



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

West Pittston Historical Society Newsletter

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Silk Weaver for the World

featured speaker:

Martha Capwell Fox

For many years the silk industry in the Wyoming Valley provided employment to a great number of residents particularly to new immigrants of the country. In fact, from 1913 to 1933, more silk was produced in Pennsylvania than anywhere else in the world and mills in the Wyoming Valley played a large part in that production.

We are pleased offer this presentation by Martha Fox that will examine the process and challenges of making silk, how and why the industry came and went and its importance for women's labor in the state. The talk includes professional and amateur photographs from the 19th and 20th centuries and a video made by Fox's brother in 1987—a rare record of silk making in Pennsylvania.

Please join us for this look at one of the area's early industries and learn how many local residents earned a living.

This presentation is a program of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, supported in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The Pennsylvania Humanities Council, a nonprofit organization, inspires individuals to enjoy and share a life of learning.

The program is free and open to the public. We invite you to join us and bring a friend.

Our Next Program

SUNDAY APRIL 19, 2009

2:00 PM

WEST PITTSTON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
EXETER AVENUE



The Hess Goldsmith Silk Mill in Wilkes-Barre was just one of many mills in northeast Pennsylvania.

Tour of West Pittston Homes



We will once again be offering our "Tour of West Pittston Homes" coming this fall.

Date to be announced soon.

www.westpittstonhistory.org

Check out our web site for vintage photos and historical info. You can also participate by joining in our forum discussion.



The Washington Street School was constructed on Washington Street at Exeter Avenue where the Moose Lodge is now located. It served students in the community for many years before it was so badly damaged by a mine subsidence in the 1940's that it had to be demolished. This article from the Pittston Gazette, March 18, 1898, is about the dedication of the Washington Street School. The ceremony, taking place just several weeks after U.S.S. Maine had exploded in Havana Harbor, was filled with patriotic spirit.

"West Pittston's New School Building Opened"

The people of West Pittston had occasion Saturday to recognize anew the progress which their town is making along educational lines. The handsome new school building which has been erected on Washington Street, corner of Exeter, to accommodate the growing school population of the district, was formally opened, and thousands

of people took advantage of the opportunity to inspect the property and to enjoy the exercises which marked the opening of the school.

Early in the afternoon the doors are thrown open and for the few hours preceding the com-

mencement of the exercises the building, from cellar to garret, was swarmed with visitors. The school children turned out in large numbers, and together with the large assemblage of patrons of the schools, the visiting organizations, etc., it is estimated that several thousand people passed through the building and

admired the beautiful appointments.

The building is complete in every detail and reflects credit upon the contractor, W. R. Hoover. The structure is 38 x 79 feet and 52 feet high. The first story is of large square blocks of a reddish color. The brick is in red mortar and the buff brick makes a neat finish. There are four large school rooms all of which are supplied with cloak rooms and teachers' closets. There are two recitation rooms, one on each floor. The hallway is from the first to the third floor, 35 feet wide with a double flight of stairs. The vestibule is constructed of yellow pine and the plastering throughout is of white sand finish. The inside trimming is of North Carolina yellow pine finished in natural wood. There are large window doors of the finest American glass. The blackboard is four feet high. The building is heated and ventilated with the Smead-Willis system.

The exercises of the day took place in the open air and were directly in front of the broad entrance to the building



on Washington Street. The crowd that filled the street was enormous. Among the people could be distinguished the clergy of the town, school directors and businessmen in general.

The opening feature of the afternoon was a parade, participated in by mem-

bers of Camp 491, P. O. S. of A., under whose auspices the flag raising was held, visiting Camps and Company C. N. G. P., the former being headed by the Leek Cornet Band, which discoursed inspiring airs, patriotic and otherwise, all along the lines of march and at intervals in the programme.

The managers of the affair experienced disappointment in the absence of the speaker of the day, A. J. Colborn, Esq., of Scranton, who was unavoidably prevented from being present. The chairman of the exercises, Wm. Atwater, president of the local lodge, made this announcement and stated that B. S. Emory would make the presentation speech. Prior to this, "America" was enthusiastically sung by the vast audience, and a prayer couched in patriotic sentiments was offered by S. J. Arthur of the Luzerne Avenue Baptist Church. Chairman Atwater, in a few well chosen words, stated the objective of the gathering and then called on Mr. Emory to deliver the presentation speech. It was an excellent effort and his patriotic utterances were enthusiastically applauded.

Attorney W. I. Hibbs, on behalf of the school board, accepted the flag. The address was presented in the speaker's usually fine style. Other addresses were made by members of the clergy and school board and were all of a patriotic nature. The singing was in charge of Prof. Harry Harris, who also rendered several fine solos in his excellent voice. While the exercises were in progress the handsome flag presented to the board was swung to the breeze amid an enthusiastic outburst of applause on the part of the audience.