The consolidation of the Borough of Wheatland with the City of Hermitage is scheduled for January 1, 2024. While merger makes sense on paper—with an elimination of redundant city services and other cost savings—the question remains about what happens to a town’s identity and history when it disappears?

Fear of losing a place’s individual identity, as well as opposition from entrenched interests, have been the main roadblocks to municipal consolidation over the past hundred years. Other than the Hermitage/Wheatland and the 2021 DuBois/Sandy Township merger, it had been decades since municipalities combined in Pennsylvania. On the other hand, municipal consolidation was quite common during the 19th and early 20th centuries. As examples, the five boroughs voted to combine as New York City in 1894, and the City of Allegheny (on the North Shore) became part of the City of Pittsburgh in 1907. In the preceding decades, Pittsburgh had swallowed up 19 boroughs and eight townships. The history of extinct localities, however, does not disappear.

Even a ghost town from the Old West still has a history. Though no one may have lived there for over a century, many ghost towns have well-documented histories—and if the ruins are still standing—can serve as a tourist attraction. In Wheatland’s case, of course, there are still 575 residents—and many more who grew up there but moved away. So, not only is there documented history, but living memory. (By the way, Wheatland, like Sharpsville, got its first post office in 1864, “Wheatland Furnace,” when it was legally part of Hickory Township. It was incorporated as a borough in 1872, two years before Sharpsville.)

Some of these memories, however, will eventually fade as those who attended grades 1-8 at the Wheatland school (torn down in 1978) or lived in the flats (swept away by the 1985 tornado) pass away.

An understanding of the history of a place is necessary to its identity. (And the stories of Wheatland, without a historical society of its own, can perhaps now be better told by the Hermitage Historical Society.) But can a community still retain its identity, once its name disappears (at least officially)? In major cities, many residents proudly identify by their neighborhoods, which are often relics of a defunct municipality. But will tiny Wheatland be able to maintain its own identity? (The Patagonia section of Hermitage is probably the closest local example.) Or will a generation from now, will it be regarded as a curiosity that this section of Hermitage was once a separate borough?
The organizing committee produced a large number of documents: letterhead and envelopes with the Centennial logo, thank-you cards, table tents, programs (in various formats), and a 70-page commemorative booklet, that greatly expanded on those produced for the 1924 and 1949 anniversaries. The seriousness of the organization did not preclude planning for zany antics to play a part.

The Society has an extensive collection of documents and mementoes from the Centennial. While we don’t want to discount the possibility of mementoes out there that have not already been donated, what we would especially like is video of the events, such as the parade, pageant, or carnival. If there are any home movies out there, we will be glad to have them transferred to a DVD and return the original (and a copy of the DVD) to the donor.
In Memoriam

Marilyn Linzenbold served as a board member of the Sharpsville Historical Society for many years, and devoted much time and energy to preserving Sharpsville’s history. When Marilyn and her late husband Art purchased the old Borough Building in 1985 for the Sharpsville Floral Shop, their plans to include a part of the building as a “Museum of Sharpsville” was what partly prompted the later formation of the Sharpsville Area Historical Society. Her recent passing is deeply mourned.

With Gratitude

The Borough Street Department donated a 1915 blueprint of a proposed sewer line from Hemlock St. to Hickory St., a framed 1933 map of the Borough water system, and a framed 1940 plan and elevation of the structures at the Shenango Furnace Company.

Abby Alter donated documents and a large collection of paraphernalia from the Odd Fellows Temple in Sharpsville.

Open House

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.

Contact Us

website: www.sharpsvillehistorical.org
email: sharpsvillehistorical@hotmail.com
see our website for officers’ phone numbers
Mailing address: 955 Forest Lane, Sharpsville, Pa. 16150
Meetings are held the First Monday of the Month at 7:00pm at our headquarters
The parade was one of the Centennial’s highlights, and a parade will certainly feature in next year’s events. To the left are some photos of the 1974 parade.

Fundraising was largely through the sale of centennial certificates (in two denominations), and commemorative plates and medallions.
The Herald gave a tremendous amount of publicity toward the Centennial, with numerous articles before and during the event. While paid for by ad space, the paper published an 88-page tabloid supplement, described then as “one of the largest ever printed by The Herald.” We have not come across a supplement so large before or since. (And, no, we don’t need additional copies of the 1974 supplement; we have plenty.)

Their editorial, along with caricatures of the drivers behind the Centennial, gives the perspective of the editors of the “big-city” next door, Sharon. Congratulatory, but in a sense condescending—typical of Sharon—in describing our town as the “gateway to the new Shenango River dam recreation area.”
The centennial produced an extraordinary number of souvenirs: ashtrays, mugs, ties, buttons. Businesses joined with their own centennial-themed giveaways.

The big excitement was the pageant, with its “cast of hundreds.”

The Sharpsville Carnival had its origins with the Centennial.