



"Not to live in the past, but to have the past live through us."

West Pittston Historical Society

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www.westpittstonhistory.org

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Dear Friends of the West Pittston Historical Society,

The officers and board members of the West Pittston Historical Society would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and healthy new year. We are deeply appreciative of your past support and hope that you have had an opportunity to attend our historical programs and activities.

Our web site has become a welcome place for current and former residents to visit viewing vintage photos, reading through the borough's history and learning about the Jenkins Harding Cemetery. The site is also attracting genealogists who regularly submit research questions to us regarding their West Pittston ancestors. Be sure to stop by to see what's new at www.westpittstonhistory.org.

Proceeds from the 2009 West Pittston Tour of Homes have made it possible for the Society to complete Phase 1 of our Pittston Gazette Microfilm project. WPHS now owns the most complete collection of Gazette films available in the county. The vintage newspapers provide a unique insight into the everyday life and events taking place in West Pittston over the years. Phase 2 of this project will involve digitizing the microfilm and placing it on our website for viewing. This will be a costly project involving an estimated 117,000 images. The success of our future fund raising events will be essential to completing this project.

The Society also continues to assist financially with the maintenance of the historic Jenkins Harding Cemetery on Wyoming Avenue. Our long-range preservation plans for the cemetery include historic conservation repairs to several of the deteriorating gravestones as well as pruning the cemetery's large white oak trees that date back to the 19th century.

As always, we are planning a number of historically informative program offerings for 2010 and we invite your programming ideas and suggestions.

Your membership renewal or new membership for 2010 will enable the historical society to continue raising awareness of the historical assets of West Pittston and to preserve them for future generations. Your continued support will allow us to preserve our historic past.

Sincerely,

The Officers and Executive Board of the West Pittston Historical Society

2010 OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

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From the Gazette:

The following abstract is taken from the Pittston Gazette August 21, 1941.

Gustav J. Huber of Warren Street, well known retired blacksmith, who is 87 years old today recalls some interesting events which took place in the Pittston area when he was a boy. His father served in the Mexican War in 1848. He married Elizabeth Ferber and settled in Pittston. He worked in the lime kiln located in the rear of the lot occupied by the American Theater. He died when Gustav was about 6 months old. The mother later married Phillip Geiger.

Continuing the story he says: As a lad I worked as a slate picker in the Butler breaker. I had plenty of chores at home too. I carried water, coal and wood and gathered shavings from the lumber yard to bed the pigs. We could not buy fine coal. Only lump coal could be bought and we had to break the lumps at home so the coal could be used in the stove. In winter I carried water from the river. It was necessary to cut a hole in the ice with an axe every time we needed water. The ice was so thick that a long-handled dipper was needed to fill the pails. I wore a yoke on which to carry the pails. Sometimes the snow was so deep that the pails dragged in the snow. In summer we had to search for a spring and it took us hours to fill our pails.

While I worked at the Butler breaker I had a narrow escape. I would ride home on mine cars which ran from the breaker and were dropped by a plane to the canal at the foot of Butler Street. The bottom gates of the car in which we were riding suddenly opened and men and coal were let through. Two men were killed. I was lucky enough to escape with a severe cut on the ear. I still have the scar.

When I was 14 years of age I worked as a laborer in the Butler mine for my stepfather. My hands would get so sore in the morning when I stretched my hands enough tears would fall from my eyes to wash my face. Finally I found an old pair of boots and made hand leathers, like gloves, to protect my hands. At the age of 17 years I was apprenticed to Henry Kuschel, Sr., blacksmith of Spring street. Eight months later my stepfather was killed in the mines. Then I had to assume more duties and assist my mother in supporting my three step-sisters. In the summer I would arise at daybreak and plow and cultivate the garden before going to the blacksmith shop. My step-sisters walked many miles a day to sell vegetables to support the family. I would search the riverbank for lumber to mend fences. I felt that I would have but one mother and I must do all I could for her while she was here. She died at the early age of 56 years.

I worked for Mr. Kuschel for ten years and learned all phases of blacksmithing. I wanted more pay so I left Mr. Kuschel and went to Mill Hollow (Luzerne) for ten months and then transferred to Lackawanna (Old Forge) for two years. In 1880 I settled in West Pittston. This town was very small then. In my boyhood there were six farms and farmhouses here. I remember when a great flood carried away the river bridges. Then a ferry was used. One winter, after the bridges were carried away, we crossed the river on the ice for several days. When I decided to settle here, I built a shop in the 500 block of Montgomery avenue. In winter, when icy conditions demanded a lot of work, I would rise at 2 a. m. and work until 8 or 9 p. m. shoeing mules and horses. In 1891 I built a shop on Race street, rear of the Moose building, and continued at that shop until 1916. After that I worked for different blacksmiths until advancing age led me to retire.

After I vacated the blacksmith shop on Montgomery avenue, I built a house on the site. In 1882 I built a house at the corner of Montgomery avenue and Franklin street. In 1895 I built the brick building now owned and occupied by the Moose lodge. I have lived retired for about 5 years and enjoy good health. I built my present home on Warren street in 1910 and have resided there ever since.

Times have changed. I recall I received \$1 for arresting a man while serving on the volunteer police force. Now borough police are paid a salary.

The July 17, 1941 edition of the Gazette featured this photo of local workers gearing up for war time production at the West Pittston Iron Works.

Round-The-Clock Production At West Pittston Iron Works



Front row, left to right—George W. Woodworth, Jr., plant supt.; Merritt Jackson, set-up man; Vernon Newton, drill press foreman; Leo Walsh, general foreman "A" shift; A. R. Evans, chief of inspection.

Second row, left to right—Hugh McGuire, tool room foreman; W. H. Tilley, plant engineer; Allan Burleson, general manager; Miss Mildred Eder, office manager; Miss Marie Bose, plant nurse; Miss Jane Owens, chief nurse; Miss Thelma Hooper, stenographer.

Third row, left to right—A. J. Scanlon, British inspector; Russell

Endres, drill press foreman; Herman Koch, cost clerk; Frank Greco, foreman "C" shift; William Walker, planer foreman; Henry Kann, paymaster; Dr. H. B. Sunday, company doctor.

Fourth row, left to right—John Bresnahan, set-up man; William Richards, drill press foreman; William Clark, Jr., chief inspector; Alexander Hair, general foreman "B" shift.

Last row, left to right—William Gibbs, British purchasing commission; Samuel Thomas, American inspector; Percy Jeffs, British chief inspector; Joseph Laux, planer foreman; Carl Shepp, chief engi-

neer; Theodore Christian, planer foreman; Harold Turner, safety engineer; Robert Havard, chief time-keeper; Russell Rozelle, set-up man; E. J. Dillon, supt. of guards; Ed. Toole, set-up man; Ford DePuy, set-up man.

The West Pittston Iron Works on Monday last became another unit in the National Defense Program when it started production on a 24-hour basis. The plant now works seven days a week, with three eight-hour shifts. Approximately 400 men are employed. The firm employs local labor. Only four men in executive positions are from out of town.