

VALLEY HISTORIAN

Greater Monessen Historical Society
505 Donner Avenue, Monessen, PA 15062
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Easter Basket Demonstration and Meal

Dorothy Jozwiak and her committee working with Elmer Andrachek held a fundraiser on Tuesday, March 31 at the Heritage Museum. Forty people attended the educational presentation of how to create a Slavic Easter basket to take to the church for blessing. Elmer was our chef for the day. Dorothy and her ladies narrated which foods were included in the basket and the historical reasons for including them. During the planning and preparation for the display and fundraisers, we have become good friends with the Holy Family Polish National Church in McKeesport. I think Susanna Swade has them on speed dial. ☺ Two sisters, who belong to the Parish, but live in North Huntingdon, Barbara Tajdeski and Bozena Kijowski, traveled to Monessen to add their ethnic charm. Bozena does Easter palm weaving and Barbara does Pysanky eggs. Their presence was a treat. Rev. Sredzinski, Chaplain of St. Emma Monastery, graciously came to give the blessing. Everyone had a wonderful ham and kielbasa dinner with the special Easter sides. Our ethnic food programs are always popular!

Polish Exhibit Opens!

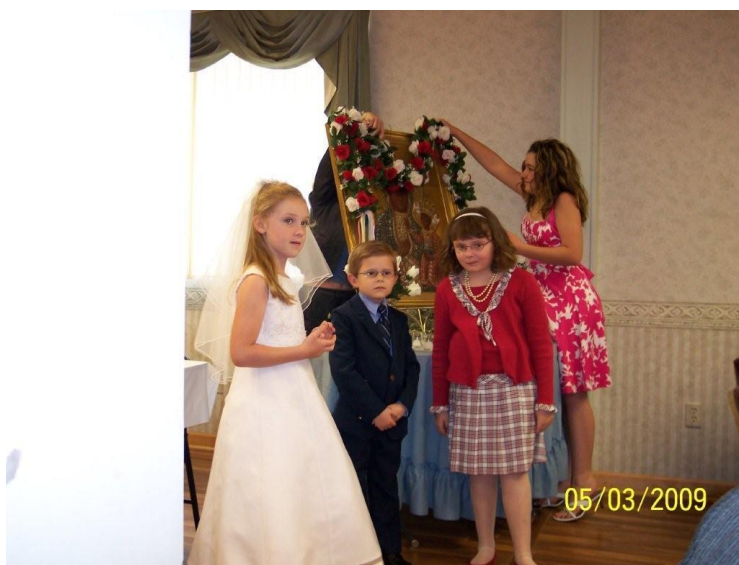
The Heritage Museum was crowded on Sunday, March 15 for the opening of our yearly ethnic exhibit. In honor of the centennial of the former St. Hyacinth Polish Roman Catholic Church and its women's Rosary Society, the Polish heritage of the Greater Monessen area was chosen as this year's theme. Along with St. Hyacinth, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Polish National Church of Monessen was also highlighted. Around these two churches, the Polish immigrants of Monessen carved their niche into the Mon Valley. Approximately one hundred guests spent the afternoon traveling down memory lane. Gary Strelick, our Board member, felt this was the largest opening to date. Dorothy Jozwiak assembled an expert crew to assist her in making this dream come true. The ladies and gentlemen worked many long days and weeks to construct the exhibit. They chose to utilize Poland's national colors of red and white to give the display a bright and cheerful look.



Polish Constitution Day Dinner

As part of the Polish Heritage Exhibit, a fundraiser dinner was held on Sunday, May 3, at Jozwiak Hall in the St. Vincent DePaul Society building on Grand Boulevard. The buffet dinner was catered by Ponce's. The dinner was in remembrance of the centennial of the former St. Hyacinth Polish Church but also remembered the Sacred Heart of Jesus Polish National Church of Monessen. May the Third is a Polish holiday commemorating the granting of the Polish Constitution of 1791 by King Stanislaw August, the last King of Poland. The document would anger the imperial neighbors of the country and lead to the three partitions of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary. Poland would be erased from the map of Europe for 123 years. Dan Zyglowicz, Master of Ceremonies, read the proclamation of King Stanislaw August in granting the constitution. Gloria Belczyk recited an anniversary poem she wrote. Dorothy Jozwiak led a candle lighting ceremony of ten candles to reflect on the past one hundred years of Polish heritage in the Greater Monessen area.

Approximately 93 people enjoyed a menu of beef tenderloin in gravy, stuffed cabbage, pierogie, salad, peas with pearl onions, pickled beets, kielbassi and Polish pound cake. Radoslaw Fizek, the well-known Polish violinist and singer provided entertainment. Rev. Dennis Bogusz, a former pastor of St. Hyacinth Church, was the main speaker and led the services for the May Crowning of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Each guest received a handmade straw Polish Christmas tree ornament compliments of the Historical Society. Special thanks to Professor Albert Pokol, the Archivist at the Louis L. Manderino Library of California University of PA, who won the half the take drawing and donated it back to us.



Mary Grace Steffey, Stephen Palli, Sarah Palli, and Gianna Gaul presented flowers to the Blessed Mother.

Sto-Lat (100 years). The early years of St. Hyacinth Church

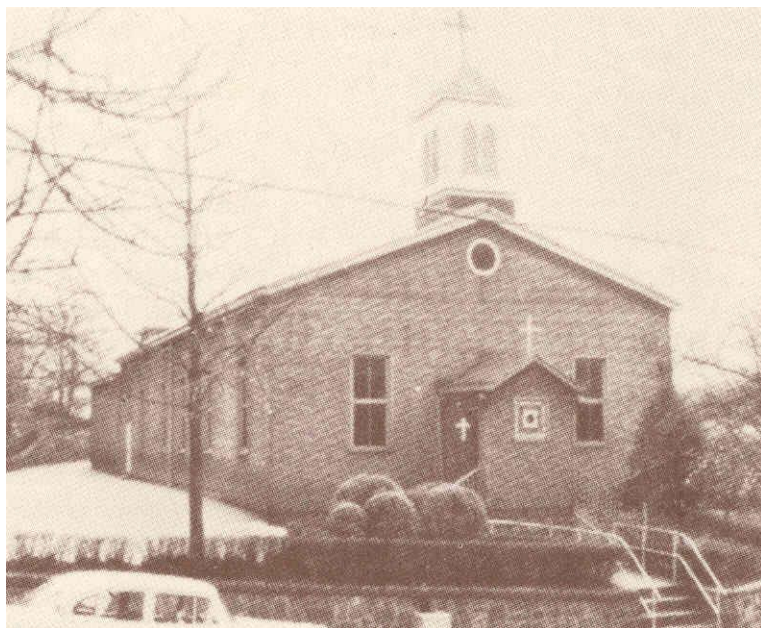
A committee composed of Peter Poplawski, Jacob Centnarowski, Joseph Wawrzinski and Lawrence Rodack formed a committee in 1908 to raise funds and secure permission to build a Polish church in Monessen. In six months, they raised \$1,500 and asked Rev. Ladislaus Odziemczewski, pastor of Most Holy Name of Mary Church in Donora, to speak with Most Rev. Regis Canevin, Bishop of Pittsburgh. Permission was granted to establish the parish under the title of St. Hyacinth.



Father Rokusz arrived on May 1, 1909 and celebrated a mass for the Polish people on May 30, 1909 in a storeroom on Donner Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets. Services were attended by the Polish families of Monessen, Charleroi, Arnold City, Pricedale, Belle Vernon and Vesta. The Parish quickly grew to 200 families. Six lots on Reed Avenue and Rostraver were purchased for \$3,400 and construction of the church began.

The church was dedicated in October of 1909, the same month the Rosary Society was organized with Ann Wojcich as first president. The altar was of hand carved wood that was painted white with gold trim. A large picture of St. Hyacinth hung above the altar with pictures of the Sacred Heart and Blessed Virgin Mary above the side altars. Gas lighting was used. The building could accommodate approximately 300 people.





In 1910, Fr. Rokusz purchased three additional lots and a house on Knox Avenue for \$5,250. Before the purchase of the rectory, Fr. Rokusz lived in the Kilroy Hotel.

Monessen's first parochial school began in the St. Hyacinth rectory with Edward Januszewski conducting classes. The St. Hyacinth School was built in 1911 with one classroom. Later, two more classrooms were added. By 1915, the eight grade parochial school had an enrollment of over 200 students. Assisting Mr. Januszewski were the Holy Ghost Sisters of Donora. In 1918, the Sisters of Nazareth arrived to maintain the school until 1949.

The cemetery was purchased in 1929 and consisted of seven acres, formerly known as the John Irons Tract. The Pittsburgh Steel Company generously assisted in the purchase of the land.

Bylaw Meeting and Board Election

In addition to planning for the spring exhibit, the Board of Directors has also been busy setting up the organization to oversee the Heritage Museum. After our autumn public meeting and your input, the Board immediately began revising the former bylaws into a workable form. Attorney Jack Bergstein generously offered advice and guidance. He assisted us with the legalities and proper form, telling us what to do and what not to do. Thank you Jack! Susanna retyped the document with Vito's assistance. After many meetings, a final form was ready for the membership. Following established procedure, public notice was given through the mail and in the newspaper that the annual spring meeting and bylaw adoption would be held on Monday,

March 30, 2009 in the Heritage Museum. After establishing a quorum, a vote was taken, and the new bylaws were passed.

The next piece of business was the election of the board of directors. The following persons were elected to a five year term on the board: Dan Zyglowicz, Vito Beneccio, Susanna Swade, Gary Strelick, Dr. Martin Dudas, and Candis Kelly.

New Cookbooks in Museum Shoppe

Susanna Swade has a Polish cookbook for the Museum Shoppe, as well as a new Italian cookbook. We also have an assortment of Polish items for sale. Don't forget to shop there for unusual gifts or reunion door prizes.

Founders Day 2009 to look back to 1897

After discussions, we decided to shift Founders Day from September to the end of July. July 27, 1897 was the original Monessen Land Sale Day. This year's celebration will commemorate the early pioneers of the town.

After construction began on William Henry Donner's National Tin Plate Company in the spring of 1897, The East Side Land Company engaged M. J. Alexander as their real estate manager and opened an office in Pittsburgh. It was Alexander who came up with the name "Monessen", as he envisioned it as the new Essen (Germany's great steel-making city) on the Mon. The business optimism sweeping over the country under the Presidency of William McKinley and the confidence of William Henry Donner in the development of Monessen pushed plans ahead to start the land sales. Colonel James Schoonmaker ordered the tracks of the Pittsburgh, McKeesport and Youghiogheny Railroad to be moved toward the river to widen the business district area.

The East Side Land Company arranged for John Head, of the Law Firm of Moorhead and Head, to speak to the crowds on Land Sale Day about the plans and excellent opportunities for development. At the end of the day, gross sales outdid the expectations of the East Side Land Company.

Plans for our Founders Day are still being formulated, but we are looking at a locally written play about a turn of the century industrial boomtown and the ethnic groups learning to live together, as well as a lecture looking at early Westmoreland County. The summer exhibit at the Heritage Museum will focus on Monessen also.

GMHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Daniel Zyglowicz, President
Gary Strelick, Vice President
Susanna Swade, Secretary
Vito Beneccio, Treasurer
Dr. Martin Dudas, Fundraiser
Candis Kelly, Exhibits



Have some free time?

We have recruited some wonderful volunteers but are always looking for additional ones to help. Do you know someone who has free time? Do you want to join a group of dedicated people interested in local history? We work together for the common good. **Volunteer today.**

Class Reunion Time

Are you a member of the Class of 1949, 1959, 1969, 1979, 1989 or 1999? Have you considered the Heritage Museum as part of your reunion plans? We have the old school yearbooks and photos of the Monessen you will remember. The Summer Exhibit will be old Monessen. Susanna Swade has come up with an idea to partner with Monessen Public Library and District Center and provide a night of fellowship at the Library on Friday night followed by a breakfast the next morning at the Heritage Museum.

Are there treasures in your attic or cellar?

We hear so many stories of photographs and pieces of local history getting thrown into the trash, because no one thinks anyone wants the stuff. We want it! Photographs tell the story of an era that is past. The stuff grandma or mom saved may be the only item left from a former business or organization. Where are the minute books from all the old organizations that were active in the Greater Monessen area at one time? Think of us when doing spring cleaning.

Westmoreland County history lectures

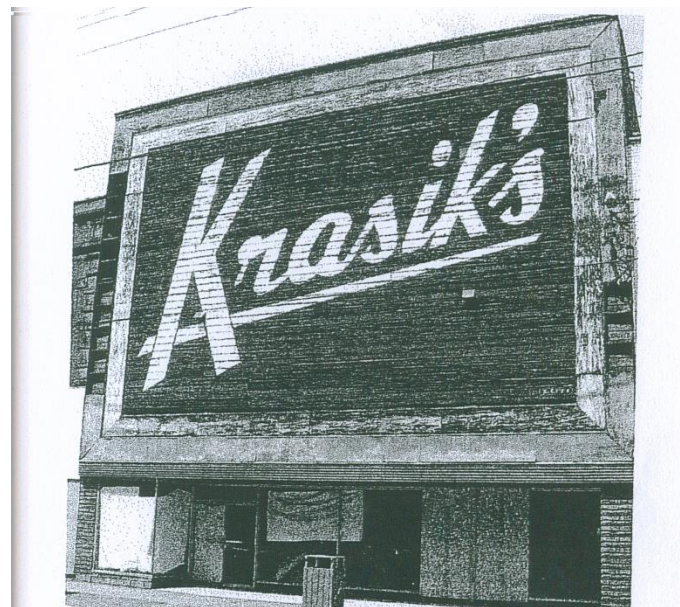
With grant funding from the Pittsburgh 250 Community Connections Grant Program through Westmoreland Heritage, the Greater Monessen Historical Society will host two lectures on early Westmoreland County history. On Saturday, June 27, 2009, Emeritus Professor of History, Dr. John K. Folmar will speak at the Heritage Museum. For Founder's Day, Saturday, July 25, 2009, Professor Willie Pigg will deliver an interesting talk on Westmoreland history. **Mark your calendars!**

Please make an effort to visit the Historical Society.

Library receives donation for reading area

Dr. and Mrs. Martin Dudas have donated two beautiful Victorian chairs for the reading area in the second floor library. The chairs originally belonged to Dr. Griffith and were located in his home on Second Street and Schoonmaker Avenue. We are very grateful to receive these valuable pieces.

Krasik Building demolished



The building known to most people as the Krasik Furniture Building at 551 and 553 Donner Avenue has been torn down. The Monessen Hardware Company occupied 551 Donner until it closed in 1940. The Luce Hardware and Roofing Company was located at 553 Donner Avenue in 1913 and 1914. A.R. Ney Company, which called itself "Monessen's Shopping Center" used the building for many years. By 1930, the R & S Shoe Store advertised men's and women's shoes for \$2.95, \$3.95 and \$4.95 from the location. On the upper floors, Dr. A. M. Persico, foot specialist, had an office in 1930. The Stewart Beauty Shoppe also opened there in 1929. The Monessen I-On-A-Co office in 1928 advertised electro-magnetic energy applications for your body. Hibbs and Woodward Real Estate were other tenants. Elma J. Gallo Insurance was listed there in 1937, and a year later, Dr. J. Arnold, the credit dentist, was practicing dentistry. In 1936, the Honolulu Conservatory of Music was offering a free Hawaiian guitar lesson.

We welcome Candis Kelly to the Board of Directors of the Greater Monessen Historical Society. She promises to work hard and handle multiple projects with ease. ☺

We are ready to move forward

At the monthly Board meeting in April, officers were chosen to lead the Historical Society into its new era. Elected president was Dan Zyglowicz with Gary Strelick as vice president. Susanna Swade continues as secretary and Vito Beneccio will continue as treasurer. As always, the GMHS Board is ready to accept your suggestions and ideas.

Upcoming Projects

The Historical Society is excited about some new upcoming projects that are all part of our new era. We are getting a webpage and will soon be able to connect to the world. ☺ In cooperation with the Library of Congress and California University of PA's Teaching With Primary Sources program, we are also getting parts of our collection digitized and cataloged on the web. For the holidays, we hope to have a coffee table photographic book of Monessen scenes ready to purchase for your gift giving. Finally, in cooperation with other regional historical societies, plans are being formulated for a November weekend open house with prizes.

We miss you ☹

It seems some of our members have not renewed their membership for 2009. We hope you will take the time to renew and rejoin our enthusiastic group of volunteers. As previously stated, the Greater Monessen Historical Society is EVERYONE who belongs. We need you! We want you! We miss you! Join today!

We are off to a good start!

In early spring, we applied for two grants through the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau annual Tourism Grant Program for Westmoreland County. We have just heard that we were awarded a \$6,500 grant to be used for publicity/advertising. It covers tourist brochures, newspaper ads and billboards.

Donner House Information

In the last newsletter, we asked for further information or photos of the William Henry Donner home on Parkway. Since then, we have located an article from the Monessen News dated March 2, 1901. It states a reception was held in the Donner home for Professor B. Frank Butts with a musicale following. Rev. George B. Beard arranged the event with a large number of lovers of music in attendance. Miss Coughanour opened the music program with a piano solo, followed by an encore. Professor French did a violin solo and encore. Mr. Mack sang a solo. Professor Butts sang several spiritual songs and led choruses of sacred music. He also led a double

quartette of male voices in several popular and humorous songs.

Recent donations to the Archives

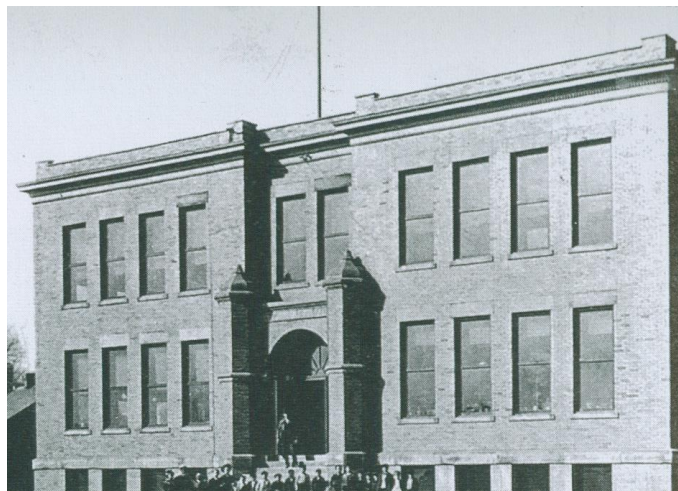
Assorted prayer cards from various Monessen funeral homes.

Three souvenir air mail envelopes with first day covers from the St. Louis Cardinals exhibition game at Monessen on June 14, 1937 donated by State Representative Ted Harhai.

We also wish to thank Donna J. Thorpe, who donated six linen tablecloths and two table runners for use in our ethnic cooking programs and other functions.

Dan's Archives

Written by Dan Zyglowicz



As part of its 1909 Decoration Day (Memorial Day) services, Monessen formally dedicated the new Third Ward school building with displays of bunting and patriotism. The Jefferson High School glee club provided music. Superintendent of Schools, Thomas E. Lytle introduced the speakers. Daniel Reamer delivered the welcome address after Rev. G. E. Brenneman gave the invocation. In his welcome, Mr. Reamer said an industrial world demands that a child receive compulsory education up to the age of sixteen.

Dr. Herbert B. Davis, principal of California Normal School, was the keynote speaker. He said education

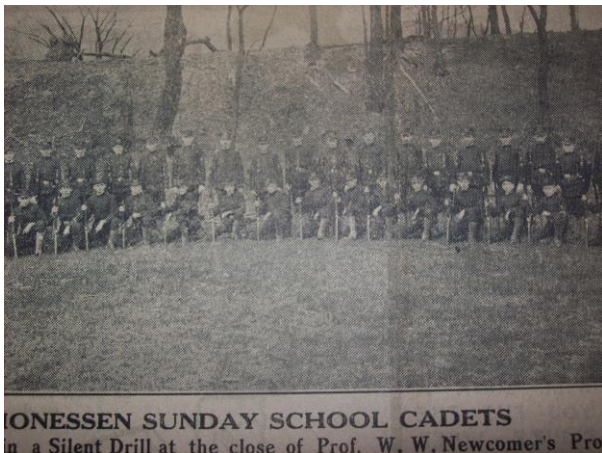
means social culture with a relationship to others in addition to book learning. He felt the five hours of classroom instruction a child receives daily has to connect with the other hours a child has in their day. The educational curriculum needs to adapt to local conditions. Dr. Davis feels the teacher should build character in their pupils as well as maintain order. They should also be on the lookout for medical problems in the children under their care. Teachers are to be prophets and leaders for the pupils. Dr. Davis ended by saying children are the flag bearers in the battle of life.

J. E. Newcomer presented three Bibles and a silk flag to the school, on behalf of the Monessen Council Jr. O. U. A. M. and the Lodge of P. O. S. of A. The Sunday School cadets fired a salute, as the flag was hoisted to the top of the pole.

In later years, the building was renamed Lincoln School, as it had been built during the centennial year of President Lincoln's birth: 1909.

Spring 1909 As Seen in the Newspaper

W. W. Newcomer, Dean of the Newcomer School of Expression in Lima, Ohio, appeared in the Opera House on May 14 in a benefit for the Monessen Sunday School Cadets. In addition to Mr. Newcomer, there was a program of humor scenes, impersonations and sketches, music by a male quartette, and a silent manual drill by the cadets.

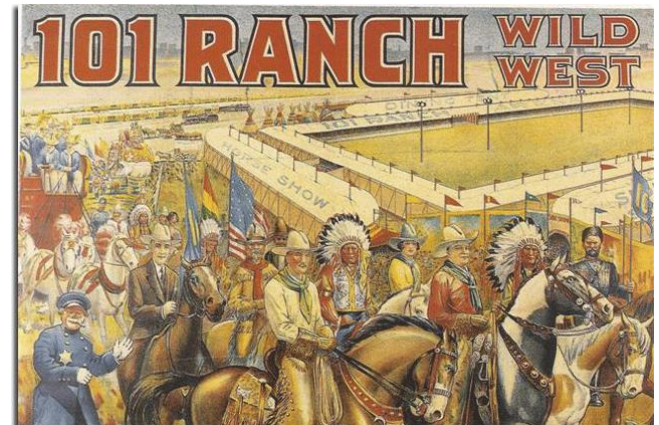


At Monessen's Jefferson High School, the Jeffersonian Literary Society held a debate on whether it was better to attend a small college or a large one. Margaret Gilchrist and Charles Meyers won with the negative. Gladys Weller and Harry Rinehart took the affirmative. Included in the program was a piano solo by Florence Sprague, a recitation by Charles Melenzyer, an essay by Effie Cunningham, a declamation by James Herron, and interesting extemporaneous talks by Regina Conway,

Nelle Currie, June Adams, Elmer Campbell, and Eskell Anderson.



Miller Brothers 101 Ranch, the fourth largest wild west show in the U.S. arrived on May 20, 1909 with 500 participants. There are 75 full blooded American Indians and 300 horses. Under the big tent, Russian Cossacks performed for the crowds.



Dr. O. J. Kreger purchased a new E. M. F. model car in Pittsburgh but failed in his attempt to have the chauffeur climb Fourth Street. Descending back down the hill at lightning speed and turning onto Schoonmaker gave the occupants a little fright.



John D. Donovan, proprietor of the Donovan Hotel, died May 28, 1909 of uraemia poisoning due to inflammatory rheumatism. He was 52 years old and came to Monessen in 1904.

On May 23, 1909, the new United Presbyterian Church at the corner of Schoonmaker and Eighth was dedicated. The church cost \$15,000 and has a membership of 150. Services previously were held in Loutitt's Hall. The church is Romanesque and two stories high with cut stone and pressed brick walls, a slate roof and copper trim. The interior is furnished in oak with two entrances: one on Eighth and one on Schoonmaker. The building has both electricity as well as gas. The windows are Florentine glass. J. A. Lohman was the architect. Of the original \$15,000 cost, only \$2,800 remains to be raised.

Ten students graduated from the Jefferson High School in ceremonies held at the Opera House. Sara Shutterly was salutatorian. Carlton Ketchum was valedictorian and spoke of the Pilgrims. Frieda Waltner was class historian. William Baker, Class president, spoke on Patrick Henry. Mary Cornwall read the class prophecy. Daniel Reamer, president of the school board, presented the diplomas. Other seniors included Anna Miller, Max Weller, Nelle Boore, Mary Smith, Jessie Sutman.



The East Side Land Company has sold thirty-nine lots on Allequippa Avenue to the Home Improvement Co., which will construct comfortable houses. John Beall, the local architect, has drawn up plans and specifications.

The Monessen Jewish congregation has purchased a plot of land on Schoonmaker Avenue between First and Second Streets on which to erect a synagogue. In the meantime, they will continue to meet in the Opera House. Max Janavitz, A. Tanser, A. Nayhouse, Max Kaufman, and Joseph Safier comprise the synagogue committee.

Sheetz & Dils Cash Grocery opened for business and two thousand people visited the store the first day. This is the only grocery in Monessen run on a strictly cash business. It is located in a central location, and the stock is kept in dust proof cases.

Brown Brothers, the jewelers, have manufactured and installed a street clock in front of the Monessen Savings and Trust Company.



Summer Weddings of 1909

Julia Louise Alvord married Robert Andrew Swan on May 17, 1909 at the bride's home on McKee Avenue. The bride is a Sunday school teacher in the Methodist church. Her husband is a machinist at the Pittsburgh Steel Co.

William J. Merritt, proprietor of the Monessen Laundry married Flora Emma Volk in the Methodist Episcopal parsonage at Meyersdale on June 10, 1909. They will live on McKee Avenue with the bride's mother. The bride was connected with the Venneri Meat Market.

Thomas Spratt, Jr., of the American Sheet and Tin Plate Company, will marry Zettie Laurer of Pittsburgh on June 17, 1909.

Phillip Brenner, Monessen jeweler, and Lena Yedinsky, of Pottsville, were married June 16, 1909.

Gertrude Berritt wed Joseph Crotty June 19, 1909. They are both associated with the Monessen Laundry Co. The couple will reside in the Fritz block at the corner of First Street and Donner Avenue.

Rev. George Brenneman of Monessen will marry Martha Elizabeth Henderson of Dravosburg on June 30, 1909. The groom is pastor of the local M. E. church. They will live in the parsonage on Fourth Street.

Paul G. Gaither, of Monessen, married Anna Graham, of Belle Vernon, June 30, 1909. The couple will live in Belle Vernon as the bride is one of their popular social leaders. The groom is an attaché of the Monessen Savings and Trust Company.

S. K. Long, of Monessen, and Grace Rhines, of Brookville, were married July 3, 1909. The bride is a social leader of Brookville and Charleroi. They will live in Monessen. Mr. Long is Manager of the Westmoreland Lumber Company.

William L. Zollars and Augusta Miller were married July 29, 1909 at the home of George Nash on McKee Avenue. The parlors were decorated with roses, asters and palms in abundance. The bride wore a gown of India linen trimmed in embroidery. The groom is the cashier at the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie freight station. The couple will temporarily live in Lock Four with the groom's parents.

Class Prophecy of 1909

For commencement, the MHS Class of 1909 looked ahead to the year 1925 and what each member would be doing. Miss Mary Cornwall delivered the prophecy. William Baker, Class President, would be a minister in Boston. Anna Miller would marry a Charleroi merchant. Max Weller would become a doctor. Frieda Waltner would become involved in hospital work. Nelle Boore was destined to become an opera star and the fiancé of an Italian count. Mary Smith, Sara Shutterly and Mary Cornwall were to never marry and become teachers. Jessie Sutman, disappointed in love, would become a missionary in China. Carlton Ketchum would honor his class by becoming the President of the U.S., following the term of President William Jennings Bryan. Each graduate received a “gift” for their future use. Carlton Ketchum received a pitch pipe. Frieda Waltner got a medicine chest. Mary Smith received a spoon to practice spoonology, while Anna Miller got a skillet. Mary Cornwall was given a talcum box and brush. An almanac was chosen for William Baker. Sara Shutterly received a bottle of Nervine for her classroom duties. Max Weller, who visits Pittsburgh in search of love, was presented a map of the city. Finally, Nelle Boore was told the Italian count would leave her, so she received a washboard to prepare herself for the future.

Does anyone know what really happened to these graduates?



Our Polish Sto-Lot (100 years) Exhibit continues through June 1 at the Heritage Museum, 505 Donner Ave., Monessen, PA.

