



## WWI Soldiers get rousing “Schuylkill” send-off

J.R. Zane

In late April 1918 HENRY H. SCOTT, a Virginia-born miner at the Maple Hill Colliery near Shenandoah, was the lone inductee heading to Fort Meade for Army training. At the train station Scott was given a rousing send-off of patriotic tunes by the town’s beloved First Lithuanian Band led by its Greek conductor. A large crowd of school students, breaker boys from Kehley Run Colliery, and hundreds of men and women, many carrying American flags, waved good-bye as the train departed.

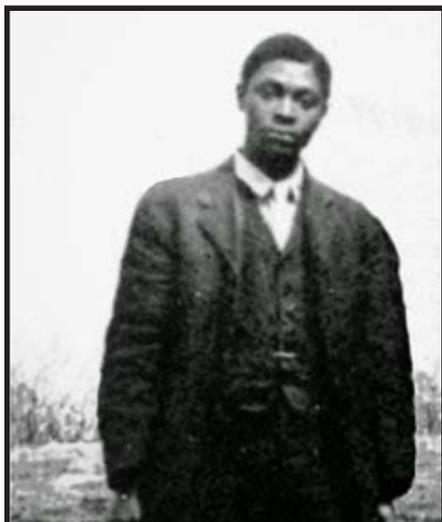
While Shenandoah was a melting pot, Mr. Scott left alone as the U.S. Armed Forces were segregated at the time and he was the lone “colored” inductee departing that day as send-offs of whites and blacks occurred on different days . He promised the crowd that if he survived combat he would return to Shenandoah. Tears filled Mr. Scott’s eyes as he bid good-bye to the crowd of well-wishers. Henry Scott kept his promise when discharged in 1919, after serving in France in both the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Engineers, and took up residence on Bower Street in the town that gave him such a loving farewell. Henry Scott, the African-American

coal miner-war veteran who called Schuylkill County home, died in 1961.

In Pottsville a similar send-off was held for CHARLES A. WILLIAMS who had been a waiter before being

drafted into the army. Prior to his departure a reception had been held for him at Thompson Hall with many of his fellow waiters in attendance among the more notable invited guests. Mr. Williams too had a send-off that included a drum and bugle corps followed by several hundred workers from the Reading Company shops. His father John, a porter at the Hotel Allen, and mother Mary, as well as brothers and sisters all bid him good-bye as he boarded the train before they returned to their home

See **Schuylkill send off** on page 2



Ralph Elwood Brock

## PA’s First African-American State Forester: Ralph Elwood Brock

February is Black History Month in the United States. Pottsville has history to share with this month in mind.

Ralph Elwood Brock was born on February 15, 1881 and raised in Pottsville, Schuylkill County. He became the first African-American to become a Graduate Forester of the Pennsylvania State Forest

Academy’s first class of 1906.

He may well have been the first African-American to be educated in forestry in the United States.

Prior to going to the Academy, Brock was employed at the former Mont Alto Reserve, now Michaux State Forest, so he had an early connection to forestry work.

See **Ralph Block** on page 6

**Schuylkill County  
Historical Society**



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**Society Hours**

Wednesday 10 a.m. - 4 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.

# Save the Date!

**7:00 PM - Thursday, May 17, 2018**

## When Harry met Meghan – A Royal Romance



Airing at the historic Majestic Theater, 209 North Centre Street, Pottsville, PA

The Schuylkill County Historical Society proudly presents a very special documentary featuring the Royal Romance of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle (The Schuylkill County Connection)

The Schuylkill County Historical Society has played an integral role in the production of this documentary. In May of 2017, we were contacted by Renegade Films, a division of Warner Brother Pictures, located in London, England. They were looking for the ancestors of Meghan Markle who immigrated to Schuylkill County in the late 1800's.

As our connection grew with the folks at Renegade Films, they quickly became interested in our photographic archives which contain numerous photos of the time period when Meghan Markle's great grandparents lived and worked in Schuylkill County.

The finished documentary includes over a dozen photos that were provided by the Schuylkill County Historical Society. We are proud to have helped in the production of this wonderful documentary.

Join us for an evening of celebration just two days before their wedding.  
SCHS Members: Free Admission      General Public: \$5.00

## Schuylkill send off continued from page 1

on Davis Avenue. Mr. Williams died in 1982 at the age of about 95.

While subject to the draft, very few blacks served in combat units and were limited to labor battalions as the United States Army was kept segregated as President Woodrow Wilson was a proponent of segregation in all federal employment. According to historian Joanne Sadler about 200,000 African-Americans served during the Great War but only about 42,000 served in combat duty, as most were used as kitchen helpers, cooks and road builders. It was not until 1948 that President Harry S. Truman issued an executive order to desegregate the military.

Remember that the SCHS World War I Exhibit is still open. Come and Visit!

## Peter W. Sheaffer Died March 28, 1991

*The headline of the Miners Journal newspaper on March 28, 1891 reads P. W. Sheaffer Dead, He Passes Away Quietly at Brown's Mill, N. J. It follows with A Short Sketch of One of Pottsville's Wealthiest and Most Prominent Citizens.*

Peter W. Sheaffer had a remarkable and illustrious career and his name and reputation was known far and wide. Mr. Sheaffer was closely connected with the developing of the anthracite coal fields and from his large holding of coal lands and his close study of geology and business interests his name was a prominent factor throughout the country. He was one of the leading members of the Methodist Episcopal Church and was known for his charity and sterling integrity.

Mr. P. W. Sheaffer, who resided at 500 S. Centre St., Pottsville, was born in Halifax, Dauphin County, March 31, 1819. He was a prominent anthracite coal region surveyor, engineer and geologist. His training began at an early age working with the geological corps of Prof. Rogers in the 1830's surveying and mapping the southern and middle anthracite coalfields. Mr. Sheaffer was instrumental in completing the publication of the first geological survey of the state. At this time was worked out the complex structure of the main anthracite basins and the general conformation of the coal measures with such a degree of accuracy that the second geological survey, thirty to fifty years later, simply elaborated their work. After the completion of the survey in 1851 he continued work in the development of several coal fields. He laid out Ashland, Girardville, Mahanoy City, Shenandoah, Mount Carmel, Gilberton, Mahanoy Plane and numerous other towns. He also located the first mines of the Shenandoah and Mahanoy valleys.

His experience in geology led to his employment in the examination of coal lands and development of mines throughout the United States

and Canada. In 1889 P. W. Sheaffer was appointed by Gov. Beaver, a member of the Coal Waste Commission, to investigate the more economical production of anthracite coal. He compiled numerous notes on coal waste and its prevention and was very concerned with how to mine and burn coal more economically. During his active career Mr. Sheaffer compiled many maps, documents and tables of the coal trade from the time when the industry amounted to but 225,000 tons, up to his last year, when 35,865,174 tons were mined in the anthracite region. This accumulation of statistics and maps comprising his life work would be the records contained in the Sheaffer estate building when opened on South Centre Street in 1893.

One of his works was a Historical Map of Pennsylvania published in 1875 by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Also among his more prominent publications were articles in the Encyclopedia Britannica and papers in numerous scientific journals of his time. He was a member of various scientific societies including: the American Association for the Advancement of Science, The American Philosophical Society, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the American Institute of Mining Engineers.

P. W. Sheaffer took an active interest in local affairs. He was a member of the Pottsville School Board, on the original members of the Benevolent Association in 1877 and its branch charitable institution, the Children's Home, and on the originators of the Pottsville Athenaeum, and was for some years its president. Many valuable books were donated to the Pottsville Athenaeum from his private library. The results of his labors are of incalculable value to the generations which succeeded him. He was one of the leading members of the Methodist Episcopal Church and was known for his charity and sterling integrity. Peter Sheaffer married Harriet Whitcomb of New England and they had three sons and one daughter. In the death of Mr. Sheaffer, Pottsville loses one of its best and foremost citizens. He is buried in Charles Baber Cemetery with other members of his family.

## SCHUYLKILL COUNTY AFRICAN AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR I

African American people in Schuylkill County have a military history that they can be proud of. Black soldiers have served from this county during the Civil War, World War 1, World War 2, Korea, Vietnam and the current conflicts.

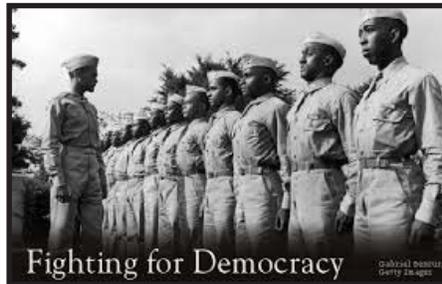
Most history buffs who study Schuylkill county military history are familiar with the famous Civil War story of the black man named Nicholas Biddle, a runaway slave who lived in Pottsville and was connected with the Washington Artillerists through their Captain, James Wren, one of the first five companies to come to the aid of the country in April of 1861. While on the march through Baltimore Biddle was struck on the head by a rock thrown by a rebel sympathizer and became the first man to shed blood during the Civil War.

When the United States declared war against Germany in April of 1917, the War Department planners quickly realized that the standing Army of 126,000 men would not be enough to ensure victory overseas. On 18 May 1917 Congress passed the Selective Service Act requiring all male citizens between the ages of 21 and 31 to register for the draft.

During this time period and before the actual calling of the draft African American men from all over the country tried to enlist..

They all believed the war was an opportunity to prove their loyalty, and patriotism to the country.

Many African American men were more than willing to serve in the country's military, but blacks were still turned away from military service. During World War 1 America was still a



segregated society and African Americans were considered, at best, second class citizens

Actually when the United States entered the war there were four all-black regiments: the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. Within one week of Wilson's declaration of war, the War Department had to stop accepting black volunteers because the quotas for African Americans were filled. At a later point during the war the Ninety-Second Division was formed completely made up of African Americans, to include the 365th ,



A typical African American Unit in World War I

366th , 367th, 368th Infantry regiments. As bad as this seems these fine soldiers didn't serve with the U.S. Army as a unit they served under French command utilizing French equipment.

**Note the French Equipment Helmets etc.**

When the draft was implemented it seems there was a reversal in this discriminatory policy toward African Americans primarily because there was nothing written in the legislation. Most draft boards required blacks to tear off one corner of their draft registration cards so they would be known and separated from white draftees. But when the draft was fully operational the draft boards were doing everything possible to get them into uniform. Although the Army was far more advanced in race relations than all the other branches of the United States military. African Americans could not serve in the Marines, and could only serve limited and menial positions in the Navy and the Coast Guard.

## Colored Soldier Fine Fairwell

*The following articles were written in the Pottsville Republican newspaper about how Schuylkill County sent off two drafted African American soldiers to the war.*

Courteous in every particular and beautifully splendid was the farewell demonstration given by Pottsville district No. 5 people Tuesday morning at eight o'clock in honor of the departure for Camp Meade, Md., of Charles Alfred Williams, the first colored embryo soldier of the U.S. national Army. Selected by this board and sent into training cantonments.

Young Williams, since his name was selected, passed the allotted age of 31 years, but he steadfastly abstained from making a claim for exemption, and was glad to answer the call of his country. He is a Pottsville boy, and spent all his life here with the exception of three years he was a waiter in Phila. And six months in Scranton at the same vocation. Monday night, at Thompson hall, he was tendered a magnificent reception by his fellow waiters of the Hotel Allen. Many friends and invited guests did him the honor there.

Tuesday morning he was up bright and early, and with filled suitcase reported to the local board at the court house on time. Preliminaries were attended and appropriate addresses delivered in the No. 1 court room. The large hall was filled with people who came to honor the first colored soldier sent from this district. After addresses were made the march to Reading Railway Station was taken up at 8:25 o'clock with standard bearers of the Boy Scouts, with flags of the U.S. and allies, county and city officers, Fourth Regiment, Drum and Bugle Corps, of Spanish American War, in khaki; Pottsville local board No. 5 eight colored men bearing a large flag; Charles Alfred Williams, National Army Recruit, on way to Camp Meade,



**Applause was frequent and emphatic as Charles Williams was escorted by parade to the Reading Railroad Station, Pottsville, for his trip to Camp Meade.**

Md. his father John Williams, and Sergt. William Tarr, colored veteran of the Civil War; colored young ladies escorting Mrs. John Williams, mother of the outgoing soldier. In the parade were several brothers of the Williams, and his fellow waiters of the Hotel Allen. Next came citizens several hundred strong, several hundred workmen of the Reading Company shops.

Most of the paraders carried on their shoulders national flags. It was one of the prettiest parades since these parades were instituted, both as to alignment and maintenance of distance between marching units, the delightful

music and the respectful enthusiastic attitude of the on looking populace, who lined both sides of the street all the way to Penn Hall Hotel, Howard Ave, and Centre St. Applause was frequent and emphatic. Chas. Alfred waved his acknowledgment and smiled for he is well known and has a host of friends.

In front of the Hotel Allen, the van guard of the parade with the soldier halted on the east side of the street and he reviewed the remainder of the parade as it passed. Here and there along the route an impulsive onlooker rushed out and shook the hand of the departing soldier.

On the train, the Red Cross Canteen committee presented him with a sweater, smokes and other gifts, and when the train pulled out he was given three cheers.

At Port Clinton colored brother soldiers from Tamaqua, and Shenandoah joined, the Pottsville registrant, and at Reading another delegation. In Philadelphia the recruits swelled to quite a number.

Charles A. Williams, the outgoing soldier, was the merriest man at the passenger station, before the train started, and kept his friends laughing with his jokes and droll sayings.

## Shenandoah Honors Colored Draftee

Henry Scott, the only colored man in District No. 1 was sent to Camp Meade on Tuesday morning on the 7:08 train from Shenandoah, and was given a rousing send off. He was led to the depot by the First Lithuanian Band members of the Patriotic League, Public Safety Committee, high school pupils and citizens. The streets were crowded even more so than when the larger numbers left the town of Shenandoah. At the station he got on the train and at the rear platform delivered a short address, thanking the people of Shenandoah for the honor shown him and promised to do "his best". He was tendered a testimonial banquet by a number of prominent residents of Shenandoah Monday night at the Graham Café.

*The African American soldiers who enlisted from Schuylkill County*

1. Benjamin T. Coles, Pottsville: MEc 904 T.C. AEF France. Served overseas in France.

2. William Crabb, Tower City: PFC, 849 Co, T.C. AEF France. Served Overseas in France.
  3. William Dampler, Auburn: Pvt. CK Company No. 9 ASC . Served overseas in France.
  4. James Davis, Tamaqua: Pvt. 804 T.C., AEF. Served overseas in France.
  5. Herman Enty, Pottsville: PFC. 803 Co. T.C. AEF. Served overseas in France.
  6. Charles Williams, Pottsville, Pvt. Co. M 368th Infantry Regiment. AEF Served overseas in France.
  7. Henry Scott, Shenandoah: Camp Meade. Two African American soldiers from Schuylkill County who died while in service.
1. Jesse Emmerson, Delano: Pvt. 369 Infantry Regiment, AEF France, Died Oct. 1 1918
  2. Thomas Wiggans, Pottsville: Trooper, 10th Cavalry. Died February 3rd, 1918

### Ralph Block continued from page 1

Immediately after graduation, Brock was named superintendent of the newly established Mont Alto State Forest Tree Nursery, a position he held from 1906 to 1911. Forestry records indicate the nursery flourished under his direction, and his accomplishments are detailed in early annual reports of the former state Department of Forestry.

He resigned from state service in 1911 to start his own nursery business in the Philadelphia area and did work in New York City. His specialty was estate gardens, orchards and landscaping.

He continued his career as a forester for the rest of his life. He died on Dec. 9, 1959 and is buried in the Chestnut Grove Cemetery, West Chester, Chester County.

In 2000, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources renamed the South Mountain Seed Orchard, long a mainstay of state forest seed and seedling production in the state, the Ralph E. Brock Seed Orchard in a salute to the Schuylkill County native.

(from PA Environment Digest)

# WELCOME



**The Schuylkill County Historical Society welcomes the following new members:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Lawrence and Janet Bobbin<br>Peter Skirbunt and Anna Chaikowsky<br>Carole Kuhns<br>Randee Reisler | Anthony Heisler<br>Jennifer K. Clarkson<br>Marie Sanelli<br>Thomas Shay<br>Barbara Bindie<br>Bill Higgins<br>Joseph T. Yezulinas<br>Christopher Tracy |
|---|---|

**Come Visit Us At**

[Sch.hist@comcast.net](mailto:Sch.hist@comcast.net)  
[www.schuylkillhistory.org](http://www.schuylkillhistory.org)

## John “Jack” Lebengood, son of Pottsville Maroon star, Fungy Lebengood visits the SCHS!

It's not every day when you get the opportunity to sit down and talk with someone who can give you first-hand insight into history. That's just what occurred on December 27<sup>th</sup> when John “Jack” Lebengood visited the SCHS.

After a phone call from Jack arrangements were made for him to visit the Society with a wonderful piece of Pottsville Maroon's memorabilia.

Sitting down with our Executive Director, Tom Drogalis, Jack told the story of his late father's career as a member of the NFL's 1925 Championship team, whose title was later withdrawn. Jack referenced Vince Genovese's book, “The Pottsville Maroons and the NFL's Stolen Championship of 1925” during his tale.

“Local talent, Fungy Lebengood, was number sixteen for the Maroons. Born in Pottsville in 1902, Fungy was a multi-talented athlete in high school. He did everything except play in the band at halftime. He played all the positions in the backfield, did the punting, the place kicking, and even helped coach the team. Fungy went to Villanova and returned to Pottsville to play for them in 22, 24, and 25. Fungy's son, Jack, in an interview with the author, said after his playing days, Fungy often came back to Pottsville to visit with reporter Walter Farquhar. Jack said his father didn't talk much about his pro days in the NFL but did tell that they had been treated unfairly regarding the championship. He said his dad knew there would be a penalty for their actions but not one so severe.

Jack also remembered accompanying his dad to Atlantic City in the summer where they would visit with Tony Latone who was then working as the captain of a different team. He was the captain of the Atlantic City Life Guards. Jack donated much of his father's football stuff to the Hall of Fame in Canton. Fungy lived in Reading after his Maroon days and son Jack was an outstanding football player in his own right playing for Reading High.



John “Jack” Lebengood

Pottsville and Reading had an annual Thanksgiving Day rivalry game. For three years running Jack scored a touchdown in each game as Reading won all of them.”

Jack went on to tell a heart-warming story about when his father was preparing for a game at the Minersville stadium, when one of his practice punts left the field and struck a young woman in the crowd. Fungy was very concerned about the woman and after the game made it a point to seek her out to be certain she was alright; smart move on his part... as Jack proudly boasted that that young woman later became his beloved mother!

### Memorial Donations

Looking for a meaningful charity to honor or remember a departed loved one? Look no farther. Memorial contributions to the Schuylkill County Historical Society is one way for families to keep their loved one's memory alive by helping the Society achieve its mission of honoring and promoting Schuylkill County's history. We will notify you of each gift made in your loved one's name, and acknowledge each person who makes a contribution. Donors will be mentioned in our newsletter and information given to the Republican Herald newspaper.

## Happy Bicentennial Union Township!

J.R. Zane

Parts of northern Schuylkill County will be celebrating a mini-bicentennial this year. Two hundred years ago Schuylkill County was enlarged to its current size of 840 square miles with the addition of parts of Columbia County and Luzerne County. "Union Township" was created on March 3, 1818 when Pennsylvania Governor William Findlay signed the legislative bill allowing this land transfer to occur. The county's breadth became 30 miles east to west and about 24 1/2 miles from north to south.

Union Township, with its rich farm land, was later subdivided in 1867 into Union, East Union Township and North Union (*Pennsylvania has a fondness for municipalities, ranking second in the nation*). Brandonville is the principal village of East Union Township and named after its founder, Nelson Brandon. Nelson's son, Lloyd, later laid out the village of Sheppton for land owner Daniel Shepp. Over 50 years ago, Sheppton made international news as a result of a mine disaster. Today, many may be familiar with Eagle Rock Resort which has a presence in East Union Township.

North Union Township had been an early Indian hunting and camping ground, and Native American relics such as arrow heads and tomahawks were found. Nuremberg, in North Union Township, had been called both Seiwelstown and later New

London. So as not to be confused with another Pennsylvania New London, its name was changed to Nuremberg, in honor of the Moravian and Pennsylvania Dutch farmers who settled there. Zion's Grove is another township village with its name derived from the local Zion's Church.

Ringtown, in Union Township, is the home for the historic "Old White Church" dedicated on March 16, 1842 that hosts its annual Ascension Day service. On the darker side, it was the township where the notorious hex

murder occurred in the early 1930s. Ringtown was originally called Catawissa Valley until 1854. The village was the home of Danny Litwhiler, a major league baseball player who played outfield from 1940 to 1951, with the Boston Braves, St. Louis Cardinals, Philadelphia Phillies and Cincinnati Reds. He was with the Cardinals when the team won the National League Pennant in 1943 and the World Series in 1944. He is noted for being the first major leaguer to have an error-free season.

Congratulations to all those celebrating their mini-bicentennial this year!

## Recent Book Signings



Thanks to the Authors...Jen Reiner: Feeding the Coal Region and John Dave Hoptak: Dear Ma: The Civil War Letters of Curtis Clay Pollock - First Defender and First Lt. 48th Pennsylvania Infantry.

Jen Reiner

John Dave Hoptak



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The Schuylkill County Historical Society Presents

**The Pottsville Fire Department in the  
Fire Chief Todd March Era:  
1975 – 2017**

Narrated by:  
Michael Glore and Michael Kitsock

**Thursday, February 22, 2018**

**7:00 P.M.**

Majestic Theater  
209 N. Centre Street  
Pottsville, PA



**Admission is FREE – Donations are appreciated!**

The Historical Society  
Of Schuylkill County  
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**These books are now available in our Gift Shop**

