



W. H. Donner

VALLEY HISTORIAN

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

Vol.10 Issue1 WINTER 2010

Tim Donner Joins Us!



Courtesy of Mrs. Lee Carol Cook, daughter of Judge Livingstone M. Johnson.

Photo shows an unknown woman on the front porch of the Rev. J. E. Morris's home in Monessen, circa 1912-1914.

African Americans To Be Featured

The annual spring ethnic exhibit at the Heritage Museum will honor the contributions of African Americans in the Greater Monessen area. It is tentatively scheduled to open on March 20, 2010. Do you have photos that tell the everyday story of African Americans in the Mon Valley area? Do you have African art, costumes, or items of cultural or historic significance? Please let us borrow them for the exhibit. We need them by March 1 to give us time to create the displays. Did you know it was an African American Republican Committee man, who opened the first governmental organization meeting that resulted in the formation of Monessen, or that the AME Baptist church sponsored an African American debating society in 1902? Come and learn the rich heritage of the Mon Valley's African American population.

Annual fund appeal

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Greater Monessen Historical Society, we wish to thank each of you, who sent in a contribution for our annual fund appeal. Without your generous support, we would not be able to operate the Museum, arrange exhibits, demonstrations and lectures or preserve the ethnic and industrial heritage of the Greater Monessen area. If you have not sent your contribution, please send it and be counted among those, who want to preserve our local history. In addition to your financial support, we also count on our friends to bring us their family treasures from the attic, cellar, garage or trunk. Think of us while doing spring cleaning. Call 724-684-8460 and let us know when we may expect you to visit. We will put a fresh pot of coffee on and perhaps offer you a cookie, while you tell us the stories associated with your items.

Membership Drive

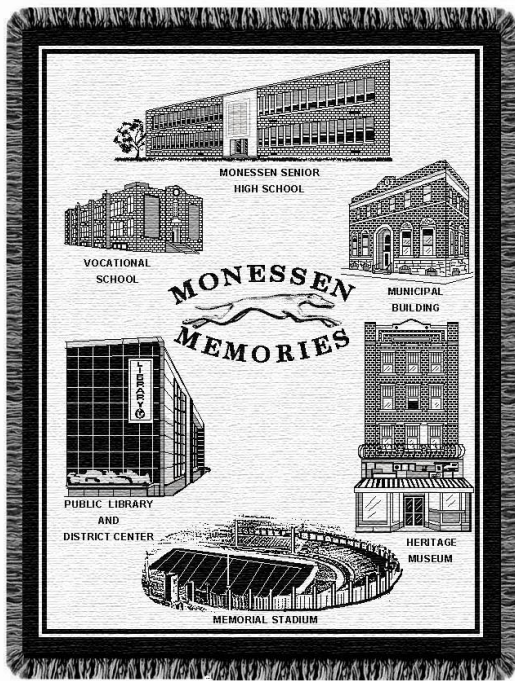
We also are so grateful that 261 people have joined the Greater Monessen Historical Society nationwide. We are a growing organization. Please remember membership runs on a calendar year from January through December. If you have not renewed your membership for 2010, please do so today. It is \$15 for an individual and \$20 for a family.

You may not see us, but we are here ☺

The Heritage Museum does not have regular hours during the winter months of January and February. We are not vacationing in Florida and lounging on the beach. We are upstairs in the Archives sorting through donations and cataloging the items into our computer. Maybe you would like to join us? Give us a call.

Coverlet: a successful fundraiser

The Christmas fundraiser has been a success. There are still some coverlets available, before we have to reorder. Price is \$50 for the cream and black woven blanket. They make wonderful birthday and anniversary gifts. Reunion committees are purchasing them for door prizes. Wouldn't Great Aunt Mary love one? The coverlet features the former Senior High School at Sixth and Reed, the old Vocational School on Rostraver (built by the WPA), the Municipal Building, our Public Library and District Center, the Memorial Stadium (built by the WPA) and the Heritage Museum. They are a practical gift everyone can use and enjoy.



G. C. Murphy 5 & 10

In 2010, the Westmoreland County "One Book, One Community" reading program will feature Jason Togger's new book, "For the Love of Murphy's". It is a history of the McKeesport-based G. C. Murphy Company, which operated five and ten cent stores throughout the region. Our research shows the Murphy Company purchased the J. K. Skelley Store at 265 Donner Avenue and reopened it as a G. C. Murphy 5 and 10 on June 7, 1902. The store later relocated to between 5th and 6th Streets and remained in business until the early 1970's. We are searching for photos and Murphy items for a small exhibit to coincide with the county book program. We also want to hear from former Murphy employees.

Civil War Anniversary

The 150th anniversary of the beginning of the War of the Rebellion or Civil War will be observed with great ceremony starting in April of 2011. Our own Colonel James M. Schoonmaker, a highly decorated veteran of the conflict, was the Chairman of Pennsylvania's 50th anniversary commemorations of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913. He was later selected as Pennsylvania's Outstanding Civil War veteran. Westmoreland County has asked the historical societies to begin gathering photos and memorabilia of the war for their own exhibits. Do you have ancestors who fought the war? Look for Civil War items and photographs you can loan to the Heritage Museum. Call and let us know what you have.

Cooperative weekend April 23-24, 2010

The "History Along the Monongahela" cooperative weekend sponsored by the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corporation, Donora Smog Commemorative Committee, Greater Rostraver Chamber of Commerce, Mon Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, Monongahela Historical Society and the Greater Monessen Historical Society, which was postponed last autumn, will be held Friday and Saturday, April 23-24, 2010. Candis Kelley, our roving ambassador, will keep us posted on this worthwhile group effort.

Thanks for the special donations

The Board of Directors wishes to single out Colonel Thomas Tredici and Dr. & Mrs. Martin Dudas for their special donations toward the annual fund appeal. We appreciate it!

We also wish to acknowledge that we have received a memorial donation by Michael and Patricia Tweardy in memory of Patsy Martucci.

In addition, the Museum received a gift in honor of Don and Gloria Hayes from Robert Hayes.



Do you recognize this house?



An early Monessen newspaper featured this elaborate home saying it was the house belonging to Miss Mary Jones, Monessen's first businesswoman. Where was it located? If you recognize it, please let us know.

Did you like our Christmas display?

The delightful Christmas display in our large front window featuring the nutcrackers was designed by Shirley Beneccio, who also created last year's wonderful Victorian look. We received so many compliments. Vito Beneccio, our treasurer, also helped set the display in place. Thanks for a trip down memory lane! I'm sure Shirley is already planning this year's design.

Annual Public Meeting, Sat. March 20, 2010

In accordance with the new bylaws adopted last year, the annual public meeting for the Greater Monessen Historical Society has been scheduled for March 20, 2010 at 1 P.M. Vito Beneccio will present the financial report to the membership. We will discuss current projects and upcoming plans. We hope you will have plenty of suggestions to offer.

Webpage is coming!!!!!!

After a false start, we have once again moved forward on a brand new webpage that will establish the Greater Monessen Historical Society and our Heritage Museum as a presence on the web. We will feature the Museum Shoppe, where orders can be placed, as well as historic photos and informational items. We can't wait until we go live. Our new domain name will be: monessenhistoricalsociety.org

Architectural Design Challenge

The Design Challenge Final Project Presentation for the Monessen Savings and Trust Building will take place at Monessen Senior High School Auditorium on Monday and Tuesday, March 22 and 23 from 9 am- 12:30 pm both days. It has been extended to give the students more time, due to the extent of the project. Wouldn't it be wonderful to someday have this architectural Monessen gem restored to its former glory?

Wouldn't your class reunion like to visit the Heritage Museum?

Last year, MHS Class of 1947 and MHS Class of 1952 included the Greater Monessen Historical Society as part of their festivities. Each class planned an event at the Heritage Museum to coincide with the Old Monessen Exhibit. They had some refreshments, looked through the old yearbooks and photos on display, visited, talked and had a wonderful walk down memory lane. Talk to Susanna Swade of GMHS and plan your own class reunion event at the Museum this summer or fall.

Greater Monessen Historical Society 2009 Budget

Operating Income

Donations	\$980.10
Dues	\$6,005.00
Events	\$6,634.04
Exhibits	\$580.00
Fundraising	\$5,170.00
Memorials	\$220.00
Museum Store	\$4,511.94
Other Income	\$903.12
Special Raffles	\$1.00
Interest Earned	\$22.98

Total Operating Income **\$25,028.18**

Grants Income

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

Community Foundation Grant (Ted Harhai)	\$1,000.00
Tourism Grant	\$3,500.00

Total Grant Income
\$4,500.00

Total Income **\$29,528.18**

Operating Expenses

Advertising	\$3,722.79
Copier	\$3,071.42
Electric	\$1,530.05
Equipment Purchases	\$1,303.93
Events	\$4,492.07
Exhibits	\$236.42
Gas	\$1,142.00
General Administration Costs	\$950.34

Insurance	\$1,578.30
Library Archives	\$375.69
Loan Payments	\$1,942.00
Maintenance	\$245.00
Museum Shop	\$1,238.69
Office Supplies	\$773.45
Pest Control	\$197.76

Phone and Internet	\$1,218.11
Postage	\$1,008.88
Professional Dues	\$135.00
Royalties and Fees	\$355.00
Security System	\$387.00
Sewage and Garbage	\$429.00
Renovations	\$752.35
Transfirst Credit Card	\$150.59
Water	\$231.60

Total Operating Expenses **\$27,422.53**

Grant Expenses

Community Foundation Grant (Ted Harhai): 1st Floor Stereo and Sound System. Will be installed in 2010.

Tourism Grant: Included in Advertising under Operating Expenses.

Please note: We spent the last \$3,359.83 of the Stout/Harhai Grant that was received in 2008 during the Fiscal Year 2009 and these funds are included in the above Operating Expenses. Copier, office supplies, renovations, museum shop, and equipment purchases.

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 Have Ethnic Items From your Family?

We are busily planning for the African American exhibit, but are already thinking ahead to next year. We have done exhibits honoring the Greeks, Italians, American Indians, Slovaks and Polish. There were many other groups, who helped settle Monessen and flourished in the area. Where are the items that Grandmother brought over from the Old Country? Do you have them? We would like to hear from individuals, who inherited or saved ethnic family items. If we know what collections are available in the Greater Monessen area, it will help us plan for next year's exhibit. Call the Museum and let us know what you have available to loan. Thank you! ☺

Volunteers wanted

We wish to thank everyone, who volunteered to help at the historical society in the past year. We could still use some help. We need people with some computer knowledge, bakers, cooks, hosts and hostesses, exhibit designers, a manager and others with special talents and skills. Give us a call at 724-684-8460. Even if you are available only a few hours a month, a week or a day, you are needed. We are a volunteer organization that depends on people interested in preserving and saving local history. There is much to do. We need idea people too! The Greater Monessen Historical Society is everyone working together to get the job done.

Speaking of Volunteers: Thank you Claudia!!!!!!

Claudia Martucci, one of our volunteers, stepped forward at the end of last year and expressed a willingness to type over 1000 names from our Class Reunion list into an Excel database. She did this on her own time and in her home. Thanks Claudia for being such a good volunteer!

Recent Donations to the Heritage Museum

Postcard of St. Leonard's Roman Catholic Church:
Anonymous

Fourteen photographs of different Monessen locations and people: Joan Thompson

Brown Marine footlocker: Mike Yusko

Windows of 1954 Guide for Y.W. A. & our mission:
Anonymous

General duty section for PA Nurses Assoc. : Anonymous

Poliomielitis: a source for high school students:
Anonymous

MHS Greyhound yearbook 1944: Anonymous

Pennsylvania Manual 1976-1977: Anonymous

Cathedral Basic Reader Book four: Anonymous

One Hundred Years ago in the newspapers February-April, 1910

Monessen School Board authorized a \$60,000 bond issue to build either an addition to the Iowa Building or a new school building to relieve overcrowded conditions. At present, eighteen rooms had fifty or more pupils with one room having eighty-eight pupils.

The new First Baptist Church Building near Sixth and Schoonmaker will be dedicated. Total cost was approx. \$20,000.

The Bijou Theatre says increased attendance shows that moving pictures are gaining in favor with audiences. Price is five cents.

William McShaffrey and L. L. Reeves have purchased two lots on Donner Avenue near Ninth Street and will soon build an automotive showroom. Only the Mitchell car will be sold and have a capacity of twenty vehicles to display.

After much debate, Monessen school directors purchased eight lots from the East Side Land Company on Linden Avenue for \$5,060 and will erect the new school on the property.

A. J. McGinness of 464 Reed Avenue, secured a patent on March 3, 1910 for an improved rolling mill for seamless tube. He is the foreman roll turner on the No.1 rod mill at the Pittsburgh Steel Company.

William Henry Donner visited Monessen on March 3, and said he was well pleased with its development.

John M. Beall was chosen as the architect for the new school building.

Colonel Charles M. Derickson, Chairman of the Shade Tree Committee announced that at least four hundred Norway Maple trees will be planted this spring.

Mr. and Mrs. John Taylor of 125 McKee Avenue celebrated their Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary on March 15, 1910. They are living with their married daughter, Mrs. George Pourney.

J. A. Sheetz, owner of the Sheetz Hotel, has bought the Deaterly Farm in Rostraver Twp. From Carl Garoncy for \$10,000 cash. It has one hundred acres and will be his summer home.

Miss Nelle McMahan, daughter of the late Alexander McMahan, has copyrighted a waltz, entitled "The Song of the Night Wind".

The Grand Hotel will be sold to P. M. Dwyer. Current owner, W. H. Schuyler is retiring.

The Westmoreland Hotel of Monessen has been listed as the official hotel for autoists.

Daniel Stevens, the son of Mr. and Mrs. George H. Stevens, of 30 Reed Avenue, celebrated his eleventh birthday on April 14, 1910.

George Nash will begin construction on a two-story brick building at the corner of Sixth and Schoonmaker.

The school children of the McKinley and Jefferson Schools will march to Sixth Street Park on April 22, 1910 for a tree planting ceremony. Each room will plant one tree after a short address from the Civic Committee.

The Sicilian Society will present a Passion play called, "The Redemption of Adam" in the Opera House. The play will be in the Italian language and have a cast of fifty.

The alleys of the Capitol Bowling room are being removed to convert the space into a new nickelodeon. Proprietor, F. L. Blackmore said the new theatre will be called the Liberty Theatorium and seat over 300 persons with one of the largest screens in the city.

The Afro American voters of Monessen and McMahan Boroughs have formed an organization called the Afro American Protective Club. The purpose is to unite all Afro American voters of the communities into one body and improve their industrial, financial, and political conditions. Walter Spriggs is President.

We remind everyone that admission to the Heritage Museum is free. 😊



Winter and Early Spring Weddings of 1910

Berne F. Weston, chemist of the Page Woven Wire Fence Co. and School Director and Miss Leona Gertrude Taylor of Monessen were married February 3, 1910 in Vandergrift. They will live at 46 Reed Avenue.

Miss Josephine Woods and Frazier McLellan of Monessen are engaged and will marry in June. Miss Woods belongs to several church choirs and is a clerk in the Janavitz store. Mr. McLellan is the foreman of the machine shop at the Tin Plate Mill.

Matthew M. Lyle, well known marathon runner and Miss Beatrice Gould were married February 16, 1910 at the home of the bride's parents, 1000 Tenth Street. The groom is employed at the Pittsburgh Steel Products Company. They will live with the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Allen.

John Barrett, craneman for the Pittsburgh Steel Company and Miss Ethel Shaner of Monongahela were married March 2, 1910 in Washington, PA.

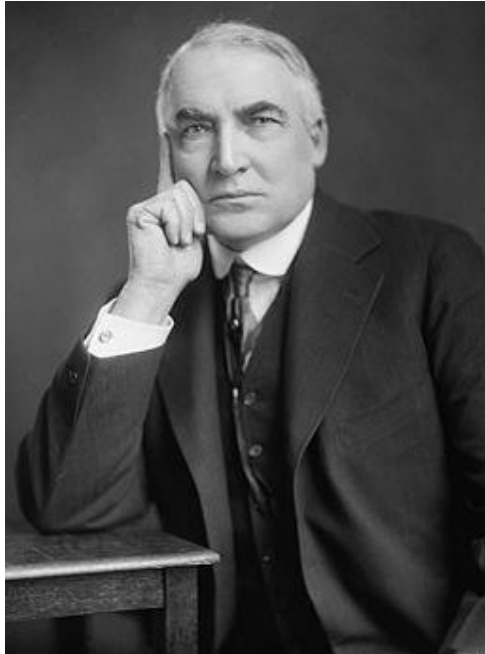
Miss Velera Thornley Wallace, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T. V. Wallace of Monongahela is engaged to George Willits Wilkinson of Belle Vernon, formerly of Pittsburgh. They will marry in early spring.

Miss Rose Lacher of Monessen and Frederick Upton, formerly of Washington, PA have become engaged. The wedding will be April 14 at St. Leonards Catholic Church. Miss Lacher is the cashier at the Safier Store, while the groom is employed at the Sanitary Barber Shop.

Miss Vina McKenna of Monessen and Oscar E. Ebert of Belle Vernon were married on March 16, 1910 at the bride's home on Schoonmaker Avenue. The groom is a Belle Vernon contractor. The couple will live in Belle Vernon.

William S. Kisner, assistant editor of the Brownsville Monitor-Clipper and Miss Gladly Idella Rowe of California will marry during the week of March 29, 1910.

Dan's Archives



A Pre-Presidential Visit

The Monessen Board of Trade (Chamber of Commerce) announced that Senator Warren G. Harding, the former Governor of Ohio and a likely presidential candidate would deliver the keynote speech at their tenth annual banquet on February 17, 1920. Senator Harding agreed to leave the debate in the United States Senate over the possible adoption of the Treaty of Versailles, which had ended the Great War, to deliver his speech in Monessen.

The Ladies Aid group of the Presbyterian Church would serve a four course turkey dinner in the Monessen High School Gymnasium to four hundred guests. Three hundred pounds of turkey were purchased. The organization also agreed to loan their dishes and silverware. Patriotic decorations and flags were placed inside the gymnasium. Tickets were sold for \$1.75 each. Placards were hung on which the mottoes and ambitions of the Board of Trade were printed.

Representatives of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, the Pittsburgh Steel Company, the American Sheet and Tin Plate Company, Carnegie Steel, Page Steel and Wire Fence Company, the City of Pittsburgh and the county seat of Greensburg sent word that they would be present. West Newton, Donora, Charleroi, Belle Vernon, and Monongahela also sent representation. Colonel James M. Schoonmaker arranged for special trains and cars to bring the important industrial officials of Pittsburgh to Monessen. The Colonel unfortunately was unable to attend personally due to a cold.

The newspaper stressed that both men and women would be admitted to the balcony to hear the speech with the understanding that smoking would be permitted in the banquet room below. The Louhi orchestra played patriotic music, and an Afro-American quartet from Pittsburgh provided singing. A. N. Shuster, retiring president of the Board of Trade was host and called the program to order. Louis X. Ely was chosen as toastmaster.

Senator Harding spoke on the "Problems of Reconstruction" for over an hour. He stated, "The first essential of reconstruction is to get back to the safe paths of the federal constitution. We have gone far afield from its safeguards, since the world was plunged in war. The next great essential is to come to a realization and appreciation of what made us what we are, so that we may cling to our boasted liberties, our opportunities and go on to greater accomplishment and attending eminence. The third essential is to free the republic and its citizens and the activities of the people from wartime burdens. We talked democracy and established bureaucracy and crowned it all with autocracy. It is vital to make sure that we hold fast to representative democracy, which we of America have proven to be the one dependable form of popular government, which the world has witnessed. We must, of course, strive to get back to approximately normal conditions. We shall never witness the old order again. We shall never again know a federal government with its indirect taxes unconsciously paid. We shall never again know a national expense account of less than three billions. There must be reformed administration and forced economics and persistent avoidance of waste and extravagance to get down to three billion. But it must be done. High cost of government is the first cause of high cost of living. Business burdened heavily met the strain patriotically for war, but it cannot go on and succeed in peace. I do not believe we can live our best at the present pace. We are beyond a safe speed limit. We must hold America eminent in industry and trade. No nation ever wrote a brilliant page in history except in commercial eminence. It is a reflux of the people's prosperity. Our one valid asset out of war's expenditures is ten million tons of ocean ships. They are ample to form the greatest merchant marine in the world. We can do it by selling to Americans to operate under the American flag. They are a loss under government ownership but may be turned to profit and an agency of good fortune under the efficiency of private enterprise. We must ever be independently and confidentially American, keepers of the American conscience ourselves, and thus made strong and free to act and play a great nation's part in the progress of the world".

Senator Harding would become the Republican Presidential candidate and go on to win the Election of 1920. Three years later, under the cloud of the Teapot Dome Scandal, he died suddenly in San Francisco, while on vacation with his wife. Calvin Coolidge would become President as the Roaring Twenties geared up.



JANUSZEWSKI
119 FOURTH ST.
MONESSEN, PA.



We wish to thank Mrs. Betty Woods, daughter in law of the late Rinard Woods, for generously loaning us a collection of photographs from Monessen Plumbing & Electric Company. They will be scanned and become part of our permanent archive. Does anyone else have photos showing Monessen businesses?

The Museum recently came into possession of this photograph. Does anyone recognize who the boy is?

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