

CURATOR'S REPORT

THE BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 12, 2019



RED RAINEYTOWN

ALONG THE HILLSIDE CLIMB TOWARD GOODTOWN

BROTHERSVALLEY TOWNSHIP!

A VIEW TOWARD CEDAR HEIGHTS APARTMENTS AND THE OLD REFORMED CEMETERY



This picture was donated by Eugene and Emily Bittner. It shows the old Reformed Cemetery in the 1950s when the trees were a lot smaller than in recent years. In the background is Cedar Height Apartments, which was the former Berlin Elementary School, which closed to public education on December 23, 1961 after serving educational needs for 47 years. It was originally built as Berlin's high school in 1914. Notice the "chicken coop" educational two-room building between the school house and South Street.

RAINEYTOWN

Raineytown was a mining village that grew up about 1898 on the sloping hillsides of the James S. Hauger farm, two miles south of Berlin and about a half mile north of the present-day village of Goodtown. The Hauger farm in 1976 is owned by the John Popovich, Sr., family of Berlin, Route 4.

The village was located at what was also known as the Pine Hill Station along the railroad that operated between Berlin and Garrett.

It was named for William T. Rainey, a well-known coal operator in the Berlin area, who owned the deep mine on the Hauger farm. Mr. Rainey built sixteen or more company bungalows to house the employees of the mines.

Raineytown was the scene of the Number 3 mine of the Coronet Coal Company of Pine Hill Station, as well as the Will Mines, Nos. 1, 2, and 3. After the mines were opened by W. T. Rainey about 1818, John Will, a coal broker of Philadelphia, began operating the mines under royalty.

Raineytown, in its earliest days, was also sometimes referred to as "Red Raineytown," since most of the min-

ing houses had been painted a bright red color. As the years ensued, the color faded and the town became better known as Raineytown.

Raineytown was also the scene of the large company store known as the Penn-Marva Coal Company store at Pine Hill Station, which in 1903 was managed by Henry Brant. The three-story framed store building burned to the ground on December 4, 1903. During the same fire, the nearby home of Frank Coleman, superintendent of the Raineytown mine, was also destroyed by fire.

Some years later a large concrete dwelling was built on the site of the store, in the 1950's being the residence of the John Sass family.

Raineytown had its own train station and some of the area farmers brought their milk regularly to the station where it was loaded on the train and hauled to town.

In the late 1920's the mine became depleted and the bungalows were sold for taxes. During that era, John O. Ream, Sr., of Berlin purchased the land.

In the summer of 1921, Raineytown was the scene of a still and moonshine raid in the basement of one of the residences.

AUGUSTUS C. FLOTO FORMER CREAMERY



This historical photo of the former Augustus C. Floto Creamery along Fletcher Street at 5th Avenue in Berlin was donated by Eugene and Emily Bittner. After the Floto Creamery was established around 1895 at a location along North Street in Berlin, it was operated by Newton Berkebile for A. C. Floto. About 1912 the Floto Creamery was moved to the Fletcher Street location in the above pictured building. Some years late the same building served as a private garage on the property of Jess M. Hillegas. Jesse and Sarah Hillegas' home was the former A. C. Floto residence.

The Floto Creamery made tub butter, which was sold in the cities. It was shipped from Berlin by the B&O Railroad. John sheets gathered the cream throughout the country using a horse and wagon for the creamery. In later years Richard and Helen Croner owned the Jesse Hillegas' residence. Some remember the creamery building being used for the storage of automobiles and a section being used as an ice house. This large former creamery building no longer exists – the structure being destroyed by fire.

THE VILLAGE OF GOODTOWN

**MICHAEL
MATIESZYN**

**OLDEST
RESIDENT
OF
GOODTOWN**

Michael Matieszyn is currently the oldest resident of the village of Goodtown in Brothersvalley Township. At the age of 87 years, Mike represents one of the last surviving children of the immigrant miners that settled in that coal mining patch and worked in the coal mining industry.

Mike was born on October 12, 1931 in Goodtown as one of the four children born to the late John and Anna (Harvist) Matieszyn while his parents were living in a house in the center of Goodtown that is now in use as a garage. His siblings included Kathryn, Mary, and Peter, all whom died at young ages of adulthood.



**THE JOHN AND MICHAEL MATIESZYN HOME IN
GOODTOWN**

THE COAL MINING VILLAGE OF GOODTOWN WAS NAMED FOR ISAIAH GOOD.

Goodtown had its beginning in 1900. Property was purchased from the farms of Norman D. Hay and Solomon Coleman by Isaiah Good, Norman Knepper and Daniel B. Zimmerman.

The coal company operated a company store in the village as well as a butcher shop in a separate building.

Mike recalls earlier years of his life when his parents and siblings resided in what was formerly the coal company's butcher shop that appears in the picture he is holding. The picture Mike holds was on the cover of our BAHS Curator's Report for February 12, 2019. Larry and Grace Pritts donated that picture – the original of which belonged to Grace's father, the late George Nicholson.

On a visit with Mike on February 23, 2019 when temperatures were 32 degree and light sleet ice was falling on Goodtown, Mike stepped out on his front porch for our short visit. His German shepherd was inside the home where he and his wife, the late Nellie Mae Bowman, raised their children.

Mike recalled that sometime in the decade of the 1940s, his parents purchased his current home from Charles and Melda Custer. The home had originally been known as the coal company's superintendent's home at Goodtown.

Mike, who is a retired, long-time employee of Croner, Inc., remembered the Fred Weimer family once living in the house next door to his home (the former Richard Blubaugh home). Weimer's garage was located between the butcher shop and the Blubaugh residence. Mike also remembered Fred's 1931 or '32 Plymouth automobile.

Mike and his daughter, Donna, currently reside at the family's home at 636 Goodtown Road in Goodtown. Mike is a 1949 graduate of Berlin Brothersvalley High School.

THE CHICO CLUB

On March 7, 1933, a group of girls at Berlin High School met with Miss Krissinger to form a social club. This club is one of the oldest organizations in the school system. The girls chose the name "Chico" – an Indian name – for their new club. The name really doesn't have any particular meaning.

These are the original officers:

President – Catherine Brubaker
Vice President – Elinor Glessner
Secretary – Anna C. Frazier
Treasurer – Virginia Gill

Their first major event was a formal dinner dance held the following spring – a custom that continued through many years.

On October 29, 1946, Chico held its first party for the 1946 school year. It was in the form of a Halloween Party, and was attended by 60 members and their guests. Games and dancing were the highlights of the evening.

The Chico Club has always been a popular club at BBHS. Its standards are comparatively high and its aim worthwhile. It combines the literary world with the social whirl in its qualities. Girls who have reached the tenth grade successfully with an average of at least "C" are eligible for membership. Two faculty members are chosen yearly to be its sponsors. Margaret Lehman and Miss Nuss served as the 1946 sponsors.

This article was copied from the November 1946 issue of The Mountain Ear, which was donated by V. Jane (Frazier) Hay.



DONATIONS:

V. Jane (Frazier) Hay donated 1946-47 Berlin basketball team and football team photos; The Mountain Ear issues of Dec. 1947, Dec. 1946, and Nov. 1946; 8th grade picture of 1943 at Berlin (home room teacher, Florence Walker); and Glencoe Railroad accident photo of December 12, 1912. **Jeanie Woods** donated a photo of Harriet Giese, wife of Joseph Ankeny. Harriet was the youngest child of the Rev. Henry Giese of Berlin. **Stew Saylor, Barbara Miller and Judy Cook** are responsible for the updated index for Book 2 of BAHS's obituaries. The updated index includes 80 pages.

David R. Hay, Curator

SEVEN MEN KILLED, THREE INJURED AND TWO LOCOMOTIVES WRECKED BY TERRIFIC BOILER EXPLOSION

Somerset, Sand Patch, Meyersdale and Berlin Citizens The Victims—Engineer Berkley Hurlled 500 Feet and Boiler of His Engine Twice That Distance by Mysterious Blast Cause of Disaster to Be Held at Somerset Next Monday at Listie Last Friday Night—Coroner's Inquest as to Evening.

THURSDAY SEPT 24, 1942

Coroner P. C. Dosch will impanel a jury at 7:30 o'clock next Monday evening at the Somerset courthouse to determine the cause of the blast which resulted in the instant death of two Baltimore & Ohio railroadmen, the serious injury of three others and the demolition of two large freight locomotives shortly before 1 o'clock last Saturday morning at the Listie grade crossing of the Somerset & Cambria branch of the B. & O.

The dead are:

JOHN L. BERKLEY, 62, engineer, of West Race Street, Somerset, body blown 500 feet from scene of blast.

CLARENCE OHLER, 28, of Sand Patch, a fireman, burned; died in an ambulance enroute to a Pittsburgh hospital.

Injured:

JACOB B. COOK, engineer, 315 Meyers Ave., Meyersdale, lacerations and scald burns of the face, head and arms.

ARTHUR HARTZELL, 24 of Somerset, brakeman, scald burns and bruises of the body and legs; condition serious.

BURDINE WILSON, Berlin, fireman, scald burns and extensive lacerations and bruises.

The explosion was the most terrific in the railroad annals of Somerset County. The report of the blast was heard for miles and the concussion felt over a wide territory. Residents of the village of Listie and vicinity were almost paralyzed by fright. Awakened from their slumbers by the roar and shock of the blast, they at first thought giant bombs were being dropped on the village by enemy aircraft, or that a giant airship had crashed and exploded in their midst.

Due to the fact that the boiler of a locomotive was lifted from its carriage and hurled a thousand feet, and that steam coils and other large fragments of wrecked locomotives were strewn over the countryside, it is almost a miracle that not more people were killed or injured.

How Did It Happen?

Just how it happened may never be known in full detail. Railway and county officials, Interstate Commerce Commission representatives, and even F.B.I. men, it is reported, have visited the scene of disaster, but none has expressed any positive opinion as to the cause of the let-go. The coroner will summon many witnesses among whom will be experienced

railroad men who will be quizzed as to how such a terrific explosion of a locomotive could be caused. Some have surmized that it was caused by a dry boiler, but this has been denied by persons purporting to know that the boiler was filled with water just shortly before the engine was started on its short run. There are reports that the engine was badly in need of repairs before it was taken out. Sabotage has been hinted at, but is hardly thought probable.

3 Engines on Train

Two locomotives were hauling and one was pushing a long string of loaded coal cars up a steep grade toward Somerset when the second engine of the "double-header" exploded with such terrific force that the huge boiler was lifted bodily from its carriage and hurled high in the air and dropped about 1,000 feet distant from the point of explosion and within 35 feet of a house occupied by Mr.

and Mrs. Baptist Magnetti and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Magnetti.

"We got scared," said Mrs. Baptist Magnetti. "The noise was terrible. I thought a big airplane had crashed right outside the house. We looked out the window but couldn't see anything except dirt, steam and dust in the air. There was a terrible hissing sound."

An automobile parked in front of the Magnetti house was sprayed with steam and the paint was chipped off. Spectators found a railroad man's cap on the hood of the car. The cap was believed to be that of John Berkley, whose body was blown 500 feet away and not found by searchers until several hours after the explosion.

Leading Locomotive Wrecked by Explosion of the Other

Pipes on the second locomotive, weighing several tons, were blown free of the engine chassis and flew through the air a distance of about 300 yards, landing with a crash along the railroad right-of-way less than 10 feet from a Listie street. In passing the front locomotive, the pipes demolished the cab and the smoke stack. The coal tender of the first engine also was damaged.

All of the coal cars remained on the track and the rails were not damaged by the let-go.

Berkley and Ohler were in the cab of the second engine, while Cook and Wilson were the engine crew of the first locomotive. Hartzell was a brakeman and it was

not determined immediately whether he was riding in one of the engine cabs at the time of the accident.

Victims Cared For

News of the wreck was dispatched to Somerset and two ambulances were sent to the scene. The injured, however, were taken to the Community Hospital in private cars. Hospital officials had a difficult time in furnishing beds for the injured as the institution was already filled to capacity.

John L. Berkley had been employed by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for 36 years. He was a son of Israel and Lydia (Shoemaker) Berkley and was born in Somerset County.

Berkley was substituting for another engineer, Charles Pile of Somerset, who was scheduled to man the locomotive but had asked to be relieved so he could attend the funeral of a friend in Altoona. Berkley was a man of excellent character and steady habits and considered a very efficient and careful engineman. He was a member of the Somerset Church of the Brethren.

Berkley Funeral

Funeral services were conducted for Berkley at his home Monday afternoon by his pastor, Rev. Galen Blough. Interment was in the Somerset County Memorial Park under the direction of the Hauger Funeral Home of Somerset.

Surviving engineer Berkley are his wife, Mrs. Carolyn (Hoffman) Berkley, and five children: Edward Berkley, Somerset; William and John Berkley Jr., both at home; Mrs. William Menser, Ferndale, and Mrs. Raymond Ruth, Southmont. He was a brother of Samuel Berkley, Somerset; Nelson Berkley, Friedens; Harvey Berkley, Listie; Mrs. William Brougher,

BURDINE WILSON
OF BERLIN — A FIREMAN —
RECEIVED SCALD BURNS
AND EXTENSIVE
LACERATIONS AND
BRUISES AT THE
LISTIE
ACCIDENT

BURDINE AND WAVIE PEARL (SIDLE) WILSON AND THEIR FIVE CHILDREN



**TAKEN IN 1929. Front row: Dale Eugene Wilson and Vera Almira
(Watts)**

**Back: Richard Burdine Wilson and Violet Alberta (Johnyak) Baby:
Doris Jean (Jordan)**

Burdine and Wavie Wilson in the back.

This photo and numerous other photos and tintypes were donated by James Johnyak, a grandson of Burdine and Wavie Wilson. The box he mailed to us from his home in Brooksville, Florida also contained two early editions of the Mountaineer Yearbook from Berlin High School, a copy of the 1908 Old Home Week booklet, and a booklet from Berlin's 1937 celebration. He donated a genealogy of the Twigg family and the wedding certificate from January 13, 1887 for Isaac C. Wilson and Harriet Elizabeth "Hattie" Johnson. They were the parents of Burdine Wilson and numerous other children including Ruth, who was the wife of Earl Daniel Hay. Ruth was the long-time postmistress at Macdonaldton. For many years Isaac C. Wilson lived near St. Gregory Church in Macdonaldton.

Two Men Killed

(Continued from Page One)

Somerset; Oran Berkley, Clearfield; Mrs. Curtis Davis, Somerset; Earl Berkley, Ferrelton; Lloyd Berkley, Pittsburgh; Milton Berkley, and Mrs. James Liberty, Somerset.

Ohler Obituary

Clarence Ohler, the fireman who was killed by the blast, was a son of Elmer and Edna (Francis) Ohler and was born in Somerset County 23 years ago. He had been a resident of Sand Patch for a number of years.

Surviving in addition to his parents are his wife, Mrs. Margaret (Maust) Ohler and two young sons, Bernard and Kenneth. He was a brother of Clyde Ohler of Sand Patch.

Funeral rites for Mr. Ohler were conducted at 3 o'clock Tuesday afternoon in the Summit Mills Brethren Church by the pastor, Rev. Kenneth Ashman. Interment in the Lichty Cemetery under the direction of W. C. Price & Son, Meyersdale morticians.

Bridegroom of a Month

Arthur Hartzell, one of those seriously burned, was a bridegroom of a little more than a month. Hartzell and Thelma Grace Heiple of Somerset were married on August 16 at a double ceremony performed in the Somerset Reformed Church by Rev. George L. Roth. D. D. Hartzell's sister, Miss Helen Allene Hartzell, became the bride of Charles H. Moyer, a State Motor Police member, at the same time.

Engineer Cook Recovering

Engineer J. B. Cook is well on the road to recovery from his injuries, although he is still confined to the hospital. Last Sunday blood poisoning appeared to be developing in his left arm, but that is now under control. His burns on arm and face are responding to treatment nicely.



**TWO LOCOMOTIVES
WRECKED BY TERRIFIC
BOILER EXPLOSION IN**

LISTIE

**SEPTEMBER 19,
1942**



**THESE FAMILY PHOTOS WERE
DONATED BY JAMES
JOHNYAK (a grandson of Burdine
Wilson):**

**Top left: Wavie Pearl (Sidle) Wilson
– wife of Burdine Wilson.**

**Top right: Mary Ella (Zorn) Sidle –
mother of Wavie Pearl (Sidle)
Wilson**

**Bottom right: Burdine and Wavie
Pearl (Sidle) Wilson.**

