



SCHUYLKILL HERITAGE

A Newsletter of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County



Volume 4, Issue 6

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

November - December, 2009

SCHUYLKILL COUNTY SUMMER THEATRES

Kenley Deer Lake Theatre Route 122 (Now Route 61) Deer Lake

Deer Lake Theatre, better known as the “Summer Theatre” had its gala opening on June 24, 1936. As noted on the ad from the newspaper, it always claimed “Broadway Players” but never mentioned any well known players.



Continuing each summer, the “Theatre” began to show some actors and actresses who later became well known in movies and television. The week of June 17, 1940 starred Lilli Flynn, wife of Errol Flynn.

John Kenley, producer of the Deer Lake Theatre, had many close connections in New York City and Hollywood, thereby being able to secure some “Big Name” players. Among those appearing in the summer of 1947 were Signe Hasso, Buddy Ebsen, later of the “Beverly Hillbillies” on TV, Bela Lugosi for Dracula, Celeste Holm, Gloria Swanson, glamorous Jean Parker, as advertised in the newspaper.

The 1948 summer season presented Tom Poston, known for the “Bob Newhart Show” on TV, Sylvia Sidney,

Kay Francis, “Heart Throb” Guy Madison, Frank Sutton, better known as Sgt. Carter in “Gomer Pyle Show”, Yul Brynner appeared in one play but did not get top billing, Vera Vague, Edward Everett Horton, and Larry Parks, famous for “Al Jolson Story”.

Mr. Kenley negotiated with share holders of the “Theatre” to have the “Theatre” airconditioned, but to no avail. Thereby, forcing the shutdown of the Deer Lake Theatre at the end of the season.

Being the entrepreneur that he was, Mr. Kenley negotiated with the Guinan Family, owners of Lakewood Park, to build a new summer theatre.

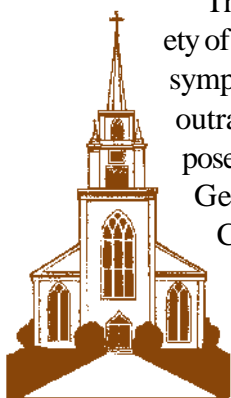
The Lakewood Theatre was planned and built very quickly. A Grande Opening Celebration was held



on June 14, 1949 in a new 728 seating capacity, airconditioned building with a fully equipped stage, dressing rooms and comfort rooms.

Continued on page 2

St. George Lithuanian Church soon to be no more



The Historical Society of Schuylkill County sympathizes with those outraged with the proposed demolition of St. George Lithuanian Catholic Church in Shenandoah. The church, with its 140 feet tall towers, is visible to all who enter the borough from any direction, was dedicated on October 25, 1891.

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The Lithuanian parish itself traces its roots back to 1872. The church building is the oldest Lithuanian church in North America. More than 5000 people came to witness the laying of the cornerstone. It was estimated that over 3000 people came by train to be part of history. Before the dedication ceremony a large parade featuring fourteen bands and dozens of religious societies marched down Main Street to the church. Reverend Peter Abromaitis was named the first pastor of the church and soon the parish

had a membership of 1200 families. The church has such historical and aesthetic significance that the controversy has been featured in national news reports. The National Trust for Historic Preservation on October 14th featured the plight of St. George Church in its on-line article “Pennsylvania Church to Fall.” With church closings becoming more frequent there is an urgent need to preserve and sustain the historical buildings that were built by our forebearers.

Continued from page 1

SUMMER THEATRES

Mr. Kenley once again brought to our area big name stars from New York City. Starring once again was Tom Poston, Bert Parks of "Here she is, Miss America" fame, Diana Barrymore, Elizabeth Scott, Joan Blondell, Kay Francis, Zasu Pitts, Susan Peters, Paul Lukas, Sarah Churchill, daughter of Winston Churchill, and Sunny Tuff.

Once again in 1950, some of the stars performing were: Loraine Day, Shelley Winters, Eve Arden, Brooks West, Edward Arnold, Lon McAlister, Victor Jory and John Canadine.

The 1951 summer began with Veronica Lake, Richard Kiley, John Garfield, Olivia DeHaviland, Melvyn Douglas, Constance Bennett, Ilona Massey and Carol Bruce starring in "Pal Joey", written by our own John O'Hara of Pottsville.

The next four summers once again presented many "Big Names", later seen in the movies. Jackie Cooper, Lanny Ross, Mae West, Alexis Smith, Angela Lansbury, Alan Alda, Franchot Tone, Peter Lorre, Dagmar, Arthur Treacher, June Havoc, Evelyn Keyes, Charles Coburn, Terry Moore, Zachary Scott, Lawrence Tierney, Kurt Kasnar, Carol Bruce and Betsy Blair, wife of Gene Kelly.

Despite the presentations by "Top Billed" actors and actresses, attendance dwindled and the theatre closed at the end of the 1955 season.

A new team of producers named Nat Stevens and Andrew Breslin decided to once again recruit "Top Actors and Actresses". Here once again are presented the lists of those "Stars" for the summers of 1956 and 1957.

Eva Gabor, Coleen Dewhurst, Lynn Bari, Jayne Meadows, Pat O'Brien, Henry Morgan, Imogene Coca, Jules Munshin, Robert Alda, Buster Keaton, Red Buttons, Carol Ann Berry, daughter of Wallace Berry, and Dorothy Lamour who suffered an accident during rehearsal and had to perform with a leg cast, which she did very well. The old sign once again was posted - "CLOSED".

The theatre was tried again in July of 1958 with five

shows. There were not any top ranked players and attendance was so poor - the theatre again closed.

Trying to keep the theatre an ongoing thing, the Guinan Family tried to rescue the theatre for the summer of 1959, but did not succeed and the theatre was closed for five years.

The summer of 1965 a new manager, by name of Charles Hall Jr., reopened the theatre with some top billed people. Listed are: Andy Devine, Tab Hunter, Kathleen Nolan (Katie in "Real McCoys"), Ed "Kookie" Burns, Monique Von Vooren, Julia Meade, and Christina Crawford, daughter of Joan Crawford who later wrote the book "Mommie Dearest". It was learned that Mr. Hall would not return for the 1966 season.

Richard Reimold, a former Hazleton High School dramatics teacher and wife Kathie decided they would "try" the summer theatre.

Richard and Kathie chose to recruit local talent and not the "top billing" people from New York. Further, they created a "Children's Theatre" on Saturday afternoon at 2:00pm. Richard and Kathie did well for a few summers, but following the 1968 season - CLOSED.

On June 24, 1969 Robert G. Buchanan stepped in to operate and direct the theatre.

He presented ten musicals along with ten "Children's Theatre" Programs. He directed the theatre until the end of the 1975 season.

The theatre remained "Dark" for the summer of 1976.

The summer of 1977, beginning on July 11, John Dobbins, Richard Whiting and Dan Langan reopened the theatre with an "All Star Cast". Once again some top names are: John Raitt., Lynn Redgrave, Phyllis Diller and Ann Corio, Pinky Lee and Lana Turner.

My wife Millie and I were fortunate enough to see Lana Turner in "Bell, Book and Candle". Following the performance she came out onto the stage and had a very "touching chat" with the audience. A very memorable occasion.

The final year of the theatre was in 1978 with some stars such as singer Jerry Vale, Ann Corio, David Morgan and Maxene Andrews of the Andrews Sisters.

The seasonal end of 1978 marked the sad, sad, story of The Lakewood Theatre - CLOSED.



Three Great Books at One Great Price

Purchase all three books below for the one great price of only \$28.17. Use Order number B048 and save big.

Books may also be purchased individually



A Collection of 20 Historical Musings ... Written by Leo L. Ward

Volume IX 1994 NO.2 20 historical accounts all about Schuylkill County written for the Pottsville Republican by our late H.S.S.C. President Leo Ward. Learn about the Pioneer Furnace, or the Centre Turnpike or the Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918. This is a must read for history buffs of Schuylkill County.

Single price \$15.00 + \$0.90 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$19.90

Publications of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County ...

Volume IX 1989 NO.1 Four great stories ... all about Schuylkill County

The Last Days of the Confederacy by Confederate General John B. Gordon.

125 Years of Journalism by Herwood E. Hobbs

The Story of the Yuengling Brewery by Edith C. Yuengling

The History of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Company by Bernard E. Buggy

Single price \$10.00 + \$0.60 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$14.60

Early Transportation in Schuylkill County

An exquisite collage of rare and very historic photographs depicting the evolution of transportation within our very own Schuylkill County.

This is not your ordinary history book. Packed with pictures of canal boats on the Schuylkill River, horse and carriages and old trains. Why it even has a picture of the first automobile brought to the county by Robert Allison that is now in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.

Single price \$10.00 + \$0.60 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$14.60

Historical Society of Schuylkill County Collectable Plates and Pilsner Beer Glasses

make a great gift.

Collectable Plates

100th Anniversary Historical Society plate

The Soldiers Monument plate

Sale price \$15.00 each



Pilsner Beer Glasses

Historical Society of Schuylkill County Pilsner Beer Glass with pictures of the Old and New Society Headquarters and signed by Leo Ward.

Sale price \$5.00 each





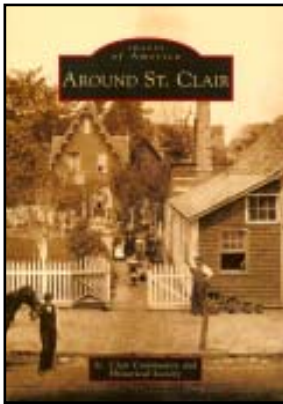
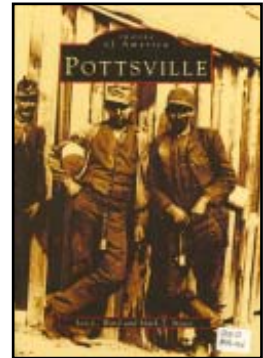
Dear Santa...

This Christmas I want a book from the Historical Society of Schuylkill County

Images of America, Pottsville by Leo L. Ward & Mark T. Major

The photographs in this book bring to life a bygone era, when Coal was King, and almost everyone who lived between Pottsville, Hazelton, Wilkes-Barre, and Scranton was affected by the daily activity of coal mining. The development of the anthracite coal industry began in 1822 causing the "Coal Rush" of the 1820s and '30s and drawing thousands of new people to the area.

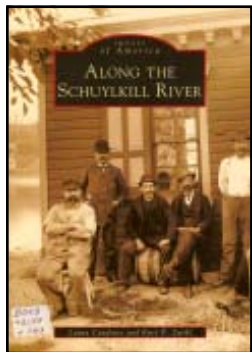
Order # B010 Sale price \$19.95 + \$1.20 tax + S&H \$4.00 Total \$25.15



Around St. Clair by St. Clair Community and Historical Society

St. Clair was started in 1831 as a small valley rich with anthracite coal. It expanded to the point of 7,000 residents with a blend of mixed ethnic cultures. This book is a pictorial treasure of vintage photographs put together by the St. Clair Community and Historical Society.

Order # B045 Sale price \$21.99 + \$1.32 tax + S&H \$4.00 Total \$27.31



Along the Schuylkill River by Laura Catalano and Kurt Zwikl

The Schuylkill River played a major role in the development of our country from the days of the Revolutionary War to the Industrial Revolution. This tells that story from a compiled group of photographs from many historical collections.

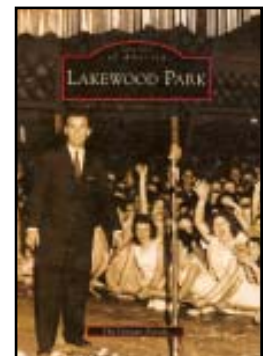
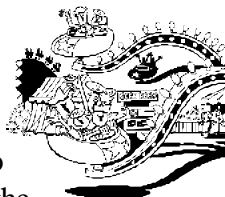
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Lakewood Park by the Guinan Family

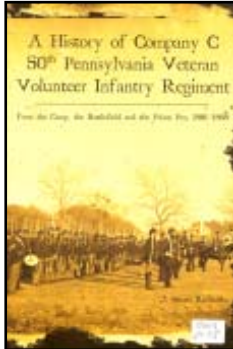
The history of Lakewood Park that served the northeast Pennsylvania from 1916 to 1984. From swimming, amusement park rides to big name bands like Les Brown to the Dorsey Brothers it served the region as a fun retreat for the mining communities.

Order # B046 Sale price \$21.99 + \$1.32 tax + S&H \$4.00 -- Total \$27.31





A great book from the Historical Society of Schuylkill County



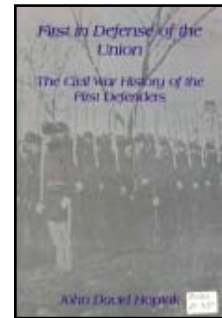
A History of Company C 50th Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Infantry Regiment
By J. Stuart Richards

The story of the men from Schuylkill Haven who made up Company C written in their own words from letters, official records and surviving narratives. Stu Richards brings to light the men who worked on the Schuylkill Canal as they fought from Beaufort, SC, to Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania to the siege of Petersburg. Truly an interesting read.

Order # B003 Sale price \$21.95 + \$1.32 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$27.27

First in Defense of the Union
The Civil War History of the First Defenders
By John David Hoptak

This is a story of those Schuylkill County men who were the first to respond to President Lincoln's appeal to come to the defense of the nation in April, 1861. Men from all walks of life left their homes, farms and mines to answer the call to arms. Hoptak not only tells their story but also names all the men and their units. The proceeds of the sale of this book will go to the Gen. Nagle's sword replacement fund at Antietam.



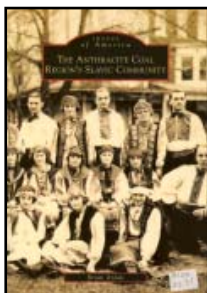
Order # B030 Sale price \$19.95 + 1.20 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$25.15



Our Boys Did Nobly
by John David Hoptak

In Our Boys Did Nobly, Civil War historian and Antietam Park Ranger John Hoptak tells the story of the 48th, 50th, and 96th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiments during the consequential Maryland Campaign of September 1862, with special focus on the crucial and bloody battles of South Mountain and Antietam.

Order # B041 Sale price \$25.00 + \$1.50 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$30.50



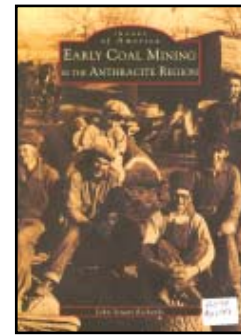
The Anthracite Coal Region's Slavic Community
By Brian Ardan

The Anthracite Coal Region's Slavic Community presents a pictorial history of Slavic people in hard coal country, conveying the unique and rich culture brought to the area with the arrival of these diverse communities

Order # B036 - Sale price - \$21.99 + \$1.32 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$27.31



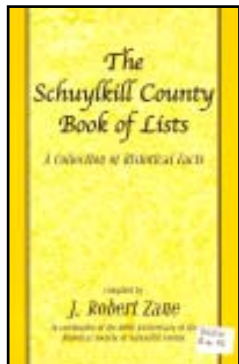
**This Christmas give a great
book from the
Historical Society of
Schuylkill County**



**Early Coal Mining in the Anthracite Region
by John Stu Richards**

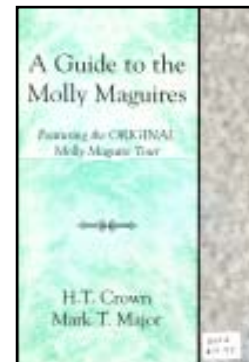
The pictorial story of the anthracite coal fields of northeastern Pennsylvania. The book covers all aspects of the miners life and the mules and equipment they used deep underground by someone who is a descendant of a Schuylkill County mining family. This is possibly the best mining book available today and has been in print since 2002.

Order # B044 Sale price \$21.99 + \$1.32 tax + \$4.00 S&H -- Total \$27.31



**The Schuylkill County Book of Lists,
A Collection of Historical Facts
compiled by J. Robert Zane**

**Order # B026 Sale price \$16.95 + \$1.02 tax + S&H
\$4.00 Total \$21.97**



**A Guide to the Molly Maguires,
Featuring the original Molly Maguire Tour
by H.T. Crown & Mark Major**

**Order # B002 Sale price \$19.95 + \$1.20 tax + S&H \$4.00
Total \$25.15**



Railroads of Schuylkill County, P A

A series of still pictures on VHS Tape or DVD of the Reading Railroad Company Trains 1946-1976 issued by the Historical Society of Schuylkill County.

Order # TOO1	VHS Tape Vol I	\$19.95 + \$1.20+ S&H \$4.00 Total \$25.15
Order # TOO2	VHS Tape Vol 2	\$19.95 + \$1.20+ S&H \$4.00 Total \$25.15
Order # COO1	DVD Vol 2	\$19.95 + \$1.20+ S&H \$4.00 Total \$25.15



**Check our Web site for additional Gifts
www.schuylkillhistory.org**

Accepting Credit Cards & PayPal in-house and on-line

Hopefully by mid-November we will be able to accept your credit card for purchases at the soon to be finished "inhouse" and "on-line" gift shop. It has been a long and arduous task getting all the details necessary to process credit cards.

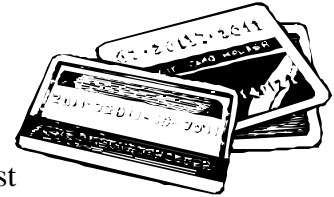
We are starting to move items around internally and looking for more merchandise that we hope will appeal to our members and other visitors.

Our gift shop will feature "Schuylkill" items such as books, T-shirts, photographs and other gift items pertaining to Schuylkill County.

We will also be able to accept membership renewals, research request payments, donations and other services that require payment transfers.

We will be able to accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discovery and PayPal credit cards.

Please check our web site to see if there is "something Schuylkill" that might interest that discriminating person on your gift list for the holidays.



Budgetary Matters ...

As many of you are aware, the Pennsylvania State Budget process went into extra innings (100 plus days) before the Legislators and Governor were able to come to terms. The slow down in the economy has had its affect on the tax revenues collected and lo and behold our states spending has outrun those revenues.

How does that affect us? We have

been receiving grant money from the PA Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) since we moved into our new Centre Street School facility since 2002. It comes to us in the form of a GOS (General Operating Support Grant) that many county historical societies and museums throughout the state receive.

We have been receiving \$9,000 over the past few years and our County Commissioners have matched

that amount. Our budget has been fairly consistent also over the past five years averaging in the \$60,000 to \$65,000 range. We will be hard pressed to meet our expenses next year if we lose this funding from the state and/or county.

We are waiting to hear what the PHMC will do relative to this funding. In the meantime we are preparing to launch our Annual Appeal which is our own fund raising effort. We hope that you will generously support this effort as you have done in the past.

The Historical Society salutes local efforts

The Historical Society of Schuylkill County salutes the communities and the individuals involved in the completion of two projects that involve county history.

In late August a community park at South Third Street in St. Clair was dedicated to the memory of Schuylkill County's favorite Admiral. The Joel T. Boone Park was the labor of love of many St. Clair residents, spearheaded by council woman Val Davis. It took nine years for the idea to become a reality but the borough of St. Clair has a park to be mighty proud of to honor its native son. Joel Boone was a World War I hero who applied dressings and first aid to wounded marines during a battle near Vierzy, France. His heroism earned him a medal of honor. After the war he was the assistant to Presidents Harding and

Coolidge. He later was the Navy Medical Corps representative aboard the USS Missouri at the signing of the Japanese surrender and was one of the first Americans to set foot on Japanese soil at the end of the Second World War.

In September a local Civil War hero was honored for his military valor. A Civil War marker was placed at the grave site of Brevet Brigadier General Benjamin C. Christ in the First United Methodist Cemetery in Branch Township. The project was the inspiration of Carol Kalinich, a neighbor of the cemetery. Research was assisted by Historical Society of Schuylkill County executive director Dr. Peter Yasenchek. The civil war officer was an Orwigsburg native who latter settled in Minersville.

Historical Society of Schuylkill County



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

**305 North Centre Street,
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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.