

VALLEY HISTORIAN

Greater Monessen Historical Society
505 Donner Avenue, Monessen, PA 15062
(724) 684-8460

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Tim Donner Joins Us!

Tim Donner, great grandson of William Henry Donner, has accepted a seat on the Greater Monessen Historical Society's Heritage Museum Board of Directors as an Honorary Member. Tim said he is pleased to join our group, and we are glad to have him. Tim visited us for Founder's Day at the invitation of Dan Zygłowicz and was very interested in Monessen. We took him on a tour of the City. He visited the Donner Home on Parkway and was delighted to see the former Tin Plant office building at the Kopper's site. His great grandfather, William Henry Donner, was the founder of the National Tin Plate Company, Monessen's first industry. Tim was the guest of honor at two receptions. The first one for invited guests was at the Heritage Museum where he saw the exhibit, "Founding Fathers and Early Monessen" and visited the new second floor library and archives areas. He graciously donated three photographs of his great grandfather for our collection. The second reception was held in cooperation with Monessen Public Library and District Center and hosted by the Friends of the Library group. Tim toured the Public Library and was very impressed by the facility. The Heritage Museum happily counts Tim Donner as a good friend.



Spring ethnic display planned

2009 marks the centennial of the former St. Hyacinth Polish Church and its women's Rosary Society in Monessen. Even though St. Hyacinth was merged along with the four other ethnic Roman Catholic churches to form the Epiphany of the Lord Parish, it is a time to celebrate the Polish contributions in the Mon Valley. Dorothy Jozwiak wants to mark this milestone by coordinating a Polish exhibit for the months of March, April and May. The theme is "**Monessen Polish Heritage**". **Do you have Polish souvenirs, photographs or items that tell the story of the Polish Americans who built St. Hyacinth's Church or the Sacred Heart of Jesus Polish National Church?** May we borrow them? Please call the Museum at 724-684-8460 and bring your Polish related items for the display. We will take care of them and return them in good condition. The exhibit is tentatively slated to open Sunday, March 8, 2009.

Museum Closed for Winter

The Heritage Museum is closed for the winter months of January & February, but work continues behind the scenes. Madeline Dudas has stepped forward and volunteered to work on the cataloging of the many local historical objects donated to the collection. Assisting Madeline are Sara Villarreal, our Douglas Education Center student worker, Sylvia Spadafore and Maggie Franceschi, both of the Lifelong Learning program. The objects are being entered into the PastPerfect computer system.

Library and Archives Opens

On Founder's Day, September 13, 2008, the Heritage Museum opened the renovated Library and Archives Area on the second floor of the Museum. The Library contains furniture and shelving from the old Monessen High School library. Over the fireplace mantel in the room is the clock that once hung in the former Monessen Post Office. Next to it is a photograph of Colonel Charles Derickson, bodyguard to President Abraham Lincoln and Monessen Postmaster. The book shelves contain volumes donated to the Museum that cover ethnic studies, local and Pennsylvania history and genealogy. Over the shelving are photos of Monessen's founders. Monessen Public Library and District Center has cooperated with us in cataloging all the books to be part of the new Polaris Westmoreland Library Network, Access PA, and OCLC. Thanks to Monessen Library, people all over the world can now see what books are available in the Heritage Museum.

The archives hold all the Monessen memorabilia donated to the Heritage Museum. We have recently gathered the boxes stored all over the Museum and consolidated them in this one area for processing. Madeline Dudas, Donnis Headley and other volunteers are working to input the items into the PastPerfect software system. Our goal is to set up a webpage to make the holdings available to all.

The final area on the second floor is the Gallery, which encompasses the stairwell and long hall of the former boarding house. Joshua Fox and Gary Strelick spent many hours hanging large photographs, plaques, sketches, charters and maps pertaining to the history of the Greater Monessen area. We encourage the public to stop by and visit. We have installed a chair lift for those unable to use the stairs.

Founder's Day

Our annual Founder's Day celebration was held on Saturday, September 13, 2008 as we commemorated the 110th anniversary of Monessen's founding. The event took months to plan and was a group effort with everyone working together. We organized food and informational booths along Donner Avenue, as well as sidewalk sales and church tours. As stated earlier, Tim Donner visited and was presented with an official City Proclamation by

Mayor Anthony Petaccia. The Heritage Museum was also pleased to host Bud Shuster, grandson of A.N. Shuster, Monessen's third burgess. In honor of the festivities, the Greater Monessen Historical Society received letters of congratulations from President George W. Bush, Governor Edward Rendell and the law firm of Reed Smith LLP. Reed Smith is the worldwide law firm based in Pittsburgh originally started by Philander Knox and Judge James Reed, two of Monessen's founders. To conclude our Founder's weekend celebration, there was a cooking demonstration by Rizzi DeFabo in our new kitchen. Thank you to all who visited, helped us in any way or participated in our activities. Once again we stress, no one person is responsible for our events, it is a volunteer undertaking involving many individuals!



Bud Shuster visits us on Founder's Day

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

Public meeting held

Following the resignation of Cassandra Vivian, the Greater Monessen Historical Society Board of Directors decided to hold a special public meeting to receive input, new ideas, and suggestions for future projects. We were very pleased with the turnout and enthusiasm showed by the participants. We hope to implement many of the ideas suggested by the participants. We are especially grateful for the new volunteers willing to devote their time and talents to the Heritage Museum. Volunteers are the cement that holds the Museum together and permits us to accomplish all that we do. ©

Genealogies wanted

For those of us involved in genealogical research, we know it is a time-consuming and labor intensive job with many dead ends. What will happen to your "Labor of Love" after you're gone? We hear many stories of family members, who are not interested in their roots, coming in and tossing precious family photographs, family histories and pieces of local history. The Heritage Museum Monessen has decided to collect Monessen and regional family genealogies, and photographs in our new Library. We also want the minutes and records of former

organizations, store ledgers, and anything that helps to tell the story of the Monongahela Valley. Bring them to the Museum.

Recent additions to the Library

The following books were donated to the Heritage Museum Library. They have been cataloged and appear on the Westmoreland Library Network, as well as OCLC:

*American quilt collections: Antique quilt masterpieces by Shelly Zegart, daughter of Judge David Weiss donated by the author.

*Quilts: an American heritage by Terri Zegart, granddaughter of Judge David Weiss donated by the author.

*Pictorial history of the Mid Mon Valley by the Valley Independent donated by Vito Beneccio.

*Our documents: 100 milestone documents from the National Archives donated by Daniel Zyglowicz in memory of Fred L. Fal, Jr.

*Jews in the Twentieth Century: an illustrated history by Martin Gilbert donated by the Heritage Museum Board of Directors in memory of Fyrne Bergstein.

Cooperation Appreciated

During the past five months, we have reached out and formed cooperative ventures with local groups. Douglas Education Center, in addition to providing a student worker, lent a filmographer to tape the visit of Tim Donner. Monessen Public Library and District Center and their wonderful Friends of the Library group hosted one of the receptions for the Donner visit. The Greater Monessen Chamber of Commerce and the GMHS are working together to make Monessen a better place. We have four representatives attending meetings on the new Redevelopment group. We have reached across the river to our Friends in Donora also. They invited us to be part of the 60th anniversary commemorative parade for the 1948 Smog Disaster. We look forward to working with all local groups interested in improving the Mon Valley.

Are you interested in local history?

The Heritage Museum is your museum. It exists to tell your story and that of your friends and neighbors. It is one of the true gems of downtown Monessen. The Museum is a VOLUNTEER effort. To succeed and prosper, we need your help. We have many ideas. To implement them, we need people. Do you have a few hours each month or week that you would be willing to donate to the Greater Monessen Historical Society? We are a dedicated group that works together and has fun doing it. Come down and see what we do!

We welcome Dr. Martin Dudas back to the Board of Directors of the Greater Monessen Historical Society.



Looking for a manager

As we branch out with all our new projects, the Heritage Museum needs someone other than the Board of Directors to be available to coordinate the daily activity. This special volunteer would be the one to organize the daily happenings, handle phone messages and mail and assist the other volunteers with any questions they may have. If interested and have time and organizational skills, we want you. Call (724) 684-8460 and leave a message.

Ethnic Cookbooks for sale

Have you been looking for a special gift for a birthday, an anniversary, or just to say "Thank you" to someone? Look no further than the Museum Shoppe at our Monessen Heritage Museum at 505 Donner Avenue in Monessen. We have a wide variety of ethnic cookbooks for sale at reasonable prices. The selections include cookbooks highlighting recipes of the Polish, the Italian, the Slovak, the Greek, the Ukrainian, and the Carpatho-Rusyn heritages. Susanna Swade and her helpers have moved the entire store and redesigned the layout. Remember to call Susanna if you need Monessen souvenirs or ethnic cookbooks for gifts.

Mon Valley Mercantile

Another location for our products, beginning in mid-March, will be the Mon Valley Mercantile, a venture of the Mon Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Mercantile will occupy space in the Charleroi Chamber Plaza, which formerly housed the Rite Aid Pharmacy. Look for our booth of Ethnic Cookbooks, when you do your shopping in this new venture.

Front Display Window

Did you like our window display for Christmas? Didn't it remind you of the Christmas displays in downtown Monessen from years past? We received so many compliments. Vito Beneccio, our treasurer, and his mother, Shirley, volunteered to do the big window. Matt Shorraw, our high school student volunteer did the other showcase window. Our other volunteers decorated the entire building in a festive way. The Library had a tree and candles in the windows. Everything looked great! Well done, friends.

Yearly fund drive

The Board of Directors wishes to thank everyone who donated to the yearly fund drive. Your generosity enables us to continue our efforts at preserving local history for future generations. If you have not yet sent

your donation, please send it in ASAP. Thank you again!!!!!!!

Membership for 2009

As we begin our fifth year of operating the Monessen Heritage Museum, your membership support is very important to maintaining our Museum. HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR 2009 YEARLY MEMBERSHIP YET? If "Yes", we Thank You for your continued support. If "No", we encourage you to do so. The yearly membership fee for an individual is \$15, a family membership is \$20, and the business fee is \$50. Membership is open to all who want to keep the Monessen story alive through your financial support. You can mail your check to us at the Monessen Heritage Museum, 505 Donner Avenue, Monessen, PA. 15062 or stop in at the Museum for a visit, bring your membership check with you, have a cup of coffee and go down Memory Lane with us. The coffee pot is always on, and everyone is welcome!



A look back to the opening months of 1909 as seen in our newspapers

In January of 1909, the Monessen News reported the new Third Ward School will be ready for occupancy by February 1. One hundred and sixty pupils will be transferred from the Baptist Church building and the old Third Ward building into 4 of the 8 available rooms.

The Citizens' English School for Adult Foreigners teaches the English language, facts of American history and American ways to all creeds and nationalities. Thirty three students are presently enrolled.

On January 17, the cornerstone of the new Monessen Turn Verein Hall at Second and Donner will be laid. The building cost \$30,000 to build, and George Hogg of Braddock was the contractor. There are 350 members. Burgess F. H. Shutterly will make the opening address. Mr. Ellsworth Dean of Pittsburgh is the architect.

Page Woven Wire Fence Company has created a flag pole for the Iowa School at Oneida and Schoonmaker. The pole is 53 ft. high. The crew consisted of W. A. Darrah, Charles Crouse, Clint Horner, J. M. Anderson, Howard Heilman, Clyde Geiger, Homer Beistel, Bert Baker, Robert Lowry, C. B. Kelly, John Beall, M. A. Dougherty, and Charles Crouch.

Thaddeus Kisor moved into his new \$11,000 mansion on the Manown place, between Monessen and Belle Vernon.

The house is of the old English style built on the cottage plan with one upstairs room.

The Jeffersonian Literary Society at the High School held a debate on woman's suffrage with Ethel Gantt and Regina Conway, affirmative and Morse Ney and Adam Horn, negative. The cause of suffrage was defeated.

B. E. Brown, the jeweler, has applied for a street clock making patent and may start a new business.

William Howard Taft, the incoming President, has selected Philander C. Knox as his Secretary of State. The Luna Theatre promises to show the Taft Inauguration.

Colonel James M. Schoonmaker, vice president of the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad, will represent Pennsylvania at the Taft Inaugural Ball.

In mid February, the following entertainment was available at the Monessen theaters:

Luna Theatre -- "Guerilla Warfare", a movie covering General Sherman and the Civil War. This will be followed by a movie dealing with the assassination of Pres. Lincoln and the capture of John Wilkes Booth.

Bijou Theatre -- De Mars Sisters Vaudeville, Mr. Severen, pantomimist, "Incriminating Evidence" moving picture and two comedies.

Monessen Opera House -- Golden Crook Burlesque with twenty five pretty girls, "Sirezona", "Fiddle De Roll" and a pie eating contest.

Star Theatre -- Elks Minstrel Show.

Monessen Theatre -- the play, "How hearts are broken", Vaudeville, Mortimus Bassett, imitator, Moe Tipton, songs, Halls Trained Dogs and a motion picture.

Donner Home photos wanted

Following the visit of Tim Donner, there has been renewed interest in the Donner Family. We are looking for photos of the Donner House on Parkway, either interior or exterior. From what we have pieced together, Percy Donner, brother of William Henry Donner and the general manager of Monessen's National Works of the American Sheet and Tin Plate Company, lived in the home after William Donner left to develop Donora. Later, H. E. Rinehart purchased the home. In later years, it became a boarding house. We would like to see photos taken through the years that tell the story of the first of Monessen's grand homes.

GMHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Daniel Zyglowicz, Interim Chairman
Susanna Swade, Secretary
Vito Beneccio, Treasurer
Gary Strelick, Building Supervisor
Dr. Martin Dudas, Fundraiser



William Henry Donner

Yearly Report

Our treasurer, Vito Benecio, has prepared a yearly report for the year 2008 to share with you. This will give you a better idea how your generous monetary donations are used.

Greater Monessen Historical Society 2008 Budget

Operating Income

Donations	\$697.93
Dues	\$4,355.00
Fundraising	\$6,408.00
Memorials	\$120.00
Museum Store	\$2,907.22
Other Income	\$145.78
Special Raffles	\$241.66
Interest Earned	\$38.37

Total Operating Income **\$14,913.96**

Events Income

Dr. Martin Dudas covered all expenses for the Dudas Cooking Demo.

Rizzi covered nearly all expenses for the Rizzi Cooking Demo.

The Lions Club donated \$1,000.00 towards the History Happened Here Too Program.

Dudas Cooking Demo	\$665.00
Founders Day	\$239.00
History Happened Here Too	\$1,453.00
Rizzi Cooking Demo	\$510.50

Total Events Income **\$2,867.50**

Grants Income

Note: All grant monies must be used for their specific projects and cannot be transferred to other expenses.

Community Foundation Grant	\$500.00
Stout/Harhai Grant	\$15,000.00
Rivers of Steel Grant	\$2,000.00
Slovak Grant	\$5,000.00

Total Grant Income **\$22,500.00**

Total Income **\$40,281.46**

Operating Expenses

Advertising	\$1,101.94
Electric	\$1,880.54
Equipment Purchases	\$2,607.86
Exhibits	\$744.20
Founders Day	\$352.84
Gas	\$1,200.00
General Administration Costs	\$707.06
History Happened Here Too	\$941.46
Insurance	970.50
Library Archives	\$1,089.22
Loan Payments	\$2,236.00
Maintenance	\$754.37
Museum Shoppe	\$784.00
Office Supplies	\$1,032.03
Pest Control	\$189.76
Petty Cash	\$179.82
Phone and Internet	\$1,220.11
Postage	\$1,332.02
Printing	\$1,015.87
Professional Dues	\$200.00
Rizzi Cooking Demo	\$24.39
Royalties and Fees	\$3,986.50
Salaries	\$5,678.43
Security System	\$265.23
Sewage and Garbage	\$355.00
Special Promotions	\$117.36
Renovations	\$3,289.08
Valley Independent	\$20.00
Water	\$251.24

Total Operating Expenses **\$34,521.83**

Grant Expenses

Community Foundation Grant: Archiving
Rivers of Steel Grant: Shelving and Furniture for 2nd Floor Library and Archives
Slovak Grant: 1st Floor Kitchen
Stout/Harhai Grant: Daily Operating Expenses of Museum, Computer

Thank you for your continued support of the Greater Monessen Historical Society and Monessen Heritage Museum

Vito C. Beneccio Board Member and Treasurer

Do you want to own a piece of local history?

The site of the Greater Monessen Historical Society's Heritage Museum was originally a boarding house to house working men, who toiled in the mighty mills that made Monessen what it was. There are still items on the upper floors that harken back to the early 1900's. We are advertising some of the treasures we have decided to sell in this newsletter. Here is a sampling:



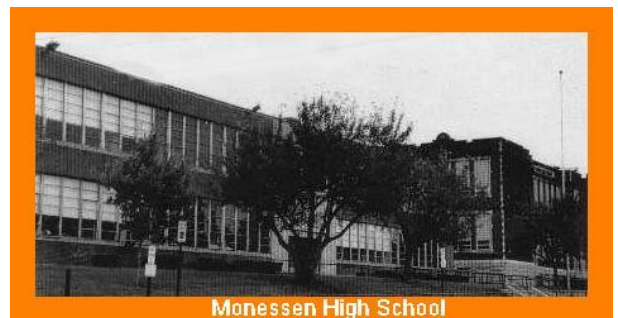
If anyone is interested in owning a piece of Monessen history or for size information, contact the Museum at 724-684-8460 and make an offer. You would have to be able to move the tub or sink from the upper floor of the Museum down to the street.

Sorry for the confusion

On the front cover of the last newsletter, there was a photo showing a group of women surrounding a lone man. The heading above the photo said to "Come Meet Mr. Donner" and referred to the upcoming visit of Tim Donner. Many people mistook the man in the photo as his grandfather, William Henry Donner. Unfortunately, there was no explanation of the photo. In reality it was a group of women employees from the Tin Plate Mill and their supervisor.

Reunions

Are you having a class reunion this year? Do you want to walk down Memory Lane? We now have a committee interested in providing opportunities for past graduating classes of MHS to visit the Museum for a nostalgic night of looking at yearbooks, photos and objects that showcase old Monessen, while sampling light refreshments. **Incorporate GMHS into your reunion planning. Give us a call!**



DAN'S ARCHIVES

Edited by Daniel Zygłowicz



We are celebrating the bicentennial of the birth of President Abraham Lincoln during the year 2009. Many people have forgotten that Monessen has its own link to President Lincoln. The second postmaster of Monessen, Colonel Charles M. Derickson, was one of Lincoln's bodyguards.

Colonel Derickson was born in Meadville and enlisted in the One Hundred Fiftieth Regiment of Pa Volunteers at the start of the War of the Rebellion. When his father became captain of Lincoln's bodyguard detail, Charles became a guard as well.

In later years, Derickson recalled Lincoln enjoyed visiting the "Soldier's House" that served as his summer presidential residence for "a cup of Army coffee and a plate of beans". He would sit and talk with the men, inquiring as to their complaints of Army life. Derickson's father, David, became a close confidant of Lincoln during the war. On the night Lincoln was assassinated, Colonel Derickson was on guard duty a block from Ford's Theater. It was he who galloped to the White House carrying word that the President had been shot.

Following the war, Charles Derickson opened a general store in Pardo, after which he had a hardware store in Mercer. It was in Mercer that he married Kathrynne Smith Carter. With the founding of Monessen by the East Side Land Company, he moved his business to the growing new town. He settled in a home at 653 McKee Avenue. After selling the hardware store, it

became the Monessen Hardware Company. Derickson then became postmaster and served for four years, during which time he was known for advancing the interests of the town. He became an official in the Presbyterian Church, a Shriner, a Knight Templar and an Elk.

Colonel Derickson would be called upon to speak to students at Lincoln's Birthday ceremonies at Monessen's Jefferson High School. In honor of Lincoln's centennial in 1909, Derickson was the guest of honor and speaker at ceremonies held at the California Normal School (California University of PA) in the Chapel of Old Main. Charles Derickson passed away on May 14, 1912 from heart ailments and was buried in Mercer.

A word about donations

Donations come in three major forms: those who give monetary contributions, those who write memories or genealogies or give memorabilia, and those who give time to keep the GMHS operations moving toward our goals and preserving our mission. The last five months have been a season of growing, caring and giving. **Thank you!**

As we express our appreciation to donors like you, who choose to care about preserving the history of the Greater Monessen area, we want to remind everyone what type of memorabilia we are looking to preserve. Following are a few general hints for contributing your memorabilia:

Do save documents, artifacts, photos, and items of potential **local historical or ethnic value**, especially if they are rare or unique.

Do save documents that have been personalized in some manner, such as with a person's name or a place name.

Do pack materials in appropriate packaging to ensure they arrive at GMHS in good condition.

If you are uncertain about the suitability of an item for the GMHS Archives, err on the side of history. Don't second-guess whether an item may be of historical value. When in doubt, bring it in.

Leaving a Legacy

When doing estate planning, consider including the GMHS in your will. We are honored to have you as friends during your lifetime, but think about how much you could continue to do for us after you're gone. We are truly grateful to those who provide for the Society's future.

Starting with this issue, the newsletter now has a new updated format, and I will be serving as your editor. We will publish the newsletter four times a year, Feb., May, Aug., and Nov. Thank you. Dan Zygłowicz