Journal
of the Lycoming County Historical Society

SNAPSHOTS
of Lycoming County History

Thomas T. Taber
MUSEUM
LYCOMING COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Winter 2020-2021
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Contents

On The Front Cover: ***Photopainters at the Louvre. by Robida, Albert***

— Foreword —

Friends,

This edition of the Lycoming County Historical Journal celebrates the rich history of the County with 'snapshots' of historical topics.

Putsee Vannucci is certainly a name familiar to many as a prolific photographer within the County. Written by his daughter Bonnie, with additions from her siblings and relatives, it provides a three-dimensional portrait of a man who documented much of Lycoming's history through the camera lens. His work captured the Little League games and for his work he received the Hartman Friendship Award from Little League. A retrospective of his work was held at Pennsylvania College of Technology in 2013. We are fortunate to have the bulk of his work preserved at the Museum. But there are other 'snapshots'-

Less familiar, but no less interesting are two articles by Michael Luna. James Henry Willis, an African-American who served the country during the Civil War, is the subject of one of Michael's articles. Michael's article is rich with detail about Mr. Willis' life - a monumental research effort. And equally interesting is Michael's article concerning those children of modest means who are buried in the 'Potter's Field' section of the Wildwood Cemetery.

I delight in being asked to portray Ebenezer Scrooge (my natural disposition- Bah! Humbug!) as part of the Will Huffman Toy Train Expo. Photograph, courtesy of John Troisi

Our resident sports historian Marc Pompeo has submitted an article about Frank 'Tinky' Casale. Everyone who frequented the Triangle Restaurant is probably familiar with the charcoal portrait of 'Tinky', in boxing gloves and shorts, but do you know his career before becoming a restauranteur? Here it is! And rounding out this selection is a reminiscence of Bruce Rogers - a childhood exploration led to a discovery of the 'Tidewater Oil' reservoirs which furthered Bruce's research and resulted in an industrial history of the Tidewater Oil Company and a pipeline which traversed the County.

All fascinating reading! Great reading for a dreary winter day, curled up with a blanket and some hot coffee, tea or cocoa! Enjoy! Here's wishing a much better year in 2021.

Gary W. Parks
Editor

TABER MUSEUM ACQUIRES A SEVERIN ROESEN PAINTING

Williamsport- The Thomas T. Taber Museum of the Lycoming County Historical Society is pleased to announce the acquisition of a Severin Roesen painting. The painting has been loaned by Bobby Maguire in honor of his parents Jim & Shirley Maguire. It is Mr. Maguire's intention to turn the loan into a permanent gift within the year.

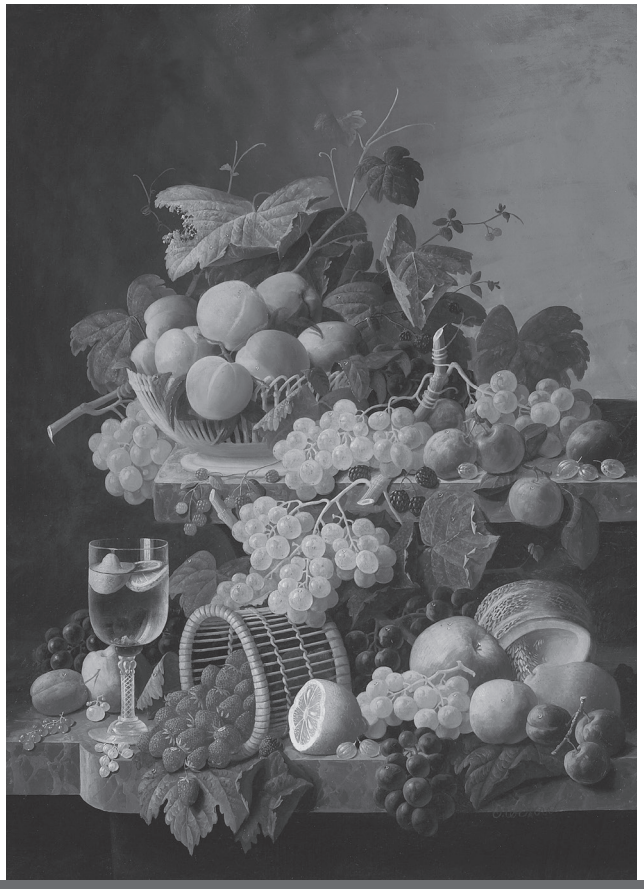
"We are so thrilled to receive this loan from Mr. Maguire. His generosity and kindness is beyond measure- thanks to him all of our visitors will be able to view the beauty of Roesen's work," remarked Gary Parks, Museum Director, "Many folks within Lycoming County appreciated his work but it was not until Jacqueline Kennedy outfitted the White House with two Roesens that his talent was more fully appreciated by our country." A number of major museums throughout the country have Roesen still lifes in their collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the National Museum of Art (Smithsonian Institution), the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Chrysler Museum, St. Louis Art Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Severin Roesen, known for his monumental depictions of fruit and flower still lifes was active in Williamsport during the heyday of logging and lumbering in the County, nicknaming the City "the lumber capital of the world". It is said that at one time more millionaires lived in Williamsport than anywhere else on earth. Unfortunately, Roesen never achieved financial success during his lifetime but it is to his credit that First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy chose two Roesens to appear in her refurbishment of the White House in the early 1960s. "I was so excited when this offer came," Parks continues, "How often does an offer such as this come?" He further remarked, "I've always thought Roesen was under-represented in the collection, after all, so many of them were painted here! We have a Roesen still life donated by the Lamade family and we are so thrilled to have it in our collection, but now a second one to admire and love."

The painting will join the Taber Museum's other still life, a permanent gift of the children of George R. and Margaret Hays Lamade. Both feature the luscious fruits so emblematic of Roesen's work. "In the still life loaned by Mr. Maguire, the grapes glisten with drops of dew, the slice of watermelon is brimming with juice, and the champagne flute has bubbles rising to the top! His signature "S. Roesen" is cleverly disguised as a grape tendril at the central bottom of the still-life. This will be such an asset to our collection." Parks notes, " You know, for a County Historical Society, we are incredibly blessed to have generous folks such as the Maguire and Lamade families, who are willing to share their treasures."

Both paintings are featured in the Fine and Decorative Arts Gallery of the Museum. A second loan from Mr. Maguire is a Federal-style looking glass. It will be displayed within the Greek Revival Parlor of the Museum.

The Taber is open for touring Tuesdays through Fridays, 9:30am until 4:00pm and Saturdays, 11:00am until 4:00pm. Ample parking is to be found behind the museum or on the street. For further information, please visit our website at tabermuseum.org or call 570.326.3326.



ONE MORE ... JUST ONE MORE!

The life of Putsee Vannucci

Bonnie Vannucci Jamieson *with J.T. and Gina Jamieson*

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"One more...just one more."

That was the line that lingered in the mind after facing his camera and returning his smile. His lens caught the breadth of Lycoming County's history, from the banal to the remarkable: weddings, families, fires, accidents, baptisms, reunions, men and women's sports, parades, factories, celebrities, nuns, animals, politicians, presidents, first ladies, criminals – all preserved in photographs by one man.

This year will mark one hundred years since the birth of Salvatore "Putsee" Vannucci (1921-2007). As a photographer and newsman, Putsee chronicled Williamsport and Lycoming County from the 1940s until his death in 2007. His photographic work (and his boisterous personality) has been thoroughly detailed, remarked upon, and celebrated since the 1980s. He is especially remembered for his expansive and unceasing coverage of the Little League World Series. Today, his portrait greets passersby along Williamsport's West Fourth Street.

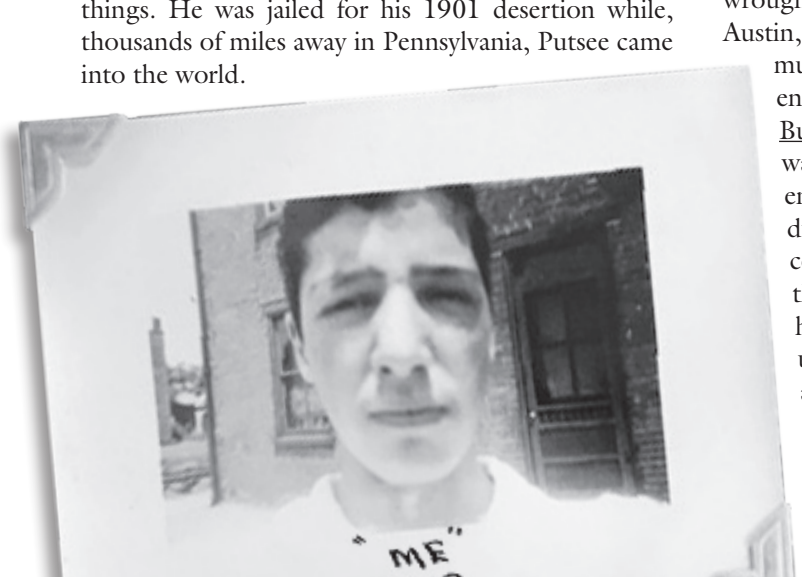
His name and photographs have been much discussed and adulated for decades. Recently discovered letters and photographs, however, illuminate a more intimate portrait of his life and work: one that decenters his most well-known achievements, focusing instead on his passions and displeasures, and the personal and worldly circumstances that molded the man he became.

1921-1946

Putsee was born on March 16, 1921, in Williamsport, the third son of John and Josephine Vannucci. But Putsee, along with his devoutly Catholic mother, was wont to report his birth on March 17: a Saint Patrick's Day miracle.

In many ways, John and Josephine exemplified the turn-of-the-century Italian-American experience. Josephine, born in Italy in 1885, immigrated to the United States as

part of the massive "new immigration" from Southern and Eastern Europe that altered the American ethno-cultural landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. John was born in Williamsport in 1884 to Italian immigrants, but he, his parents, and his siblings frequently returned to Italy, maintaining numerous trans-Atlantic relationships and communities. John's return trips to Italy, however, complicated things. Returning in 1901, John was drafted into the Italian military despite his American citizenship. In the early twentieth century, Italy did not equate the emigration of its subjects, or even their naturalization in another country, with a renunciation of citizenship. Though John was born on American soil, his father was not yet a naturalized citizen himself, and in the Italian view John thus inherited the responsibilities of an Italian citizen, including military service. Despite being drafted in Italy, however, John absconded through Switzerland and Scotland before returning to Williamsport. There he settled, opened businesses, and became a husband and father. But in 1921 yet another return journey to Italy complicated things. He was jailed for his 1901 desertion while, thousands of miles away in Pennsylvania, Putsee came into the world.



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Throughout Putsee's childhood, his father's financial struggles in Pennsylvania forced the family to move from place to place throughout the state. As a teenager, after his father's untimely death, Putsee settled in Williamsport with his mother, Josephine. He trudged through his teenaged years in a "rat-infested" apartment on Edwin Street. But he made do. After discovering his passion for photography at Curtin Jr. High School, Putsee reserved half the family sink for a make-shift darkroom (the other half for Josephine, prepping pasta) and sold his photos to classmates for ten cents apiece. He honed his photographic development skills through a part-time job at Hoyer's Photo. Gradually, the camera became Putsee's natural appendage. After high school, he extensively chronicled a stint in California with his brother, Art. After returning from his California sojourn, he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, the New Deal era initiative providing young men conservation work in rural and wilderness areas. Here he continued his amateur photographic career, documenting the daily life and labors of the CCC.


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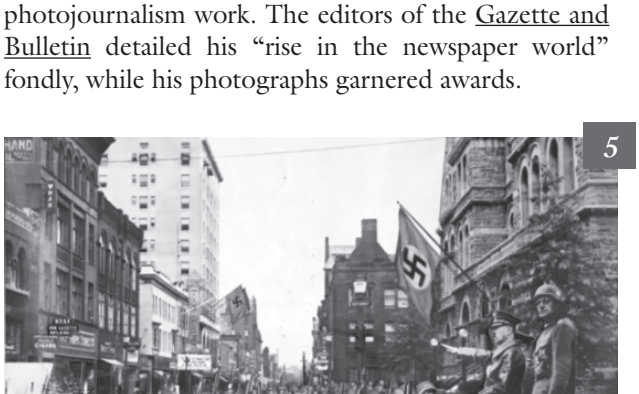
In the early 1940s, photography merged with Putsee's nascent professional life. He joined the staff of the Gazette and Bulletin, assuming an array of journalistic and photographic responsibilities. Tragedy boosted his early career at the newspaper when he chronicled the "vast destruction" wrought by a broken dam near Austin, Pennsylvania. Tumult much farther from home energized his Gazette and Bulletin work as well. He was medically unable to enlist in the armed forces due to a congenital condition in his right arm that rendered it four inches shorter and robbed his hand of strength. Nonetheless, in 1942 he used his photographic acumen to contribute to anti-Nazi sentiment. He manipulated an image of downtown Williamsport, inserting a corpus of Nazis, and Hitler himself, trampling down West Third Street. The accompanying article, "Nazi Boots Stamping Down Williamsport Streets. Don't Let It Happen Here," elicited fear of an Allied defeat. Putsee later labeled this image, "MY MASTERPIECE." He had other work of which to be proud. His colleagues and community bestowed accolades upon Putsee and his photojournalism work. The editors of the Gazette and Bulletin detailed his "rise in the newspaper world" fondly, while his photographs garnered awards.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Despite success in his beat at the Gazette and Bulletin, Putsee felt constrained by the local news market and yearned for wider audiences. In 1944 that impulse drew him to a larger city – Newark, New Jersey – and to a job at the news service ACME Newspictures. At the Gazette and Bulletin, Putsee shouldered the dual responsibilities of writing and photographing, but at ACME he focused primarily on honing the photographic craft. ACME was an ideal place to do such that. Founded in the 1920s as newspapers became more and more fixated on photographic production, ACME employed a veritable army of nameless photographers (among them, at one time, the famed Weegee), and demanded of Putsee a frenetic energy to make news pictures.

Complete immersion in photographic news work came with manic highs and lows. Putsee entered a world of extreme physical exertion, risk, and competition, and he relished the moments of high drama both in and out of the darkroom. A fellow photographer once came in "with negatives that were almost black," Putsee wrote, and incurred the wrath of their boss, a man Putsee described as "a movie version of a hard-boiled photo editor." When his colleagues proved unable to salvage the negatives, Putsee gleamed as he stepped in to save the day: "ole Puts, he remember[ed] a formula from Hoyer's and he applied the Vannucci touch."

Things were considerably more dramatic in the field. One December morning he was called to cover a car accident: the vehicle had plunged into a storage building and its nose pierced an elevator shaft. Putsee wanted to photograph from inside the shaft looking up at the "dangling" car, but the building owner refused. Putsee redirected the owner's attention and dove down the shaft with forty pounds of photographic equipment to get his shot. But suddenly, as he recounted in one letter, he was "sweating blood." The freight elevator began to rumble down, threatening to crush him. He managed to escape, unscathed and gleefully delighted: "the day I really enjoyed my job" came to a close.

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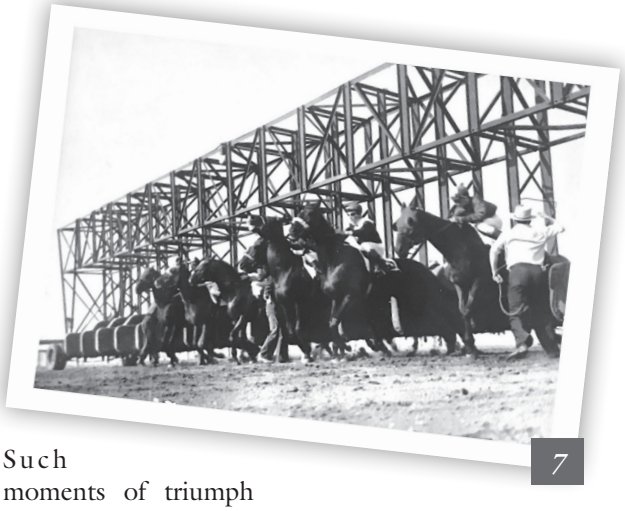
In this and other episodes, such as when he elbowed his way through a crowd of photographers for a shot of Frank Sinatra, Putsee also celebrated outwitting his competitors, or "scooping" them. In "cities where there are competitors, a scoop really means something," he wrote. The ability to overcome unforeseen obstacles and succeed in the competitive photographic news market gave him great energy and great pride. "Just call me the 'Get it, Kid,'" he boasted.



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Such moments of triumph and elation, however, were often offset by other moments of frustration. The flipside of photojournalism and news-chasing for a syndicate like ACME included crushing, relentless, and sometimes thankless workdays. His ACME boss exerted incredible pressure on the staff. Good photographs would be approved of with nothing more than a grunt. "I'm starting to think," Putsee wrote of his boss, "[he] is either trying to kill me or just [give] me a damn stiff tryout." Workdays that began in the morning likely ended after nine o'clock in the evening, thanks in part to frequent interruptions. For instance, Putsee found some of his time in the darkroom (usually lonely, claustrophobic work that might demand developing over one hundred photographs in one sitting) constantly disrupted by calls to chase other stories.

The downsides of photo syndicate work at ACME weighed on him and he dreamt instead of work at a "good newspaper." To that end he left ACME behind to pursue newspaper work in Binghamton and Rochester, New York. Putsee found Rochester especially enticing, entertaining fantasies of starting a family there even if it meant abandoning newspaper work for employment at the Kodak Camera Company (headquartered in Rochester). But impediments large and small complicated his work life. Putsee depended on the Binghamton Sun newspaper to provide photographic equipment; when it couldn't secure a camera, he languished in boredom for weeks, unable to take a photograph. Meanwhile, returning war veterans began to crowd the labor pool and he doubted that steady, dependable employment could much longer be had. A call from the Gazette and Bulletin with the promise of work pulled him back, once more, to Williamsport. But again prospects floundered as the mass return of veterans squeezed the labor market.

One constant through this tumultuous period – unemployment, migration from city to city and state to state, feverish work hours, unbearable pressure from ACME employers – was the romantic relationship he cultivated with Maxine Shindle. In late 1944 Putsee

bluntly stated his spectrum of emotions in a letter to Max: "I don't like [my boss]. I love you." He met Maxine at Brozman's Department Store in 1941. Their courtship matured while Putsee was on his tri-state odyssey from 1944-1945. They were kept apart by distance and Putsee's paucity of travel funds – "why don't you see if you can't bum, borrow, or steal a gas coupon for me[?]," Putsee once asked Max. Consequently, they relied to a great degree on letter writing and written flirtation to grow their bond. Letter writing usually trumped telephone communication for practical reasons – Putsee sometimes found scheduling, and paying for, phone calls difficult. Putsee also preferred handwritten correspondence, rejecting Maxine's predilection for typewritten letters. Handwriting, Putsee probably felt, heightened the intimacy of their correspondence. The courtship conventions between Putsee and Maxine ran the gamut from banal descriptions of days and leisure activities to more intimate flirtation. Letter writing helped them reconstruct their daily and romantic lives through Putsee's turbulent journeys of 1944 and 1945, paving a road towards marriage.

Local Young Couple Wed Recently At Informal Service in Arlington

ANNOUNCEMENT has been made of the recent marriage of Miss Maxine Shindle, daughter of Mrs. Lena Meginnis, of 211 East Central Avenue, South Williamsport, to Putsee Vannucci. The bridegroom is the son of Mrs. Josephine Vannucci, of 7 East Edwin Street, this city.

The informal single-ring marriage was performed Friday afternoon, July 26, in Arlington, Va. Judge M. A. Mahaffrey officiated.

Miss Shindle was dressed in an ensemble of red and white print jersey, with which she wore a small white hat and white accessories. Her bridal flowers were a corsage of red roses and white delphinium.

Mr. and Mrs. Clair Miller, of this city, attended the couple. Mrs. Miller was dressed in a two-piece street-length dress fashioned with an aqua print bodice and a black skirt. She wore black and white accessories.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Vannucci were graduated from the Williamsport High School. The bride has been employed by the civil service commission in the office of the army recruiters. Mr. Vannucci is in business with his brother in the Vannucci Photo Service.

MR. AND MRS. PUTSEE VANNUCCI

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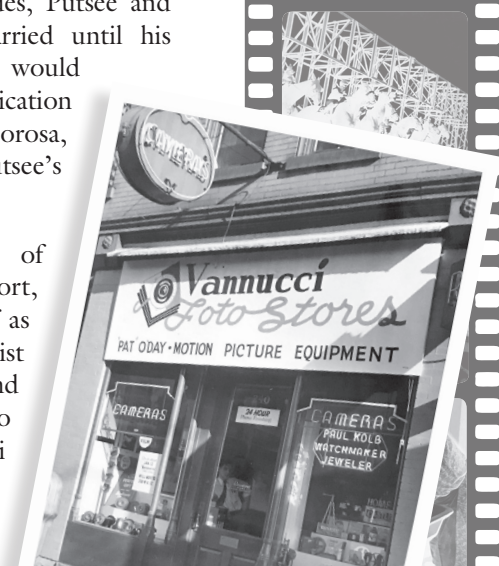
1946-1980

Despite the intensity of Putsee and Maxine's bond, their marriage did not come smoothly or without considerable personal crises. The union between Putsee, a Roman Catholic, and Maxine, a Lutheran, encountered particular resistance from Maxine's mother. Interfaith marriage became increasingly more commonplace after the Second World War, but many Protestants criticized a matrimonial union with Roman Catholics in the immediate post-war period. Maxine's mother most likely numbered among those Protestants, and perhaps Maxine harbored similar anxieties. In one letter to Max, Putsee appended a cartoon which spoke to that uneasiness. "I don't see why different religions should interfere with marriage," the caption read, "if a man and woman can get along, as different as they are, other differences shouldn't matter." Mostly, though, Maxine's mother resisted for more personal, rather than religious, reasons. She shared an acutely close connection with her daughter, and she likely feared marriage would interrupt their own relationship. Whatever her reasons, Putsee knew it to be an issue. As he complained to Max, the "phrase that your mother uses – It would kill me if you married Putsee…believe me – I don't think it would 'kill her if we married.'"

They married and it did not "kill" Maxine's mother. But the disapproval of their union did force Putsee and Max away from a traditional wedding. In July, 1946, a weekly dinner with friends turned into a spur of the moment elopement. Maxine hid in the bathroom, crying, while Putsee called her mother to inform her of their decision. They drove in the dead of night to Arlington, Virginia, where a Justice of the Peace signed their union into law. The drama of their marriage continued for decades: the Catholic Church excommunicated Putsee for marrying outside the church with a Justice of the Peace. A nun would warn him that if he did not rectify the problem his children would languish in purgatory. Nonetheless, despite resistance to their marriage on all sides, Putsee and Max remained happily married until his death (and, in 1986, they would resolve Putsee's excommunication by marrying at Mater Dolorosa, a church co-founded by Putsee's grandfather).



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Married and in search of stability in Williamsport, Putsee established himself as a premiere photojournalist of Lycoming County and simultaneously transformed himself into a business owner by opening Vannucci Foto Services with his brother, Art, in 1946. He had fantasized about opening and running a photography business while in Newark. "I will someday," he wrote, "soon, too, I hope." Business ownership was baked into his family history, and the businesses he and his family established remain imprinted on Williamsport and Lock Haven today. Putsee's father, John, and his five brothers owned or operated establishments such as

the Victory Restaurant on Pine Street, The City Hotel (owned by the Crouse family), The Eagle Hotel and Deer Head in Lock Haven. As Putsee took up the mantle of business ownership with Vannucci Foto Services, yet another destructive flood boosted his profile, even as it wiped out their newly founded store. Putsee and Art documented the damage and printed a photobook that sold profitably, helping to fund his new retail store, and explained his photographic services including a darkroom. A year later, Putsee embarked on his celebrated and historic journey documenting the Little League World Series.

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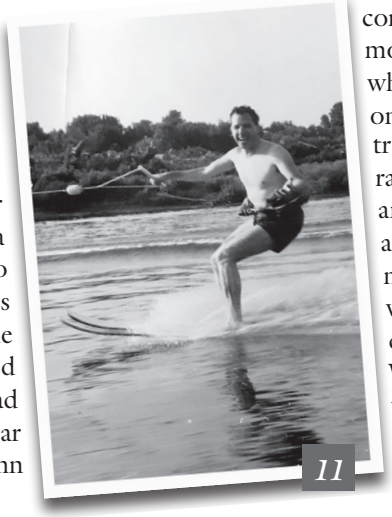
Soon, Putsee sunk his roots even deeper into Williamsport. In 1951 with Maxine, Putsee broke ground on their home, still standing on Pennsylvania Avenue. The house was designed to accommodate both Putsee and Maxine's mothers and their newborn, Bonnie (born 1951). But as the situation proved untenable, the Vannucci's home instead housed a more stereotypical nuclear family, with two more children, John (born 1954) and Tamara (born 1960), joining Bonnie. Putsee's photographic work and his work running Vannucci Foto Services soon consumed the entire family. Maxine and the three children all contributed significantly to Putsee's work. Maxine ran the mundane aspects of business ownership and took on the role of sous-photographer, while the children were called in to support the business's day-to-day operations or to model for placeholder postcards speckling Vannucci Foto Service's showroom. Photo work so consumed Putsee that he named the family motorboat "Assignment" – so that, even when not working, he could claim "I'm on Assignment." In many cases, work trumped family entirely. Vacations were rare, and any number of family events and functions needed to be planned around work assignments. Putsee very nearly met the same fate as his father when he risked missing the birth of his child, Bonnie. At one Little League World Series game Maxine stated she was going into labor. But, Putsee said, first things first: getting the day's film to the darkroom.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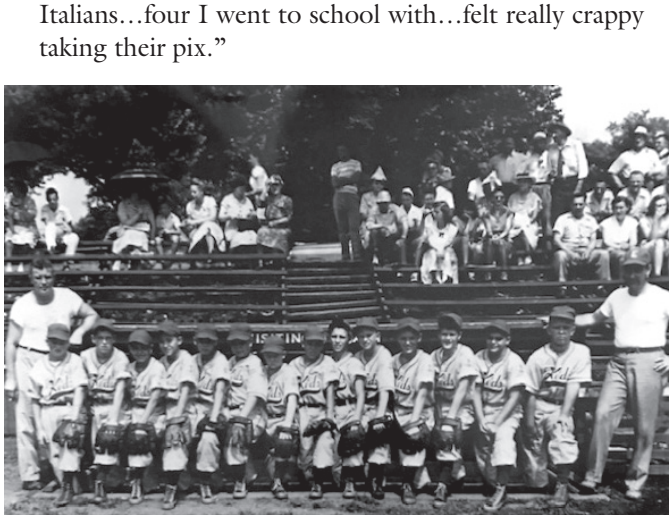
From the 1950s on, Putsee's reputation as North-Central Pennsylvania's visual scribe grew. He documented life in Lycoming County, and beyond, for both private and public consumption. He became a sought-after photographer for weddings, family portraits, class reunions, and a diverse cohort of other customers. He received warm thanks from clientele like Standard Oil, General Electric, Woman's Day magazine, the wife of labor leader Walter Reuther, and many others. The breadth of his photographic work for public consumption, through newspapers like the Sun and the Grit, was particularly remarkable, and he often reflected on both the pleasure and the pain of documenting a variety of subjects. He captured the smiles and cheers of young boys at soap-box derby races. He spent beautiful days flying above Williamsport, logging dozens of hours capturing aerial photographs. But his lens caught plenty of moments of devastation and turmoil. He documented the mangled wreckage of an airplane that had cut across Bald Eagle Mountain and left the bodies of the dead strewn in its wake. He documented a fatal car crash on Route 15 that claimed the life of a Vannucci Fotos employee. He documented the dissolution of an illegal gambling ring, which caused him great consternation: "[W]as exciting, until they rounded up the guys…and most of the 12 were Italians…four I went to school with…felt really crappy taking their pix."



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Most importantly, though, his work for Little League grew exponentially with each year's World Series. Here he caught the drama, excitement, elation, and frustration of the young sportsmen and their game, in addition to an expanding cohort of famous faces: Jackie Robinson, Cy Young, Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio. Putsee created thousands of images of the Little League World Series from 1946 until the year of his death, 2007 (though he did not remain under contract in his later years). As a young man working in Newark, he began to grow his reputation as a sports photographer. "Don't want to be specialized," he wrote in 1945, "but [I] am slowly getting to be known for my sport pictures." Even though he continued to resist specialization over the next six decades – photographing all sorts of events, happenings, and people – his half-century of Little League photography ensured that he was, and always would be, known for his sport pictures.

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1980-2007

By the mid-1980s, Putsee began to think about his legacy and the thousands of negatives and photographic prints he produced, and was still producing, over a half-century. He undertook the grueling task of organizing, archiving, and discarding negatives and images both personal and private (one can imagine the monumentality of the task given the man took nearly two dozen photographs of his son's first haircut). Putsee donated thousands of photographs and negatives to the Taber Museum. Many more photographs adorn the walls of the Genetti Hotel. Still, the process of constructing and deconstructing his photographic archive bedevil and overwhelm his children and grandchildren today.

As he retrospectively considered his body of work, so too did the public. Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, Putsee gradually cemented his public legacy and reputation as a significant chronicler of twentieth-century Pennsylvania by garnering lifetime achievement awards, exhibiting his body of work, delivering lectures on Williamsport history, and becoming the subject of numerous biographical profiles in local newspapers. Much of the recognition came from his tireless devotion to photographing Little League year in and year out. He threw out first pitches, had a Photographers' Well dedicated in his name, and landed in the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame. "I never scored a touchdown, or hit a homerun, or scored the winning shot," he once said. "But I bet I caught most of you doing just that." Such recognition for his Little League work continued years after his death, in special exhibitions like Penn College's 2013 "In the Field of Play: The Little League Baseball World Series Through the Lens of Putsee Vannucci." This photographic work, a fundamental but only fractional piece of a life fully lived and an oeuvre fully realized, was always his most loved. As the Lock Haven Express put it in a 1990 profile of his LLWS work, "what a friend we have in 'Putsee.'"

The twilight of his career as a business owner was somewhat less joyful. Though he continued to offer photographic services to clientele out of Vannucci Foto,

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the photo supply store came under different ownership. Working in tandem in this arrangement led to legal conflicts, and his trust in others became a lesson in life. Eventually, Vannucci Foto passed to the Rafferty family, who maintain it today on West Fourth Street and honor Putsee's legacy. Putsee's eldest, Bonnie, was jubilant when the business experienced a renaissance under the Raffertys' ownership. As she reflected in a 2017 letter to the Lock Haven Express,

"It was with great surprise and happiness we learned of the re-opening of Vannucci Foto in downtown Williamsport by the Raffertys. Knowing that the legacy of a family business will continue with a family is heartwarming in this day and age. Growing up in a family business was common in my youth - shopping downtown meant entering a place of business where you most likely had classmates whose family owned the establishment and they lived next door, or up the street, or around the block. In all these businesses, SERVICE was the star and the customer was always "right." I remember well when malls began their infiltration and customers suddenly stopped buying cameras from us thinking they were getting a better deal. But then their next step…coming back to us to learn everything about the camera because service was the commodity that was missing at the mall! We know the Raffertys will care for their customers as Dad…did, and that they will carry the Vannucci name with pride."

As the last years of Putsee's life went by, even as his body tried to rob him of his exuberance, he maintained the same joyous and gracious spirit as the young boy learning to develop photographs, bent over half of an old sink in a run-down apartment. The spirit of his life was perhaps best summed up at a 1990 Little League banquet by his dear friend and former Gazette and Bulletin colleague Chuck Lucas:

"Those who know Putsee know that he has a heart even bigger than his reputation as an outstanding professional photographer. He's a man who has combined intelligence and journalistic skill with good humor and friendship; a man who has achieved recognition for his work, but retains a caring nature for the people whose lives he records on paper and film; and finally, a man full of life, and full of love for his family and friends."

That is the legacy his children know well.

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Image Descriptions

1. ***Putsee Photog***
   Putsee's dream was always to be a 'PhotoJournalist'
2. ***Unknowing before Hartman Award***
   Putsee thought he was hired to cover the Little League Banquet (not knowing he was soon to be awarded the Hartman Friendship Award.)
3. ***Selfie (1937) age fifteen***
   Did Putsee invent the 'selfie' ? One of many photos in his first personal scrapbook
4. ***Putsee standing in CCC***
   A CCC scrapbook was recently located, with never before seen photos of his time in the CCC. It was carefully crafted by Putsee and indicated what appeared to be a time Putsee relished and where he developed close friendships. He often related the pranks pulled by his fellow CCCers to his children
5. ***War Bond Nazi Ad***
   Recently discovered framed picture, leading to another discovery: a two page article written by Putsee at age 21, relating the take-over of Williamsport by the Nazis, along with the photo. In his own handwriting, "My Master-Piece"
6. ***Frank Sinatra shot by Putsee 1945***
   In a letter to Maxine, February 9, 1945 Putsee related how he was the only photographer to capture this shot - and how he did it, which appears to differ from previous published reports. (memory may have changed some details!)
7. ***California Horses***
8. ***Wedding Announcement***
9. ***1st Vannucci Foto Services Market Street circa 1946***
   There were 3 locations over the years, Market Street was the first
10. ***2nd Vannucci Foto Services store***
    308 W. Fourth Street
11. ***Putsee skiing***
    His other passion, and spur of the moment get away. After breaking his leg skiing his kids took turns driving him to assignments.
12. ***LL team 1948***
13. ***Chuck Lucas & Putsee***
    Chuck Lucas, life long friend, presented the speech at the Hartman Award banquet
14. ***Photo Well Honor***
    A highlight of his life, Putsee poses with Maxine, children & grandchildren in 2003.
15. ***Maxine and Putsee at store***
    Maxine and Putsee 'at work' in the 318 W. Fourth St. store. Putsee ALWAYS, greeted his wife with that smile, a loving hug, and kiss - ALWAYS.

Bonnie Vannucci Jamieson
is the eldest of Putsee and Maxine's 3 children, followed by John and Tamara. Bonnie has worked over 40 years in the field of Special Education, beginning her career as a teenager volunteering at the School of Hope (Hope Enterprise). Pittsburgh has been her home since 1980. Bonnie has been involved in research based model programming serving children with autism, behavioral needs, and other challenges including one of the first inclusion-based programs for young children with autism. Throughout her career, she has presented at local, state, and national conferences. She retired from The Watson Institute as a consultant to teachers, families, and administrators in public and private schools. She is married to Hugh Jamieson and is a proud parent to J.T. Jamieson, a doctoral candidate at Berkeley, and Gina Maria Jamieson, executive director of a non-profit organization based in New York City. Her second career is researching and preserving the legacy of family via hundreds of photographs, letters, and news articles.

FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The Life and Times of James Henry Willis

By M.A. Luna

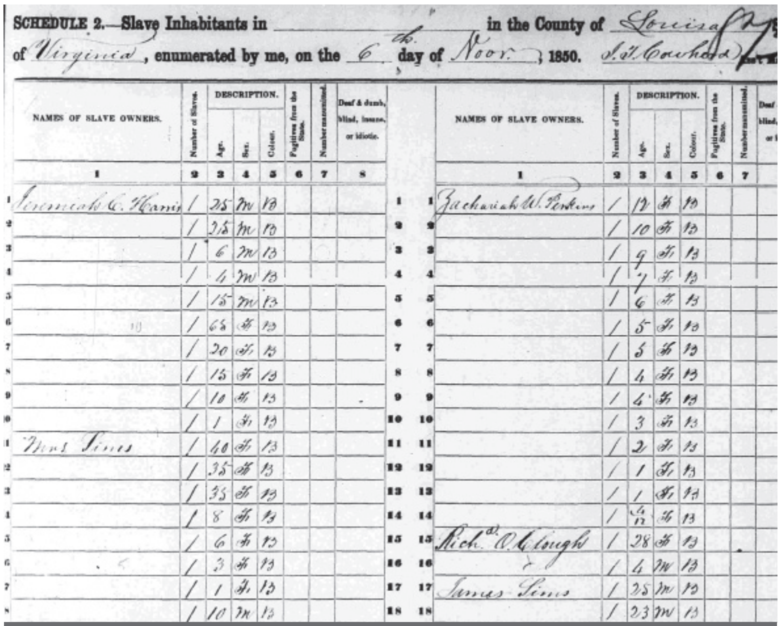
James Henry Willis, age 69, on the right, at the 1908 Memorial Day Celebration in Williamsport, Pa. On the left is Fribley Post No. 390, G.A.R member Isaiah White

In the third week of May in 1942, Civil War Veteran James Henry Willis lay blind and bedridden in his home at 119 Lincoln Street in Montclair, New Jersey. ***Having surpassed the age of 102 just the week prior, Mr. Willis - formerly Sergeant Willis of Company C, 127th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops - was among the last 500 or so surviving combat veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic; by 1950, less than a dozen would remain.***

For Sergeant James H. Willis, however, this most recent birthday would be his last. Nine days later on May 19th Mr. Willis died, and so ended the valorous life of Lycoming County's last surviving Civil War Veteran. His life is remarkable not only because this last of Williamsport's Defenders of the Union in the bloody struggle against Southern slavery was himself an African-American, but also because at the time of the Civil War's opening salvos at Fort Sumter in 1861, James Henry Willis was a slave, the property of a Southern plantation owner in the heart of the Confederacy.

The saga of his life, largely untold until now, tells us much about the country that America once was. How we choose to finally recognize and honor Mr. Willis here in Williamsport, along with the hundreds of thousands of his brothers-in-arms who served the United States in the Union Infantry Regiments, U.S. Colored Troops in the final years of the American Civil War, will tell us much about who we are as a City and as a Nation, and who we hope to become as Americans.

James Willis was born into slavery on the plantation of Ms. Eliza Sims in Louisa County, Virginia, equidistant between Richmond and Port Royal, in or about the year 1840. For most of his early enslavement Willis was a domestic slave, a 'houseboy', performing menial servant work for Eliza. Domestic slaves were required to perform every task that a master could not, or more likely would not, do for themselves, including all of



SCHEDULE 2.—Slave Inhabitants in ______ in the County of Louisa ______ of Virginia, enumerated by me, on the 6th day of Novr., 1850. ______

Names of Slave Owners	Number of Slaves	Age	Sex	Colour		Names of Slave Owners	Number of Slaves	Age	Sex	Colour
1 Jeremiah C. Harris	1	25	M	B	1	Zachariah W. Perkins	1	17	F	B
2	1	25	M	B	2		1	10	F	B
3	1	6	M	B	3		1	9	F	B
4	1	4	M	B	4		1	7	F	B
5	1	15	M	B	5		1	6	F	B
6	1	65	F	B	6		1	5	F	B
7	1	20	F	B	7		1	5	F	B
8	1	15	F	B	8		1	4	F	B
9	1	10	F	B	9		1	4	F	B
10	1	1	F	B	10		1	3	F	B
11 Mrs Sims	1	40	F	B	11		1	2	F	B
12	1	35	F	B	12		1	1	F	B
13	1	35	F	B	13		1	1	F	B
14	1	8	F	B	14		1	1/12	F	B
15	1	6	F	B	15	Richd. O. Clough	1	28	F	B
16	1	3	F	B	16		1	4	M	B
17	1	1	F	B	17	James Sims	1	25	M	B
18	1	10	M	B	18		1	23	M	B

The 1850 Census Slave Schedule, listing the slaves belonging to "Mrs. Sims" of Louisa County, Virginia, on the left column. The 10-year old black male listed at the bottom is likely James Henry Willis.

By the summer of 1862 the first year of the American Civil War had passed, and the Union armies had begun to push further into Virginia, clashing in the battles of Hampton Roads in January, Yorktown in April, Seven Pines in May and the Seven Days Battles outside Richmond in June. Slaves gathered up what little information they could, risking severe punishment to eavesdrop on the conversations of nearby whites who had begun to eye their slaves more warily than ever. Through cryptic references, hushed whispers and daring clandestine meetings in the dark of night amid the wooded backcountry, slaves across Virginia began to spread the word: The Federal armies were approaching.

That summer, James Henry Willis, who would have been about twenty-two

the cooking, cleaning, clothes washing and mending, house maintenance and groundskeeping, all the while tending to the personal needs of his or her master at all hours of the day, every day, with little sleep. Even as a slave child, the work was all that mattered, and all that he or she would ever be taught. Anything resembling the literal education of a slave was illegal anywhere in the South. James would be a young adult before he would learn the alphabet, and older still before he would be able to read what little he could write.

To be a slave on a plantation in antebellum Virginia was to live nearly the worst kind of existence imaginable. Every minute of a slave's life was entirely subject to the momentary whims of his master. Slave children were routinely sold or traded away to distant plantations to settle a master's personal debt or to raise cash for other expenses. Beatings and lashings were administered for the slightest of transgressions. Horrific stories of the brutal treatment of slaves by white slaveowners were well known throughout the South, common but quiet secrets which all knew but few spoke of openly. The Reverend Jermain Loguen, an escaped slave from Tennessee, in speaking against the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, expressed the slave's fate simply: "No day dawns for the slave, nor is it looked for. For the slave, it is all night - - night forever."

SCHEDULE 2.—Slave Inhabitants in Southern District in the County of Louisa of Virginia, enumerated by me, on the 5 day of July, 1860.

Names of Slave Owners	Number of Slaves	Age	Sex	Colour
1	1	37	M	B
2	1	46	F	B
3	1	44	M	B
4	1	33	F	B
5	1	33	F	B
6	1	32	M	B
7	1	31	M	M
8	1	29	M	M
9	1	24	M	B
10	1	23	F	B
11	[illegible]			
12	1	20	F	B
13	1	17	M	B
14	1	15	F	B
15	1	16	M	B
16	1	15	M	B
17	1	15	M	B
18	1	14	M	B
19	1	13	F	B
20	1	13	F	B
21	1	11	F	B
22	1	10	F	B
23	1	9	M	B
24	1	8	M	B
25	1	8	M	B
26	1	8	M	B
27	1	6	M	B
28	1	6	M	B
29	1	6	F	B
30	1	5	F	B
31	1	4	F	B
32	1	3	F	B
33	1	1	F	B
34 Benjamin S Watson	1	65	F	B
35	1	22	M	B
36	1	20	M	B
37	1	16	F	B
38	1	7	M	B
39 owner Henry Duggins	1	40	F	B
40 James Bumley Agt	1	20	F	B

Slave Schedule from the 1860 Census listing, in the left column, the slaves of owner 'Eliza A Sims' of Louisa County, Virginia. The male slave, whose age is shown here as 25 (the eighth slave entry for Ms. Sims) may be James Henry Willis. Given ages were often incorrect. Above his entry are female slaves that include a female of 41 or 42 years and an elderly female slave of 75. Other entries include numerous slaves of Willis's generation. These entries may be his mother, grandmother and siblings. It is impossible to know with certainty.

years old at the time, made the wrenching decision that tempted thousands of slaves across Virginia and the Confederacy. Faced with the seeming certainty of a life forever condemned to the perpetual hell of slavery, Willis made an equally unimaginable choice. Leaving behind his mother, his grandmother, and his siblings, not knowing if or when he would ever see them again, he gathered together a few scraps of food and, concealed within the darkness of a humid Virginia night, set out toward the Rappahannock River. Risking capture and almost certain death by whites combing the countryside on the hunt for escaping slaves, Willis headed due north, hoping to find the Union lines and, on the other side, freedom.

Regimental Flag of the 127th, U.S. Colored Troops

James traveled perhaps as far as thirty miles that night, carefully avoiding homes and settlements along the way. At times, he must have heard the baying of hounds or the distant hoofs of passing riders, each new sound bringing a new moment of terror. Carefully weaving his way north, he reached the southern banks of the Rappahannock, probably somewhere between Fredericksburg and Port Royal, his familiarity with the landscape learned during frequent trips, perhaps, accompanying his master to the merchant ports and warehouses in either place. There, somewhere along the dense thicket of the low riverbank, Willis stumbled upon a detachment of the 1st New Jersey Calvary, the "Jerseymen" from Trenton, lead elements of the second division of General Irvin McDowell's Third Corps, maneuvering towards Richmond and bivouacked on the nearby estate of a southern plantation owner.

For weeks now, slaves from across the peninsula had streamed into the Union camps, carrying nothing except a few pieces of clothing and whatever food they managed to steal away, many feeding only on raw shucked corn and wheat, the same as was fed to the army's mules and cattle. Overwhelmed by the endless train of refugees, the Union soldiers could do little more for the slaves than ration them as best they could with food and clothing, and urge them northward. Still, the Federal army needed laborers, manpower for the felling of trees and clearing of roads, gathering firewood and water, tending to livestock, excavating trenches, transporting and moving munitions and stores, and for the digging of graves and burying of the dead, a gruesome task that due to illness, disease or battle wounds continued around the clock, day after day nearly without interruption. As the Civil War raged across the country, nearly 500 American soldiers would die every day, on average, throughout the entire four years of the war.

Willis, a strong young man, quickly found such work, and when the Federal forces reversed their direction away from Richmond and towards a second clash at Manassas Junction along the Bull Run creek in northern Virginia, James Henry Willis went with them. For nearly nine months, Willis and thousands of other escaped slaves trailed behind the Union army, marching hundreds of miles across Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. By 1863 Willis had become a servant for a group of officers in the Second Rhode Island Infantry, caring for their horses and tending to their laundry. When one of the officers was wounded later that spring, Willis accompanied the man to one of the many military hospitals in and around Washington, DC, which in the summer of 1863 cared for as many as eight thousand casualties on any given day.

On May 22, 1863, Lincoln's War Department issued General Order No. 143, authorizing the mustering of regiments of U.S. Colored troops for service in the war against the southern rebellion. By the year's end Willis was in Philadelphia, which was a haven for free Blacks before the war and had since become a refuge

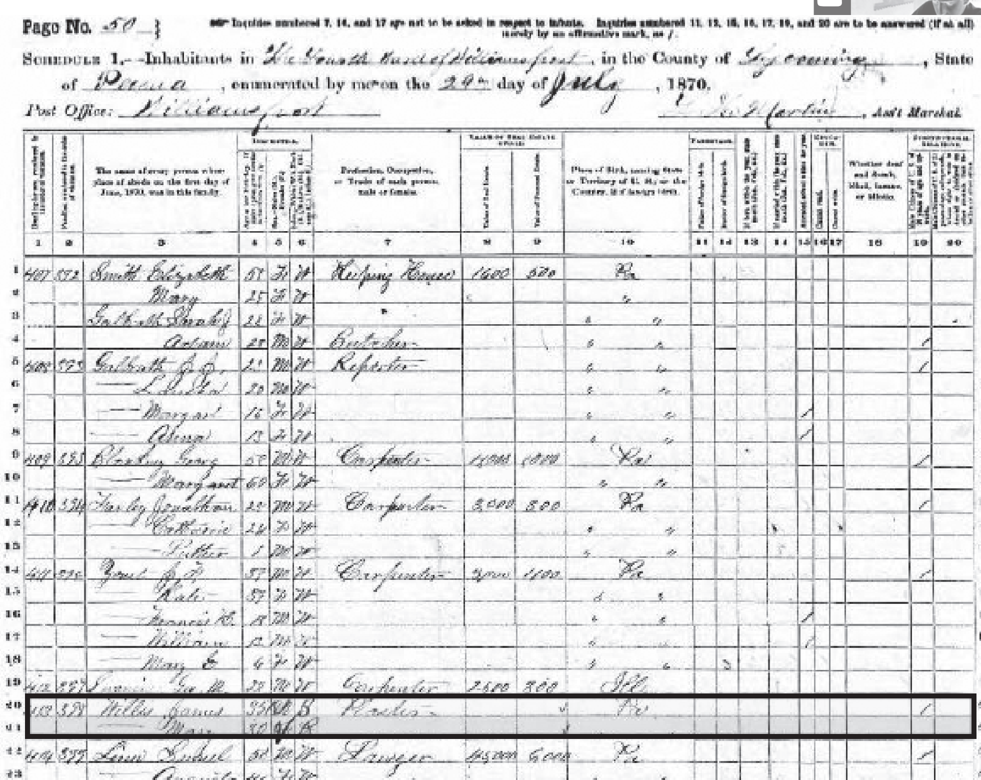
for an ever-growing stream of Black fugitives. Though thousands of white Philadelphians, as in every northern city, had enlisted when the war began, Blacks were refused the opportunity.

As the war dragged on, however, debate over the slave's potential value as an effective soldier grew among military commanders and government officials on either side of the Mason-Dixon line. Howell Cobb, a member of the Georgia plantation aristocracy, and who as Treasury Secretary under President James Buchanan had urged southern seccession after the election of Lincoln, expressed his clear opposition to the notion of allowing slaves to serve as southern soldiers. In a letter to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Cobb wrote, 'The day you make soldiers of (slaves) is the beginning of the end of the revolution. If slaves will make good soldiers, our whole theory of slavery is wrong.' Cobb was more right than he could bring himself to admit. The war would be all but lost before southern leaders would succumb to the purposeful arming of a slave, a last grasp at preservation that confirmed the glaring contradictions of southern slavery; so precarious was the state of the Confederacy that its preservation required that slaves fight to defend their continued enslavement.

President Lincoln, as he often did, was content to settle a question in his mind and then wait for the consensus of the national mood to catch up with what he knew to be right. By May of 1863 he had decided that the country at last was ready. 'The bare sight of fifty thousand armed and drilled black soldiers upon the banks of the Mississippi,' he wrote, 'would end the rebellion at once'. Upon his order, training schools were established to instruct white officers in the management and administration of black soldiers, organizational plans were made, and by the end of the summer the first Regiments of U.S. Colored Troops were mustered. Little over one year later, on August 25th of 1864, War Department records confirm that Private James Henry Willis was enlisted into Company C of the 127th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry, at Camp William Penn located just north of Philadelphia

Within the last two years of the war, approximately 180,000 free blacks and former slaves enlisted in the Union armies, all of them volunteers. Their willingness to serve, however, did not come without exceptional sacrifice. By most estimates, Black soldiers died from disease and discriminatory medical care, versus death in battle, at a rate nearly four times that of white soldiers. Still, Black soldiers in the Union army fought with a bravery that few expected, and twenty-five Blacks were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism in combat.

For Pvt. James Willis, the adventure of being a soldier in the United States Army, assigned to the 3rd Division, 10th Corps of the Army of the James, was unlike anything he had ever known, a life as far removed from that of a slave as he could have imagined. He carried a rifle and wore the uniform of his country, fighting for freedom not only for himself and for the country he served, but also for his family and for the millions of his brothers and sisters languishing still beneath the smothering yoke of southern slavery. Wounded in his left foot during the campaign surrounding the siege of Petersburg, Pvt. Willis stayed with his unit. An active participant in the seminal conclusion of the four-year national conflagration that was clearly nearing its end,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Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.

Schedule 1.—Inhabitants in The Fourth Ward of Williamsport, in the County of Lycoming, State of Penna, enumerated by me on the 29th day of July, 1870.

Post Office: Williamsport

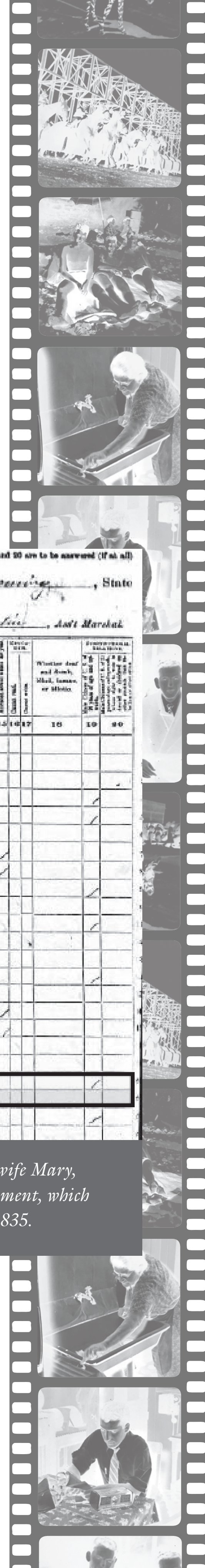
[illegible], Ass't Marshal.

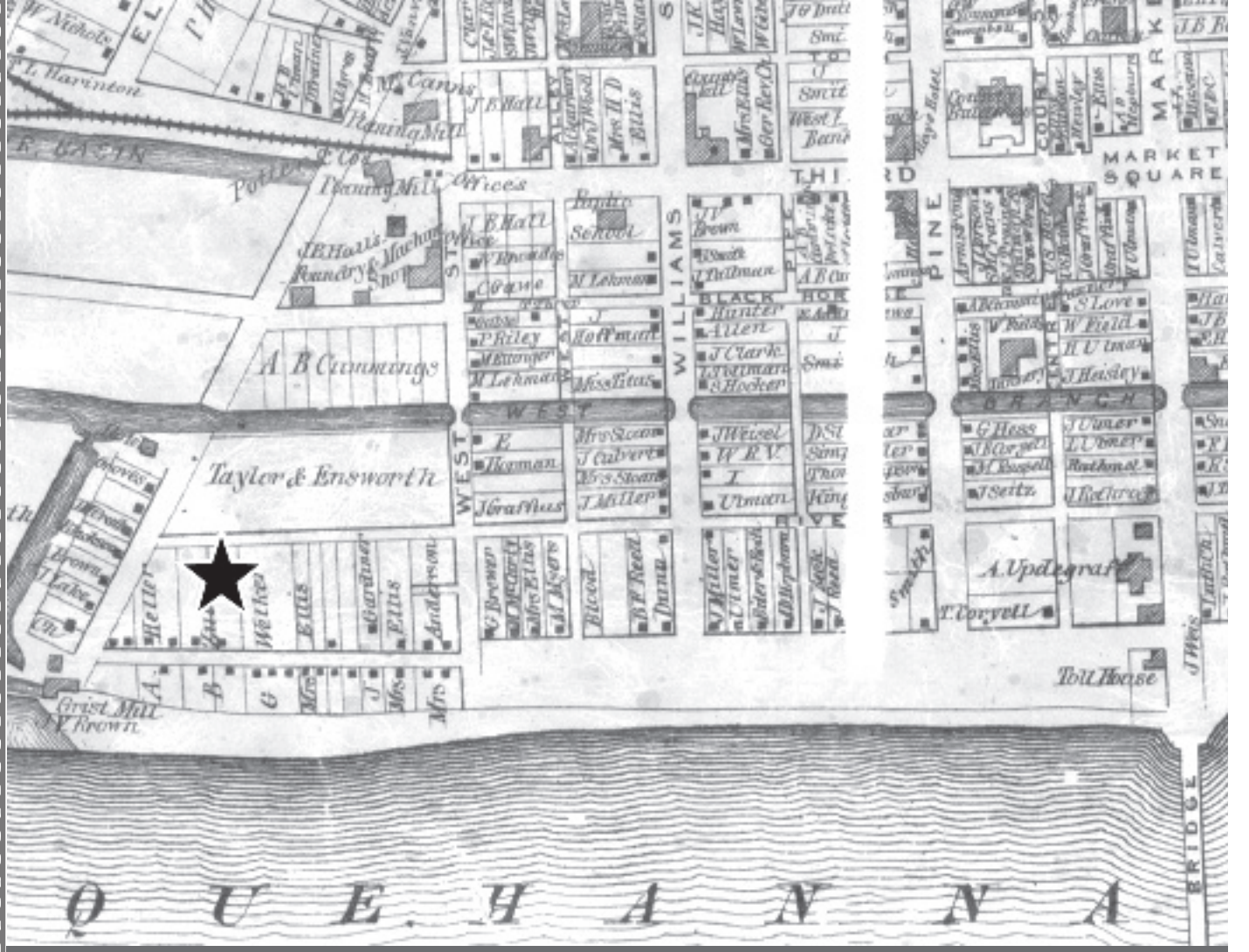
Line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	407	572	Smith Elizabeth	58	F	W	Keeping House	1600	500	Pa
2			Mary	25	F	W				"
3			Galbraith Sarah J	22	F	W				" "
4			Adam	28	M	W	Butcher			" "
5	408	573	Galbraith J. J.	21	M	W	Reporter			" "
6			L. Ed	20	M	W				" "
7			Margaret	16	F	W				" "
8			Alma	13	F	W				" "
9	409	575	Bleakley George	57	M	W	Carpenter	14000	1000	Pa
10			Margaret	60	F	W				" "
11	410	576	Farley Jonathan	22	M	W	Carpenter	3000	500	Pa
12			Catherine	24	F	W				" "
13			Luther	1	M	W				" "
14	411	576	Yount J. P.	57	M	W	Carpenter	4000	1000	Pa
15			Kate	57	F	W				" "
16			Francis H.	18	M	W				" "
17			William	12	M	W				" "
18			Mary E.	6	F	W				" "
19	412	577	[illegible] Geo. M.	28	M	W	Carpenter	2500	300	Ill.
20	413	578	Willis James	35	M	B	Plasterer			Pa
21			Mary	30	F	B				
22	414	579	Linn Samuel	58	M	W	Lawyer	45000	6000	Pa
23			[illegible]	[illegible]	F	W				

The 1870 Census, listing James Willis, age 35, employed as a Plasterer, and his wife Mary, age 30, as residents of 'The Fourth Ward of Williamsport'. According to this document, which represents the first census that Mr. Willis participated in, he was born in 1835.

Pvt. Willis and his regiment were part of the army of General Grant that relentlessly battered Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia into submission throughout the spring of 1865. When on April 9th it all came finally to an end with the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia to Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia, Private James Willis was there.

As the fighting concluded and the individual Confederate military units surrendered, newly promoted Sergeant Willis and the 127th Regiment were dispatched to Texas





★–*Site of the Fribley Post No. 390, G.A.R. Meeting Hall, indicated by author on an 1861 Map of Williamsport. (Note the series of bridges, on the north/south streets, that cross the West Branch Canal, later filled in and named Canal Street)*

to assist regional military governors in reestablishing Federal authority in the southwest. It was there, on September 6th, 1865, that Sergeant James H. Willis, possibly due to a worsening of his foot injury, was discharged from service at an Army post on Brazas Island near Port Isabel, Texas. Mr. Willis returned to Pennsylvania, where he soon met and married Ms. Mary Prettyman, a house servant for the Witherspoon family in Philadelphia. There, he took a job briefly as a Pullman Porter on the railroad, which may have first brought him to Williamsport. The 1867 Williamsport City Directory lists James, now employed as a plasterer, residing at a home in an alley behind 99 River Street, at the time a riverside throughway later renamed Jefferson Street, most of which no longer exists. By 1880, James and Mary Willis had relocated to 75 Washington Ave, and Mr. Willis had taken a job as a Messenger for the Williamsport National Bank, a job he would keep for nearly forty years.

As in most Northern towns, Civil War soldiers returning home to Williamsport after the war formed a Grand Army of the Republic Veteran's organization. Restricted to whites only, these G.A.R. Posts were fixtures of nearly every Pennsylvania city by the end of the 19th Century. Williamsport's G.A.R. Reno Post No. 64, organized in October of 1876, held its meetings in an elaborately decorated hall in what came to be known colloquially as the "rummage sale place" at 136 West Third Street, the present-day site of the Trade & Transit Centre II. By 1910, the Post boasted a membership of more than 700 members. Taking its name in honor of General Jesse L. Reno, who died in the Battle of South Mountain in Maryland in 1862, the Post Meeting Hall was a center of community happenings for decades after the war ended.

Visitors to the Post Hall on Third Street marveled at the collection of Civil War souvenirs and artifacts collected by the veterans. Robert S. Ulrich, a long-time Williamsport Civil War historian, detailed the collection in an April 1958 edition of the Journal of the Lycoming Historical Society. When the Reno Post quietly disbanded in the early decades of the 20th Century with the inevitable passing of its remaining members, the artifacts themselves were simply left behind. In 1958, an effort by Lycoming College was initiated to catalog the items, which were transferred to the College archives for preservation and display. In 1971, the collection

was transferred once again to the Lycoming County Historical Society, on West Fourth Street, where many of the artifacts remain on display to this day.

Little-known, however, is that until about 1905 there existed, in addition to the Reno Post, two smaller G.A.R. posts within the city. The Barrows Post, with a modest number of enrollees, had met periodically for about ten years above a storefront at 317 Market Street. It was absorbed by the Reno Post at the beginning of the 1900s. A third G.A.R post active in Williamsport at the end of the 19th Century, however, is practically unknown today.

For Negro citizens who remained in the South after the Civil War, the system of sharecropping and Jim Crow laws they lived under presented a life little changed from slavery, and the exodus of Blacks northward in the 1880s represented the largest in-country migration of people in the nation's history. For the Negro soldiers who settled in northern cities and communities of the country for which they had fought little, too, had changed. Institutional segregation and widespread discrimination greatly limited the opportunities available to them. Negroes were funneled into the most menial of jobs and confined to the most undesirable areas of the communities they settled in. Likewise, Negro businesses, schools and other organizations were segregated by race and location from those of white citizens, and for the returning Black veterans of the Civil War within Williamsport it was no different.

Unwelcomed into membership in the white G.A.R. Posts on 3rd Street or on Market Street, the former Negro soldiers in and around Williamsport, as elsewhere, formed a G.A.R. Colored Veterans organization in 1883. Remarkably, these local Black veterans chose to name their Post in honor of a white man, Col. Charles W. Fribley, a native of Lycoming County and the former commander of the 8th Regiment, U.S. Colored. The 8th Regiment had consisted mostly of free Blacks from Pennsylvania who were among the first Negroes enlisted into the regiments in August of 1863, including eighteen free Blacks from Williamsport, Loyalsock, Jersey Shore, Old Lycoming, Eldred, Muncy, Nippenose and Cascade townships.

This new veteran's organization, the Fribley Post No. 390, G.A.R., met outside the heart of the city amidst the lumber mills and coal receiving yards along the bank of the Susquehanna. The Fribley Post met in a small riverfront warehouse at 337 W. Jefferson Street, near the point where it once intersected with Hepburn Street. Today, the site is buried beneath the earthen mound that forms the foundation for the Rt. 180 highway where it passes in front of Wegmans market. Around 1925, the remaining members of the Williamsport Fribley Post, which by then numbered only a few, were accepted into the Reno Post with 'full status'. Tragically however, nearly all the official records associated with Fribley Post and its members were never preserved.

Throughout its years, James Willis was a fixture of Fribley Post, whose members marched in formation in the city's Memorial Day celebrations each year or in anniversary commemorations at nearby Gettysburg until, like their white comrades, they were no longer physically able to do so. A photograph of Mr. Willis taken during the Memorial Day event in 1908 when he was an elderly man of nearly seventy years shows a proud and distinguished veteran. Standing erect in shined shoes and striped trousers, the breast of his formal coat, which he always wore fully buttoned, is adorned with G.A.R. badges and encampment ribbons. Wearing crisp white gloves, he grips a cane as do many of the elderly veterans in the photograph, the walking aid for most an accoutrement as much of necessity as it was of style. Beneath his infantry cap, the taut clean-shaven face of a younger man stares directly into the camera, his narrow gaze concealing the prodigious experiences of his incomprehensible life, of which much, regretfully, may never be known.

On March 30th, 1917, James Willis' wife of nearly fifty years, Mary, died at the age of 76 or 77. Mrs. Willis was buried in Wildwood Cemetery, her grave located at the foot of a steep hillside along the fringe of the cemetery in a virtually forgotten section known as the 'Poor Ground'. For Mr. Willis, the inevitable trials of a long life changed nearly everything for him. Nearly 80 years old himself, he could no longer endure the daily physical burdens of delivering documents and other parcels for the Williamsport National Bank. Or, perhaps, with the loss of his long-time companion, he simply lost the desire to do so.

Later that year Mr. Willis left Williamsport. By now, many of his friends and fellow G.A.R. post members had died or, like Mr. Willis, had relocated to the care of distant family members. Leaving behind the life he had known over fifty years, he moved to Montclair in New Jersey, to the home of a great-niece, Ms. Eva Virginia Clay. A former resident and nurse in Williamsport, Ms. Clay was a 1910 graduate of the Freedman's Hospital School of Nursing in Washington D.C. and an Army nurse in New Jersey in the last year of WWI. As a trained nurse, Ms. Eva Clay was the ideal caretaker for her aged great-uncle, a role which she seemed to have accepted without hesitation.

Though Mr. Willis would never again reside in Williamsport, the legacy of his life remained within the city. His nephew, Mr. Charles H. Clay, had relocated with his family from Henrico County, Virginia to Williamsport, part of the exodus of Black Americans out of the South at the turn of the century. A waiter at the Updegraff Hotel in the years between 1912 and 1915, Mr. Clay joined the Williamsport Police Department in 1915 at the age of thirty, one of only two Negro Policemen in the city at the time, a position not without

considerable risk for a Black man in a predominately white city in the early 1900s.

A summary history of Williamsport's Police Officers from 1866 to 2002, complied by retired city police captain James G. Carn in 2002, records a September evening in 1906, for example, when Officer Thomas Hughes, one of Williamsport's first Negro Policemen, was escorting to City Hall a white prisoner whom he had just arrested for public drunkenness at a nearby social gathering. A large crowd of white attendees at the function, as many perhaps as three hundred, streamed out onto the street in pursuit of Hughes. Angered at the arrest of a white man by a Black officer, the crowd attacked Hughes, beating him severely as he ran the gauntlet of his assaulters through the streets of Williamsport, his prisoner in tow. Other Officers quickly arrived to rescue Hughes, but the damage, it seems, had been done. Patrolman Hughes would not recover, and died nine days later. An official City Coroner's inquest, however, ruled that it was Hughes' already "weakened' physical condition prior to the assault, and not the beating itself, that was the cause of his death.

Regardless of the clear dangers, however, and despite unassailable justifications for refusal, a commitment of service to their community and to their country was a pledge repeatedly accepted without any apparent hesitation by Mr. Willis and by the family that followed him to Williamsport. Mr. Willis' nephew, Mr. Clay, would serve as a City Policeman for nearly eighteen years. In November of 1932, Officer Clay caught a cold that lingered, soon developing into pneumonia. Other complications followed, and on March 11 of 1933, barely four months later, Officer Charles H. Clay died. He was 48 years old.

Clay's children, too, presented themselves for service when the opportunity came. His son, Clarence Clay, registered for the draft in 1917, but WWI ended before his draft number was called up; in 1942, after America entered the Second World War, he registered for the draft again. Officer Clay's daughter Eva Clay, as noted, served as an Army Nurse at the war's end, and his second son, Charles H. Clay, Jr., followed his father's example, serving the City of Williamsport as a Policeman for sixteen years before dying of heart failure in 1953 at the age of forty-two. He and his father were two of only twelve African-Americans who served as Police Officers for the City of Williamsport in the years between the City's incorporation in 1866 and the year 2000.

After relocating to the home of Eva Virginia Clay in Montclair, James Willis lived another twenty-five years, and by all accounts it was a life of lucidity and enthusiasm. He remembered names and places of his early life long before, and spoke often of his adventures with the Grand Army of the Republic, and of his years as a slave on the Virginia plantation of Ms. Eliza Sims. For the rest of his life, he was the oldest Civil War veteran in Essex County, New Jersey, and perhaps in the entire state.

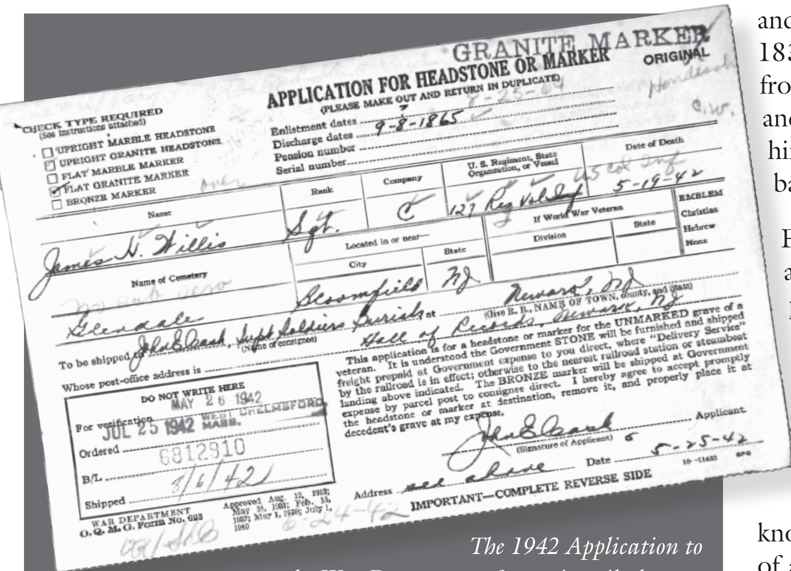
Unfortunately, he wrote little down about his life, nor, it seems, did anyone else. Still, he was a citizen of note, and in 1940, on his 100th Birthday, President Franklin Roosevelt sent Mr. Willis a bouquet along with a message of congratulations. "It is a privilege not vouchsafed to many," the President proclaimed with characteristic aplomb, using a verb that hardly anyone has used since, "to round out a full century of life." For nearly the last quarter-century of his life James Willis was fortunate to enjoy exceptional health far beyond the expectations of a near-centenarian, never setting foot in a physician's office since the age of seventy-five. At the gathering of friends and acquaintances at his Montclair home to celebrate his century of living, Mr. Willis informed the assembled well-wishers that he "felt as good now as when I ran away from slavery" almost eighty years earlier. "I'm looking forward to another fifty years," he declared. But it was not to be. Within the next year, Mr. Willis' health began to rapidly deteriorate, and in the last months of his life he was confined to bed and nearly sightless.

On May 19th, nearly six months after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor that marked America's entry into WWII, Civil War Veteran James Henry Willis died. He was buried with full military honors at the Glendale Cemetery in Bloomfield, New Jersey on May 22nd, 1942.

There is much about the life of Mr. James Henry Willis that can never be known. The most rudimentary information, for instance, is simply unavailable. Even his age is uncertain. Born into slavery, no formal documentation recording his birth now exists; it likely never existed. Plantation slave records, those that have survived, document slave information in much the same way that livestock, farming implements or other 'items' of value were recorded. Emphasis is placed on what mattered most to the plantation owner, that being the total numbers of a particular thing of value owned at any given time, or the price paid for it. Recording for posterity's sake the full name along with the exact birthdate of a slave was generally deemed no more necessary than recording the name of a mule or the length of a grub hoe. What mattered was how many of each were owned and, as in the case of a slave, how much he or she was worth. Only in the Federal Census records of 1850 and 1860 did southern slave holders enter into separate Slave Schedules the age and sex of each slave owned, as well as whether the slave was 'black' or 'mulatto'. Slave names were almost always omitted, and so cross-referencing the personal information of former slaves after the Civil War with federal slave records from the decades before the war is nearly always fruitless.

In an effort to control the growing number of free blacks in the antebellum south, various states passed a multitude of laws that required detailed records on free blacks over the age of 12, for instance, or required counties to maintain a roster of blacks confined to prison, lists of runaway slaves, or other information. Those records, however, are often equally unrevealing. After the war ended, uncertainty among former slaves about whether they might be forced to return to the South, now that the war was over, provided ample incentive to hide their identities. Also, being wholly without any contradictory documentation, Blacks were free to throw off their slave-given names and choose whatever name or surname they desired for themselves, by which they would be known for the rest of their lives. Many did so.

Obviously, the scourge of slavery created enormous difficulties that hinder present-day African-Americans in their attempts to trace family lineages. In the case of Mr. James Henry Willis, for instance, even the origin of his surname Willis is difficult to know for certain; so, too, are even the most basic of facts such as the correct spelling of individual names. Hand-written federal census records of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries are notoriously prone to error. The data was entered into the records not by the subject of the census, but rather by the census-takers themselves. The individual recorder's interpretations of phonetic pronunciations of names and pronouncements of ages by persons often barely literate and who spoke with unfamiliar accents and speech patterns that were difficult to understand created vast inconsistencies between successive census records. Based on his age as given in the seven federal censuses that he participated in over his lifetime between 1870 and 1940, Mr. Willis's inferred birthyear is either 1840, 1838 or 1835. It should also be remembered that, aside from the discrepancy in the given year, the exact month and day of his birth was unknown with certainty even to him. The date he chose to use as most likely to be true, based on his own memory, was May 10, 1840.



GRANITE MARKER
ORIGINAL

APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER
(PLEASE MAKE OUT AND RETURN IN DUPLICATE)

CHECK TYPE REQUIRED
(See instructions attached)
☐ UPRIGHT MARBLE HEADSTONE
☐ UPRIGHT GRANITE HEADSTONE
☐ FLAT MARBLE MARKER
☑ FLAT GRANITE MARKER
☐ BRONZE MARKER

Enlistment dates ....
Discharge dates 9-8-1865
Pension number ....
Serial number ....

Name	Rank	Company	U. S. Regiment, State Organization, or Vessel	Date of Death
James H. Willis	Sgt.	C	127 Reg Vol Inf	5-19-42

Name of Cemetery	Located in or near— City	State
Glendale	Bloomfield	NJ

If World War Veteran — Division — State

EMBLEM: Christian, Hebrew, None

To be shipped to John E. Cook, Supt Soldiers Burials (Name of consignee) at Hall of Records, Newark, NJ (Give R. R. NAME OF TOWN, County, and State)

Whose post-office address is ....

This application is for a headstone or marker for the UNMARKED grave of a veteran. It is understood the Government STONE will be furnished and shipped freight prepaid at Government expense to you direct, where "Delivery Service" by the railroad is in effect; otherwise to the nearest railroad station or steamboat landing above indicated. The BRONZE marker will be shipped at Government expense by parcel post to consignee direct. I hereby agree to accept promptly the headstone or marker at destination, remove it, and properly place it at decedent's grave at my expense.

.... Applicant.
(Signature of Applicant)

Address see above Date 5-25-42

DO NOT WRITE HERE
MAY 26 1942
For verification JUL 25 1942 WEST CHELMSFORD MASS.
Ordered 6812910
B/L 8/6/42
Shipped ....

WAR DEPARTMENT
O. Q. M. G. Form No. 623

Approved Aug. 12, 1913; Feb. 14, May 15, 1931; Feb. 14, 1930; July 1, 1937; May 1, 1940

IMPORTANT—COMPLETE REVERSE SIDE

The 1942 Application to the War Department for an inscribed grave marker for James H. Willis, Sgt., Company C, 127th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry, which was quickly approved.

The headstone over the grave of Sgt. James H. Willis, 127th U.S. Colored Infantry, Williamsport's last surviving Civil War Veteran, who died in 1942 at the declared age of 102. He may have been as old as 107.

For many African-Americans, oral histories that are not also recorded in writing, but rather are passed solely by memory from one generation to the next, are still priceless archives of their family's early descendants, though the memories rely upon cohesive generations to ensure their preservation. Mr. Willis' immediate family was lost to him when he fled the Simms plantation in 1862. Whether he ever saw them again is unknown. Thusly, those known relatives that survived Mr. Willis are descendants of an as-yet unclear relation, the closest being Ms. Eva Clay, his great-niece, by definition the child of a child of an older sibling or older half-sibling - or the spouse thereof - of Mr. Willis, a detachment of direct relation that disrupts the depth and accuracy of any known oral history. Possibly, Ms. Clay was a direct relation of James Willis' wife, Mary.

Mr. Willis' recollection was that he was born into, and escaped from, a plantation outside Richmond belonging to 'Eliza Simms from Port Royal' in Virginia. A search of census records and other documents reveal an Eliza F. Bernard from Port Royal, fitting to the times and who subsequently married a Mr. Thomas Semmes, (pronounced like 'Simms') but there is no record yet found to indicate that this Semmes family of Virginia ever owned slaves. Indeed, most Virginia families at the time were not slaveowners. Mr. Willis' remembrances suggest that 'Ms. Eliza Simms' was a widow at the time he escaped from slavery. Federal Census Slave Schedules from 1850 and 1860, the only years in which slaves were individually counted by census during Mr. Willis' life as a slave, reveal a slave owner named 'Eliza A Sims' from Louisa County, Virginia, nearby to both Richmond and Port Royal, who owned a considerable

number of slaves during the two decades of Mr. Willis' enslavement. She is the only Eliza 'Sims' or 'Simms' listed on available Federal Slave Schedules as a sole slave owner of multiple slaves near Richmond in both 1850 and 1860. The age and sex of the slaves owned by Ms. Eliza A. Sims of Louisa County, Virginia during that time corresponds closely with the relative age of Mr. Willis and his memories of the family members he left behind. Connecting with absolute certainty the slave James Henry Willis with the slave owner Eliza Sims, however, may never be possible. Though the scarcity of formal records greatly complicates any attempt to trace African-American lineages, there is still much to learn of Mr. Willis and his remarkable life, and potential sources of information are far from exhausted.

What is known for certain is that for Mr. Willis, as for thousands of escaped slaves, the opportunity to take part in the great struggle for the preservation of the Union and for the liberation of millions of black slaves in the South was one from which he could not turn away. Having fled the misery of slavery at enormous cost to himself for the uncertain possibility of a life lived freely, Mr. Willis willingly risked that new life in the hope of securing freedom for others and for the preservation of a nation that, after the war, refused to accept him as an equal citizen. Even then, after all he had endured, Mr. Willis decided that Lycoming County, Pennsylvania was where the life he had won for himself and for his wife could best be lived. If in all his fifty years as a resident of Williamsport he ever expressed regret over this decision, there is no record of that, either.

On the eve of the Civil War, five days before Christmas in 1860, carriages from all parts of town streamed into the city. Fourth, Market, Third, Hepburn, Mulberry and Pine Streets all bristled with activity as the leading citizens of Williamsport, pressing against the cold winds that signaled the coming of the first day of winter, converged on Doebler's Hall on the east side of Sugar Alley (now State Street), a vast auditorium space that spanned the block between Third Street and Black Horse Alley (now East Church Street), one block east of Market Square. The site was specifically chosen just the week before as the only venue in the city large enough to accommodate the number of people that were expected to attend. By 7 p.m., the capacity crowd spilled out into the street.

Just over a month prior, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, whom hardly anyone in town had ever heard of before the previous summer, had been elected President and the southern states were clamoring for secession. Earlier that very day, South Carolina had formally abandoned the Union, the first pull of a thread that threatened to unravel the nation. In Washington, Congress scrambled for a solution, but hopes for a peaceful reconciliation were darkening. On this night, city leaders had called a rushed meeting to formalize a Resolution of the Town Council of the Borough of Williamsport, to be sent to Washington urging against a dissolution of the Union

PROCLAMATION.—In pursuance of resolutions passed by the Town Council of the Borough of Williamsport, the citizens without respect to party distinction, are invited to meet together in Doebler's Hall, on next Thursday evening at 7 o'clock, to "express their love for the Union, and devotion to its perpetuity."

No people are more interested in the preservation of the Union and the quiet prosperity of the whole country than the people of Williamsport. Under the influence of the best government, State and National, ever devised by man, we have increased in wealth and population beyond any of the inland towns of Pennsylvania.

"Union and Liberty—one and inseparable." Shall they be destroyed? Let us meet as patriots, and reason together.

WILLIAMSPORT, PA., Dec. 12, 1860. S. M. CRANS, Burgess.

In compliance with this call, the largest number of the citizens of Williamsport, that we have ever seen together, assembled in the large Hall, filling it to a perfect jam.

The Town Council had appointed a Committee consisting of Maj. J. H. Perkins, Wm. A. McCann and J. W. Hays, to make all necessary arrangement for the meeting.

At the appointed hour, Maj. Perkins introduced the venerable Francis C. Campbell, the father of the Hon. James H. Campbell, the member from Pennsylvania, on the Committee of *thirty three* in the House of Representatives of the United States, as President.

The organization was completed by the selection of the following, the most of whom are old citizens of Williamsport who are identified with all its interests and constitute the real stamina of all our public relations.

VICE PRESIDENTS.—Oliver Watson, Esq., Robert Faries, Esq., E. S. Lowe, Esq., C. B. Bowman, Esq., Charles H. Doebler, Col. H. B. Packer, Hon. George Schnabel, Col. Thomas Throp, Hon. James Armstrong, Dr. Samuel Pollock, J. K. Hays, Esq., Elisha Covert, Esq., W. J. Lyon, Esq., Tunison Coryell, Esq., Abraham Updegraff, Esq., Hon. John Smith.

SECRETARIES —F. E. Embick, John B. Coryell, D. L. Montgomery, Robert P. Allen.

The Rev. Wm. Simonton of the First Presbyterian Church opened the meeting with a most fervent and patriotic address to the Throne of Grace.

The venerable President now stepped to the front of the platform, and explained the object of the meeting in a most dignified and eloquent manner. The man of four score years, the friend of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, appealed in the eloquence of those great men for love, brotherly kindness and an honorable conservative conduct in all our proceedings.

A. J. Dietrick, Esq., Lindsey Mahaffy, Gen. Robert Fleming, G. A. Cramer, G. White, Esq., and the Hon. C. D. Eldred were appointed a Committee to draft resolutions expressive of the sense of the people of this section of the Union. Who reported the following which were adopted with a unanimous voice.

Resolved, That without pausing to inquire whether fanaticism North or South is most to blame, we can no longer close our eyes to the fact that a crisis big with the fate of the Republic exists, and it is the solemn duty of all good citizens to lay aside for the time, party feeling and prejudice, and unite as our Fathers did, with one heart and purpose, to save and perpetuate the Union by every honorable and just means.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this meeting, the existing discontents among the Southern people, and the growing hostility among them to the Federal Government, is greatly to be regretted, and that whether such discontents and hostility are without just cause or not, any reasonable, proper, and Constitutional remedies, and effectual guaranties of their peculiar interest as recognized by the Constitution, necessary to preserve the peace of the country, and the perpetuity of the Union, should be promptly and cheerfully granted.

Resolved, That we hereby pledge ourselves without distinction of party, to support whatever propositions the Committee of Thirty-three, appointed by the Representatives of the People, in Congress, shall propose, and which Congress shall pass, whether the same shall be in the form of Constitutional amendments, or otherwise, believing that any concession for peace and fraternity is better and more honorable than a pertinacious adherance to opinion at the expense of civil war and National ruin.

Resolved, That we fully believe that no law has ever received the sanction of Pennsylvania, obstructing the execution of the Fugitive Slave Law, and if any such law exists upon the statute book it is a libel upon their patriotism, and ought, and must be promptly repealed.

Resolved, That we appeal to our brethren of the South, and of such other States as are considering the question of seceding from the Union, to forbear; that we remind them of the innumerable ties which bind us together as one people, and which seem to us so strong that no power short of that which paralyzes all memory, and effaces all history, can separate us; that our glorious institutions, under whose guidance and protection we have attained so great prosperity and renown, and which have made this Union of States the joy and hope of oppressed millions throughout the world, were framed by the wisdom, built by the toil, defended by the blood of a common ancestry, and cannot perish without an eternal reproach to their children, if we destroy so great and fair an inheritance.

After the adoption of the Resolutions, the Hon. J. W. Maynard addressed the meeting. He was followed by E. G. Scott and Wm. H. Armstrong, in exceedingly appropriate speeches. The Hon. Thos. Kimber, President of the Elmira & Williamsport Railroad, was then introduced to the meeting. His remarks were judicious and patriotic.—

An 1860 broadside recording the unanimous adoption of a Proclamation by the Town Council of the Borough of Williamsport which, in part, affirms the City's commitment to uphold enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

and a preservation of "our glorious institutions…which have made this Union of States the joy and hope of oppressed millions throughout the world." If the irony of the declaration was noticed by anyone at the time, it went unmentioned.

Then, to demonstrate for their southern brethren the sincerity of purpose with which the resolutions were declared, the Council further resolved that no law ought to be passed within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that in any way obstructed the execution of the contentious Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. City leaders, it was made clear, had resolved that Williamsport authorities would return to the south any escaped slave captured within its limits.

The history of Williamsport, in its treatment of its African-American citizens in the decades before and after the Civil War, mirrors that of many of her northern sister communities. In the years between then and now, the questions of racial equality have been asked, answered, and asked again, with each succeeding generation deciding for itself what its own legacy ought to be. That which we know to be wrong is, by now, supremely evident. The foremost question for the present generation, it seems, and for the City of Williamsport, is how the legacy of those wrongs ought to be righted. The answer, perhaps, begins not with a debate over the extent of previous transgressions, but rather with a new resolve to integrate into the mainstream of our learned history the shrouded contributions of the Black Americans of our past.

Certainly, there is a universal consensus that those Americans who have offered up their lives 'that this nation might live', as Lincoln memorialized at Gettysburg, are deserving of our indelible gratitude. Surely, now, for these former slaves it is 'altogether fitting and proper' that we formally commemorate the unheralded devotion that these unlikely soldiers gave to the cause of freedom.

It will not happen all at once. Still, the questions of race need to be asked, and the answers we seek to find, answers as consequential now perhaps as those that divided the nation 160 years ago, may once again offer the opportunity for a rebirth of freedom in America. For the City of Williamsport, as for thousands of cities across the country, the journey towards a universal freedom for all her citizens requires only the resolve to seek a just beginning.

Where, then, ought that journey begin? The citizen-soldiers of Fribley Post No. 390 of the Grand Army of the Republic were long relegated to eulogize their fallen comrades from beyond the unseen margins of the community and the nation they served. Mr. James Henry Willis, our community's last surviving Civil War veteran, quietly bore the noble legacy of Williamsport's Civil War Veterans until his tired body could no longer endure the burden. For these men, perhaps, a formal recognition of their unquenchable desire for freedom for themselves, and ultimately for us, offers a fitting and proper place to start.

Michael A. Luna
an amateur historian and writer, is a nine-year veteran of the United States Air Force and a former Security Police Lieutenant at the Kennedy Space Center/Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Brevard County, Florida. An avid student and reader of American History and an enthusiastic proponent of NASA and the American space program, he was a member of the Space Shuttle Columbia Disaster Recovery Team in Hemphill, Texas in 2003.

Born in Dover, Delaware, the son of a true Coal Miner's Daughter, he spent most of his early childhood in Europe, residing in England, Spain and Italy. Returning to the United States, he grew up in the West Virginia coal fields of Logan County, in a small town named Man in the heart of 'Hatfield & McCoy' country.

He enjoys researching and writing about the rich history of Williamsport and Lycoming County. In addition, he is currently writing his first book, a work that traces the 250-year history of coal in America from its first use in the mid-18th Century to the rise of coal mining in Logan County, West Virginia in the early 20th Century, and how on a winter morning in February of 1972 the coal industry destroyed a way of life in his hometown along the Buffalo Creek.

The father of three daughters, he lives with his wife, Lori, in Montoursville, Pennsylvania.

TIDEWATER OIL COMPANY

Bruce Rogers

The time, the early 1960's.

A group of elementary school-aged boys are high on a hill overlooking Williamsport and Loyalsock township. Their toy replica weapons in hand, surplus sea rations and backpacks from the army surplus store at their side, they gaze beyond the sloping fields stretching in front of them to the streets and buildings below.

A large triple-trunked pine tree provides shade as it stands as a sentinel on the brow of the hill, serving as a sort of demarcation line where the open slopes transform into the wooded hilltop beginning at this big pine.

Today's trek up the hill and into the woods is for the purpose of reenacting for fun the combat maneuvers of World War II, as seen weekly on one of the boys' favorite TV shows. Other trips onto this prominence may simply be for a hike. Yet the attraction to this locale, beyond the hilltop view and open woodland, would also be a rather unique feature.

When my friends first introduced me to this spot, they referred to it as "the craters." And upon approaching, for the first time, the two anomalies that I encountered there in the shade of the trees, I realized they were, indeed, two earthen crater-like structures. But, when told what was buried in those features, my mind created an incredulous image. "Tanks" they told me. "Tanks" thought I, "army tanks buried right here on this hill."

That large triple-trunked pine tree, itself, always instilled a certain sense of magic, like the tower of a castle from which the world could be observed. Little was it realized that, in the realm of time, as events become history, that there was a connecting link where we stood, a link between the energy that was motivating and supporting the activities that we observed below us in town and those unique features nestled in the shade of the forest to our backs.

Other than an occasional trip to the neighborhood service station in those bygone days, on my bike to get gas for the lawn mower or lubricating the bike chain with a few drops of oil, I, for the most part, didn't give petroleum products, the lifeblood of civilization, much thought. Yet, if not for the genius of those who developed a vast array of products from this resource and an affordable means to get them to us, our lives and all of civilization would be far different.

Since the time of ancient peoples, oil was procured from vegetable sources and animal fats, in more recent centuries whales being a primary animal source. As whale oil became increasingly in demand, whaling, the quest to capture these creatures, became a well-organized business. The main use for that oil was illumination, in oil lamps, candle making and lubricating machinery. Additional products included soap, paint, varnish, textiles and rope manufacturing.

A superior quality of light - bright, clear and without excess smoke - was produced by candles made from spermaceti, a peculiar oil found in the head of Sperm whales. Spermaceti could also be refined into a lubricant ideal for precision machinery. This machinery in turn aided in the growth of industry in the United States.

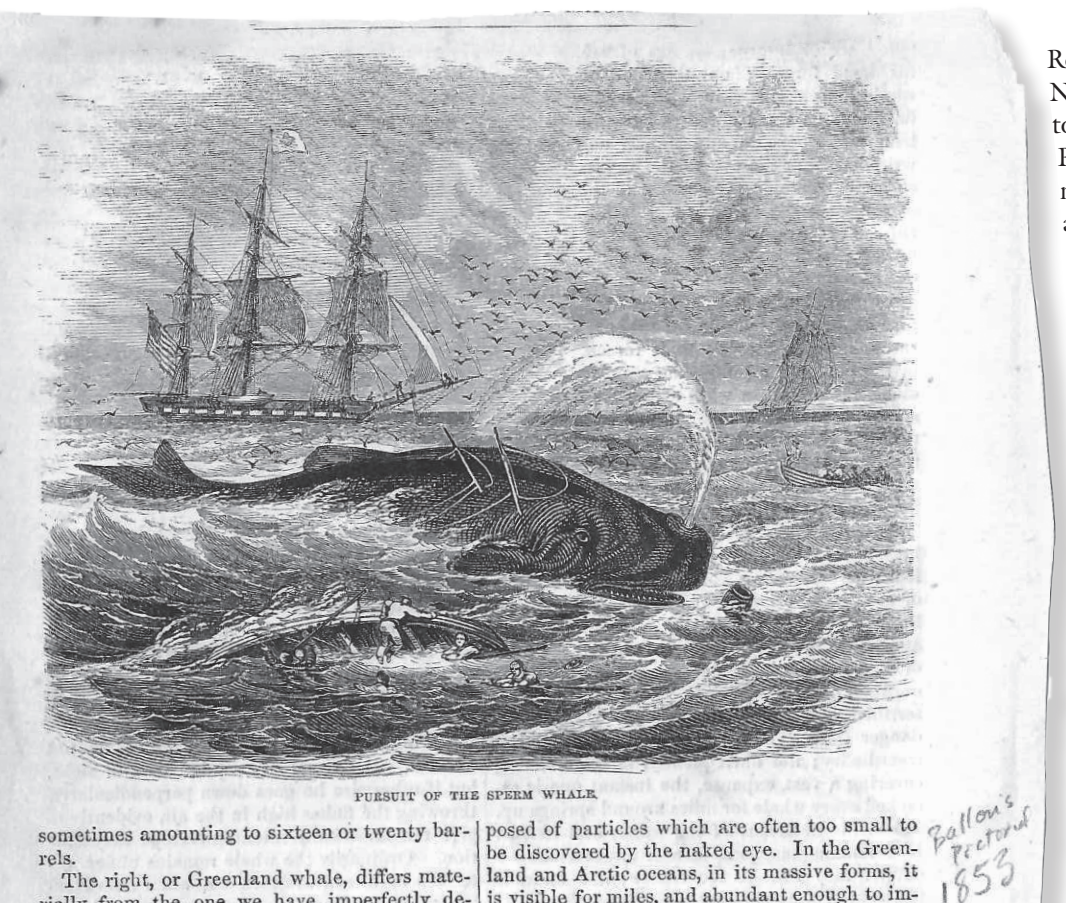
Obtaining and transporting whale oil was labor intense and expensive. The hardy seamen on the whaling ships, after harpooning and landing the creature, would peel and cut the fat, or "blubber" from the carcass, cut it into chunks, boil it in a vat aboard ship, pack it into casks and transport it back to port, one of which was the busiest whaling port by the mid 1800's, New Bedford, Massachusetts. So, the relatively superior products developed from whale oil were available and "state-of-the-art" well into the 1800's, but only to those who had access and could afford them.

Petroleum-based oil was first discovered for use by the Chinese as early as 600 B.C. and reportedly transported in pipes made of bamboo. The name, petroleum, comes from the Greek language: Petra-rock and elaion-oil. The present-day fracking process, in fact, involves harvesting petroleum products from rock formations. By the early 1800's, it was not uncommon to get oil seepage in wells drilled for water or salt brine. This oil was considered a nuisance, however some enterprising merchants sold it in small quantities as a natural remedy or curative agent. In the late 1800's a group of investors from New Haven, Connecticut, formed the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company. Interest had grown in

developing kerosene for lighting, gas was a byproduct. They had a Yale University chemist analyze a sample Pennsylvania oil and it was determined to be a very high quality and could be refined into useful products. Edwin Drake, one of their employees, struck oil near Titusville on August 27, 1859. And the rest is, as is said, what we are all interested in "*history*". A frenzied oil boom was set off in the "oil regions" of Northwest Pennsylvania.

The groundbreaking factor in Drake's discovery wasn't in drilling but rather that oil could be drilled for and pumped out the same as water. In support of the value of Drake's discovery was the fact that the technology for refining oil was known by the early 1850's. In August 1846 a Canadian, Dr. Gesner, patented a method for distilling kerosene from coal. Through the 1850's, a patent for distilling petroleum into "burning oils", development of lubricants from coal tar and an increase in refining production to 650,000 gallons of refined oil a year by 1856 resulted in coal oil lamps being widespread by 1861. Pennsylvania oil was of high quality: one barrel yielded 60-65% illuminating oil, 10% gasoline and 5-10% benzoyl or naphtha. The remainder was tar and waste.

As the refining of oil and use of its products expanded in the 1860's and 1870s, so too did the financial opportunities that the industry offered. Enter John D. Rockefeller. Born in Richford, New York, his family moved to Cleveland in 1853. Rockefeller was talented in math, learned bookkeeping and entered the business world. He dressed well, was scrupulously honest, exacting and generous to his church and charities. In March of 1859, just shy of 20, he went in business for himself.



PURSUIT OF THE SPERM WHALE.

sometimes amounting to sixteen or twenty barrels.

The right, or Greenland whale, differs materially from the one we have imperfectly described. The sperm is an inhabitant of warm

posed of particles which are often too small to be discovered by the naked eye. In the Greenland and Arctic oceans, in its massive forms, it is visible for miles, and abundant enough to impede the progress of a ship. By the aid of a

Ballou's Pictorial 1853

Rockefeller was hard working, a planner and aggressive. Starting out as a commissioned merchant in commodities, he soon realized the value of shipping and railroads and in raw industrial materials. In 1863 he saw his opportunity-in oil. Rockefeller abhorred waste and looked for efficiency in his business. In this vein, he bought tracts of timber, manufactured his own wooden oil barrels and bought wagons and horses for transportation. By 1858 Rockefeller and his partners had the largest refinery business in the world. His model was to utilize all waste products, for the sake of profit make the business as large as possible and, to stabilize price, limit small entry-level competition.

Located in Cleveland near the rail access and due to the size of the business and expanse of products, Rockefeller and Flagler had great advantage over other refiners. By 1870, Rockefeller and his partners created Standard Oil Company, holding about 10% of the oil business. By 1879, through buyouts, mergers, pipeline companies' deals with shippers and railroads and aggressive marketing, Standard Oil did about 90% of the refining in the U.S., with 70% being exported overseas.

In 1879, Standard's only serious competition emerged – Tidewater Pipeline Company, taking Rockefeller by surprise and succeeding in building a pipeline from the Pennsylvania Bradford oil regions east, to access to the Reading rail lines and ultimately to the seaboard ports.

Congruent with the importance of oil has typically been a fight for control of it, from Standard's attempts to control competition, to the new reliance on oil in the advanced technology of WWI, to the importance of oil in WWII and the unrest related to the immense

oil fields in the middle east. Fortunately, at this time the U.S. is oil and gas independent, alleviating the need to ensure access to foreign supplies and the ensuing political entanglements.

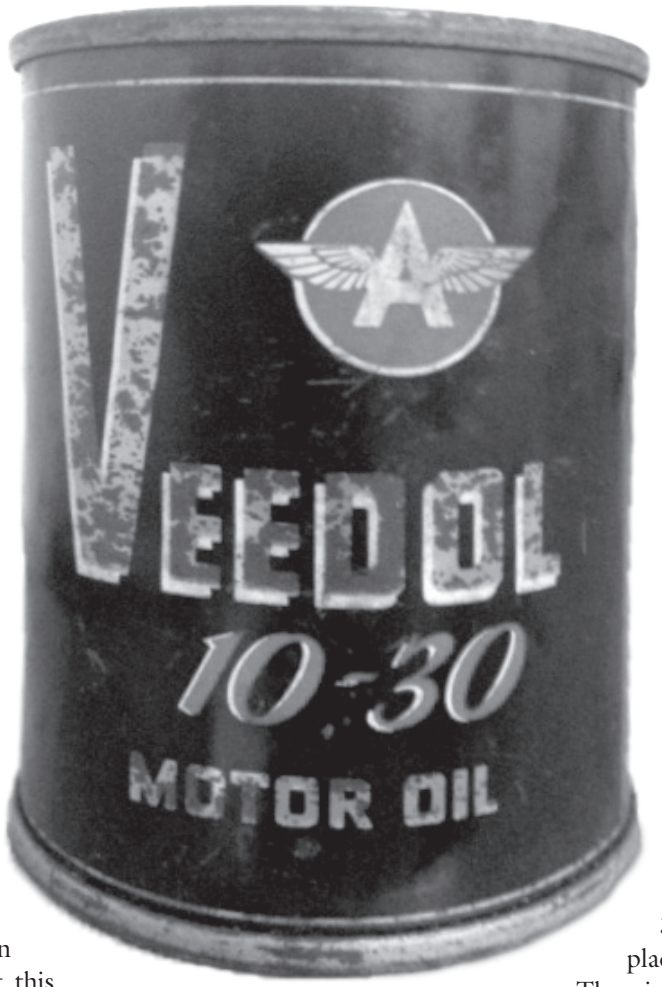
In the 19th century, the control and destiny of private property, as land, was determined primarily by the land owner, void of oversight and regulation by government as it is today. A parallel might be that private land rights then were much like technology or intellectual property is today. In the mid 1800's, limited government control resulted in the land owner determining the destiny of how the land he owned would be used. It is now far easier to establish, say, a new form of social media with regard to regulations than it was to complete the Keystone XL Pipeline.

So, let us come to realize now just how pivotal a role past events in our own neighborhood played in the eventual development of a system of arteries to enable the flow of societies' "lifeblood" of energy, the liquid gold, to be available to virtually everyone.

I often ponder the irony of a common thread, seemingly unrelated, being present in two events, far removed from each other in time. Once again reflecting on a time in the 1960's, but this time being the latter part of that decade, I witnessed an event that had impact on all of mankind, namely man landing on the moon. And, ironically, roughly ninety years prior to that time, for any group of young boys, or anyone, trekking on that aforementioned hill overlooking town, they would have been witnessing an event that, to some extent, would have an impact on all mankind. And there would be a common thread, kerosene and craters.

"A task of herculean character". So stated the news item reported in the Saturday May 31, 1879 edition of the Daily Gazette and Bulletin out of Williamsport. Indeed, there was much activity going on in town related to the arrival of oil in Williamsport; refineries being built, pipe being laid, rail sidings being expanded. In 1878 a group of investors, led by a certain Byron Benson, determined to challenge the grip that Standard Oil had on the refining and shipping segments of the oil industry. Eighty percent of the world's oil was coming from Pennsylvania and a high-quality product was being extracted from wells in the Bradford fields.

Benson's group formed the Tidewater Pipeline Company, the name reflecting the intent to deliver oil to the seaboard ports. Their method, in order to circumvent Standard Oil's control of shipping, was to construct a long-distance pipeline, a feat never before undertaken. The concept was termed "Benson's pipe dream" and bettors gambled 50 to 1 that no engine was powerful enough to push oil over mountains that reached in excess of 2000 feet in elevation. Nevertheless, Tidewater went to work, secretly procuring property right-of-way, succeeding despite opposition. That same Daily Gazette article went on to describe the herculean task as not only overcoming the natural obstacles but as much so the repeated efforts of those who opposed them.



Yet Tidewater forged ahead. The route was roughly 110 miles of lengths of threaded steel 6" diameter pipe with 3/8-inch-thick walls weighing reportedly 350 to 800 pounds each placed on top of the ground. The pipe capacity was two gallons per foot, pressure tested at 800 pounds per inch delivering 6,000 gallons per day from the 70-80 horse power engines. Newspaper accounts from the Bradford Era as of April 1, 1879 related that Tidewater had acquired facilities from Equitable Oil Company in the oil region to combine with their new line. Construction progress at that point in time amounted to 200 men and 100 horse or mule teams laying pipe and building the two pump stations, one at Frisbee (Coryville) and the other near Coudersport. The pipe was being received at the Jersey Shore rail station, up to 38 car loads with 10-12 tons per car. It was then shipped on wagons or sleds up Pine Creek, 1,800 pounds to the load with an average of 40 teams at work each day. On that date, 250 tons had been shipped despite the bad conditions of the muddy roads. A large quantity would

likewise be needed up at Larry's Creek.

The pumps were described as 3 throw pumps, made by Holly Water Works Company. The advantage of the pump design was that the typical 15 to 275-pound pressure fluctuation realized in ordinary pumps, which put excessive stress on the pipe, would be limited to 15 pounds.

A May 31, 1879 Daily Gazette and Bulletin account reported that the pipeline, which had been started on February 26th, entailed survey work, a telegraph line, pump stations and receiving tanks in addition to the above ground pipe itself. This would be the first line of that type "that has ever been put in operation for any considerable distance". The receiving tanks were 25,000- and 64,000-barrel capacities when completed and cost about $17,000. They were described as "constructed with extreme care and are splendid specimens of boiler work" as related in a June 7th Daily Gazette account. For reference, one barrel is 42 gallons.

In the April 12th Daily Gazette and Bulletin interview with Tidewater it was disclosed that 30 days of pumping would be carried by the Reading and New Jersey Central rail line to New York Harbor. At Williamsport, an eight-inch pipeline would convey the oil from the receiving tanks to a new 2,700-foot siding at the rail line near the river. At that location there would be a series of 8-inch stand pipes that bent over the rail tank cars. Seventy cars were on site, each capable of holding 100 barrels; 30 or more cars could be filled in a matter of minutes. On June 7th it was reported that the first consignment was 6,000-7,000 barrels.

An article on June 11th in the Williamsport Sun and Lycoming Democrat stated that the pipeline had a gate valve every four miles with regular telegraph stations at intervals and patrol men dispatched to monitor the line.

The pipeline also offered opportunities in Williamsport beyond the transfer and shipping activity. The Daily Gazette reported on May 17, 1879 that "The Solar Oil Company will manufacture under special patents lubricating petroleum and refine for export high grade oils." The capacity would be up to 1,000 barrels a day under the supervision of F.W. Edwards. The ground for the refinery was broken in early 1879 near "the old stone barn on the Miller farm, a short distance below the city, between the canal and railroad." This was the Lawrence Miller farm, 2 ½ miles east of the court house. David Stuempfle, builder, had the contract for the brick and stone building.

A visitor from the Daily Banner reported on March 17, 1880 that Solar "receives oil from the Tidewater tanks" and that they "even make their own barrels." In addition to Solar, other refinery operations were going into operation in town.

On May 31, 1879 the Daily Gazette reported the sound of air that was being forced out of the pipeline ahead of the oil at the receiving tanks could be distinctly heard. "No oil as of 4:00 P.M." that Saturday, it being some 50 miles distant. The noise was "loud and peculiar."

Finally, pumping had begun at Coryville on Wednesday, May 28, 1879 at 7:10 and 10 seconds P.M. On Wednesday, June 4th the Williamsport Sun and Lycoming Democrat reported that oil gushed out of the pipe at the receiving tanks. Mr. George Sanderson of Williamsport National Bank received the first oil and "has a bottle as a relic." He was accompanied on the occasion by other dignitaries involved in the project.

The Tidewater project proved the doubters wrong, the entities who were trying to obstruct it unsuccessful and the community benefitted commercially. By the early 1880's Standard Oil did gain influence over Tidewater, acquiring a third of its stock by 1882 and in October of 1883, in a market-sharing agreement with Standard, Tidewater held 11.5% of the oil business. Eventually, the pipeline was extended to Bayonne, New Jersey. Tidewater Oil Company, as it became known, went on to be marketed under the brands Veedol, Tydol and Flying A. In time, through various acquisitions, it was owned by British Petroleum and Phillips 66, Getty Oil and Tidewater India. Rockefeller, to his credit, although benefitting tremendously by his business talent and aggressive approach, gave most of his wealth to charitable institutions and foundations in his later life, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars.

So, reflecting back, as I witnessed the landing of the first man on the moon on that July afternoon in 1969, there was, in a way, that common thread with another group of young boys, or, in fact anyone who had been, in a time just 90 years prior, on that hill overlooking town that now has those peculiar-looking earthen structures. They witnessed the arrival of petroleum, to be refined primarily into kerosene at the site of those receiving tanks at "the craters." And what I was witnessing was the culmination of the quest for mankind to arrive on the moon, by way of a rocket propelled by rocket-grade kerosene propellant, burning at the rate of 2,230 gallons per second which would enable the first planting of a footprint among the craters of that moon.

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Bruce Rogers

was born and raised in Lycoming County and has always found history interesting, including past events of our region. Having completed the Associate program in Building Construction technology at the former Williamsport Area Community College, he has been involved in the construction trades, ten years full time carpenter/mason, 32 years in public school district maintenance. When not occupied with a variety of other interests, he enjoys reading, often history including the struggles and adventures of our predecessors. With the good fortune to share his marriage of 46 years with his best friend, Jeanne, they enjoy the experience of watching the families of their four children make their own histories.

WILLIAMSPORT'S LOST CHILDREN

M.A. Luna

On tepid autumn afternoons in Williamsport's Wildwood Cemetery, **cool breezes rustle the old-growth oak and maple trees that line the winding pathways, the gnarled branches adorned in a rich canopy of amber, bronze, and mulberry. Across the three hundred-forty acres that make up Wildwood, transected by an approaching roadway into its eastern and western halves, polished blocks of carved granite push upward to mark the solemn places where more than fifty-seven thousand of Williamsport's former residents lie at rest. From modest tablets to soaring monuments, remembrances of the city's ancestors are etched into the visible history of this hallowed ground.**

On an unnoticed slope on the fringe of East Wildwood, however, at a place where the shoulder of the narrow car path drops away suddenly, a few dozen weathered headstones lie scattered along an otherwise barren ground, the sharp incline of the hardened terrain in places seemingly unsuited for a proper interment. Wedged between the roadway and the encroaching woods that surround the cemetery, this swath of ground, roughly one hundred yards long and a third as wide, sweeps unnoticeably around the base of a knoll that is itself covered in regimented lines of chiseled grave markers. From this knoll, however, where occasional visitors stroll reflectively between the rows of headstones in search of familiar names, the lower slope below is all but invisible, unseen and forgotten.

Forgotten also is what, or rather whom, lies beneath this isolated hillside. This nondescript piece of seemingly unused ground is Wildwood's 'Poor Ground' cemetery, where in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries the city of Williamsport deposited the remains of its poor and indigent citizens, its paupers and vagabonds. Cemetery records indicate that, almost incomprehensibly, 882 bodies were interred here in this seemingly inadequate space. The actual number, however, is probably closer to a thousand. Though Wildwood was founded in 1863, burial records prior to 1877 are non-existent, according to Wildwood administrators, inexplicably lost to the passage of time. The records that are available, however, tell a unique story of life in Williamsport in the decades following the Civil War, a chronicle of society in the late 1800s and early 1900s that few today are aware of.

As the city of Williamsport grew in the years preceding the start of the Southern Rebellion, as the endless whir of the mill saws along the banks of the Susquehanna River echoed through the city, churning out a treasure-lode of processed lumber each day for the barons on Millionaire's Row, early city planner's lack of foresight became increasingly evident.

A city cemetery was first established in 1801 outside of what was then considered the limits of the borough, on a piece of unused ground on the east side of Penn Street purchased from city founder Michael Ross. Located between Fourth Street and the railroad tracks that passed just beyond what was then the north end of the city, less than a dozen burials occurred there, including that of Michael Ross's mother. Within a short time, the ground was quickly deemed an "inappropriate" site for sepulture given the unforeseen eastward expansion of the city's manufacturing and residential sections, according to a historical summary published in the West Branch Bulletin in 1864.

In March of 1808, the Town Council of Williamsport again purchased from Ross, for the modest sum of one hundred dollars, a tract of land deemed suitable for a more formal cemetery. Framed today by North Street & Edwin Street, and bound east and west by Court & Pine streets, the site was still considered at the time to be the outer limits of the city. The first interment here, that of the body of an elderly Black man named Thomas Downing, occurred shortly thereafter. When during the War of 1812 American soldiers once passed through Williamsport, some of the men too ill to continue were left in the care of city residents; those that died were laid to rest in this burial ground, also.

When the new cemetery along Pine Street was founded, Williamsport was a city of approximately three hundred persons. No one at the time could have imagined the growth that was coming, an expansion in large part the result of the invention of the steam engine, which almost overnight would exponentially increase the board-feet of lumber that a mill could produce on any given day. Immigration into the city would increase proportionally to meet the demand for labor, and the quaint riverside borough of Williamsport would

become a lumber boom-town.

By 1849, it was clear that the city had already largely outgrown the capacity of the Pine Street cemetery, and once again city founder Michael Ross offered a solution. In exchange for one thousand dollars, Ross transferred ownership to the Williamsport Cemetery Company of an eight-acre parcel along Washington Boulevard, and on the 31st day of October in 1851 the new ground received its first direct interment, the body of a 4-year-old little girl named Lucy Hepburn.

When the Williamsport Cemetery was founded in 1850, the population of the city was just over sixteen hundred persons; by 1860, it was nearing ten thousand. Any reasonable estimate suggested that well before the end of the 19th Century, the eight acres within the Washington Boulevard cemetery would be unable to accept any more burials. Community leaders were determined, finally, to find a permanent solution.

In the summer of 1862, notable Williamsport businessmen with recognizable names like Herdic, Updegraff, Logan, Doebler, Youngman, Armstrong, McMinn, and others formed a charter committee and turned their attentions to the ridgelines above the eastern bank of the Lycoming Creek just north of the city. The land there, gently rolling hilltops crowned in towering maple, pine, oak and hemlock trees, possessed all the characteristics that made the selection the ideal site for a new city cemetery. Good drainage, suitable soil depth, and the absence of excessive rocks, along with what J.M. McMinn, who led the land search for the committee, described as "views of matchless beauty and sublimity", convinced the committee that it had found what it was looking for. Mother Nature herself, McMinn declared, seemed to be pointing out that "this was the spot".

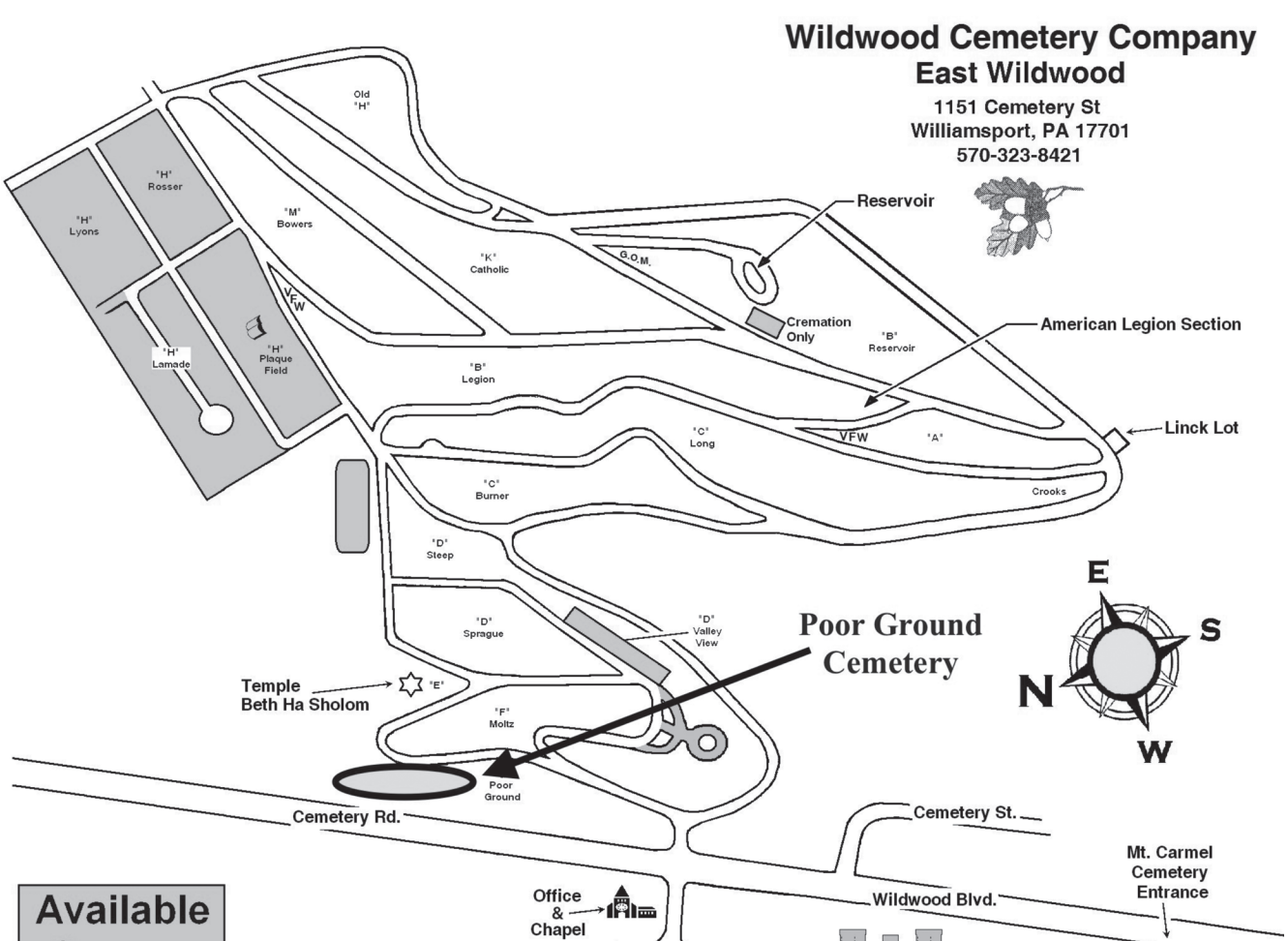
The owner of the land, however, Mr. Isaiah Hagerman, an elderly man of ill health, refused to sell. The committee, it seems, simply waited him out. When the elder Mr. Hagerman died at the end of September in 1862, committee members promptly approached his son, Augustus, who early the following year signed an agreement to sell the entire tract of land to the committee, about one hundred-fifty acres, for two thousand dollars. The Wildwood Cemetery & Crematorium Corporation organized itself in the autumn of 1863 and went promptly to work laying out plots, pathways and avenues, constructing roads and clearing and removing underbrush, stumps, logs and old fences. Sectioned into lots and packaged four lots per plot, the plots themselves were sold in varying 'tiers' of $100, $80 or $60 each. Individual lots sold for $25, prices set to ensure that all of Williamsport's "noble residents" could afford suitable lots in the new grounds.

It was recognized, however, that not all of Williamsport's citizens would be able to afford the cost. Nor, it must be added, was the new Wildwood Cemetery open to the city's Black residents. While the cemetery charter committee was negotiating with Augustus Hagerman for the purchase of the Wildwood grounds, Williamsport Borough authorities purchased one acre of ground near the city's Poor House. Located today along Freedom Road, about a quarter-mile north of the place where present-day Market Street intersects with Grampian Blvd, the single acre was donated to the 'colored population' for use as a burial ground. The first colored city resident buried there was Mr. Wesley Jacobs, who succumbed to small pox in the winter of 1863. The burial ground, known today as the Freedom Road Cemetery, is the resting place of at least nine known African-American Civil War veterans. The total number of graves located here is unknown.

To avoid the necessity of a 'Potter's Field' for the poorer white residents of Williamsport, which would require the use of a portion of the cemetery grounds that might otherwise be sold at a profit, the Wildwood directors urged local churches and schools, the railroad companies and manufacturing facilities, along with the city's many benevolent associations, to purchase ground within Wildwood that could be used to bury Williamsport's poorer laborers and transitory workers so that no pauper's burial ground need be opened "for one who has no friend." Such efforts, however, produced little, and as the city's poorer labor force increased, so too did the need for a pauper's burial site. Thus, the eventual establishment of East Wildwood Cemetery's Poor Ground. What could never have been foreseen at the time, however, was how great the need for available space within the Poor Ground – and within the Wildwood Cemetery as a whole – would be and, tragically, for whom it would often be needed.

In late June or early July of 1876, a baby girl was born to Abram and Sarah Young of Loyalsock. The fifth child and second daughter of the Young family, her parents named her Minnie. She entered the world, presumably, in a bedroom of the family farmhouse in the stifling midsummer heat, the cooler temperatures of autumn still months away.

Some years later, there would be a sixth child, and then a seventh, and most of Minnie Young's siblings would live well into their seventies and beyond. Minnie, however, would not. On the first day of April in the following year of 1877, the nine-month-old little girl died. According to Wildwood's existing burial records, which begin in 1877, Minnie Young is the earliest officially chronicled interment.



Available Graves

According to a contemporary newspaper account, however, the very first burial within the new cemetery occurred on the 6th of January in 1864, when Lycoming County resident James Smith buried his father, David, who had died shortly before his 62nd birthday. The number of burials that occurred in the thirteen years between David Smith and the April, 1877 burial of little Minnie Young cannot be known. That the earliest burial on record at Wildwood is an infant, though, foretells a tragic reality.

Late in January of 1882, as detailed in an obituary published at the time in the Williamsport Daily Gazette & Bulletin, the child of A.T. & Ella Cramer died, the 5th child lost to the young couple in the last two months.
On the morning of Saturday, July 1st of the same year, a German family in Lycoming County awoke to discover that all three of their young boys, ages 6, 4 & 2, had died sometime during the night of diphtheria.

In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, infant and child mortality rates in America were horrendous. Scarlet fever, whooping cough and diphtheria, among other childhood maladies, ravaged families across the country. In Williamsport and Lycoming County, too, the results were no different. In the last years between 1877 and 1900, Wildwood Cemetery would bury almost five hundred-fifty children aged twelve or under. How many were buried during the first thirteen years of the cemetery's existence is, again, impossible to know.

In the first two decades of the 20th Century, over sixteen hundred more children would follow, most of them dying within months of taking their first steps. In all, approximately four thousand-six hundred known children lie at rest in Wildwood Cemetery today, and 80% of those – over thirty-seven hundred – are age 2 and under. By contrast, Wildwood has buried just 98 children in the years between 2000 and 2020.

An unpleasant truth about the era of the late 1800s and early 1900s is that adequate health care for Williamsport's poor residents, regardless of race, was extremely difficult to access and often was simply nonexistent. The children of poor families, their immune systems already weakened by an equally poor diet, would suffer the most. Within the 'paying' portion of Wildwood, children account for less than five percent of the total burials. In the Poor Ground, more than one-in-four graves is that of a child. Race, it seems, had very little to do with it; death came for the poor children of each race in nearly equal numbers.

By 1904, likely out of necessity, Wildwood had begun burying African-Americans in the Poor Ground alongside

whites. That African-Americans in Williamsport at the time were almost universally poor is clear: they make up barely one percent of the total burials in Wildwood Cemetery exclusive of the Poor Ground, where African-Americans account for almost fifty-five percent of interred persons. Indigent whites make up all the remaining graves in the pauper's ground, save one: Iitaro Kono. His story, what little is known of it, is still fascinating.

Iitaro Kono arrived in Seattle aboard the Japanese cargo steamer Riojin Maru in May of 1903. A 25-year old Kodokan Judo 2nd Degree Black Belt, Kono founded the first Dojo in the United States the following year. The details of his journey from a Seattle Dojo to The Greatest Show On Earth are unknown, but in 1914 Kono came to town as a Japanese Wrestler with the Barnum & Bailey Circus. At the time, he was already suffering from inoperable cancer that worsened suddenly during the traveling show's late-summer visit to Williamsport. Confined immediately to bed, the Barnum & Bailey Circus moved on without him. He died in Williamsport shortly thereafter. The cost and the logistics of returning Kono's body to his family in Japan were unmanageable, it seems, and he was buried in the Poor Ground on September 4th, 1914 at the age of 35.

Also buried in the pauper's field is George Stovey, who died in March of 1936 at the age of 70. At the time of his death he was penniless and living in a temporary shelter, one of thousands of homeless victims of the flood that inundated Lycoming County that year, an event which spurred the development of the flood levy system in place today. George Stovey is considered by many baseball historians to have been the best Negro pitcher of the 19th Century, and the first ever truly great African-American baseball pitcher in the history of the game. Discrimination, however, kept him from playing in the Major Leagues. His name has been spoken of frequently as a deserving candidate for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame, but the years of his playing career places him outside the era of current eligibility. A private citizen and baseball enthusiast in Williamsport paid for the installation of a modest grave marker for George Stovey shortly after his death. Still, that his burial place is not more prominently memorialized within Williamsport, the birthplace of Little League Baseball, defies a just explanation.

Interred within East Wildwood's Poor Ground, too, are several former American military servicemen, including four known Civil War veterans of the United States Colored Troop Regiments, even though a formal memorialized Civil War Soldier's burial ground is located elsewhere within Wildwood. Mary C. Willis, the wife of fifty years to Williamsport's last surviving Civil War veteran, African-American James H. Willis, rests here, also.

The economic disparities in life that made the pauper's field a necessity in death are reflected still in the appearance of the burial ground today. Of the approximately one thousand graves located here, only about sixty are marked. For most families, the added cost of a chiseled granite stone was simply out of reach. The cost of burial in the ground, between five and ten dollars, was often paid by the city's Poor Board, an agency common in early 20th Century cities tasked with overseeing the disposition of its indigent citizens. Though the graves of the known Civil War veterans are marked, most of the remaining few headstones that exist within the grounds have long since fallen into disrepair, and some have been nearly lost to neglect, absorbed by the overgrowth of the encroaching woods. The graves of hundreds of others without markers lie forgotten, and some are lost forever.

Most regretfully is that none of the two hundred-thirty-four interred children in the Poor Ground – of whom seventy-five percent are infants under the age of 1 – are memorialized with headstones. The exact location of any of their tiny coffins can only be guessed at.

On a coming afternoon, visit Williamsport's Wildwood Cemetery. Enter the East portion through its main gate, and turn immediately left, following the lower road. As the tree line on your left gives way to a small clearing, slow your car to a stop before the path begins a sharp turn to the right. The shallow empty ground over the hill to your left is Wildwood's Poor Ground burial place.

Stand for a moment on the crest of the hill, gazing over the few visible headstones scattered across the forgotten slope. As you stand here, try to imagine the one thousand or so graves laid out beneath the ground in front of you. It hardly seems possible. For most of them, indeed for nearly all of them, and particularly for the two hundred-thirty-four children and infants buried here, the known record of their lives vanished when they were laid into the earth over one hundred years ago.

Poet Maya Angelou wrote that "each child belongs to all of us". If that is true in life, it is a certainty in death. In death, we are all someone's child. These are Williamsport's children, our children. That so many were laid to rest here without the dignity of memorialization, without the expectation that anyone would want to do what you are now doing by visiting the site, is to deny the ethereal ties of human affection, what Lincoln called the "mystic chords of memory", that bind humanity together, past to present. Our history, the story of what we've done, is transitional; Our humanity, the story of who we are, ought never to be.

Michael A. Luna
an amateur historian and writer, is a nine-year veteran of the United States Air Force and a former Security Police Lieutenant at the Kennedy Space Center/Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Brevard County, Florida. An avid student and reader of American History and an enthusiastic proponent of NASA and the American space program, he was a member of the Space Shuttle Columbia Disaster Recovery Team in Hemphill, Texas in 2003.

Born in Dover, Delaware, the son of a true Coal Miner's Daughter, he spent most of his early childhood in Europe, residing in England, Spain and Italy. Returning to the United States, he grew up in the West Virginia coal fields of Logan County, in a small town named Man in the heart of 'Hatfield & McCoy' country.

He enjoys researching and writing about the rich history of Williamsport and Lycoming County. In addition, he is currently writing his first book, a work that traces the 250-year history of coal in America from its first use in the mid-18th Century to the rise of coal mining in Logan County, West Virginia in the early 20th Century, and how on a winter morning in February of 1972 the coal industry destroyed a way of life in his hometown along the Buffalo Creek.

The father of three daughters, he lives with his wife, Lori, in Montoursville, Pennsylvania.

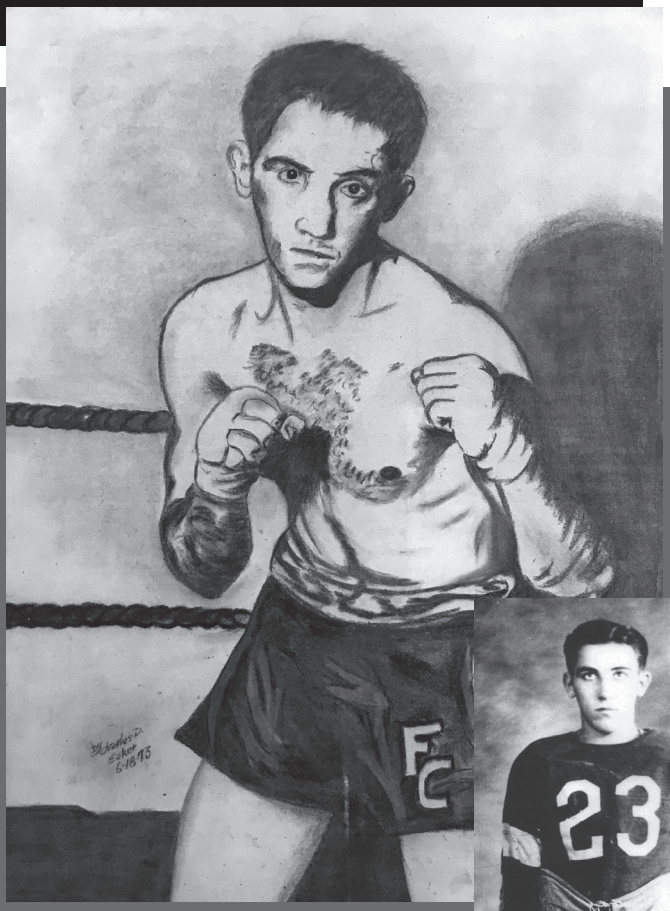
FRANK CASALE, HALL OF FAME BOXER

Owner of the Triangle Tavern

Marc Pompeo

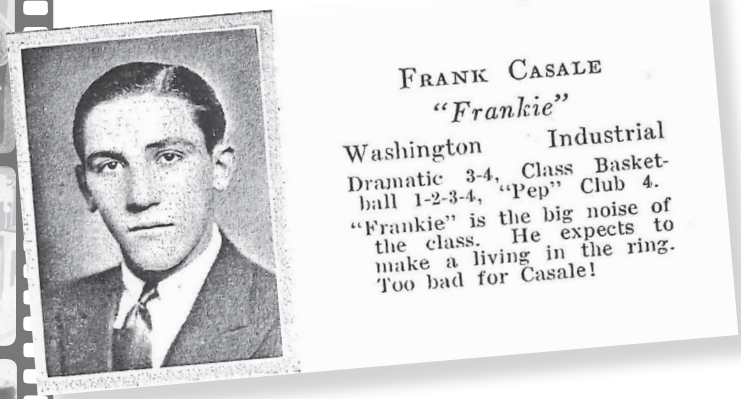
Born in Sullivan County…

on July 7, 1913, in Hillsgrove, a small community in Sullivan County, Pennsylvania, Francesco Casale (Frank) was the son of Nicola Casale (Nicholas Casale) and Rosa Maria Cioffi Casale (Rose Marie Cioffi Casale). His siblings included sisters Angela Maria (Mary), Francesca (Frances), Eugenia (Gina), Yolanda, and two brothers, Giovanni (John) and Arturo (Arthur). The family lived in Masten, Pennsylvania, a lumber mill town in northern Lycoming County. His father worked at the town lumber mill and he also worked for the railroad. Later, Frank's family would settle in Williamsport. The story of Masten is featured in a book by Thomas T. Taber, III: Ghost Lumber Towns of Central Pennsylvania: Laquin, Masten, Ricketts, Grays Run.



Graduated from Williamsport High School…

Frank Casale was a member of the 1930 class of graduates from Williamsport High School. In the 1930 LaMemoire yearbook "Frankie" is listed as a member of the Dramatic Club 3-4, Class Basketball 1-2-3-4, & the Pep Club 4. He graduated by completing the Industrial Course curriculum. Along with his senior picture is a parting comment about Casale: "'Frankie' is the big noise of the class. He expects to make a living in the ring. Too bad for Casale!"



FRANK CASALE
"Frankie"
Washington Industrial
Dramatic 3-4, Class Basketball 1-2-3-4, "Pep" Club 4.
"Frankie" is the big noise of the class. He expects to make a living in the ring. Too bad for Casale!

BOXING CAREER

also played semi-pro football...

At the age of 18, Frankie learned to box in the basement of the local Knights of Columbus. He began his amateur boxing career as a featherweight and later boxed as a 152-pound middleweight. From 1931-36, Casale boxed in Williamsport and at many other venues in Pennsylvania, including Golden Gloves competitions. He also played semi-pro football with the Jersey Shore Panthers, and football for the former St. Mary's Academy from 1931-32. When he finally hung up his gloves, Frank "Tinky" Casale's record was an enviable 69 wins, two losses and 47 knockouts.

Banquet Planned For Boxers

In the January 23, 1975 issue of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette, a page 31 article headed "Bell's About to Ring For Ring's Old Timers" provides details about a banquet for boxers from the 1930s being planned by Frank Casale, chairman of the event, with help from Sol Wolf: "As many as 20 former amateur and professional boxers, most of them city natives, will be

honored at Old Timers Boxing Night observed by the West Branch Valley Chapter, Pennsylvania Sports Hall Fame, on Tuesday. Feb. 18. Sol Wolf, chapter president, said today the staged banquet is open to non-members of the chapter. Dinner will be served at 7 p.m. in the ballroom of the Lycoming." The article also mentioned that the banquet would feature a talk by former world welterweight boxing champion Carmen Basilio.

Note: Sol Wolf was the head football coach at Williamsport High School from 1926-1930. He also coached college football and was a professional broadcaster during the 1930s and 40s. The 2015-2016 issue of the Journal of the Lycoming County Historical Society includes a feature article about Wolf titled, "SOL WOODBRIDGE WOLF: Hall of Fame Coach, Professional Broadcaster & Witness to Sports History."

In the Feb. 7, 1975 issue of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette, under the headline "Old Timers Boxing Night Has Nostalgia Written All Over It" Wolf and Casale talked about the upcoming event in a pg. 17 article: "This thing has nostalgia written all over it," Wolf said to Casale as they sat in the living room of Sol's home on Four Mile Drive, where much of the planning took place. "Sort of makes me homesick for the old days. Like when we were younger, eh Sol?" was Casale's reply, himself being "one of only 20 men still around who boxed when the sport flourished here in the Great Depression years of the 1930s." Wolf then added, "Since we've thrown this banquet open to the public, the response has been just great. Seems like the people who lived through the 30s want to come and see the boxers they knew. And those too young to remember (or, who weren't born yet) have a desire to meet the ol' boys." Wolf continued: "We're going to seat the old timers (boxers of the 1930s) together." When Wolf asked Casale what he thought the old time boxers were going to talk about, he replied: "Only one thing. Boxing. They have some interesting tales."

The local boxing scene in the 1930s...

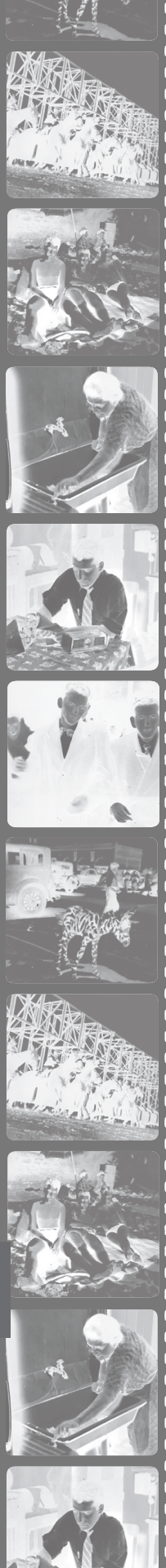
The February 7 article also provided details about the boxing scene in Williamsport in the 30s. Boxers in the amateur class, like Frank Casale, were known as the "windup fighters" because they fought before the professional bouts. Other local windup fighters included Sparky Janeski, a middleweight and a worker at Bethlehem Steel, and two light heavyweights, Ray Chrisop and Goose McCaslin from Lock Haven.

The local boxers trained at the Milo Athletic Club which was on the fourth floor of the building located at the northeast corner of Pine and Fourth Street and in the basement of the Knights of Columbus. The report also mentions that "boxing shows" in Williamsport "were held at the Knights of Columbus, the Karlton Theater (formerly the Majestic), the Elks and Eagles clubs, the Pine Street Armory (the former Sears farm store) and at Bowman Field." Two of the best local pros mentioned in the report were Frankie Erne (real name Frank Fagnano) and Whitey Laubach. Also among the best pros were Eddie Leroy (real name Eddie Best), Jack Poukish and Tiger Thomas.

CASALE TALKS ABOUT MEMORABLE BOUTS

Never lost a bout in Williamsport...

Later in the February 7 article it mentions that Casale never lost "a bout in this City" and that among the most memorable bouts of his career was one against John (Sparky) Janeski (also known as the Jaysburg Flash). About his bout with Janeski, Casale said, "I won a five-round decision over Sparky. We fought at the K of C. Three hundred people were turned away. We filled the place."



Ends opponent's winning streak…

He also spoke about two other memorable bouts in the article. Both were against the same opponent. Casale explained that the first bout was in York, PA, and the second was in Williamsport: "His name was Buzz White. He had a string of 52 straight wins going. I had him down a couple times in the first round.Then I beat him again at Bowman Field. Both were decisions."

Lost only two bouts during a stellar career…

When asked about his two losses, he said, "I got beat in the state amateur finals in Dushore by a fellow named Mickey Grandenetti of Philadelphia." His other loss was "to a fellow in Harrisburg" but he couldn't recall the name of his opponent.

Recalls other memorable fights…

Other matchups from the 1930s that Casale mentioned included a few local boxers (in bold print): Dorey Shimer vs. Whitey Laubach; Ray Chrisop vs. Joey Walker (from a Civilian Conservation Camp); Ralph (Scaley) Wagner of Sunbury vs. Honey Boy Shimer (Shimer won at the Elks; Wagner in Sunbury) & Joe Bellott vs. Charley Sabatella. "There were others, too," said Casale. "Frankie Erne was a great fighter. He fought the best in the state. [Jack] Poukish fought the best welters Pennsylvania had to offer."

Jersey Shore boxer fought future world welterweight champion…

The last fight discussed in the article has details about a matchup between Burke Veley of Jersey Shore and Fritzie Zivic. About this intense rivalry, the article says: "Burke Veley fought Fritzie Zivic four times in the 1930's, three times in Pittsburgh and once in Uniontown. That was before Zivic turned pro and won the world welterweight championship in 1940." Veley, at the time this report was filed, was employed at the Ross Club in Williamsport, said that he fought "around 125 fights and lost only 25."

"BOXING BELL RINGER COMING UP TUESDAY"

Additional details about the upcoming banquet "which promises to be a bell ringer" are noted in a page 17 article of the February 15, 1975 issue of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette. "Every seat's a ringside seat," said Casale, chairman of the event. About the seating, Sol Wolf stated: "We are going to have all the boxers seated together. They'll be introduced individually." There is also mention that the event was expected "to draw at least 200 men, women and some children."

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BANQUET AT THE LYCOMING HOTEL

On page 15 of the February 19, 1975 issue of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette under the headline "Old Timers Night Knockout!" is an article about the banquet to honor local boxers from the 1930s. The report begins: "The winter's main event of the West Branch Valley Chapter, Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame, was an honest-to-goodness knockout. More than 30 Williamsport and Lock Haven boxers of two and more generations ago were in the main-go last night in the ballroom of the Lycoming. They were honored last night on Old Timers Boxing Night. Over 300 men, women and a few children applauded the boxers of the past, ranging in age up to 95."

Event chairman Frank Casale sets the stage…

To get the evening started, Frank Casale greeted the large and excited audience: "Mr. Toastmaster, Carmen Basilio, Honored guests of the Boxing World, ladies and gentlemen. I am really thrilled and highly honored to have the opportunity to be chairman of this event. I am not much of a speaker, and therefore do not intend to prolong this meeting as we have a heavy schedule ahead of us, with some prominent people to meet and to hear from. I am very happy to see such a big turnout here for this great event, and I am sure most of you love the sport of boxing as I know it is my first love. So before I introduce all of the amateur and pro fighters of the late 20's and 30's I want to take time out to thank all of the committee members, especially Ray Keyes who worked day and night to give us the beautiful publicity to make this a success, also Sol Wolf who is 78 years old and what a worker he was for this affair, also my friends, Anthony Miele, Chuck Derr, John Schuchart and the many others who took part."

Main speaker was Carmen Basilio...

The article continues stating that Carmen Basilio, a world welterweight and middleweight champion in the 1950s, who once fought Sugar Ray Robinson, was the main speaker, to wit: He told numerous boxing stories in delightful fashion. However, he never mentioned himself. Prior to and after the event, Basilio "spent a lot of time

signing his autograph and extending personal well wishes to many of the people in attendance." However, the most satisfying part of the program, according to the report, "was provided by the boxers. Before, after and during the banquet they talked with each other and with their followers and well wishers about one thing --boxing."

Each boxer honored…

At the conclusion of the event, toastmaster Anthony D. Miele spoke about the sport of boxing: "We are honoring a profession that requires strength and stamina. We are paying a tribute to the sports world, a tribute to boxing and to society in general." Each of the former boxers being honored received a necktie. When "each boxer stepped forward to receive his gift, a gong was sounded." Making the presentations were Frank Casale and Ray Keyes (sports editor of the Sun-Gazette), and Miele, all members of the committee that was in charge of the event. A total of 30 boxers were recognized at the banquet. The names of the deceased local boxers were read by Miele.

Listed to the right are thumbnail sketches of the Lycoming & Clinton County boxers of the 1930s, many of whom were present at the banquet. Note: The names listed indicate that boxing was a sport that attracted young men from various ethnic backgrounds, a result of the waves of immigration from Europe in the late 1800s and the early part of the 20th century. Some of the boxing heroes of the era included Jim Braddock (son of immigrant parents- his mother was Irish, and his father was Anglo-Irish) Jack Sharkey (son of Lithuanian immigrants), Primo Carnera (born in Italy), Lou Salica, Tony Canzoneri, Frankie Genero (won a gold medal as a flyweight at the 1920 Olympics), Benny Leonard (son of Jewish immigrants from Russia), and Jackie Fields (father was a Jewish immigrant from Russia).

FRANK (FRANKIE ERNE) FAGNANO — As a featherweight, pound-for-pound one of the greatest to come out of this part of the state. He defeated such boxing greats as Tommy Britton, one of the nation's leading lightweights; Tommy Logan of Boston, Mass., U.S. Olympic champ in 1928; Giffy Kenvin, of Mahony City; Harry Schaffer, Bloomsburg idol; Johnny Catalina, Billy Williams and Battling Shannon. When Jack Dempsey appeared at the Williamsport Elks in 1930, Frankie KOd Schaeffer and Dempsey remarked, "Frankie, you could be the coming world featherweight champion." Erne fought more than 60 bouts, lost only two (both by decision). Later managed fighters, including middleweight Frank Casale.

BROOKS (WHITEY) LAUBACH — One of the Williamsport-Lock Haven area's best welterweights. Called the "Fighting Cop" and the "Blonde Tiger." Fought the best welters from Pennsylvania and New York. Among them Georgie (Bugs) Bender of Frackville, Georgie Mallick of Minersville, Mickey Drummond and Cutty DeMarco from Philadelphia. One of his best remembered fights here was against Dorey Shimar. Later ran stable of fighters under banner of Montoursville AC.

SPARKY JANESKI — Tagged Jaysburg Flash, one of the outstanding welterweights in Pennsylvania. Had terrific record as amateur. Fought top welters including Bobby Taylor in Johnson City, N.Y.; Tommy Sanders in Berwick; KOd Charlie Jenoco, pride of Steelton; also put KO to Bobby Barton, an AAU finalist. Also fought Bill Brown, Mansfield; Joe Bridie, Rochester; Leon Stizzle, and Ernie Gross, a rugged champ from York. Janeski's record as an amateur drew state-wide recognition.

JOEY BELLOTT — Classy lightweight under management of Eddie (LeRoy) Best. Fought some outstanding boxers such as Ernie Petrone, Charlie Sabatella, George (Dusty) Brown, Johnny Rucker, Vince Terminello, Johnny Sheppard, Mike Evans.

RAY CHRISOP — Top light heavyweight of the Williamsport amateurs, now living in Genesco, Ill. Great crowd pleaser. Generally conceded he could have made it big had he turned pro. Defeated such fine fighters as Gus Varazio, who later became a top notch pro heavy. Also Izzy Richter and Woody (Flash) White of Penn State; Kid Hoches, Harrisburg's great heavy; Joey Walker a CCC camp idol, and Lock Haven's Goose McCaslin.

GOOSE McCASLIN — Pride of Clinton County, great crowd pleaser, and like Chrisop likely could have made it big as a professional. Fought best around the east. Among them classy Jimmy Clark of Jamestown, N.Y.; Earl Witmer, Lancaster sensation; Ralph DeJohn of Syracuse; defeated Al Fields of Buffalo, a heavyweight who lost to Joe Louis in the AAU finals. Split decisions with Chrisop.

JIMMY (DUNDEE) BELLOTT — Brother of Joey. Now lives in Philadelphia. Great little lightweight in Frankie Erne's stable. Fought some memorable bouts at the Elks and in Sunbury.

FERDIE WETZEL — Featherweight out of Lock Haven. Brilliant amateur record. Among better opponents were Hughie Smith of Syracuse; Carmen Christie of the Mason AC; George Sprague of Rochester. Fought Baltimore's brilliant Ernie Kahler to a standstill at K of C.

CHARLIE DAWSON — Middleweight, brother of welterweight Hughie Dawson. Both had impressive records. Charlie more experienced, fought better fighters in Harrisburg area.

PAT KIRBY — Welterweight in many Pennsylvania Railroad tournaments, winning several of them before turning pro, where he also did well.

GEORGIE BARNES — Lightweight handled by Whitey Laubach, who also handled Vince Myers. Barnes and Myers both fought some great fights.

TUG CUOZZI — Flashy Renovo lightweight who died in September. Two of his great fights were with Bobby Galetti and Dick English.

FREDDIE VAN ATTA — Out of Montoursville. Handled by Laubach for Montoursville AC.

EDDIE BARDO — Fought under name of Jackie Dillon, KOd Ed (Cannonball) Jenkins, Wild Bill Anderson and Young Sharkey. Fought many other good fighters. Described as "rough and tough cookie."

BEN (TURP) LETA — Rugged Williamsport welter remembered for bouts at Elks, Jaysburg (Newberry), Reed's Athletic Field and the Milo AC.

(Editor's Note — Because boxing records of amateurs, and some pros, are not too well kept, it was a difficult task for the Hall of Fame Club to compile records on many former fighters. The above list does not cover everything; nor is every former local boxer included).

OPENS LANDMARK RESTAURANT

In 1956, Frank Casale, a former Williamsport city fireman and one-time owner of Frankie's Tavern and

the 21 Club, opened the Triangle Tavern at 300 Shiffler Avenue, in Loyalsock Township. Located in a large c. 1920's Spanish Mission Style building ("Casale Building"), the Triangle became one of the go-to Italian restaurants in the area that included Tag's Bar and Grill and the Columbia Hotel.

Destined to be a proud, hard-working family business, Mr. Casale employed members of his immediate family to work at the Triangle. The front page of a menu from the Triangle Tavern noted, "Since 1956, a tradition of outstanding food and service has been established by Frank and Blanche Casale. They have passed down this experience to their children; Frank Jr., Rosemary,

Joanna, Linda, Mary Jean, and Joyce. We are always here to serve you in the Casale Family Tradition."

The extensive Triangle menu offered both American cuisine ("Dinner A La Americana") and Italian ("Dinner A La Italiana"). The balance of the menu included salads, soups, appetizers, side dishes, pizza, sandwiches and a wine list. Desserts were also available. As noted by Linda (Casale) Navarro, one of Mr. Casale's daughters, the favorite entrees among those who frequently dined at the Triangle included the homemade lasagna, homemade gnocchi, and spaghetti with hot sausage. Another favorite entree was the eggplant parmesan which was from a recipe by Mary Navarro, the mother-in-law of Linda (Casale) Navarro. The pizza was also very popular.

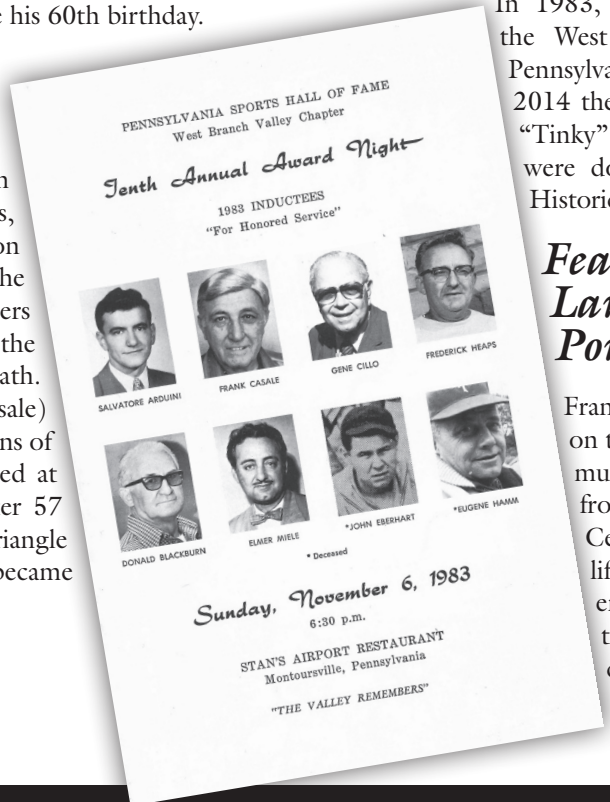
Invitation to Little League World Series managers and coaches...

One of the memorable traditions, and a testament to the Casale family's hospitality, was a standing invitation to the managers and coaches of the teams at the Little League World Series to dine at the Triangle.

In addition to the wonderful hospitality and fine cuisine, the folks who patronized the Triangle will always remember the charcoal portrait of Frank "Tinky" Casale that was displayed in the dining area. The framed 50½" by 38½" portrait showed Casale, a righty, in an orthodox stance (left hand and left foot to the fore), with his hands taped and wearing boxing trunks with the initials "FC". The portrait, done in 1973 by family friend Charles D. Ecker, was a gift from Mr. Casale's family to commemorate his 60th birthday.

Died in 1999...

Recently retired from the family business, Frank Casale died on August 26, 1999, at the age of 86. Family members continued running the business after his death. According to Linda (Casale) Navarro, four generations of the Casale family worked at the Triangle. Sadly, after 57 years in business, the Triangle closed in 2013 and became part of history.


PENNSYLVANIA SPORTS HALL OF FAME
West Branch Valley Chapter

Tenth Annual Award Night

1983 INDUCTEES
"For Honored Service"

SALVATORE ARDUINI · FRANK CASALE · GENE CILLO · FREDERICK HEAPS

DONALD BLACKBURN · ELMER MIELE · *JOHN EBERHART · *EUGENE HAMM

* Deceased

Sunday, November 6, 1983
6:30 p.m.

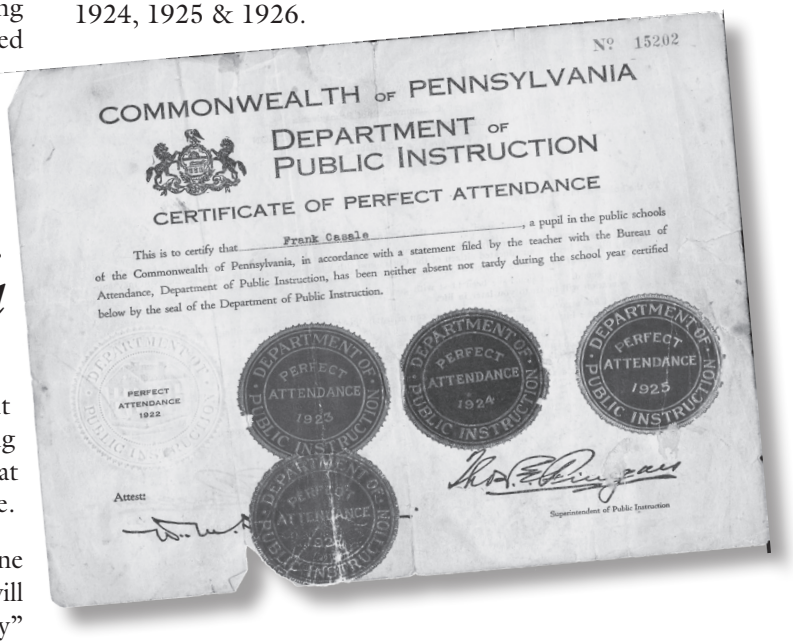
STAN'S AIRPORT RESTAURANT
Montoursville, Pennsylvania

"THE VALLEY REMEMBERS"

HONORS AND LEGACY

Receives certificate for perfect attendance in school..

Young Frankie Casale earned a Certificate Of Perfect Attendance from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Public Education for 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925 & 1926.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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
CERTIFICATE OF PERFECT ATTENDANCE

This is to certify that Frank Casale, a pupil in the public schools of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in accordance with a statement filed by the teacher with the Bureau of Attendance, Department of Public Instruction, has been neither absent nor tardy during the school year certified below by the seal of the Department of Public Instruction.

PERFECT ATTENDANCE 1922 · 1923 · 1924 · 1925

Attest:

Superintendent of Public Instruction

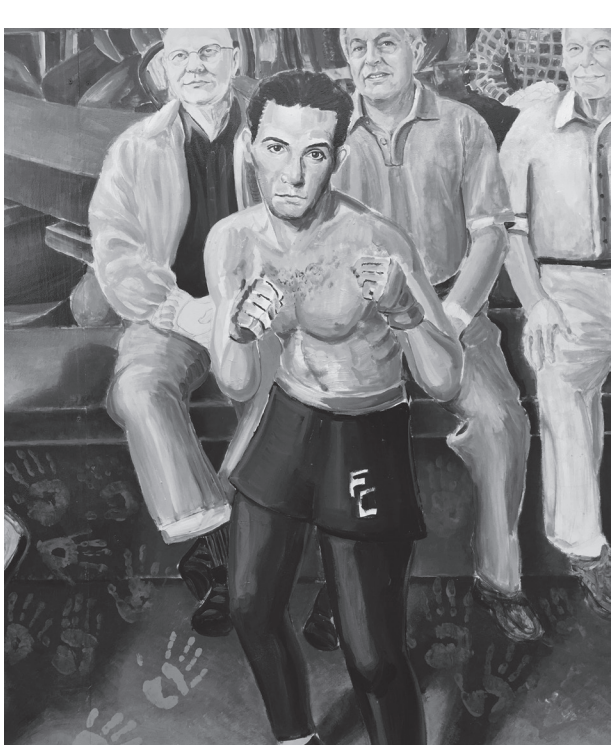
Elected to the local chapter of the PA Sports Hall of Fame...

In 1983, Frank Casale was inducted into the West Branch Valley Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame. In 2014 the iconic charcoal drawing of Frank "Tinky" Casale and his boxing gloves were donated to the Lycoming County Historical Society.

Featured on World's Largest Outdoor Portrait Mural...

Frank "Tinky" Casale is immortalized on the west wall of the large mural in the parking lot across from the Community Arts Center in Williamsport, PA. The life-size image, save for a few embellishments, is a duplicate of the charcoal drawing that was once displayed at the Triangle Tavern. The "Inspiration: Lycoming County" mural was done by

master artist Michael Pilato, a native of State College, PA. According to the website Pilatomurals.com, Mr. Pilato "holds the World Record for Largest Outdoor Portrait Mural with his piece 'Inspiration Lycoming County'." Now considered a landmark, the mural is a destination for visitors to north central Pennsylvania.



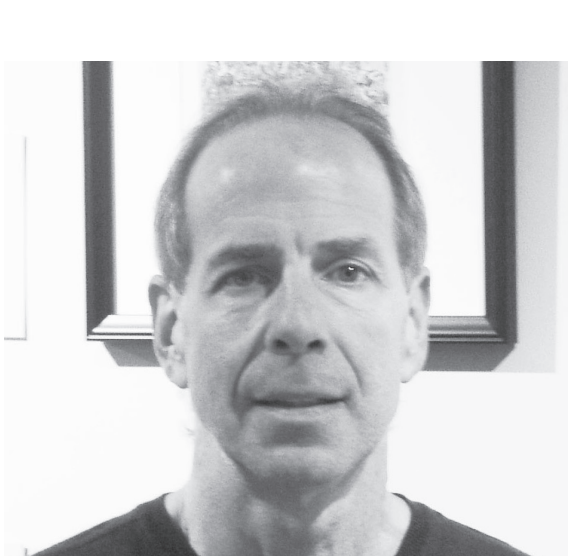
The famous All Italian Cook Book

comprised by the Mater Dolorosa Church, Williamsport, PA, includes several recipes of Yolanda Casale Sampson, the sister of Frank Casale: Minesta (Italian Soup & Green Vegetables), Brosccioli (Rolled Steak) - an item on the Triangle menu, Yolanda's Meat Balls, Yolanda's Canned Hot Peppers in Oil, Torta Di Ricotta (Cheese Pie), Yolanda's Janetts (Cookies), Strawberry Spumoni (Italian Ice Cream), Tagliatelli Alla Casalinga (Homemade Noodles) and Pizza Fritto (Fried Pizza Dough).

Mr. Casale's son, Frank A. Casale, Jr. (1937-2015), authored a cookbook entitled, Hey, Don't Throw That Away! Frank A. was a co-owner of the Triangle Tavern.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their help in making this article possible: Gary Parks, Director of the Thomas T. Taber Museum; Scott Sagar, Curator of Collections of the Thomas T. Taber Museum; Anthony H. Visco, Jr., Architect. A special thank you to Linda (Casale) Navarro, daughter of the late Frank Casale. Finally, a very special thank you to my wife, Ame, for her help and her patience.



MARC G. POMPEO

served on the Board of Governors of the Lycoming County Historical Society from 2009-2020 (Serving as Vice President 2011-2018 & as Member at Large 2018-2020). He has a B.A. in History from Moravian College, Bethlehem, PA. Marc also attended Lycoming College for courses in history and education. In 1982 he received a Pennsylvania Instructional One Certification in Secondary Education / Social Studies.

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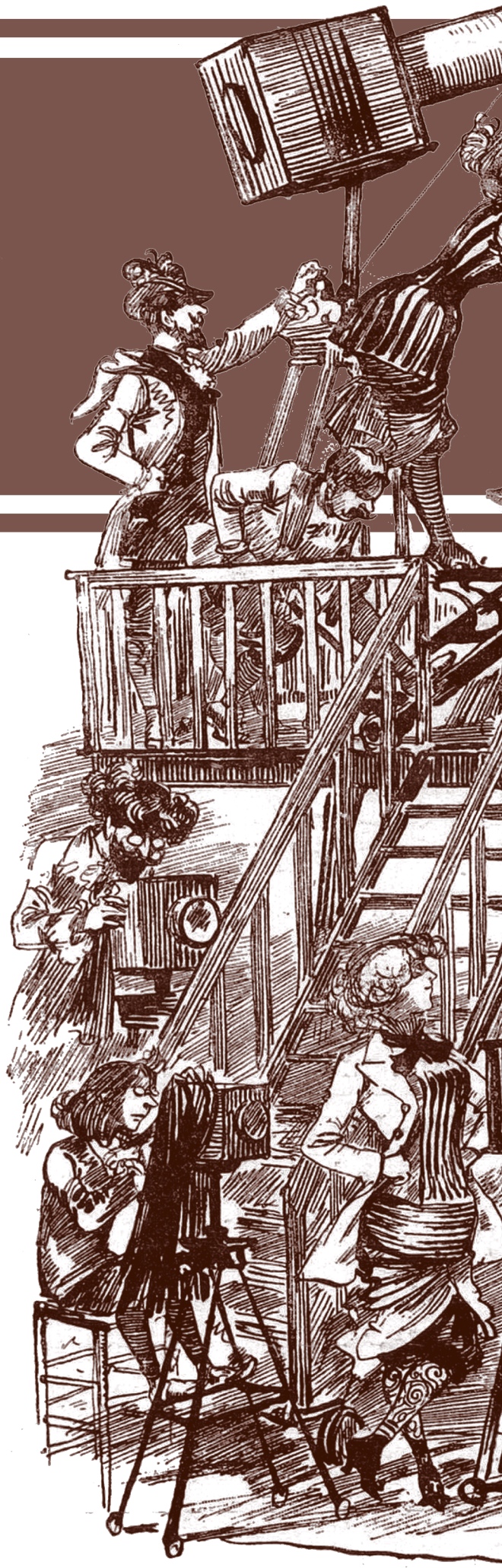

Thomas T. Taber

MUSEUM

LYCOMING COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY