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# NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Nanticoke's own History Detective

**John Sherrick is on the Case**

John Sherrick loves piecing together existing information stored in the Society's computers with tidbits he collects from copies of old newspaper articles and documents donated to the Nanticoke Historical Society. Finding a missing piece that adds to the story of someone's life and times or completes the ownership lineage of a Nanticoke property is what drives him to put in countless hours sorting through and placing each new acquisition in its proper place.

"Cross referencing is a challenge" he says, in regard to making sure documentation is made across the board, from property ownership, personal information and business history. Then there's the challenge of making sure information pertaining to dates lived, addresses, or descendants match, so that the details are attached to the right person. It's an

*See Sherrick*

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## Keeping up With the Times

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**Nanticoke History on the Web**

Opinions on the immense effect technology and the world-wide web have on our lives today swings from favorable to unfavorable depending on who you're talking to. However, it is a valuable tool that allows organizations like the Nanticoke Historical Society to get the word out as to all the benefits it offers.

Gene Bojarski, The society's web site creator and Facebook page administrator, has given over many hours developing these sites. Serving as content manager for the web site and Historical Society Facebook page Bojarski keeps everyone up-to-date on society events as well as initiating placement of photos for possible identification. Log on to [www.Nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.Nanticokehistoryonline.org). to find out more about the society, read stories about the city, find out how to request information, see photos and much more.

These two vehicles alone allow world-wide access to the society and in today's transient environment will help keep the Nanticoke Historical Society on the cutting edge.

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#### DID YOU KNOW

**April 24, 1800** - The Library of Congress was established in Washington, D.C. It is America's oldest federal cultural institution and the world's largest library. Among the 145 million items in its collections are more than 33 million books, 3 million recordings, 12.5 million photographs, 5.3 million maps, 6 million pieces of sheet music and 63 million manuscripts. About 10,000 new items are added each day.

enormous undertaking, but something one can tell instantly, Sherrick truly enjoys.

As one of the “information officers” and lifetime member of the society, Sherrick admits it was his love of Nanticoke that brought him to the challenge.

With his computer as his trusty sidekick, Sherrick started his historical quest by listing all files and sub-files in categories under the appropriate main heading of Encyclopedia. Some of the main entries include biographies of individuals, families, commercial, churches, fire departments, police department, city government, festivals, schools, city directories, mining industry, military from the revolutionary war to Iraq, the Susquehanna River and real estate history. The list is endless.

“I think of everything I don't have,” Sherrick said in a recent interview. During a newspaper strike in the 70's the suburban columns devoted to Nanticoke and other small towns stopped and are now gone, “It's not printed anymore, all that history is gone. You can't make those associations anymore.” Sherrick is very familiar with how important those articles are, as he copied every article that referenced Nanticoke starting with the 1891 Wilkes-Barre Record up to 1973 Times Leader. At a quarter a copy the project was not only time consuming but expensive. He then set about placing and cross referencing each article.

### ***New Database Information***

One of Sherrick's most recent projects includes photographing every grave marker in each of the 12 cemeteries in and around Nanticoke. In 2009, he started with the Nanticoke Cemetery, which from beginning to end was a challenge since some grave markers had deteriorated and crumbled. Nonetheless, Sherrick continued photographing the sites and later matched them with an existing map filling in the missing information. At present, Sherrick has two more cemeteries to document, St. Faustina, formerly Holy Trinity and St. Joseph's which he plans to

start this spring.

If that wasn't enough, from 2009 to 2011 Sherrick photographed all of the homes and businesses on each street in the city as well as some Sheatown and Alden properties. He painstakingly matches his current photos with any past photos of the location, so as to keep a running record of the property's history. He then adds his newly acquired information to a history which chronicles everything that happened on that particular street.

One would have to wonder if there are enough hours in the day to keep such a pace, but as Sherrick admits, he sometimes works into the wee hours of the morning. The Society is fortunate to have Sherrick and his dedication and love for the city of Nanticoke and its rich history. It proves that each bit of information, no matter how minute, is important in piecing together a larger picture of the people that migrated to and built this city. In his quest to document the past, he's found references to his own family in articles of a 1927 newspaper.

More importantly, through his “historical detective work” Sherrick has made it possible to take individual pieces of seemingly disconnected information and link them in a continuous chain to a distant past.

## **Historical Society presents Huber Program**

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The Nanticoke Historical Society hosted a program presented by Bill Best, president of the Huber Breaker Preservation Society. Best offered a comprehensive history of the anthracite mine fields and the workings of coal breakers; described as “enormous preying monsters,” on one of many web sites dedicated to the subject He also spoke of the Preservation Society's attempts to save the last remnants of the Huber Breaker in Ashley. One fact

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## Calendar of Events

### "AN INTRODUCTION TO GENEALOGY"

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

**7 P.M. APRIL 24**

*SAMANTHA MILL HOUSE, 495 EAST MAIN STREET,  
NANTICOKE  
(NEXT TO MILL MEMORIAL LIBRARY)*

### "Nanticoke Area Mining Movies"

***Narrated by Charles Petrillo***

**7 P.M MAY 15**

*AT THE CULTURAL CENTRE OF ST. FAUSTINA.  
38 W. CHURCH STREET, NANTICOKE*

### "Next Monthly Meeting"

**7 P.M. MAY 29**

*SAMANTHA MILL HOUSE, 495 EAST MAIN STREET,  
NANTICOKE  
(NEXT TO MILL MEMORIAL LIBRARY)*

Meetings suspended for June July and August

### "Family Picnic Day"

*FOR ALL MEMBERS*

**10 A.M. TO 3 P. M. – JULY 19**

*SAMANTHA MILL HOUSE (NEXT TO MILL MEMORIAL LIBRARY). EVERYONE IS ASKED TO BRING A COVERED DISH TO SHARE. THE SOCIETY WILL PROVIDE HAMBURGERS, HOT DOGS, SODA AND WATER. MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO CALL OR EMAIL THE PRESIDENT IF YOU WILL ATTEND AND WHAT YOU ARE BRINGING.*

### "MIRACLE OF THE BELLS"

*A FALL DATE IS BEING DISCUSSED FOR THE SHOWING OF THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS MOVIE. DATE AND TIME AND LOCATION WILL BE ANNOUNCED.*

*Huber*

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makes Best's focus more immediate, breakers are unique to the Northeast section of Pennsylvania and the Huber is the last one standing.

Breakers such as Loomis in Hanover Twp., Bliss, Truesdale and Auchincloss in the Hanover section of Nanticoke and the Susquehanna #5 and 7 dotted the landscape in Luzerne and surrounding Lackawanna, Schuylkill, Northumberland, Carbon, Columbia, Dauphin, Susquehanna and Sullivan Counties, The Huber Breaker in Ashley, named in honor of Charles F. Huber, Glen Alden Coal Corporation Chairman was one of the last constructed. The colliery closed in 1976.

### ***Northeast PA coal region unique***

Coal deposits are worldwide, but the coal from a 500 square mile region of northeastern Pennsylvania is special. 300 million years ago, decaying plant matter known as peat shifted and compressed under enormous pressure to become coal. But in Northeastern Pennsylvania the upheaval of the Appalachian Mountains moved the peat deeper beneath the earth's surface, creating anthracite a harder more pure high-carbon coal. It proved difficult to ignite but burned longer and more efficiently than bituminous. In 1808, Judge Jesse Fell of Wilkes-Barre, burned anthracite on a grate proving it could be used to heat homes and David Thomas of the Crane Iron Works in Catasauqua brought the first large-scale anthracite furnace to Northeast PA. As the demand for anthracite increased, the need for finding a way to efficiently break the coal into burnable sizes grew.

### ***Battin's Invention***

In 1844, Joseph Battin, a supervisor at a manufacturing plant in Philadelphia invented the first coal breaker. Battin's first chance to show the usefulness of his invention came when Gideon Bast, asked him to set up a breaker at his colliery on Wolf Creek, north of Minersville. As time went on more and more mines added breakers to their operations. But, by the 1970s, many coal breakers around the world were being shut down in favor of

*See Huber*

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## LINKS TO SUCCESS

It was June of 1996, and the Nanticoke Historical Society was still in the early stages of formation when members received a letter from Mr. L.W. Lamb of Gauteng, Republic of South Africa. The letter, which came by way of then Nanticoke Mayor **Wasil Kobela** and Nanticoke Cemetery Director, **Harold Cain**, detailed Lamb's interest in finding the burial site of his great grandparents **Henry and Matilda Bodilly** who emigrated from Cornwall England to Nanticoke in 1830.

Members of The Society eagerly began their search and found they had the family's burial records in their database. Henry Bodilly was buried on October 6, 1884. The couple's infant son was interred on October 26, 1884 and Matilda, wife of Henry, was buried on November 2, of the same year. One of the two surviving sons, Lamb's father, returned to England. Lamb was aware the family had died of "some form of plague and as he stated in his letter, "I always forgot to ask (my mother) about our ancestors and now I have become interested and would like to find out more."

Copies of the records as well as photographs of the sites were sent along to Lamb. Although Lamb wasn't sure anyone would have the information he requested, he was fortunate to have reached out in the very year of the Society's inception. For the founding members, it solidified their determination to continue their efforts to link people, even from as far away as South Africa, with relatives that settled in Nanticoke.

**NOTE:** As in years prior to 1884, and up to the outbreak of Spanish influenza in 1918 diseases such as typhoid fever, cholera, diphtheria, influenza and small pox would reach epidemic proportions devastating whole communities.

➤ **IN THE NEXT ISSUE....** Who was Edward G. Phillips and does anyone know what's buried in Patriot Park?

*Huber*

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coal preparation plants.

After a post -World War II decline in coal production and several catastrophic mine accidents, King Coal ruled the region no more.

Sadly, the society was unable to save the breaker itself, as restoration would have been an immense undertaking, but through the tireless efforts of Best and members the Preservation Society has obtained 3 ½ acre site in front of the breaker for a memorial park in which they hope to include a theatre, multimedia building, miner's home and gift shop. The society is in the process of obtaining two train cars to be restored and placed at the site.

The Nanticoke Historical Society was pleased to be able to present the program and stands with the Preservation Society in their efforts to commemorate these last remnants of Pennsylvania's rich coal history.

### Congratulations

*to the winners of our Easter Drawing - Thank you to everyone who participated.*

*The winners are:*

*1st prize Tom Mera, Delaware*

*2nd prize Ray Blockus, Shickshinny*

*3rd prize Al Yarasavage, Mt. Top*

## Society Hosts Open House

Recently the Nanticoke Historical Society hosted an open house at their offices at the Samantha Mill House. Visitors were invited to submit an historical or genealogical query to members of the staff at no cost. Information officers Chet Zaremba and John Sherrick accessed the Society's database for requested information while those who attended enjoyed refreshments and discussed the memorabilia and photographs on display. Check out the Nanticoke Historical Society Facebook page to see photos.

**MEMBERS SEARCHING FOR  
INFORMATION ON THE  
FOLLOWING SURNAMES:**

**Ray Blockus**

Surnames: **Blockus, Blokus, Blocus, Chesko, Chezka, Czieka, Chzan**  
[Texasgal445@yahoo.com](mailto:Texasgal445@yahoo.com)

**Bob & Elaine Deluca**

Surnames: **Deluca, Tarnowski**  
[emd469@pa.metrocast.net](mailto:emd469@pa.metrocast.net)

**Michael Geiger**

Surnames: A New one added **Lenahan**  
[ironmike47@comcast.net](mailto:ironmike47@comcast.net)

**Stanley & Sally Gorgas**

Surnames: **Hyduk/Hydak, Haydock, Adamski, Bialobek, Tomko, Ulatowski, Bjalobek, Butchko, Paulus, Negosh, Galick, Harczarik**  
[sgo2240718@aol.com](mailto:sgo2240718@aol.com)

**Richard & Theresa Hess**

Surnames: **Sienzant/Sierzant, Wiemcak/Wiecek, Mikolaicik**  
[HessTerry@hotmail.com](mailto:HessTerry@hotmail.com)

**Nancy Heyrich**

Surnames: m-grandparents **Joseph Kaminski, Kuryloski**  
[naheyrich@aol.com](mailto:naheyrich@aol.com)

**John Hickey**

Surnames: New names added **Carter, Toward, Dougherty, Higgins**  
[jfhicke@q.com](mailto:jfhicke@q.com)

**Sandy Lee**

Surnames: **Lee, Burnaford**  
[henslee33@gmail.com](mailto:henslee33@gmail.com)

**Martha (Becky) Price**

Surnames: **Connor, Hopko, Cintalla**  
email [Rebekah53@verizon.net](mailto:Rebekah53@verizon.net)

**Barry Littleford**

Surnames: **Littleford, Ruddick, Davis thru marriage Myers, Stewart, Paige (Tushinski)**  
email [LIL4D@verizon.net](mailto:LIL4D@verizon.net)

**Richard Robins**

Fathers Family Surnames: **Robins, Mott, Wolf, Dodson, Pringle, Carter, Sharps, Large, Ives, Bonham, Porch, Morse, Harrison, Gregory, Wolfe**  
Mothers Family Surnames: **Wells, Wheeler, Hungerford, Miller, Baltzell, Dugas (Du Vallon), Morris, Kemball, Grosch, Butz, Smith, Guibert.**  
[w5brr@aol.com](mailto:w5brr@aol.com)

**Helen Wasiakowski**

Surnames: **Wasiakowski, Krukowski, Welnowski (Welnoski), Wolski, Piontkowski, Madajewski, Hiller (Chyla), Mackiewicz, Aszuk**  
[HelenScarlett@yahoo.com](mailto:HelenScarlett@yahoo.com)

**John Stolarick**

Surnames: **Grandfather Stephen Stolarick**  
**Grandmother Mary Chabala**  
Phone 570-696-1036

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