



SCHUYLKILL HERITAGE

A Newsletter of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County



Volume 6, Issue 4

“to discover, procure, and preserve...”

July - August 2011

Tracking Irish Ancestry in Schuylkill County

By Tom Dempsey

The genealogy “bug” has affected many of Irish ancestry in Schuylkill County, causing them to seek out information that will lead them to the counties and villages in the “auld sod” from which their forebears hailed.

Most civil and church records in the county are not of much help in this matter. This includes naturalization records. When the form asks for a place of birth, more often than not, “Ireland” is simply filled in. Very frustrating to say the least. The best source of this information is on surviving gravestones in some of the older Irish Catholic cemeteries in the county. Cemeteries of parishes such as St. Patrick’s, Pottsville; St. Stephen’s, Port Carbon; St. Vincent’s, Minersville; St. Kieran’s Heckscherville; St. Mary’s, St. Clair; St. Joseph’s, Ashland, St. Joseph’s (old), Girardville; Annunciation, Shenandoah; St. Canicus, Mahanoy City; St. Ignatius, Centralia (Columbia County) and some others with a high percentage of early Irish burials, have many stones with this information on them.

There are tombstone inscription books in the Historical Society of Schuylkill County and other local libraries which will save you actually walking through the desired cemetery. Some of these are also for sale. So, where do you start? You should start by talking to older members of the family who may have this information or may have heard family discussions on where in Ireland the immigrant ancestors came from. It may also be recorded in old family bibles which may be in the possession of certain family members. There are many resources on the internet some of which charge small or reasonable fees to search vital records in Ireland for birth and marriage information on the ancestors. The best of these is the Irish Family History Foundation www.rootsireland.ie.

There are some general immigration patterns among the Irish who came to Schuylkill County. In the central area of the county, around the Pottsville, St. Clair, Port Carbon and Schuylkill Haven area were a “mixed bag” of Irish coming from all counties in Ireland. Many came before the Potato Famine hit Ireland and these for the most part worked on the Schuylkill Canal and early railroads. Many of these Irish came from the central counties of Ireland such as Cork.



When the famine hit starting around 1845 and lasting well into the 1850’s, the largest influx of Irish occurred and most of these found employment in the coal industry. In eastern and northeastern Schuylkill County there was a heavy presence of immigrants from County Donegal. In the areas west of Pottsville, in Minersville and the surrounding townships of Cass, Branch and Reilly there were many Irish who were from County Kilkenny and Queens (Laois) County. These came from the Leinster Anthracite Coal Field of Ireland and many of these immigrants were experienced in the coal industry. In the Mahanoy Valley north of the Broad Mountain in an area from Ashland through Girardville, Lost Creek, Wm. Penn, Shenandoah, Mahanoy City and surrounding villages, the predominant county represented is Mayo, located in northwest Ireland. These are generalities, but may be helpful as a place to start looking. Also many Irish who originally settled “south of the mountain” moved “north of the mountain” during the Civil War as new mining activity was developing in that area.

Tom Dempsey is a native of Centralia who now resides in Girardville. Tom has been a longtime member of the Historical Society and is one of our volunteer researchers and a solid member of our Board of Directors.

Editors note: This is the first in a series of genealogical articles that we will be publishing.

Planning a successful genealogical research trip...

By Jean Dellock

After you exhaust all the resources at home and in your local area when compiling your family history, you may be thinking of taking a research trip. Before starting on your research trip it would be wise to do some planning so you can use your travel time wisely.

First, and most importantly, you should determine which family line you want to research. Then determine what information or evidence you want to locate, and in how much depth you want to go in your research. By setting realistic goals you can accomplish more in the time you have.

After you determine your research goals you should then check what records are available at the library or historical society you are traveling to and what hours they are open. It is also helpful to learn in advance, something about the history of the area where you are planning to traveling and research.

The Historical Society of Schuylkill County has an extensive collection of civil, ecclesiastical, newspaper and miscellaneous other records. Although we only have one microfilm reader at present (feel free to contribute to our fund drive for a new machine) we have an extensive collection of microfilm. We have all the Federal Census films

for the county – from 1810 to 1930. We are fortunate to have a published 1890 census for the county for that missing year of the federal census.

The listing of newspapers and court records on microfilm in our holdings is posted on our web page. (www.schuylkillhistory.com).

The Society has an extensive collection of church and cemetery records. The focus is mainly on the early German churches. Catholic Church records are difficult to acquire and we only have one or two of them. The Pottsville city directories; mine inspector books, which list miner's deaths; town and township histories; and church histories in our collection can also be helpful when trying to piece together your family history.

We look forward to having you visit our facility, whether to do research, tour our museum or visit our gift shop.

Jean Dellock is also one of our volunteer researchers and our former Secretary and Board member. She has co-authored numerous genealogical record books.



World War II Veterans Share Their Stories

We have begun to interview some of our World War II veterans under the Veterans History Project. This program was developed by the Library of Congress to collect video-recorded oral histories of our American war veterans and their wartime experiences.

We had students from Pottsville Area High School along with their teacher/counselor go out and interview the veterans. We will be starting again in Septem-



World War II Memorial Washington D.C.

ber.

If you know of a WW II veteran who is willing to share his stories from when

Recent Acquisitions to the Historical Societies Collections

Picture of old Pottsville Post Office from Joanne M. Yarrish.

History of 159th Engineer Combat Battalion during WW II from Russell Ruch.

CD with Civil War Letters to the Medlar Family from Randy Lindenmuth.

Papers on Edwin Forbes Civil War illustrator and landscape artist from Kent Ahrens, Athens OH.

Frederick L. Ebert's WWII memorabilia from his son Frederick J. Ebert

he was in the service, please let us know.

Also, if you are or know of a teacher or student from other school districts in

Schuylkill County and would like to participate in this program please contact Dave Derbes at 570-622-7540.

Eva Lopes Is Retiring

Somewhere within the past ten years, The Historical Society accepted a new volunteer to help us with our clerical work. That young lady happened to be Eva Lopes.

Eva's claim to fame at the "Society" was her computer skills and ability to organize parts of the library. Eva accepted the challenge to index our library of cemetery ledgers. A tumultuous task as it was, she indexed more than one hundred and fifty books. Researchers have all thanked Eva for this great favor since it saves so much time.

Since Eva came to us here in Schuylkill County from Boston, she has found our native language most different than the Boston "accent" and also the closeness of Schuylkill County people.

On behalf of the group that has worked with Eva, we offer her our best wishes and ask God to grant her good health.

Schuylkill County Baseball

We are putting together a program celebrating baseball's history in Schuylkill County. We will recount the history of players like Sparky Adams from Zerbe who played twelve years in the major leagues and Jake Daubert from Llewellyn who was considered one of the greatest first basemen of all times. There are many other (30 some) Schuylkill County men who played major league baseball. More details to come next newsletter.



Jake Daubert

Blossoms and Barbies, A Very Unique Exhibit

For July and August we have a unique exhibit that features the **WYSO art collection** and the **Barbie Doll Collections** of Karen Durkin and other local Barbie collectors. We have had portions of Frank (WYSO) Wysochansky's Folk Art on display at the Block of Art events over the past two years. This particular exhibit features WYSO's collection of floral art and is why we title it **Blossoms**. It gives you the feeling of walking in a springtime garden with colorful blossoms blooming all around you. Frank Wysochansky came from a emigrated Ukranian family that settled in the anthracite coal region

Join Us For An Early Fall Foliage Country History Bus Tour



We are planning a fall foliage county history tour for Saturday, October 8th. The focus of the tour will be many of the earliest settlements of the county.

We will visit many of the first churches that were established and stop along the way to relate stories of the first settlers and early towns. The stops will also focus on the locations of the graves of the Revolutionary War Soldiers who settled in the county.

We will begin and end at Martz Hall in Pottsville and our travels will take us through West Penn, East Brunswick, West Brunswick, South Manheim, Wayne, Pine Grove, and Branch Townships.

We will stop for lunch at Heisler's Dairy, Lewistown Valley for a lunch. Lunch is not included in the cost of the tour. You may also bring your own lunch as well.

The cost of the tour is \$15.00 / person. You may make reservations by calling the Historical Society at 570-622-7540 or sending a check to the Historical Society of Schuylkill County, 305 North Centre Street, Pottsville, PA 17901.

Upcoming Programs

July 8th Pottsville Night Out Days of Old, Pottsville's historic downtown. Tours of downtown, Schuylkill County's Historical Society's Antique Fire trucks, Childrens' Smoke House, the Breaker Boys, Historical Society Schuylkill County exhibits.

August 31st Charles Adams, news writer, author and well known speaker on Ghosts from Berks County will be with us to speak about his new book "**Berks and Schuylkill Ghost Stories**"

Program starts at 7 PM at the Society.

Admission is free and the public is invited.

around Scranton. He painted the life that he saw around him using what materials that were available to him. You will be impressed with this delightful exhibit as you were with his other art. You do not want to miss it.

New Schuylkill Books Schuylkill Stories: The Chronicles of Ione Geier



A collection of articles written during the prizewinning journalist's 40 years at the Pottsville Republican newspaper.

This book has two purposes: to publish a sort of alternate history of Schuylkill County with the kind of information you normally wouldn't find in a history book; and to benefit three nonprofit organizations in Schuylkill County.

Articles in this volume include stories about county residents during World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, local authors, embarrassing moments, memories of Pottsville, Frackville, and Shenandoah as they were in the mid-1950s and a wide variety of other stories of people from Schuylkill County.

Limited supply. Price \$20.00 including sales tax.

Microfilm Reader/Printer Urgently Needed

We continue to look for a microfilm reader/printer. We have had several leads on machines but none with printing capacity. Thus far we have raised \$2400.00 to date and have a few other pledges.

We want to thank the following for their generous support: Billie Jean Bagiley, Rhonda Bower, the Pottsville Womens Club, The Philanthropic Club and William Kreig Jr.

You Will Only See It Once In Your Lifetime

This year, July has 5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays and 5 Sundays. This happens once every 823 years.

Kind of interesting - read on! This year we will experience four unusual dates.

1/1/11, 1/11/11, 11/1/11, 11/11/11 and that's not all.

Take the last two digits of the year in which you were born - now add the age you will be this year,

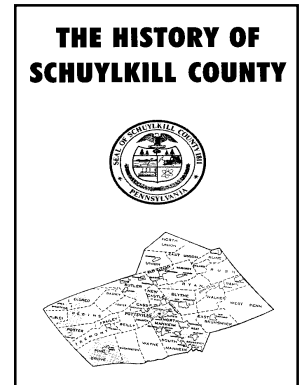
The results will be 111 for everyone in the whole world.

The History of Schuylkill County

This book was originally published in 1950 by the Pottsville School District and reprinted with the permission of the District by the Historical Society of Schuylkill County.

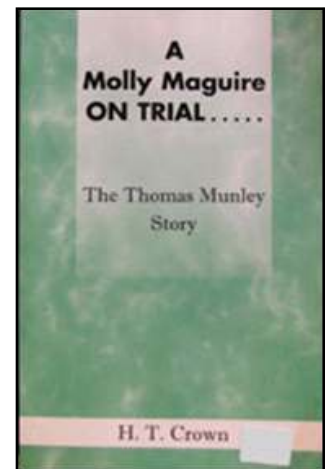
It is a history of the Schuylkill County written for the young resident and covers all phases of life in the county from coal mining, transportation to farming. An appropriate gift for anyone interested in county history. Reprinted during the celebration of the County's Bicentennial.

Order # B076 \$10.00 plus tax



A Molly Maguire Trial The Thomas Munley Story H. T. Crown

The Molly Maguire trials of the mid 1870s took place in an atmosphere of anti-Irish hysteria generated by the Pottsville Miners Journal, the Shenandoah Herald, and Philadelphia and New York newspapers. It was in this atmosphere that Thomas Munley a Molly Maguire accused of the murder of Thomas Sanger at Raven Run, went on trial. The Pinkerton



detective, James McParlan, was put on the witness stand for the prosecution. McParlan had infiltrated the Molly Maguire using the name, James McKenna, and learned all of the secrets of the Mollies. Author Howard Crown examines McParlan's testimony in the trial and raises startling questions about the detective's testimony. Did McParlan commit perjury on the witness stand? Was Munley innocent of the crime? The author answers many questions that have been raised about the trial in his well written book.

Order # B004 Sale price \$15.95 plus tax

MEMORY LANE

A Trip Into Schuylkill's Past



Question: The Schuylkill River is of what origin?

What does the word Schuylkill Mean?

Answers below.

Other things we did with coal!

Watching coal delivery... coal going down the chute, into the bin (coal bin in the house) this was our entertainment.

The ashes from the coal stoves were used during the winter to give traction to vehicles trying to get up those steep hills.

Cooking with coal, just scrumptious meals.

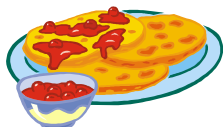
Coal in your Christmas stocking, (if you were bad)

(answers: *Dutch/Hidden River*)

RECIPES

Stars & Stripes Dessert

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 1 to 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon coarse sugar
- 2 cups of sliced fresh strawberries
- 1-1/2 cups of fresh raspberries
- 1 cup of fresh blueberries
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided
- ½ cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup (8oz) sour cream



On a lightly floured surface, roll out pastry to 1/8" thickness.

Cut with floured star shaped cookie cutters. Place 1 inch apart on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Bake at 400° for 8-10 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to wire racks. Brush lightly with water and sprinkle with coarse sugar. Cool.

In a large bowl, combine berries and ¼ cup of sugar; set aside. In a small bowl, beat cream until it begins to thicken, add remaining sugar; beat until soft peaks form. Place sour cream in a small serving bowl; fold in whipped cream.

Place bowl on a serving platter, spoon berry mixture onto platter, top with pastry stars.

Yield: 8 servings

MEMORIES

Do you remember the UMBRELLA MAN?

He came down the street ringing a small hand bell. He carried a small table on his back which he would set up on the front porch or sidewalk. He repaired umbrellas, sharpened knives and scissors.

Do you remember the PARLOR?

Now called a living room or family room, or den.

Do you remember the MOM AND POP STORES?

We had no supermarkets. You could purchase your items and buy on the book. You had a book with 2 pages having the same number, the proprietor kept a copy and you had your copy, at the end of the pay period (two weeks) the bill was paid. Most of the stores had sawdust on the floor, produce was sold out of the bushel baskets in which they came, bananas hung from the ceiling, and the owner would pull as many bananas as you wished from the stem.

Do you remember Home Remedies?

For a cough, you mixed vinegar and honey and kept it on the back of the stove.

You keep a supply of old bed linen on hand, to use as plasters (Mustard, Onion, Bread). If you had a chest cold, mom would spread the mixture on the cloth, fold it, put it on your chest, and pin it to your pajamas for the night.

Vicks ointment was used frequently for a lot of ailments. Headaches, sore throats, chest colds, sore feet.

For colds, hot soup and hot night totties (caps) were used as remedies, the night totties caps were popular with adults (wonder why??—).

For toothaches, use a drop of whiskey (or 2 or 3 or 4) to ease the pain.

Fourth of July Jell-O

- 1 pkg. (3oz) berry blue gelatin
- 2 cups of boiling water, divided
- ½ cup of cold water, divided
- 1 pkg. (3 oz) strawberry gelatin
- 1 can (15 oz) pear halves, drained and cubed



In a large bowl, dissolve the berry gelatin in 1 cup of boiling water, stir in ¼ cup cold water, pour into an ungreased 9" x 5" loaf pan. Refrigerate until firm. Repeat with strawberry gelatin and remaining boiling and cold water. When gelatin is set, cut into cubes. Just before serving, gently combine gelatin cubes and pears in a large glass bowl or individual dishes. Yield 6-8 servings.

The Historical Society
Of Schuylkill County
P.O. Box 1356
Pottsville, PA 17901

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Historical Society of Schuylkill County



**Tourists, Historical
Researchers, Scholars and
Genealogists are Welcome**

**305 North Centre Street,
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www.schuylkillhistory.org

Society Hours

Wednesday 1:30 - 6 p.m.

Thursday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Friday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Saturday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The Purpose of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County is to discover, procure, and preserve the records of the history of Schuylkill County and any data or materials which may establish or illustrate that history.