



Celebrating 150 Years

The Female Grammar School

Now the Home of the Schuylkill County Historical Society

We are within what is commonly referred to as the “Old Female Grammar School”. However it served only females for a brief period of its history. In fact boys were admitted, at the latest in 1888, but maybe even a few years after it was opened. It was constructed as a result of the Common Schools Act which was enacted in the 1830s to provide public school education for all children. Its first principal was Amanda Silliman.

Construction started in 1863 during the Civil War. Its location was on land that John Pott had set aside to be used for burial, religious and educational purposes. The west side of this site (where the playground was situated) was used as the burial ground, while the east side was the location of the first building. The Pott family was not entirely pleased with the idea of a school on the property. Abraham Pott testified in an 1859 suit against the school board that his father’s first intention was to give the lot for a burial ground. *“It was fenced up and people began to be buried there. After that John Pott, our father, told us ... that we should build a school house to have a school in, and for a church when people should be buried there; I think*

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Pictured are former teachers at the Female Grammar School. Left to right: Karl Reed (1968-70 Math and Art) Jack Spleen (1976-1977 3rd Grade) Peggy Jaeger (1962-1982 K-3) Janet Terefencko (1971-1982 2nd Grade)



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Holiday Marketplace

*Schuylkill County
Historical Society
305 North Centre St,
Pottsville, PA*

**Saturday, November 14, 2015
10am to 4pm**

Free and Open to the Public!

For a list of artists and vendors please go to page 6



**Schuylkill County
Historical Society**



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305 North Centre Street,
Pottsville, Pennsylvania
(570) 622-7540

Society Hours

Wednesday 1:30 - 6 p.m.
Thursday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Friday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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

The Purpose of the Schuylkill County Historical Society 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.

Celebrating 150 Years

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we built it by subscription; we had trustees appointed; the school house was on the south-eastern end of the lot he had given; I think the school house was erected in 1818 or 1819; it is there yet; the burial ground was from Centre street to Second street.."

The school house Abraham Pott refers to was a log structure which served as the only school building in the borough of Pottsville for almost fourteen years.

It became one of the first towns to provide facilities for public education. The School board had been using any available space, including private homes, small store rooms and church basements. So the humble log structure was used and needed to be replaced for the growing population.

As the public schools grew to accommodate more students, larger facilities were needed. The trustees of the burial ground donated by John Pott allowed the public schools to build a stone school building near the existing log school house in 1841, to provide more space for education. This addition of space was inadequate and in 1859 the school district made plans to remove the two existing buildings on the lot and replace them with a new larger structure to be used specifically for the interests of female students. The removal of the existing buildings was

delayed due to a suit brought by John Potts' son, Benjamin, against the school district He claimed that the proposed building and use of the lot



Former Grammar School Teachers, Janet Terefencko and Peggy Jaeger kick off the celebration!

was not in keeping with his father's original intentions since a larger building would encroach upon the burial ground. In addition, the use of the building by female students alone would not allow all citizens of Pottsville to use the lot that was originally set aside for their use. However, the State Supreme Court ruled, "...that the proposed erection of the building would be no encroachment on the rights of burial, but recognizing such right of burial and directing the school district to properly define the cemetery's boundaries."

With this victory, the school district hired John Fraser, a Philadelphia architect, to design the building. Begun in 1863, the Female Grammar School was built by Henry Zimmerman, carpenter, Jonathan Schum, carpenter, and Samuel Aumen, brickmaker. John Fraser was

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Celebrating 150 Years

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Scottish-born and his most significant surviving building is the Union League of Philadelphia building. The Union League was a Patriotic Society which supported the policies of Abraham Lincoln. Today the building houses a private members-only club and is located at 140 South Broad Street in Philadelphia. Frazer died in 1906.

The Pottsville School building was completed in September of 1865 and dedicated in December. The building cost \$21,800 plus an extra \$9,500 allowance, but in spite of the record cost, the new building was worth it in the opinion of the *Miners' Journal* "editor who commented 'we don't believe there is a taxpayer in the borough who would regret paying his portion of the school tax if he would only visit the school of which we are speaking.'" The editor also mentions the extravagance of the interior of the new building- "Now we see beautiful cherry seats made in great measure for the special comfort of the pupils."

Although the new building was celebrated, the rest of the lot was set aside as a burial ground but was not cared for and it was reported that it served only as a habitation of snakes and other vermin. There had been no burials for thirty years and the appearance of the site was poor. In fact, some accounts report that "...graves were sunken down, tombstones had fallen, water cascading down from Laurel Street towards Race Street was washing away graves and exposing skeletons..."

A state law of 1891 declared certain sanitary conditions were to be maintained in the public schools. These new standards required separate toilet rooms be provided for both sexes. With only narrow play yards on each side of the school building the lot did not have enough room to comply with the act. Fortunately, an Act was passed in 1893, allowing school districts to use public burial grounds "...for the purpose of common school education."

In order to gain the space required to provide separate toilet rooms and a larger playground as



well as improving the appearance of the lot, the school board purchased lots in the Presbyterian Cemetery. The remains of almost 500 dead were reburied at the Presbyterian Cemetery. Founder, John Pott and his wife, Maria were interred at the Charles Baber Cemetery. With the newly acquired space, a small addition was constructed on the west side of the building to provide separate sanitary toilet rooms required by law. "A large play yard was established in the remaining space of the lot. Aside from the small addition in the back the building had remained mostly unchanged. The large play yard was converted to a parking lot shortly after the school closed in the early 1980's and children were then educated in the newly-opened John S. Clark Elementary School.

Much of the information above came from the following: Loewentstein, Amy Michelle (1997). "Adaptive Use Proposal for the Headquarters of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County. (Masters Thesis) University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

WELCOME

The Schuylkill County Historical Society welcomes the following new members:

Debbie Gaddy	Chuck and Laverne
Agnes Heller	Seaman
Sharon Kirkby	Kellie Vogt
Laurie Maley	Mary Davies
Francis Braconoro	Patricia Wagner
Donna Crone	Martha Underwood
Lillian B. Dinos	Michael Buryk
Robert and Rebecca	Sherry Beitler
Ryan	Tom and Pauline
Jeanne M. Pettinger	Eltringham Family
Cindy Rodenbough	Ann Driscoll

Thanks Recent Acquisitions

- 1st Defenders Medal of Honor, Book on the First Defenders, Book on the Great Rebellion, Book on the Life Struggles in a Rebel Prison, Discharge Documents of William Weller and 1st Defenders Reunion Photo. Donated by Charles Seaman, Pottsville, Pa.
- The Poetical Works of William Alexander Davies in leather bound volume, all handwritten by the author and an assortment of miscellaneous items. Donated by Lillian Gravell Dinos, Athens, Ohio
- Books and Maps of the Civil War and a photo of the bell being installed at St Johns RC Church, Pottsville. Donated by Carl Raring, Pottsville, Pa
- An assortment of railroad maps. Donated by John Cherko, Frackville, Pa
- 1860s photograph taken by Theo Seigfried of Ashland. Donated by Jennifer Bower, Winston-Salem, NC
- Sheet music written by Robert Braun. Donated by Fran Yop, Pottsville, Pa
- Photos of Tumbling Run Dam. Donated by Larry Moore, Leesburg, Va
- Copper Chamber Pot. Donated by Elizabeth Wilkins-Quillman, Pottsville, Pa
- 1952 telephone directory. Lycoming Valley Historical Society, Pa
- A copy of the Summer 2015 The Miner's Lamp with article "A New Deal Era Etching by Nicholas Bervinchak" (1903-1978) 'Bootleggers's Wife & Son' 1939. Donated by Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum, Scranton, Pa
- Haas family genology. Donated by Arlin Haas Jr. Centerville, Va
- Post Cards. Donated by Bernice Keebler, Willow Grove, Pa



**Charles Seaman donates
1st Defenders Medal**

- Copies of Civil War letters from William W. Clemens. Donated by Mary Jane Pelhem, Ellington, Ct
- Seltzer Lard Can. Donated by Bob Hahner, Pottsville, Pa
- Photo of Locust Mt. Lodge No. 538 I.O.O.F. Glee Club. Donated by Kay Gray, Naples, NY
- Post card of the Frackville rail yard postmarked March 9th, 1912. Donated by Stephen T. Martsko, Clarks Summit, Pa
- A keepsake book entitled "A Girl's Commencement – Rosebud Memories. Articles and photo of the 1918 graduating class of Pottsville High School. Donated by Cumberland County Archives, Carlisle, Pa
- Old photos, newspaper clippings and post cards. Donated by Edward Buber, Port Carbon, Pa
- Baseball jersey and a metal tag from the Eastern Steel Co #841. Donated by Bruce E. Montag, Glen Mills, Pa
- Glass negatives of the Spanish-American War, photo negatives, pack of small photos of the Anthracite Region, pack of Schuylkill County Pictures, photo of the Platt Hotel in Tumbling Run, Booklet of Views of Tumbling Run, pack of Tin Type pictures, various Schuylkill County Photos, diagram of Turkey Run Stripping and a pack of Pottsville Photo Stamps. Donated by Chester Bayliff, Shenandoah, Pa
- Large Schuylkill County Wall Map, newspaper scrapbook, numerous copies of Schuylkill County Historical Publications, Bavarian Beer can, Mahaney City Quas Cent Book, Carol Books, Bowers Book of Multiple Bohemian Beer Labels. Donated by Barbara and David Hess and Sally Hess Higgins, Bristol, Ct
- Leather Pottsville High School pennants (2 ea). Donated by Charles "Dutch" Bachman, Schuylkill Haven, Pa
- Miscellaneous pictures of Duncott, Minersville, Newtown, Blackwood, Branchdale and Sweet Arrow Lake and newspaper articles on John Cavanaugh. Donated by Henry Knauber, Wiconisko, Pa
- Match Book Collection. Donated by Eric Quimby, Bethlehem, Pa

The 1918 Influenza Epidemic, part 2

(Note: The following is a summary of a reminiscence of the 1918 influenza epidemic as told by Leslie D. Lamont to the staff of the Pottsville Library on March 19, 1964.)

Forty-six years after the onset of the influenza pandemic in Schuylkill County, Leslie Lamont, a division superintendent employed by the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company, recorded his memories of those difficult times. Lamont provided not only an eye witness testimony to the grim situation but also lent a note of poignancy to the tragic scenes he witnessed.

Lamont noted that the epidemic caused so much suffering that "some company or corporation with a heart and influence" had to help those who were too poor and unable to fight the disease. Even with the Red Cross and Salvation Army involved, the job was too big. Enter the Philadelphia Coal and Iron Company, the largest employer in the county. The directors of the company set aside an amount of money to help alleviate the situation. A good example of this occurred when the company paid for the expenses of the Army doctors who were sent in to help the local doctors.

According to Lamont, the armory on North Centre Street in Pottsville was turned into an emergency hospital. Here professional, practical, and volunteer nurses cared for patients. The collieries provided orderlies and ambulance drivers from their first aid corps. Many patients had to be moved from their homes when family help became insufficient. Lamont recounted the deaths of 93 men formerly under his supervision. Of these deaths, 8 were foremen.

The main center of operations for the county was located in the basement of the P&RC&I company building on 2nd and Mahantongo Streets. In the evenings the place hummed with activity. Temporary telephones allowed the county medical director, Dr. J.B. Rogers, to record the number of new cases and fatalities. On one occasion Lamont overheard Rogers speaking with someone in Tamaqua about the deaths there. Rogers seemed truly excited to

learn there were "only" 18 deaths that day as opposed to 24 the day before.

Lamont observed that there were no antibiotics at the time. Quinine was the only drug largely used. Barrels of quinine pills were delivered to the company. Here doctors filled their pockets before leaving to visit their patients. A handful would be left at the homes they visited.

At the Pottsville armory, Lamont said creosote pills, along with the quinine and a drink of whiskey, were prescribed. Lamont complained that all the creosote pills did was to give them embarrassing bouts of gas.

Lamont felt that the closing of the saloons was the worst thing that could have happened. Despite the occasional state police raid, most saloons admitted patrons through the back doors. Bar business continued to boom but if men did not have the flu when they came in, they usually had it when they came out. In nearly every family affected, the man of the house was the first to get sick...thanks to the saloons.

Lamont often visited the homes of the sick with one of the army doctors or with another employee of the company. In one Schoentown home, Lamont found "the father dead, five hungry children crying for something to eat, and the mother probably ready to deliver the sixth child in a few weeks and the only thing in the house to eat were three rutabagas." Lamont gave five dollars to a local store with orders to deliver five dollars worth of staples. On a later visit to the same home, Lamont learned that the family owed the store three dollars so they only received two dollars worth of food.

Lamont remembered four other Schoentown families who were in a bad way. He was told by the company president to give each family \$15 a week until they could get back on their feet. He felt discouraged to visit homes where he often found two men in bed...one dead and the other dying. He would never forget "standing by the side of a wicker clothes basket and watching a baby die and

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Influenza Epidemic

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not being able to help.”

Pat Smith, an inside foreman for the P&R who lived in Mt. Lafee, died shortly after a visit from Lamont. Earlier that afternoon, Smith lifted his nightshirt up to show Lamont wide, dark distinct stripes around his body.

On another occasion, an ambulance sent from the Pottsville armory to a house in the fifth ward ran into a serious problem. All the doors and windows were locked. Neighbors had not seen the residents for days. A policeman was sent for and the door broken in. The house was filled with sulfur fumes from candles the couple was burning to “kill the germs”. The woman was taken to the Miliken Hospital where she died that night. It was Lamont’s unhappy task to tell the man, who had been taken to the armory, that his wife had died. What did he want done with her body? “Me no want, dead woman no good,” was the reply.

Lamont recounted his daily visits to the armory. Deaths were noted by counting the bodies in the vestibule. They were placed here for the convenience of the undertakers. Sometime there were so many bodies that Lamont had to step over them to enter the armory. He became hardened to lifting the sheets covering the dead in order to identify them.

Lamont heard several unverified stories concerning flu victim burials. One purported story related how undertakers removed the corpses from the caskets after the mourners left the cemeteries. The bodies were then placed in rough boxes with the coffins returned to the undertaker for reuse. Undertakers privately justified the practice due to the scarcity of coffins.

Many victims lacked family, friends, or money at the time of their deaths. Many of these bodies were buried at county expense in the public county cemetery located at the alms house (Rest Haven) between Schuylkill Haven and Orwigsburg. Able-bodied members of the almshouse dug the graves and finished the burials. Caskets were delivered to the cemetery leaving the inmates to complete the burials. Lamont hinted at many “ghoulish-like stories” about the almshouse burials but as he could not verify them, he felt it best not to describe them.

Even Lamont could not escape the flu. He, his wife, and their nurse came down with the disease. The three of them recovered with the help of careful medication and the visit of their own doctor. Lamont’s final words were, “With the modern drugs (of today), it is hardly possible that it could occur again. Let us hope it does not.”

By educating people on how influenza could spread, public health officials hoped to help people avoid it. [Credit: National Library of Medicine]



Holiday Marketplace
Saturday, November 14, 2015
10am to 4pm.

Below is a list of artists and vendors participating in the 6th annual event.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The Nutty Bavarian | Just A Taste | Sweet Barista |
| Ukrainian Pysanky Art | Fine Art | Bird on a Wire |
| Hope Hill Lavender Farm | Neat Stuff | Henny Fairre |
| Something Sweet Candies | Fiber Jewelry | |
| Kozy Gifts by Kara | Sinful Jewelry | |

Memorial Donations

In memory of Arthur J. Argall Jr., given by Richard E. Tomko
In memory of William A. Covach given by Richard E. Tomko
In memory of Frank Homa given by Richard E. Tomko

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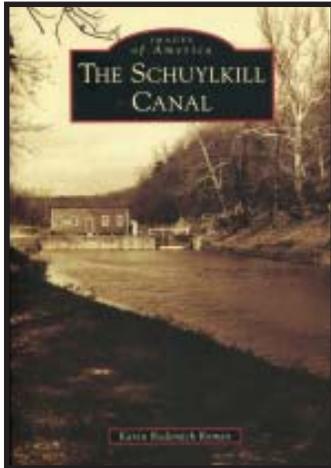
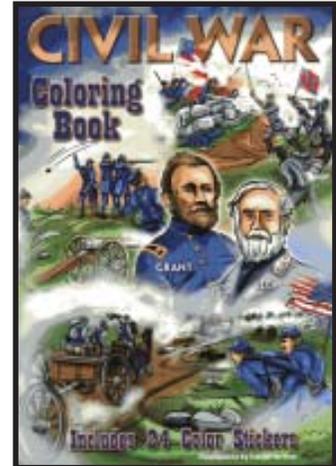


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A-LIST Christmas GIFTS

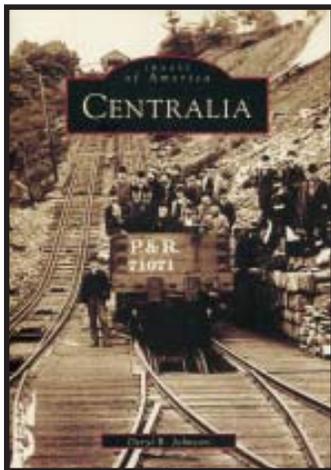
Give a great book from the Historical Society of Schuylkill County

Civil War Coloring Book
Illustrations by David Harston \$1.00
24 stickers are included
See examples below

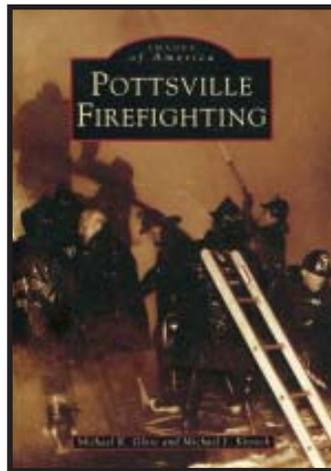


The Schuylkill Canal
by Karen Rodemich Roman \$21.99

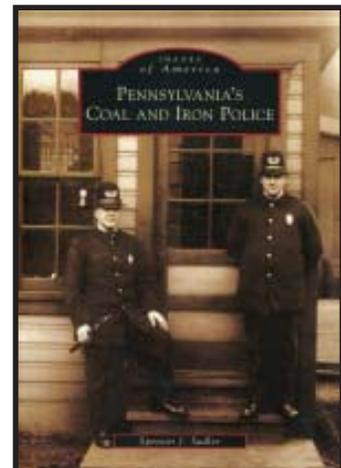
Pottsville Firefighting
by Michael Glore & Michael Kitsock \$19.99



Centralia
by Deryl B. Johnson \$21.99



Pennsylvania's Coal and Iron Police
by Spencer J. Sadler \$21.99



Check our web site for additional gifts
www.schuylkillhistory.org

The Historical Society
Of Schuylkill County
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LOOK
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Or current resident

Elf Scavenger Hunt
Saturday, November 28
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Join us for a Free Scavenger Hunt in downtown Pottsville. Find the elf at each of the locations and be entered for a prize drawing. Once each elf is found have your card signed by someone at that location. Once your card is completed submit your card at the last location to be entered for a Prize Drawing. All participants will receive a small candy treat with the completed card at the last location.

The elves can be found at: 216 North Centre St.
215 W. Market St. 305 North Centre St.
520 North Centre St. 14 North Centre St.

Scavenger Hunt Organized by:

Building a Stronger
POTTSVILLE
Pottsville Area Development Corporation
www.downtownpottsville.org

Prizes:

- Candy Basket from Something Sweet Candies
 - Book from the Pottsville Free Library
 - \$25 Gift Card from Klingamans
 - \$25 Gift Card from Momma Millies
 - \$25 Gift Card from Schuylkill Historical Society
 - \$25 Gift Card from YMCA
 - \$25 Gift Card from the Majestic Theater
- Drawing will be held on
November 28 at 4:00 p.m.
at Something Sweet Candies*