing about memories—they are yours and yours alone, to be savored and relived at your leisure, something that no one can take from you, but that you can share with others whenever you wish.

I hope you have enjoyed sharing mine.