

# VALLEY HISTORIAN

GREATER MONESSEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 505 DONNER AVE MONESSEN PA 15062 724-684-8460 VOL 7 ISSUE 6 WINTER 2007

## WE ALL GET THINGS DONE!



### PIERRE LUTI DONATES SIGN

We have a new sign on our facade and it is terrific. We designed it to represent all the different aspects of this community through the years. It should bring back memories. Take a minute and look at it when you pass by. When you see Pierre thank him for his generosity! Can you identify the places and the symbols?

### MONTANA STEAMBOAT NOV 25.

**Skeleton in the Sand: The Montana.** Enjoy a History Channel video of the California, PA built boat the Montana being rediscovered in the mud of the Missouri River followed by a discussion about boatbuilding on the Monongahela River. 1PM

### WOODWIND QUINTET AT OPEN HOUSE DEC 30 1-4

December 30, 1-4. Our year has been bountiful. Come celebrate with us. In addition to ethnic foods we will have two performances by the Laurel Mountain Winds and Associated Artists, a local group of musicians who in addition to traditional pieces **will play a number of compositions by Monessen composers.** The group will perform at 1 o'clock and again at 3.

### VEGELIA NOV 28

November 28, 5-8. Bring a traditional Christmas Eve dish and enjoy the Christmas Eve feast with your friends. You must have a ticket for this affair as space is limited at the museum. Donations are \$10 plus the ethnic dish. If you bring the recipe you will get \$3 of your donation back. The recipe will become part of our RESEARCH PROJECT collection. 5-8

### GATHERING RECIPES

We are beginning the long and interesting road of collecting authentic ethnic recipes. You know, Nana's Pagash! Remember Nonno's sausage, Zedo's goulash.

Monessen once had 27 different nationalities. In the 1930s they included 940 Americans (mostly Germans, Scots, English, Irish), 837 Italians, 727 Slavs, and 486 Carpatho-Rusyns. The smallest groups were 2 Bohemians, 3 Mexicans, 2 Serbians, and 5 Austrians. In between were people from Croatia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, & the Ukraine.

It was in these immigrant kitchens that the ethnic culinary tradition was born. The transplanted women learned to compromise on the ingredients they could not find in America. They learned that other women from other countries cooked similar foods. For example, Eastern Europeans all made a stuffed cabbage, but with variations. A stuffed cabbage was a *halupki* to a Carpatho-Rusyn woman who cooked it with tomatoes, but to a Croatian it was a *sarma* and cooked with sauerkraut, and to a Pole it was a *galumki*. In all of their clubs, in addition to *halupki* they feasted on a noodle and cabbage dish called *halushki*, a stuffed dough with cheese, prune, or potato filling called a *pierogi* (*pirohi* to a Ukrainian, *pirohy* to a Slovak), and a stuffed smoked sausage called a *kolbassi*. In later years so did the rest of the town, which would gladly visit the clubs for a Saturday plate of kraut and kolbassi and a polka or two by a good "hunkie" band.

This is a valley wide project. We will accept recipes from all nationalities and ethnic groups from around the valley.

## CAN YOU GUESS THE LOCATION OF THESE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES?



**HINT: THEY ARE ALL IN DOWNTOWN MONESSEN ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS.**

In addition, there were specific specialties. Hungarians would serve goulash, and maybe chicken paprika with *czeregi*, a twisted flaky fried dough), *pampushkas*, a giant doughnuts filled with lekvar, and *palachinta*, crepes with dill and sweet cottage cheese. Where an Italian would have a fig tree in the backyard, a Slovak would have a walnut tree. Nuts were used in everything, but primarily in *kolache*, cookies, like *makovinik orechovnik*, nut and poppy seed rolls. They made their sauerkraut in crocks and eventually shopped for their special items imported from the "old country" at grocers named Troychak, Olsavick, Tordy, and Chick in the neighborhoods.

The traditions and the foods related to them thrived through three generations. Then, slowly, as the children moved away, intermarried with other ethnic groups, or simply lost interest, the traditions, their foods, and their recipes began to fade. We want to bring those traditions back, namely through recording the recipes made in ethnic homes during a year of celebrations from New Years Day to New Years Eve and every day in between.

Traditional ethnic cookbooks usually do not record the recipes made in the homes of immigrants. If they do, they do not record when the food was eaten, who introduced the food to the family, what region the food represented, how it varied from other regions, why it varied from other regions, etc. In addition, modern substitutes have been introduced like garlic powder for garlic, boxed ingredients for natural ingredients. We will take the recipe back to its origin. They will be lost forever if we do not save them. SOOOO, let's write them down. Let's record them. Let's share them with our friends. If not, within a few years they will be lost forever.

We do not want recipes that call for Lipton Soup, or ketchup, or other American ingredients. If you have adapted your recipe to include such very American items, give us the original and then add the info on the American ingredient as a footnote.

If you still make your recipe with a hand full of this and a pinch of that, write it that way and we will help convert it to cups and ounces. We will soon begin preparing space for a proper kitchen. It will have mirrors so we can give cooking demonstrations and film the how to aspect.

Cassandra will be in charge of this project. She needs five helpers WHO WILL BE PAID (A MODEST AMOUNT), They will find additional helpers to reach the various ethnic groups. If you are interested in being one of the PAID organizers contact the museum. 724 684 8460.

Here is a sample recipe for Christmas:

### **Cod in Sauce with Onions Baccalà in Umido con Cipolle**

Like boiled cod, cod in onion sauce or with sage and garlic is part of a Tuscan Christmas Eve tradition. The Tuscans did not follow the idea of seven fishes. It comes from the kitchens of Carolina Paggini Parigi. She and her husband Nazzareno came to Monessen in 1913 from the small village of Quarata near Arezzo in Tuscany. From 1913 to 2006 it was served every Christmas Eve in the Parigi/Vivian home.

1 salted and soaked whole cod fish  
1/2 cup flour  
1 tsp. pepper  
1 cup corn oil

5-6 medium onions\*  
2 cups whole or crushed canned tomatoes  
1 cup broth or water

Soak and prepare cod fish as directed in the introduction to this section on page 103. Wash, drain and pat dry. Mix flour with pepper and place on a board (do not add salt).

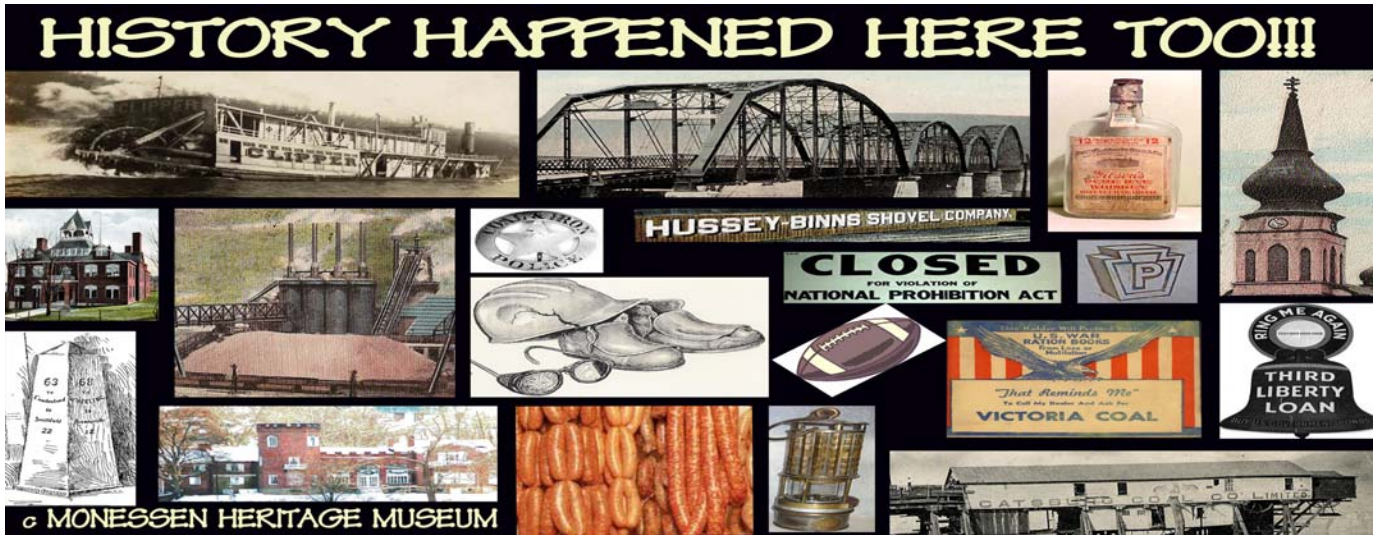
Place a large-size iron skillet on medium-high heat. Heat to hot and add oil. Press fish into flour. Turn and press again. Coat well. When oil is hot, place fish in skillet. Cook until a golden brown, turning once to brown both sides. Remove from skillet and place on paper towel to drain. If oil is dirty from flour, discard, wipe the skillet, reheat, and add new oil.

Peel, wash, and slice onions. Add to oil and saute for 10 minutes, or until transparent.

Add tomatoes and crush with a fork. Simmer 10 minutes. Rinse tomato can with 1/2 cup broth or water and add to mixture. Do not add salt. Mix well.

Lower heat and simmer uncovered for 15 to 20 minutes or until sauce begins to lose bright red color. Add fish. Cover and simmer slowly for 30 minutes or until sauce is a brown-red and oil begins to separate and float on surface (skim if desired). Do not stir or turn. If sauce begins to dry, add remaining broth. Serves: 6-8, depending on size of fish.

Note: The amount of onions is a matter of taste: 1 to 2 onions add flavor, 3 to 5 make the onions, like potatoes, a component of the stew and sweeten it. We like lots of onions.



### New York Cheese Cake

This is the best soufflé-style cheesecake in the world. It was given to Jackie Seroka and Elizabeth Vivian at Madeline's Beauty Shop by Mrs. Godla in the 1950s. They passed it on to others. It became a part of the holiday table in many homes. The story goes it was the same recipe served at Lindy's restaurant in New York City. It is the best!!!! ***It is not an authentic ethnic recipe.*** We will collect this type of recipe but it will have its own category.

#### Crust

14 double graham crackers 2, 8oz Phila cream cheese  
 1/8c sugar 2, 8 oz sour cream  
 1/8 pound butter 4 eggs

#### Filling

1c sugar  
 juice of 1 lemon  
 1t vanilla  
 1T flour

**Crust:** Crumble the graham crackers into tiny pieces. You may wish to place them in a meat grinder. Add sugar to crumbled crumbs and mix well. Melt the butter in a small pan over medium heat. Do not allow to turn brown. Sprinkle the butter over the bread crumbs and mix. Press bread crumbs into bottom of spring pan climbing half way up the sides. Set aside.

**Filling:** Separate the eggs. Beat the egg whites until stiff and fluffy. Set aside. In a medium-sized mixing bowl beat the egg yolks. When well beaten begin to add the sugar a tablespoon at a time. Blend well after each addition until the mixture begins to cream. Add the flour. Mix until creamy. Then alternate cream cheese and sour cream, blending well with each addition. When well blended add the second cream cheese and the second sour cream. Add the juice of one lemon and the vanilla.

Remove from mixer. Fold in the egg whites until well blended. Pour into spring pan that has been covered with crust. Bake in 350 degree oven for about 45 minutes to 1 hour or until browned. When done the cake will crack on the top. Do not open the oven door while baking. When done turn off the oven, open the door a crack, and allow to cool in the oven for about 1 hour. You want the cake to be high and fluffy. If it falls it will still be good, but

Remove from oven. Run a knife around the outside of the cake to loosen it from the pan. Open the spring and remove the top of the pan. Allow the cake to rest on the bottom of the pan and place in a cake dish. You may serve it plain or top it with any of the toppings suggested below.

### TEACHERS INSERVICE AT MHM

As part of an in-service day 26 teachers from around the Mon Valley came to the Museum in October to learn about how History Happened Here Too. (HHHT) The museum presented a 2 hour program on the industrial and ethnic history of the valley including how to access resources both at the museum and on the Internet. Can you recognize the different valley industries and services in the Montague above?

We applied to the History Channel for a grant to implement our HHHT program with Monessen schools. We did not get that grant. So, we applied to the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County, but they did not think we were worthy either. So, we turned to Monessenites. We sent out a mailing asking MHS graduates to help in a big way. The responses have just begun to come in. Member Harry Steele donated \$500 to get us started. With that money we will buy a class set of the Monessen book for the school district.

### EXCUSE MY FAUX PAU

When I rewrote the museum information for the Valley independent I made a big mistake. I did not read the last two paragraphs of the previous text and let it ride. Well, it said almost the same thing that I was saying in the paragraphs before it. So we look very foolish. I am sorry. -Cassandra

### New Hours

OUR WINTER HOURS:

WE ARE OPEN FRIDAYS UNTIL 5 PM. WED-SAT 10-3 FRI 10-5

# DAN'S ARCHIVES

One hundred and five years ago in December of 1902, the Borough of Monessen was four years old and ready to celebrate another joyous Christmas season.

Among the businesses advertising Christmas sales in the *Monessen News* were:

**Brooks** for everything under the sun

**Levy** for dress suits

**Lamonts** for W. I. Douglas and Queen Quality shoes

**Myers** with a new store filled with clothing and hats

**Moyer** for the finest jewelry

**Skelley's** for toys and the right prices,

**Ely Brothers** for slippers

**White Front Meat Market** for your turkey

**Willson Hardware Company** for carving sets

**Saltzar** for Christmas novelties

**Wright and Thompson** with a new store and new furniture to sell

**F. C. Blair** and their holiday jewelry

The edition of the *Monessen News* for December 20, 1902 carried a front page editorial comparing Monessen to a young boy wanting toys. It said he has received such an abundance of good things these past four Christmases. His first present was the American Tin Plate plant with its 1500 workers. This was followed by the Page Woven Wire mill, and then the American Steel Hoop mill. The Monessen Foundry and Machine Company followed, and lastly, the young boy received the Pittsburgh Steel Company. All together these "toys" pay out nearly \$200,000 each month to their workers.

The editorial states Monessen should be happy and thankful for the many good things bestowed on it by God. Four days later, the Paper carried the Borough's wish list to Santa for 1902, noting it has much, but wants much more. Among the listed items were: a new street leading to the Monongahela River, mud free streets, improved electric system, an opera house, a free library, a Sunday train, more school rooms, a bridge and street car line to Charleroi, voting wards, a good telephone line to Pittsburgh, and a late train from Pittsburgh.

The *Monessen Daily Independent* carried "Santa Claus Letters" from the children of the Borough on its front page during the month of December. Here are some delightful examples of Christmas wish lists one hundred and five years ago:

Dear Santa,  
Please bring me a tool chest, a story book, an express wagon and a box of ten pins. I am eight years old and go to school every day. Don't forget my brother, David, he wants a magic lantern.  
From your loving friend,  
Joseph Madigan.  
P.S. Bring us lots of fruit and candy

Dear Old Santa,  
I would like for you to bring me a dolly as big as myself and gocart and trunk and lots of baby dresses for my dolly and don't forget to be shure and come, some candy, Christmas tree,  
Vilet Bender  
I am 2 years old.

Dear Santa,  
I am a little boy eight years old, I would like to have a horn, some games, a story book, a deck of cards, so I can play seven up, some candy, and a Christmas tree. Please bring my mamma a little raw hide whip.  
From your little friend,  
Blair Crum

Dear Santa,  
I am a little girl five years old. I would like to have a little rocking chair, a gocart, a story book, a little iron and a Christmas tree, also some candy and nuts.  
From your little friend,  
Mary E. Crum.

Dear Santa,  
Please bring me express wagon, engine, rifle, foot ball, a pair of rubber boots. Dear Santa please put my gifts on the Christmas tree.  
Your little friend,  
George Newton.

Dear Santa,  
I am Hays Satterfield and I want a real live pony and cart, harness and whip, also drum, horn, ice wagon. Dear Santa don't forget I have to little brothers. Ned is three years old and Herbert is one year old and they like playthings to. They like candy, oranges and good things to eat and Dear Santa I have three little cousins. They are Maud Wheatley, Helen Baker, Stuart Wild. Bring them lots of toys, gum, baby doll, drums, candy and everything nice to eat and Dear Santa don't forget to come.

**Dear Santa,**  
**Don't forget that the Monessen Heritage**  
**Museum has old fashioned games for tons**  
**of good fun.**

**JACKS**  
**JUMP ROPES**  
**PUZZLES**  
**MARBLES**

**Shop with us! Keep tradition alive!**