



A Guide to the Mansion District
& Other Historic Properties
of SMETHPORT, PENNSYLVANIA



During the 1890s Smethport experienced a bicycling phenomenon. You too can experience the same excitement.

Wheeling or Walking throughout a famous Borough

SOUVENIR of SMETHPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

Bicycling In & Around Smethport, Pennsylvania Smethport's Topography Blesses the Bicyclist

The natural lay of the paved roads surrounding Smethport, Pennsylvania makes wheeling the entire region delightful. The stunningly picturesque region is geographically blessed with some of the most advantageous bicycling routes in the nation. Several of the scenic valleys “hubbing” out of the McKean County seat have a marvelously gentle, rolling topography which seems to magically propel the cyclist through the area’s vast natural beauty.

In only two directions does the cyclist encounter Smethport’s majestically forested hills & these hills are both a challenge and an adventure to the wheelmen’s experience. In addition, there is a vast network of back roads for the mountain biking enthusiast but the bicyclist must proceed with caution. Gradually the back country routes through the region will be explored and improved.

Early bicycling as a citizen past time, & serious bicycle racing as a popular sport had very early origins in Smethport, Pennsylvania. The natural environment, despite dirt, muddied roads, put Smethport bicyclists exploring and traveling, primarily for pleasure to Port Allegany, Kane, Eldred & other regions throughout Pennsylvania as well as Bolivar, Buffalo, Friendship, Portville, Rochester, New York and all parts in between. On long journeys sometimes the wheelman would ride to a destination & then return on one of the railroads serving Smethport.

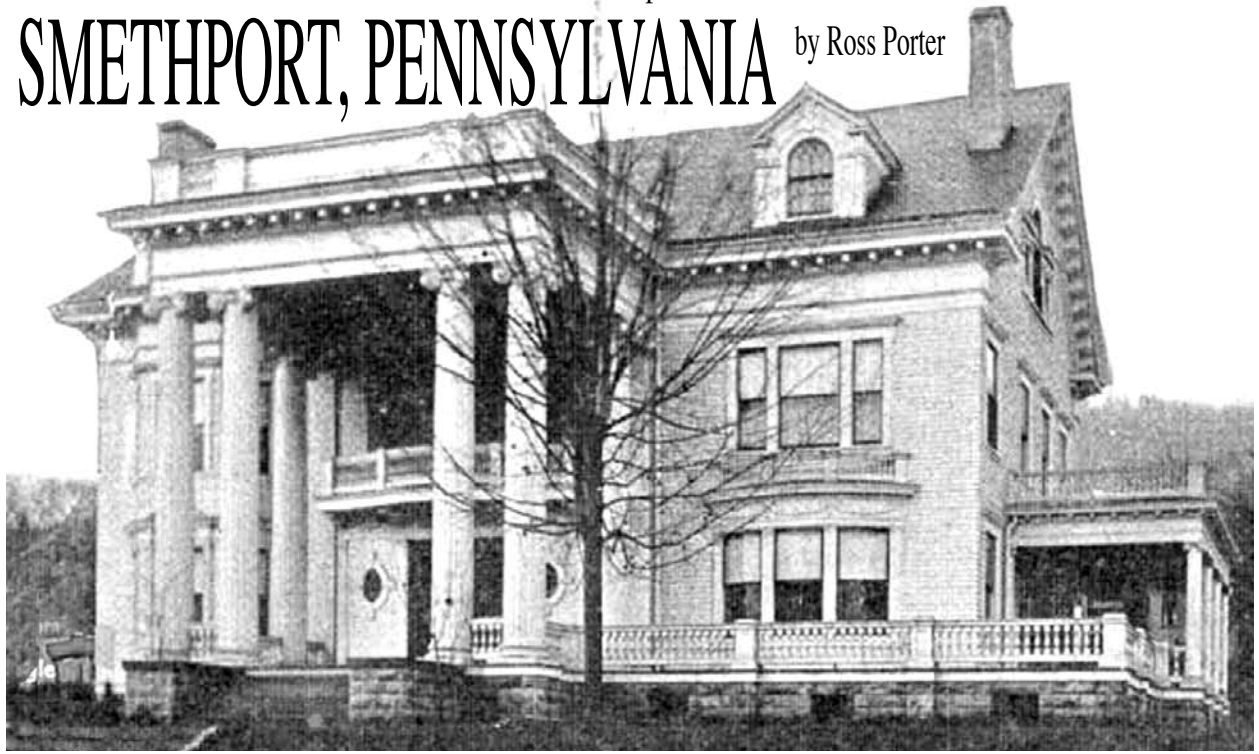
written, edited, & published by Ross Porter
Planet 3 Publishing

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Volume I Version 2.0
In memory of John G. Coleman

for additional information go to the
Planet Smethport Project
www.smethporthistory.org

All proceeds from the sale of this booklet support
Smethport Heritage Council Projects

A Guide to the Mansion District & Other Historic Properties of
SMETHPORT, PENNSYLVANIA by Ross Porter



By Foot, By Bike, By Carriage ... Experience Smethport Personally

Welcome to fascinating Smethport, Pennsylvania. You are about to enter a voyage that will transport you back in time as you explore the historic streets of the rich, lavish life style & entrepreneurial creativity of Smethport during the 19th century & early 20th century. Take your time on your journey. Smethport must be savored to be understood. Smethport was a town of pedestrians, horse transport and bicyclists a 100 years ago. To understand the life-style and get into the proper emotional & mental understanding you too must be on foot, on bicycle or on horseback. Smethport must be slowly savored like an aged wine. Take your time; breathe in deep and smell the fresh mountain air, walk at the same speed as the pace of life when the mansions of Smethport were first carefully being constructed by some of the finest craftsmen in the country.

In this tour we will explore some of the mansions constructed in the second half of the 19th century. You will explore the town and escape to another era of time. Do this on foot, do it another time on bicycle or horse-drawn carriage. Relax, slow down to another pace in life, and explore historic Smethport, Pennsylvania.

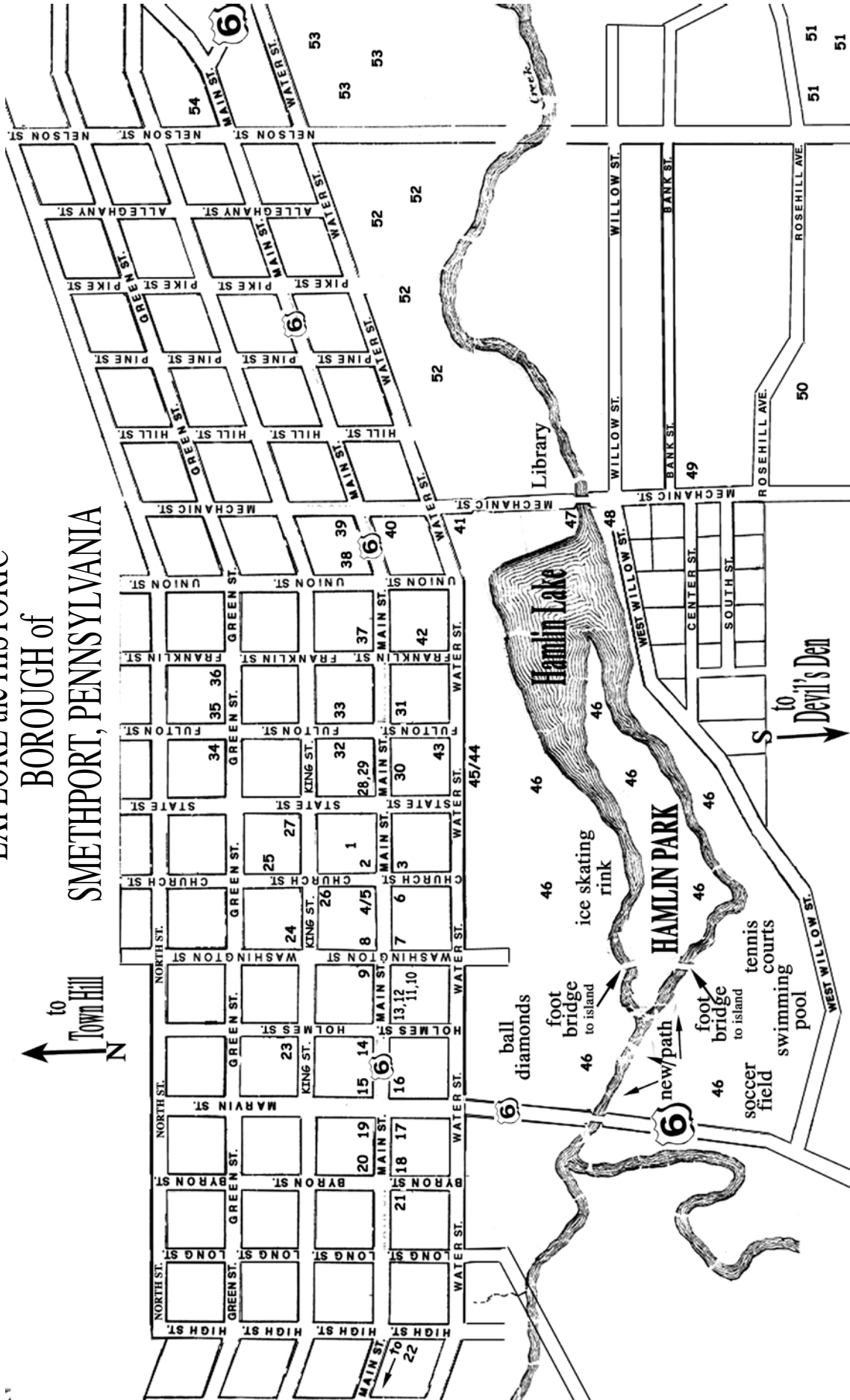
Smethport and Its Victorian Heyday- Opulence in Smethport

Several factors impacted Smethport during the 1870s and 1880s that would propel Smethport into the regional forefront. The combination of vast lumber reserves, oil revenues, and railroads beginning in the 1870s caused the McKean County economy to skyrocket. Vast amounts of money flowed into Smethport, the county seat.

1875 was the initial pivotal year for Smethport. Smethport evolved from wilderness outpost to economic powerhouse. With the completion of Byron Hamlin's McKean and Buffalo RR through East Smethport, the door to growth swung open. The coming of the railroad, coupled with the exploitation of vast natural resources, led to a rapid growth of cash income and sudden wealth in the county. This growth ignited Smethport's Gilded Era. The amazing natural resources that abounded in the area would prime the growth.

EXPLORE the HISTORIC BOROUGH of SMETHPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

to
Town Hill
N



1880s Birth of the Smethport Mansion District

By the 1880s Smethport was in the midst of a construction boom. Smethport was fully engaged in an economic miracle. The valley was thick with construction and industrial activities. Architects, stone masons, contractors, and builders flocked into Smethport to design and create mansions, public buildings, hotels, and churches that would create the elegant and unique facade characteristic of Smethport's streets evident today. It was in this environment that the mansions of Smethport were constructed. New gold watches and posh carriages were common. Shops lined Main Street offering every good imaginable in the 1880s. Mechanic Street was filled with the constant whine of saw mills, the humming of carriage makers, and the pounding of blacksmith shops. Log sleds arriving from all directions jammed the streets.

Beginning Your Tour of Smethport

Welcome to Smethport in the midst of this economic frenzy. Take your time. Allow your self to feel and smell Smethport. Relax and explore. Experience this other time. The Walking Tour begins in front of the McKean County Courthouse. Park your car in the area and head west on Main Street. Be sure to take the time to study the McKean County Courthouse. This is McKean County's fourth courthouse, built during 1940-1941 following the destruction by fire of the famous 1880 Architect Martin Beebe courthouse. Architect for the 1941 courthouse was Thomas K. Hendryx.

1



500 Block Main Street

#1: 1941-present

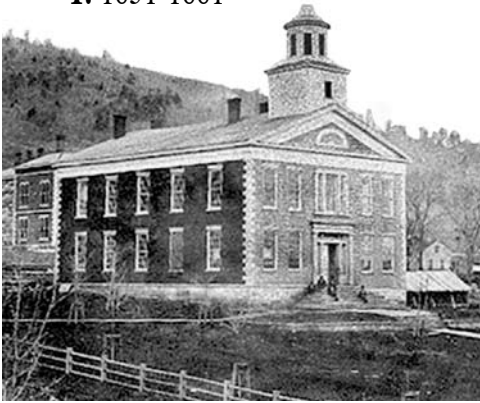
Smethport Centennial Photo 1953

The present McKean County Courthouse was completed in 1941 following the destruction by fire of the famous Martin Beebe third courthouse. Architect for the 1941 courthouse was Thomas K. Hendryx, The building was dedicated June 15, 1942.

1

Earlier McKean County Courthouses built on the same Smethport Public Square location

1: 1851-1881



1851: Second McKean County Courthouse: Torn down in 1881 to make way for a new, more significant structure.

Second Courthouse for McKean County: In 1851 the second McKean County Courthouse was built on the public square in the same location as today's courthouse. Just as with the original 1826 courthouse, the second courthouse was built by Smethport architect-builder Solomon Sartwell. The courthouse grounds were surrounded by a wooden fence enabling livestock to graze. The courthouse was torn down & replaced in 1881 for a new, modern structure.

2



2: During April, 1861 Thomas L. Kane came to Smethport to recruit a force to fight in the US Civil War. Following the 1940 Courthouse fire the monument was moved to the west corner of the Courthouse property.

1: 1881-1940

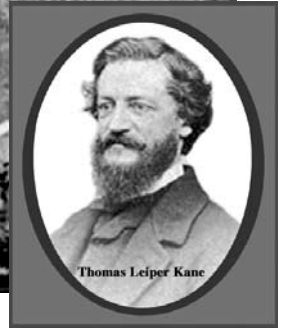
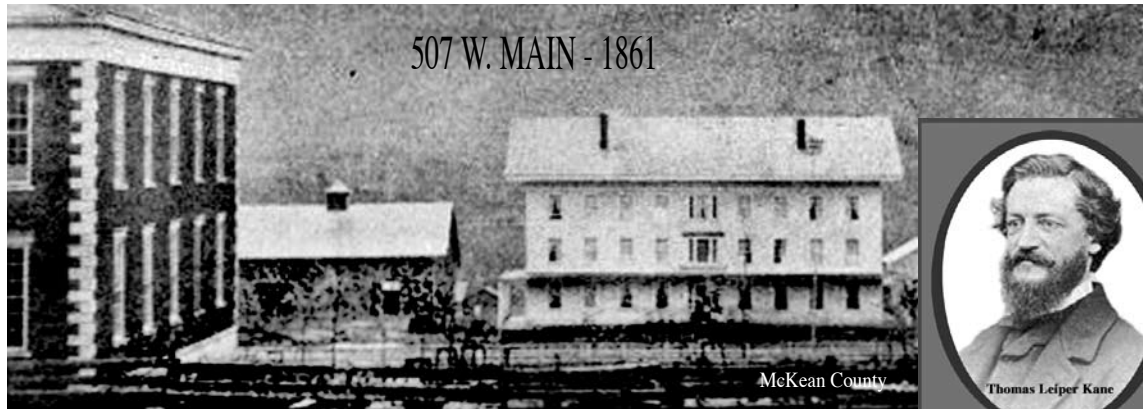
1



In 1940 the 1881 Martin Beebe courthouse (above) was destroyed by fire and replaced by the current, fourth courthouse.

SMETHPORT: BIRTHPLACE of the CIVIL WAR BUCKTAILS

The Bennett House Hotel was located Across from McKean County Courthouse on the location of today's Courtyard Restaurant.



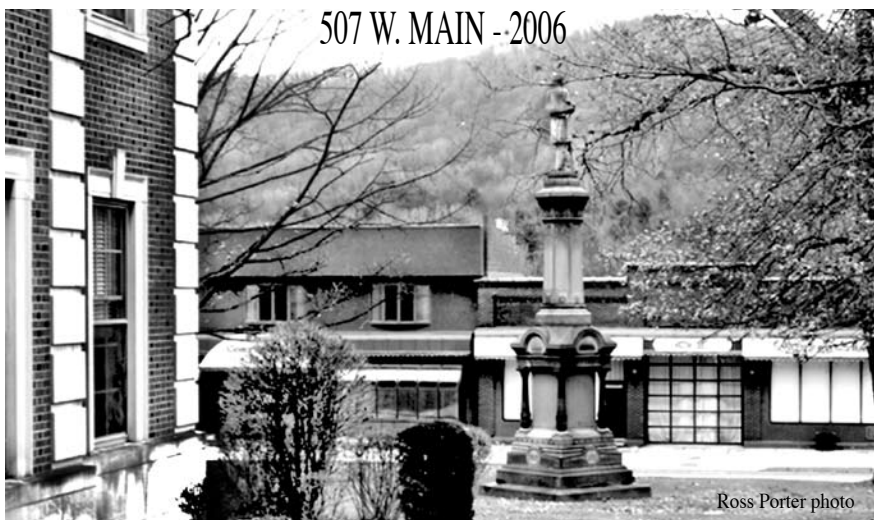
In April 1861 men from throughout the region congregated in Smethport to answer the call of Thomas K. Kane to join a militia. The Bennett House Hotel, site of Kane's recruiting headquarters burned in 1881. Today's Courtyard Restaurant, 505 W. Main rests on the location of the Bennett House Hotel.

Thomas Leiper Kane rallied his troops in Smethport.
Ross Porter Collection

The day following the confederate bombardment of Fort Sumner on April 12, 1861 Philadelphian Thomas Leiper Kane contacted Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin and offered to head to McKean and Elk Counties and raise a company of skilled fighting soldiers. Kane had chosen Smethport for his recruitment because the men of our region were fiercely patriotic, skilled with the handling of firearms, seasoned in survival techniques, physically strong and robust, and in possession of an unusual, determined character. Governor Curtin approved Colonel Kane's request but required that each of the new infantry recruits must carry his own musket or rifle.

On April 17, 1861 Kane arrived in Smethport and immediately commissioned the printing of a recruitment poster was distributed throughout the county announcing the formation of the famed Company I. "McKean County Rifles" of the Pennsylvania Reserves. Colonel Kane established the Bennett House Hotel, located on the very spot of today's Court of Angels Banquet Hall, to be his headquarters. Recruitment in Smethport took place for the next several days.

New recruit James Landregan noticed a deer hanging from a butcher shop at the P. Ford Building on Church



Street across from the McKean County Courthouse and just below the Methodist Church. Landregan cut the deer's tail and attached it to his hat. Kane immediately sensed the symbolism and had the other new recruits cut strips of deer hide and attach them to their hats and caps. From that point forward, announced Kane, the regiment shall be known as the Bucktails.

On Thursday, April 25, 1861 the new recruits had breakfast with Colonel Kane at the Bennett House. Speeches were made by Byron Delano Hamlin of Smethport and Hon. N.E. Eldred, of Wayne County and the recruits marched off toward Emporium and their way to Harrisburg and Civil War legend status.

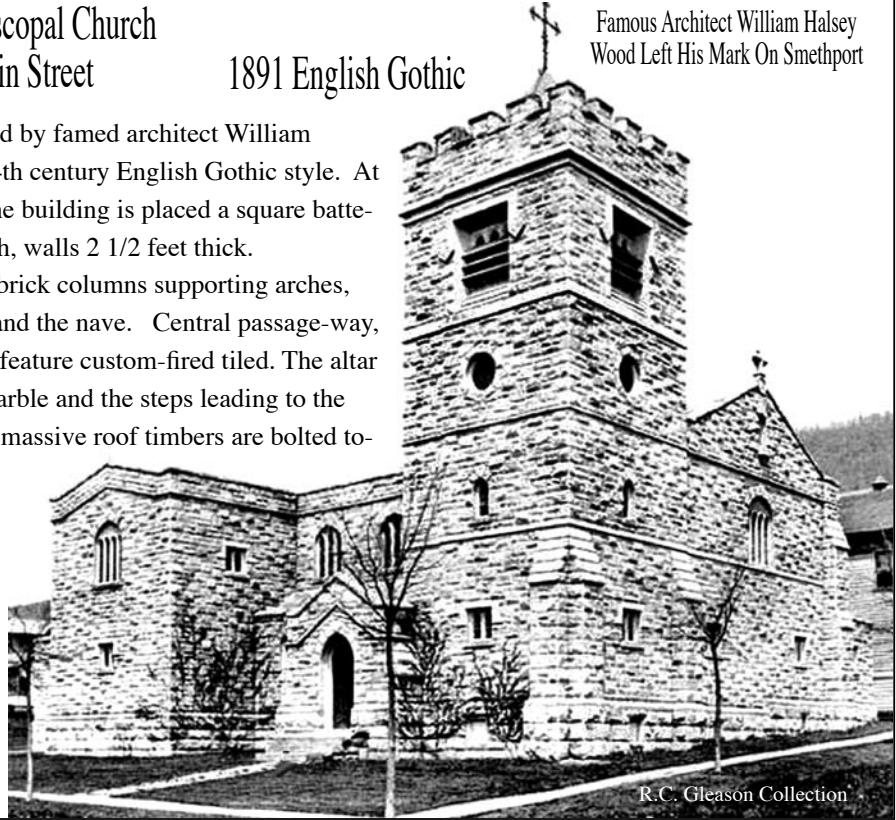
4

Saint Lukes Episcopal Church
602 W. Main Street

1891 English Gothic

Famous Architect William Halsey Wood Left His Mark On Smethport

St. Luke's Church, designed by famed architect William Halsey Wood, is of the 14th century English Gothic style. At the south east corner of the building is placed a square battlemented tower, 17x17 feet in width, walls 2 1/2 feet thick. Inside the sanctuary are massive brick columns supporting arches, also of brick, between the aisles and the nave. Central passage-way, aisles, choir and sanctuary floors feature custom-fired tiled. The altar slab is one piece of pure white marble and the steps leading to the altar are Tennessee marble. The massive roof timbers are bolted together and the ceiling is yellow pine. An ornate wood screen of oak, divides the nave from the chancel. These interior appointments were manufactured from special designs prepared by the noted architect, William Halsey Wood.



R.C. Gleason Collection

5

St. Luke's Church Interior

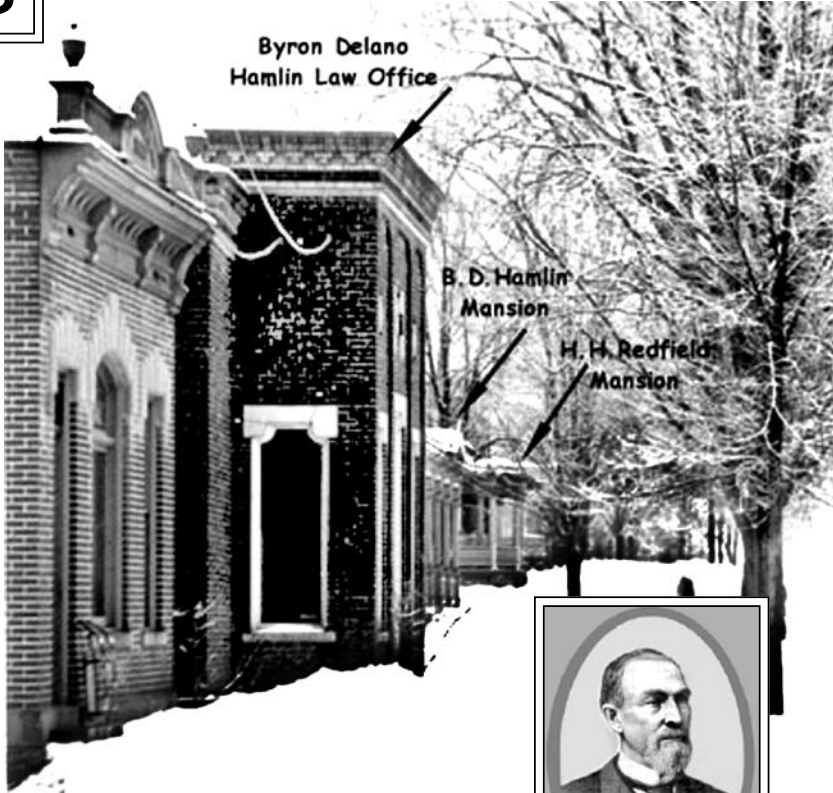
Saint Lukes Church Archives



Famed Architect William Halsey Wood of New Jersey was hired by Henry Hamlin to design Saint Lukes.

St. Luke's Church is one of the few remaining pristine examples of genius architect William Halsey Wood of Newark, New Jersey.

6



John G. Coleman Collection

Byron Delano Hamlin
Law Office
Location of 2nd Hamlin Bank
607 Main Street

For many years attorney Byron D. Hamlin managed the Keating Land Company. The Keating Land Company bought, sold & managed the vast forest lands of McKean County. In 1874 Byron established the McKean & Buffalo Railroad, the initial locomotive of the economic engines of Smethport and the region, providing the initial transportation system for the vast natural lumber resources of the county.



7

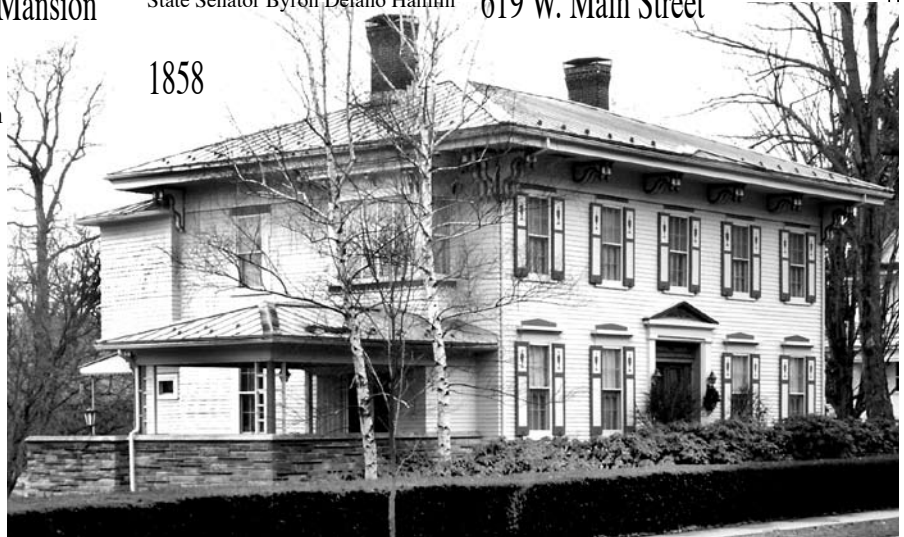
Byron Delano Hamlin Mansion

State Senator Byron Delano Hamlin

619 W. Main Street

Just west of his law office is the stately Italianate Style mansion Byron Delano Hamlin, uncle & financial partner with Henry Hamlin. Byron served in the Pennsylvania State Senate during the 1850s. In addition to politics, Byron pursued many business endeavors in the Smethport area including land, lumber, coal, and the Mcean & Buffalo Railroad. That railroad helped open up the vast natural resources of the county.

1858



Ross Porter photo 2006

The Byron Hamlin mansion was one of the original mansions in Smethport. The home later was owned by Melville Gillette. A racket ball court was constructed inside the carriage house & the outline of the clay tennis courts can still be seen to the east of the home. The east porch, bomb shelter, & attached greenhouse was added by architect Raymond Vernor Hall. Byron's former law office is immediately to the east of the property.



Ross Porter Collection

8

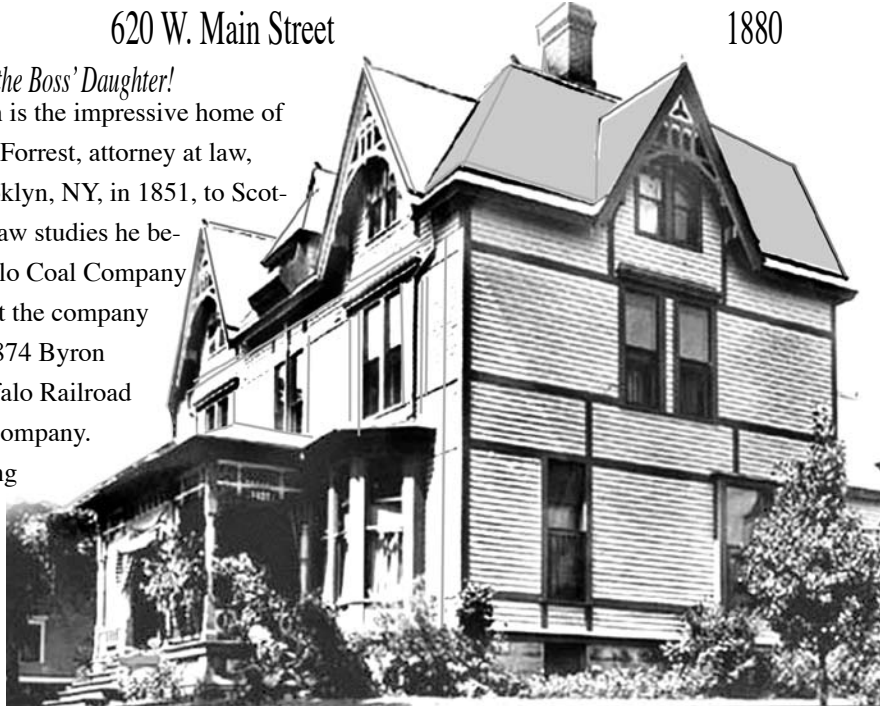
John Forrest Mansion

620 W. Main Street

1880

He Married the Boss' Daughter!

Just next to St. Luke's Church is the impressive home of John & Mary Forrest. John Forrest, attorney at law, Smethport, was born in Brooklyn, NY, in 1851, to Scottish immigrant parents. After his law studies he began work in the office of the Buffalo Coal Company in Fall Brook, Pennsylvania, and at the company headquarters in Buffalo, NY. In 1874 Byron Hamlin began the McKean & Buffalo Railroad to haul coal for the Buffalo Coal Company. Byron was so impressed with young John that he convinced John to move to Smethport & work for Byron's land company. In January, 1877, he came to Smethport & entered the law and land office of Bryon Delano Hamlin. John & Mary Hamlin, daughter of Byron Delano and Harriet (Holmes) Hamlin, were married in 1878. In 1880 they completed their large, stick style mansion. Their former carriage house, now also a private residence, can be seen to the rear of the property.



Dona Teep Cooper Collection

9

Charles Sartwell Mansion 708 W. Main Street 1849 w/ Victorian updates

Famed Smethport Architect & A Noted Magazine Publisher

The Charles Sartwell home at 708 W. Main Street is believed to have been built by celebrated Smethport architect Solomon Sartwell in about 1849. Over the years the home has undergone extensive renovations transforming the home from a Greek Revival to a 1890s style Victorian. Solomon's daughter, Mary, married Major John C. Backus, another important name in Smethport history. In 1910, after several other owners, Smethport magazine tycoon, Scott F. Redfield purchased the mansion. Scott published *The Boys Magazine*, a predecessor of *Boy's Life Magazine*.



Ross Porter photograph 2006

Tall, lanky and brilliant, Horace Hamlin Redfield, grandson of Byron D. Hamlin, was the son of Jeanette Hamlin and her Washington newspaper correspondent husband Horace Victor Hamlin. Although born in Chattanooga, young Ham spent summers in Smethport and returned following his graduation from college and was soon in-

involved with a myriad of business interests, each important by itself, but combined were truly amazing. Blessed with a luminous, quick business mind, his interests soon widened to a dizzily impressive resume. He served as president and a director of the Grange National Bank, in Smethport, &



young Horace spent his summers in Smethport & loved it.
R.C. Gleason Photo



John G. Coleman Collection

was founder and president of the First National Bank of Eldred. In Bradford he was a director of the First National Bank, and he was also a director of the Hamlin Bank & Trust Company. Mr. Redfield became a member of the advisory board of the First Mortgage Guarantee & Trust Company, of Philadelphia, and was a director

of the Great Southern Lumber Company, of Bogalusa, Louisiana; vice-president and a director of the New Orleans Great Northern Railroad; president of the McKean County Refining Company; & a director of the Smethport Water Company. He later sold his holdings in the McKean County Refining Company, which had headquarters at Farmers' Valley, Pennsylvania, to the Quaker State Oil Company. Mr. Redfield was also a director of the Coudersport & Port Allegany Railroad. He was also a director of the Gaylord Container Corporation, and served as chairman of the board of directors of the Jefferson County Gas Company, of Warren, PA. He even served one term in the Pennsylvania State Legislature. In 1900, he married Grace McCoy, daughter of Frederick A. and Emily Leona (Huenerfeld) McCoy. Her father, Frederick A. McCoy, was a longtime druggist in Smethport. Horace & Grace raised three children in their home on Main Street.



Horace and Grace on their front porch in Smethport shortly after their 1900 wedding
R.C. Gleason Photo

Judge Joseph Bouton Mansion 707 W. Main Street 1905

McKean County Miner

Thursday, July 6, 1905

The structure is of brick and native white sandstone. The exterior, embellished with spacious porches, is of an Elizabethan design of architecture. The fluted round and square columns of the porches give a reassuring air of permanence and solidity to the building. Mr. J. A. Olds, the well-known contractor of Bradford, had entire charge of the construction operations.



John G. Coleman Collection



Judge Bouton

On entering the mansion through the massive front door the visitor finds himself in a roomy vestibule, with a wainscoting of golden oak for a base surmounted with panels of leather in imitation of elephant's skin, with galloons and borders in strikingly harmonious, hand-painted designs. The reception hall at the foot of the main stairway is also wood finished in golden oak, with beam ceiling containing panels of delicately decorated burlap. The hall is furnished with a cozy open fireplace, as are the library and dining room.

The guest chamber features Birges reproduction wall coverings. The original design contained 17 colors and 14 of these were successfully copied by the greatest wallpaper press in the world. Panels in relief are faithfully shown with a beautiful floral border effect. The hall on the second floor is done in an elegant finish and two bathrooms are conveniently located.

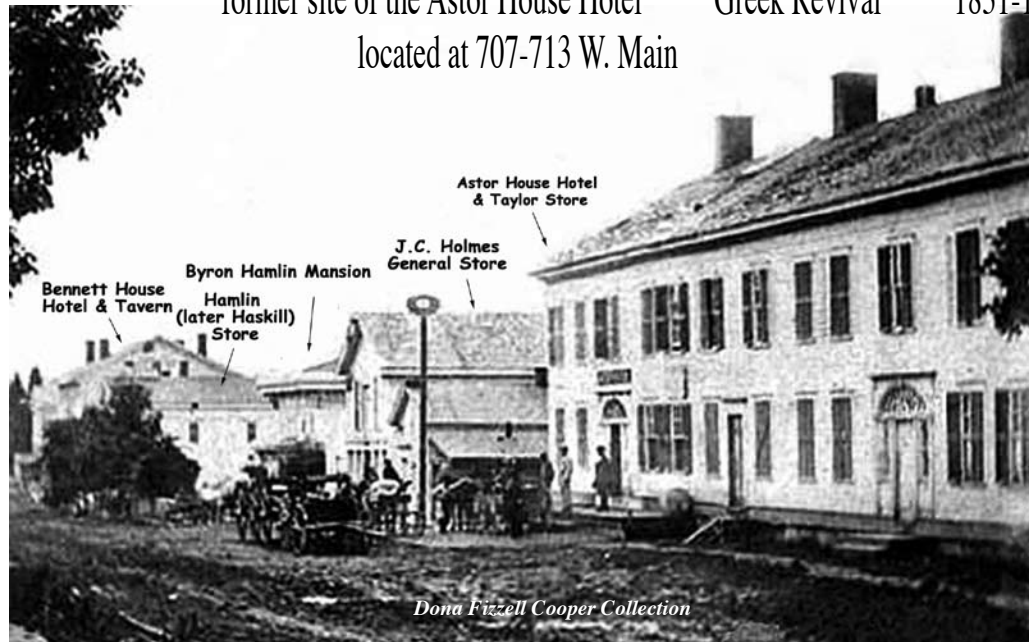
The third floor contains three bedrooms and a bath, all prettily decorated, aside from Mr. Bouton's den which occupies the front of this floor. It is a large attractive room, the walls covered with warm, rich tones of Oriental tapestry and the ceiling finished in plain tint. The halls are plain ingrain with burlap bases.

The basement contains a laundry room furnished with stationary tubs, instantaneous heater and all modern conveniences. Also located here are several store rooms for provisions, fruits and vegetables, etc., and the boiler room containing the Gurney steam heating apparatus.

The plumbing throughout the building is of the best material and workmanship. Aside from gas fixtures of a superior grade the house is wired so that electricity can also be used. The light arrangement is controlled by switches in various parts of the house. By pushing a button in Judge Bouton's room the whole interior can be illuminated. The plumbing arrangements were looked after by H.H. Redfield of Smethport. Hyde & Murphy of Ridgway had charge of the interior woodwork and the decorators. Parker & Black, who will soon have the house ready for occupancy, say the work from foundation to chimney tops is of the very best grade.

12

former site of the Astor House Hotel Greek Revival 1831-1868
located at 707-713 W. Main



The Astor House Hotel was Smethport's giant, posh Greek Revival style hotel. Travelers on the early East-West Highway (today U.S. Route 6) enjoyed fine dining & elegant accommodations. Built in 1831 the Astor House was an immense 108 feet long & featured a ballroom in the back section. The Astor House was destroyed by fire on March 28, 1868. The Astor House was located at 707 and 713 W. Main Street.

13

The William Haskell Mansion
713 W. Main Street



William Haskell was a merchant and part owner of the Astor House Hotel when it burned during 1868. Mr. Haskell then purchased the Henry Hamlin Hardware store which also later destroyed by fire when the Bennett House Hotel burned in 1880. The Haskell Mansion was constructed on what was the west end of the Astor House property. Lavish woodwork and fireplaces grace the mansion.

14

Henry Hamlin Mansion

802 W. Main Street

1868

While a Smethport merchant with his uncle Byron, Henry began loaning money from his store in 1853. In response to the National Banking Act in 1863, he decided to institutionalize his practices by establishing the "Exchange Office of Henry Hamlin." In 1874 Henry concentrated his efforts fully into developing his banking interests. No longer would banking be a part-time endeavor. Henry's vision would transform the future of Smethport. Henry totally retired from the mercantile trade and concentrated on banking.



Ross Porter photo 2006

Smethport's Henry Hamlin was reported to be the wealthiest private banker in the United States in 1895.



Smethport's Henry Hamlin in 1870 at age 40.

15

Delano R. Hamlin Mansion

1881

820 W. Main Street

Quickly Delano R. Hamlin, the land baron, and railroad owner Byron Delano & Harriet Hamlin was born in 1847. After graduating from college in 1868 he studied law in his father's office 607 W. Main Street and in 1871 he became a partner in his father's law and land business. Also in 1871 Mr. Hamlin married Miss Eugenia McCoy, a daughter of Dr. William Y. McCoy, of Smethport. In 1881 construction on their fine residence at 820 W. Main was completed to their elegant home. At an early age D.R. became a victim to attacks of inflammatory rheumatism, which plagued him for many years & finally caused his early death at age 36. During the 1980s & 1990s the residence was well-known as the "Black Berry Inn B & B." It has since been returned to a private residence.



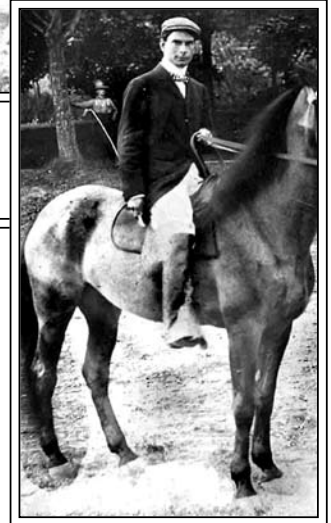
Dona Fizzell Cooper Collection



Delano R. Hamlin: oldest child & only son of Byron & Harriet Hamlin



Smethport Horse Club, to the left of Henry Hamlin Mansion & in front of D.C. Young Mansion, 1901.
Dr. Ray Young is 3rd from left.



Dr. Ray Young, MD
in Smethport in front
of his parents' home, 1901.

16

DeWitt Clinton Young Mansion

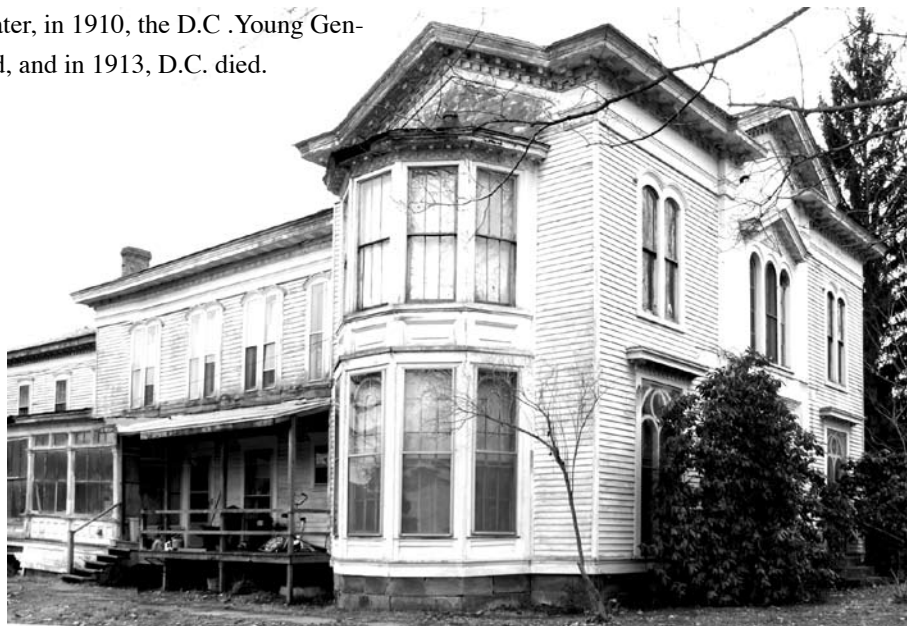
807 W. Main Street 1874

Built in 1874, this was the luxurious residence of Dewitt Clinton (D.C.) Young & Ada Taylor Young. In 1881 the home made local news for its outstanding natural gas central heating system & multiple bathrooms with hot and cold running water “found in different parts of the domicile.” The handsome Young carriage house, located to the left rear of the home was completed in 1881, more closely resembled a “comfortable dwelling house, more than the home of horses, or the receptacle for carriages... and (is) one of the finest barns in the county...” Mr. Young also owned the important D.C. Young General Store located in the 200 block Main Street and Union Street. A series of tragedies beset the family. Raymond, a medical doctor and pride of the family, contracted a lung disease and died suddenly in 1903 at age 30. Seven years later, in 1910, the D.C. Young General Store burned to the ground, and in 1913, D.C. died.



Pat & Ernie Long Collection

Both D.C. & Ada Taylor Young were from early, hardy pioneer families. Their lives became laced with a series of tragedies.



Ross Porter Photograph 2006

17

Hamlin-McCandless Mansion 905 W. Main Street 1891

The Hamlin-McCandless Residence was built by Victorian era architect E.N. Unruh as the grand home of Henry Hamlin's daughter Emma Hamlin McCandless & her Scottish husband (& Saint Lukes Episcopal Priest) John Heber McCandless. Completed in 1891, the home featured classic, Queen Anne architecture. Following the construction of Emma's brother's home (see below) in 1900, the McCandless home was radically enlarged so it would have proper proportions next to her brother's home.



The Reverend John Heber McCandless & Emma Hamlin McCandless



18

Orlo James Hamlin Mansion 911 W. Main 1900

The lavish O.J. Hamlin Mansion was completed in 1900 as the home of banker & financier Orlo James Hamlin and his wife, Mirabel Depew Folger of Geneva, New York. Orlo was the only son of Smethport benefactor Henry Hamlin. Orlo began working at his father's bank even before his 1894 graduation from Hobart College. Beginning in 1918 he served many years as the president of the Hamlin Bank and Trust. He also was a director of the ginat Great South Lumber Company, of Bogalusa, Louisiana, as well as other wood and oil industries.



John G. Coleman Collection



O.J. Hamlin in 1907

19

John C. Hamlin Residence

904 W. Main

1879

John C. Hamlin, Henry Hamlin's younger brother, lived across the street from his niece, Emma McCandless. He built his house about 1878 so he was a long time resident of West Main Street when the houses were built on the south side of the street. John was a hardware merchant in Smethport and was six years younger than his older brother Henry. He opened Smethport's first exclusively hardware business in 1865. In 1857 he married Charlotte M.

McCoy, daughter of Dr. W. Y. McCoy, one of the first practicing physicians of Smethport. John was very active in the Episcopal Church, served as Senior Warden and also taught Sunday School there for many years.



Dr. Ferdinand & Meida
Magno Collection



John & Charlotte McCoy Hamlin

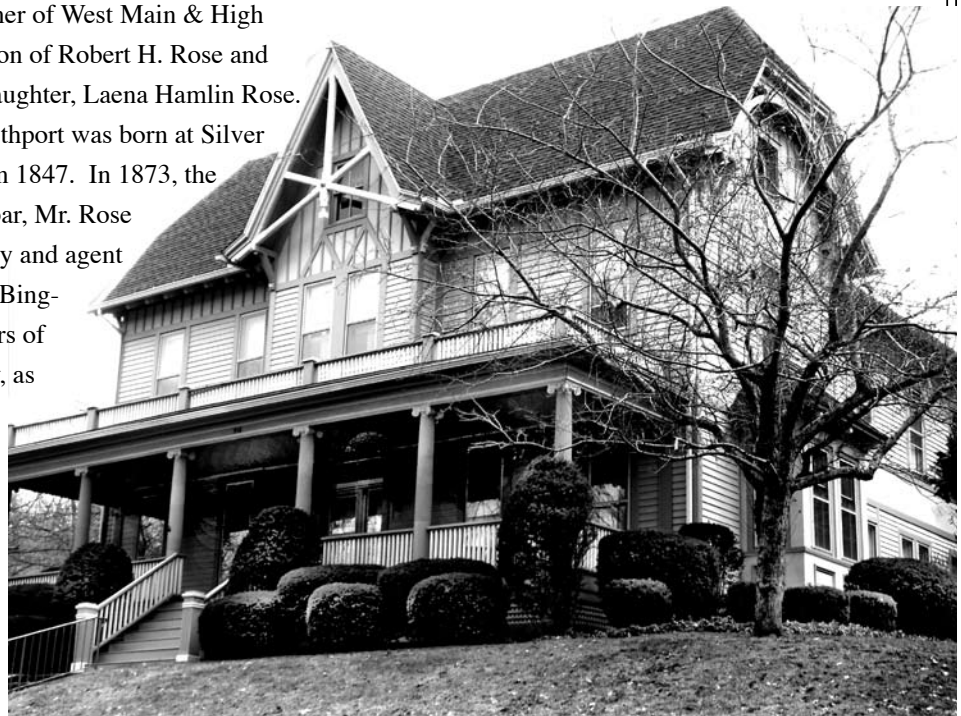
20

The Robert Rose & Laena Hamlin- Rose Mansion

916 W. Main Street

1889

At the northeast corner of West Main & High Street is the mansion of Robert H. Rose and Henry Hamlin's daughter, Laena Hamlin Rose. Mr. Rose, an attorney in Smethport was born at Silver Lake, Susquehanna County in 1847. In 1873, the year he was admitted to the bar, Mr. Rose came to Smethport as attorney and agent for the Bingham estate. The Bingham's were the original owners of nearly all of McKean County, as well as Potter and adjoining counties, and the largest owners of oil territory in the area. In 1890 the Roses' moved the law practice to Binghamton, New York & famous McKean County Judge Thomas Morrison purchased the mansion.



21

Ralph E. Burdick Mansion

1001 W. Main

1901

Banker Ralph E. Burdick was an early officer of Hamlin Bank & a pioneer photographer & motor car owner in Smethport. In addition to his work with Hamlin Bank, he was heavily invested in other McKean County industries, real estate and philanthropic endeavors. Mr. Burdick lived in his home until his death in 1955.



22

Leonard Brynolf Johnson's "Brynwood Estate"

1235 W. Main Street

1936

Brynwood was the home of Leonard Brynolf Johnson, the inventor of the famous Johnson hand-painted Christmas displays. In 1932 Leonard & his wife, Helen Morris Johnson, returned to his hometown of Smethport and opened the Johnson Pharmacy in the Hamilton Building at 101 W. Main Street. During the mid 1930s Leonard began designing custom-made Christmas lawn displays for his family and friends, which soon developed into a nationally advertised enterprise. Business was so successful that in 1949 it was necessary to charter a United Airlines flight to meet delivery deadlines. The Smethport outdoor displays became nationally known and the Christmas Store a major American tourist attraction.



Johnson's many, unique Christmas displays were shipped world-wide.

23

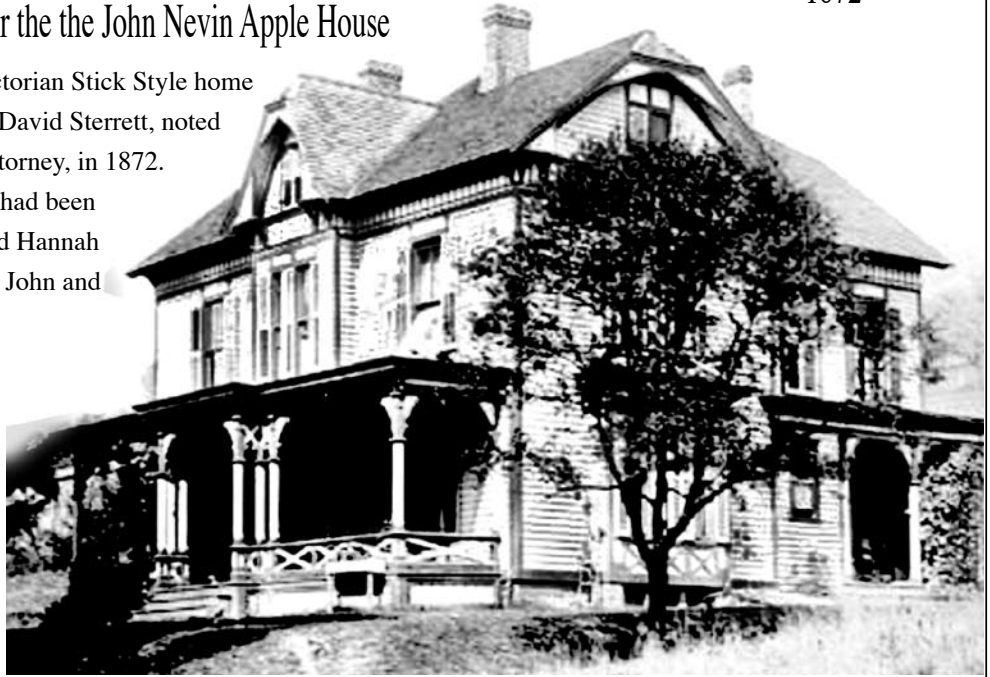
David Sterritt Mansion - 802 W. King Street
later the the John Nevin Apple House

Victorian Stick Style 1872

The Sterritt Victorian Stick Style home was built by David Sterrett, noted Smethport attorney, in 1872.

By 1890 the property had been acquired by Henry and Hannah Hamlin who sold it to John and Sarah Shoemaker.

In 1891 attorney John Nevin Apple purchased the home. The house has remained in the Apple family for over 115 years. The dining room has eight doors framed in golden oak and is decorated with wainscoting of the same pattern.



The rare, pristine Sterritt-Apple is nearly identical to its 1872 construction.

Jeanne Apple & Woody Romine Collection

24

C.D. Comes Residence

608 W. King Street

1900



Lumberman C. D. Comes, son of D. D. and Polly V. Smith Comes, built this fine mansion after making his fortune at his lumber cutting operation. He and his father, D. D. Comes, operated a large sawmill in Keating Township. It was reported that the Comes installation milled 4,000,000 feet of lumber per year and peeled 2,500 cords of hemlock bark in 1890 alone.

25

Smethport's famous "Upper Tavern"

407 N. Church Street

1830

One of Smethport's early, colorful businesses was the celebrated "Upper Tavern". Parties and regular "pub" gatherings helped establish the Upper Tavern in early Smethport history. Now a private home, the structure looks nearly identical to the original tavern.



26

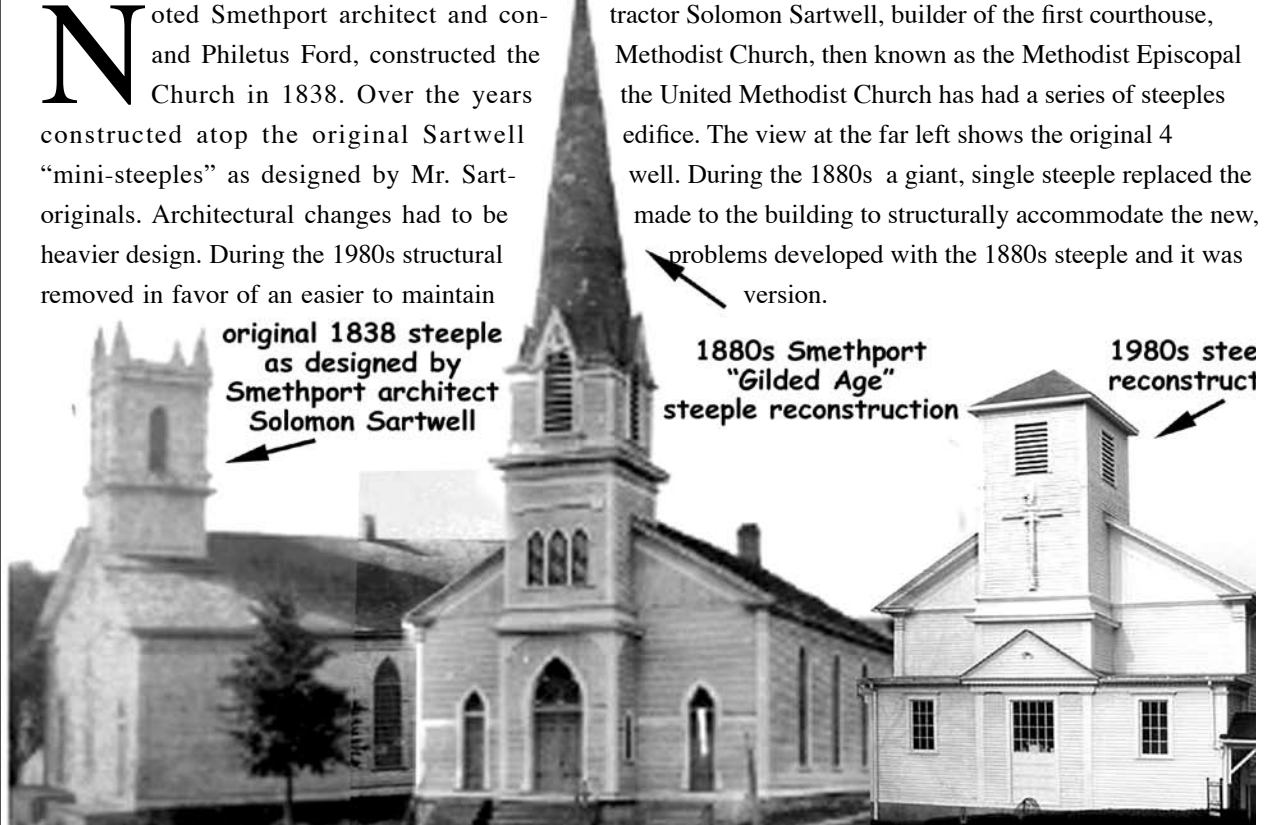
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

corner of Church & King Streets

1838

Noted Smethport architect and contractor Philetus Ford, constructed the Church in 1838. Over the years constructed atop the original Sartwell "mini-steeples" as designed by Mr. Sartwell originals. Architectural changes had to be heavier design. During the 1980s structural removed in favor of an easier to maintain

tractor Solomon Sartwell, builder of the first courthouse, Methodist Church, then known as the Methodist Episcopal the United Methodist Church has had a series of steeples edifice. The view at the far left shows the original 4 well. During the 1880s a giant, single steeple replaced the made to the building to structurally accommodate the new, problems developed with the 1880s steeple and it was version.



original 1838 steeple as designed by Smethport architect Solomon Sartwell

1880s Smethport "Gilded Age" steeple reconstruction

1980s stee reconstruction

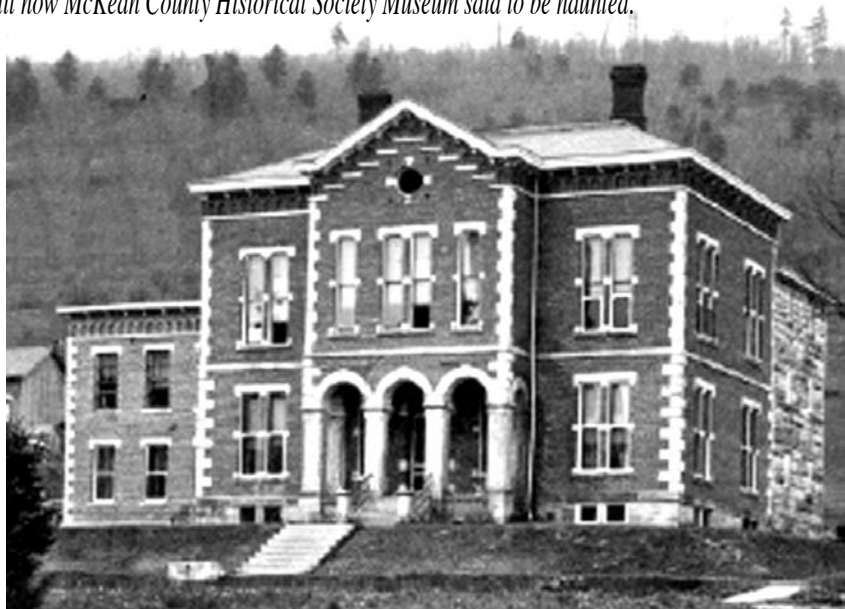
The Old County Jail

502 W. King Street

1875

former County Jail now McKean County Historical Society Museum said to be haunted.

Construction on the Old McKean County Jail was completed in 1875, ten years after the end of the American Civil War. The new, 1875 structure replaced an earlier frame construction jail that was immediately east of the courthouse. The jail was also the family residence of the McKean County Sheriff. This enabled the sheriff to monitor the behavior of the prisoners. A ruckus in the jail would disturb his entire family. Since 2002 the Old McKean County Jail has served as the headquarters and museum for the McKean County Historical Society.



John G. Coleman Collection

MATRICIDE.: Ralph Crossmire Hanged to Death for the Murder of His Mother November 1892

Vows to Haunt the County Jail

Twenty-seven year old Ralph Crossmire was sentenced to death and hung in the old jail in December 1893 for the 1892 murder of his mother, Mrs. Lucetta Crossmire. Ralph was convicted of strangling his mother and then hanging her by a rope from a rafter in the family barn on the back Farmer's Valley road. The murderer was accused of hiding in the barn and waiting for his mother to milk the cows. The day after the murder Ralph was arrested by Deputy Billy Clarke and incarcerated in the county jail. The crime, trial & execution was intensely covered by regional and national newspapers. According to the 12/15/1893 *McKean County Miner*, "The evidence were entirely circumstantial, but the chain was woven so completely around Ralph Crossmire that scarcely any one who heard the proceedings could doubt his guilt..."

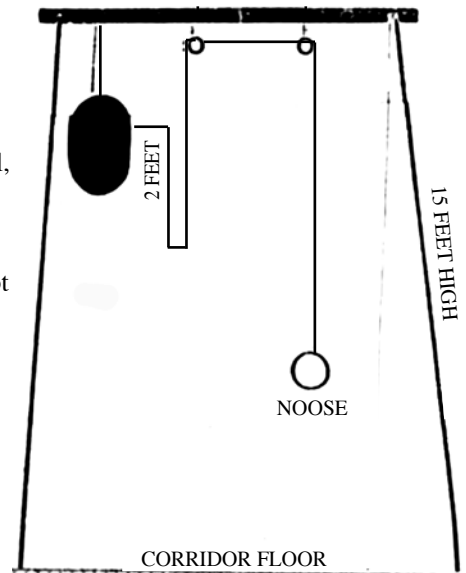


The Mother: Lucetta Crossmire
McKean County Miner
12/15/1893



The Son: Ralph Crossmire
McKean County Miner
12/15/1893

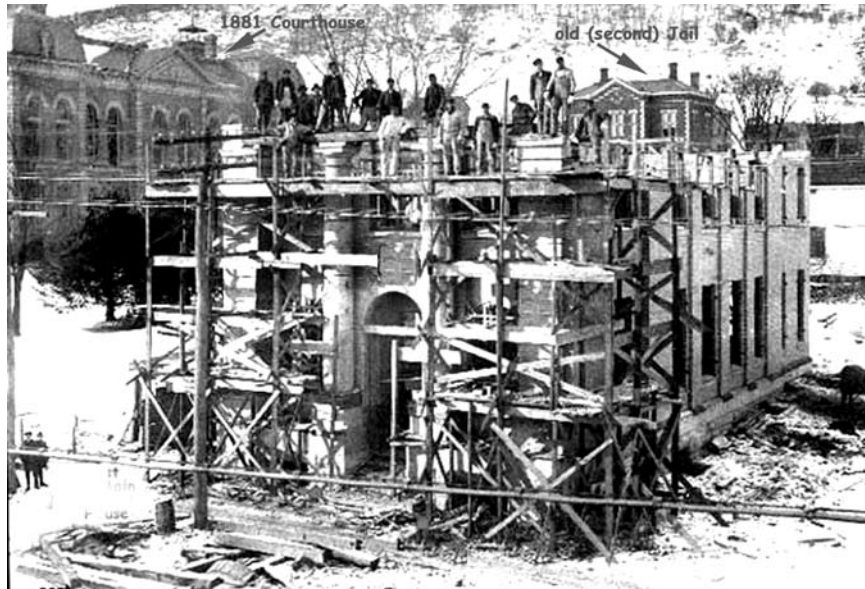
Crossmire proclaimed his innocence and announced that he would return to haunt the jail. Reports following his execution stated that prisoners had been terrorized by the ghost of Ralph Crossmire.



A diagram of the hanging gallows
McKean County Miner 12/15/1893

The Grange National Bank of McKean County at Smethport 428 W. Main St. 1907

Construction on the Grange National Bank of McKean County at Smethport began during 1906 and was opened for business during 1907. The Grange Bank became the second bank servicing Smethport and the region directly competing with the older Hamlin Bank and Trust. Merchant Dwight Clinton Young was elected President of the bank and Attorney and pharmacist A.B. Backus served as Vice President. In 1907 D.C. Young was elected Second Vice President at the First Annual Session of the Grange National Banking Association held in Williamsport, PA. The Grange National Bank is now Northwest Savings Bank.



Construction on the new Grange Bank began during 1906 and continued through the winter and spring of 1907.

Brownell Brothers General Store 420 W. Main



The Brownell Brothers store is the oldest building in the Smethport Business District. RC Gleason Collection



Ross Porter Collection

The Brownell's had a full delivery service throughout the region. This photo was taken in front of what would eventually become the Smethport County Club.



Fred Brownell

An early fixture in Smethport streetscape, the Brownell Brothers General Store is the oldest remaining commercial building in the Smethport Business

District. The first Brownell store was located facing the Courthouse behind what is today the Northwest Savings Bank. Fred Brownell lived above the store.

Deliveries were made throughout the region. Today, the former Brownell Brothers Store is known as the Pink Elephant resale shop.

Brownell Bros.,

— DEALERS IN —

General Merchandise!

DON'T BE FOOLED

And spend your money in trade merchandise but invest in good honest goods at lowest prices. We have just replenished our store with a fresh stock of

CHOICE NEW GOODS!

Of the best quality to be found in the market. Our long and varied experience has taught us when and where to buy goods that are best suited to the taste of purchasers. Our stock is COMPLETE IN EVERY DEPARTMENT.

STAPLE GROCERIES, PROVISIONS, CANNED GOODS
FLOUR, SALT MEAT, FISH, &c.

at the very lowest market prices. Call and examine our stock before purchasing your supplies.

Thanking our customers for their liberal patronage in the past, and hoping for a strict adherence to the principles of honest dealing to merit a continuation of the same, we remain respectfully yours,

Brownell Bros.,
SMETHPORT, PA.

30

Smethport's famous Route 6 Diner 423 W. Main Street 1937

The Smethport Diner was constructed by Alfred Sturdveint following the disastrous 1933 Main Street fire.

The diner was built to resemble a rail-road car and quickly became a popular stop along historic Route 6. The diner has had a variety of owners over the years but quality food, friendly hospitality, and unique atmosphere have always distinguished the diner.



Be sure to visit the diner and maybe even order a famous "Hubber-Burger". For over 70 years the Smethport Route 6 Diner has been a favorite stop for travelers and townspeople.

31

The Hamlin Bank and Trust Company 333 W. Main Street structure completed 1887

Hamlin Bank and Trust Company has a long history in Smethport. Bank founder Henry Hamlin began loaning money from his general store as early as 1853. During 1863 he officially commenced banking with the establishment of the "Exchange Office of Henry Hamlin". The bank flourished under Henry's

wise leadership and in 1887 the bank at the present location was completed. Henry hired famous Buffalo architect Milton Earl Beebe to design the new edifice. The interior of the bank was finished in carved McKean County cherry and the exterior with Philadelphia brick with stone and terracotta detail.



Jonathon Colegrove's store was attached on the left side of the bank. Established in 1863, Hamlin Bank and Trust Company has been located at the corner of W. Main and Fulton Streets since 1887.

304 Fulton Street Smethport, PA
HUMBLE ORIGINS:

Marvel Specialty Company was founded in 1923 by Ralph Herzog and William Kerr. Production began in the the Frey barn located in an alley behind 413 W. Main Street near the rear of today's Cottage House Restaurant. The first product was a magnet set consisting of a cast horseshoe shaped high carbon steel magnet painted red and silver with various stamped metal figures stitched to a display card.

In 1932 Ralph Herzog became the sole owner of Marvel Toy Company in Smethport and changed the name to Smethport Specialty Company.



constructed 1912

Originally built in 1912 by Scott Redfiled as the print shop for *Boy's Magazine*.

Donald and James Herzog, sons of Ralph Herzog, joined Smethport Specialty Toy Company in the early 50's following college. In 1955 James Herzog found that dust from the magnet grinding could be used for magnetic drawing and patented the first workable Woolly Willy Magnetic Drawing set. About the same time the United States Army needed a three dimensional map which was produced by vacuum forming heated plastic. Donald Herzog suggested this process could be used to form a clear plastic to contain the magnetic drawing powder. Leonard Mackowski, a very talented Bradford artist, designed the display card. He often hid his name in the art and you will still find it on the back of the original set that has been delighting youngsters for more than 45 years.

Initially no toy buyer would purchase Woolly Willy as most thought it a very poor toy concept. Eventually G. C. Murphy chain, McKeesport, PA, tried six dozen in their Indianapolis store. The first six dozen sold in a couple of days. His next order for that store was 12,000 sets which sold out in a few weeks. Suddenly everybody wanted Woolly Willy. Woolly Willy went on to become one of the 40 most popular toys produced during the 1950 to 1980 period.

1955: Father of Woolly Willy

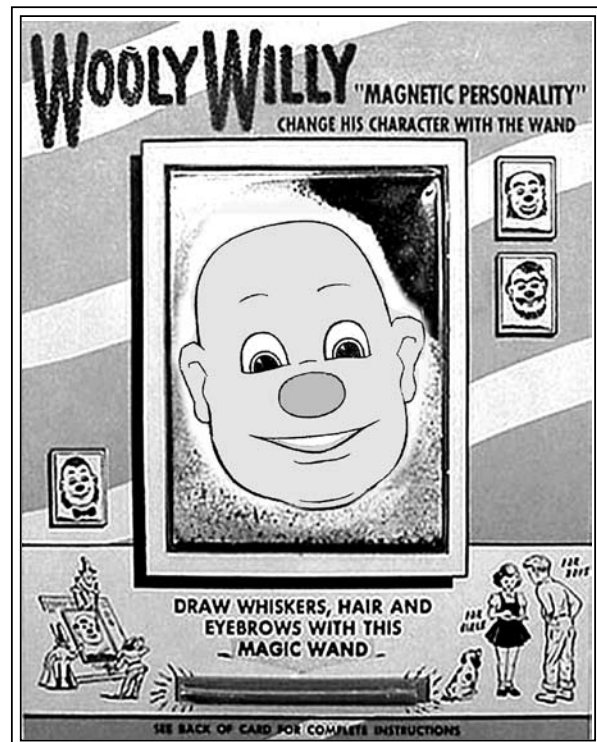
James Reese Herzog-
Original Mastermind

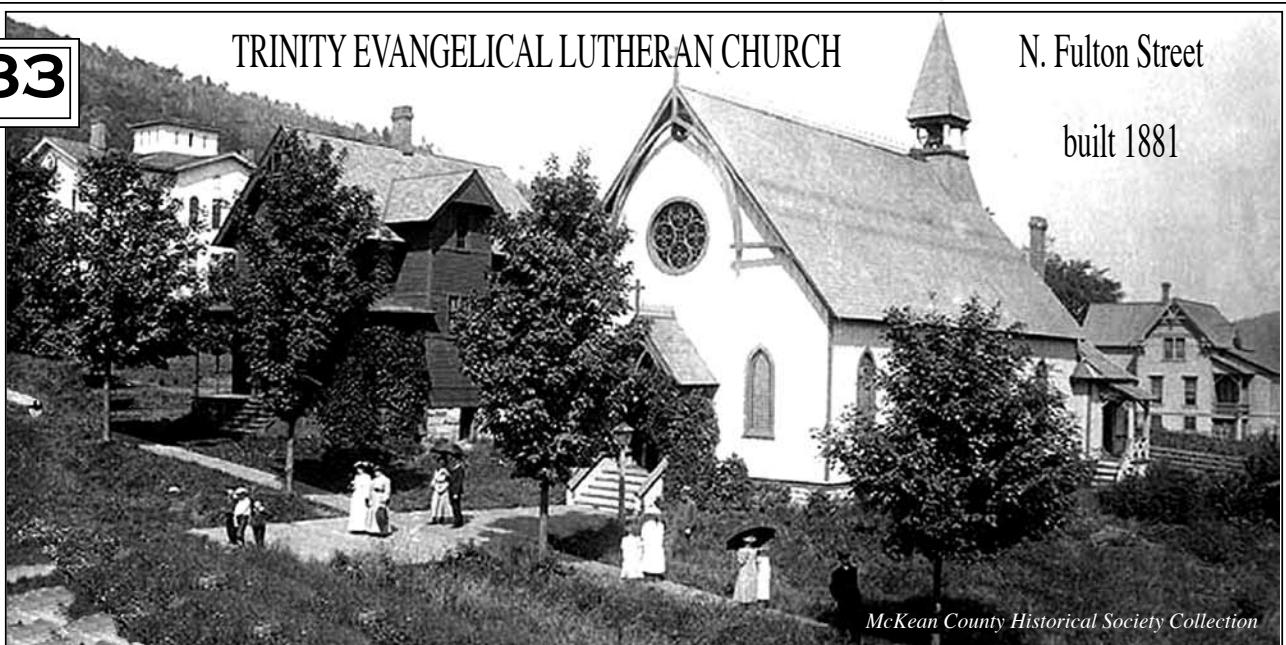


Low profile Smethport inventor, James Reese Herzog, is the creative genius of the Woolly Willy Toy. In 1955 he and his brother, Don Herzog, developed the toy in the early days of their career at the family toy company Smethport Specialty.

For more information go to the
 "Planet Smethport" website:
<http://www.smethporthistory.org>

Woolly Willy® image & graphics ©Smethport Specialty,
 Smethport, PA- All Rights Reserved



33**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH****N. Fulton Street****built 1881***McKean County Historical Society Collection*

The Ansgarius Evangelical Lutheran Church of Smethport was organized during 1891, by a group of Swedish Lutherans residing in and around Smethport. During June, 1892 the congregation purchased the church used by the Episcopalians who were moving into their brand new stone church on Main Street. The Lutheran church was the original St.Luke's Episcopal Church built in 1881. The building was not yet eleven years old when it was purchased by the Lutheran congregation.

34**A.N. TAYLOR RESIDENCE 402 W. GREEN STREET****ABOUT 1870***Former Merchant Falls to an Early Death from Roof!*

Successful merchant A. N. Taylor died at his residence as a result of a fall off his roof on September 25, 1875. Born in 1824, A.N. spent his entire adult career in the merchantile business. In 1845 at age 21, he formed a partnership with his father, and purchased the Astor House Hotel, added a general store, and moved into the owner's apartment. In 1849 he married Ann E. Fuller from Oswego County, New York. He successfully managed and expanded the Astor House Hotel until the night of March 28, 1868 when the family was forced to flee the blazing building. Following the destruction of the Astor House he built this residence for his family and constructed a store on Main Street. At the time of his untimely death in 1875 he was reportedly worth \$300,000. The Taylors had three children, the oldest of which, Ada, married D. C. Young, who would also become a well known merchant in Smethport. (see D.C. Young Mansion 807 W. Main Street).



Smethport
businessman
A.N. Taylor prior
to his untimely
death.

35

F.D. Gallup Mansion

306 W. Green Street

1902

Attorney Frederick D. Gallup, from the early McKean County family, constructed his fine home immediately west of his parents home on Green Street. During the early 1920s F.D. moved his law practice to Bradford and moved his family with it. Law partner Ernest Potter and his wife Marion Potter returned to Smethport and purchased the former Gallup residence. Community minded Potter was a member of the law firm of Gallup, Potter and Gallup, and was also engaged in business as an oil and gas producer.



Anne Digel Potter Collection

36

W.D. Gallup Mansion

302 / 304 W. Green Street

1880

The W. D. Gallup Mansion, today known as the “Lavendar House” was constructed about 1880 by Smethport merchant, W.D. Gallup. In 1815 Mr. Gallup’s grandfather, Nathaniel Gallup and family, arrived in Norwich Township from Connecticut via Potato Creek in a canoe.

Mr. Gallup was a successful merchant beginning his business career as a clerk in the Henry Hamlin store. In 1871 he married Miss Elizabeth Shepard, daughter of David V. Shepard, and they raised two children,



R.C. Gleason Photo 1995



Anne Digel Potter Collection

Fred D. and Rena May. In 1877 he entered business on his own and built a large successful trade. Also in 1877 he was elected McKean County Treasurer and McKean County Commissioner in 1885.

37**Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church** Corner of Franklin & Main Streets 1906-1907

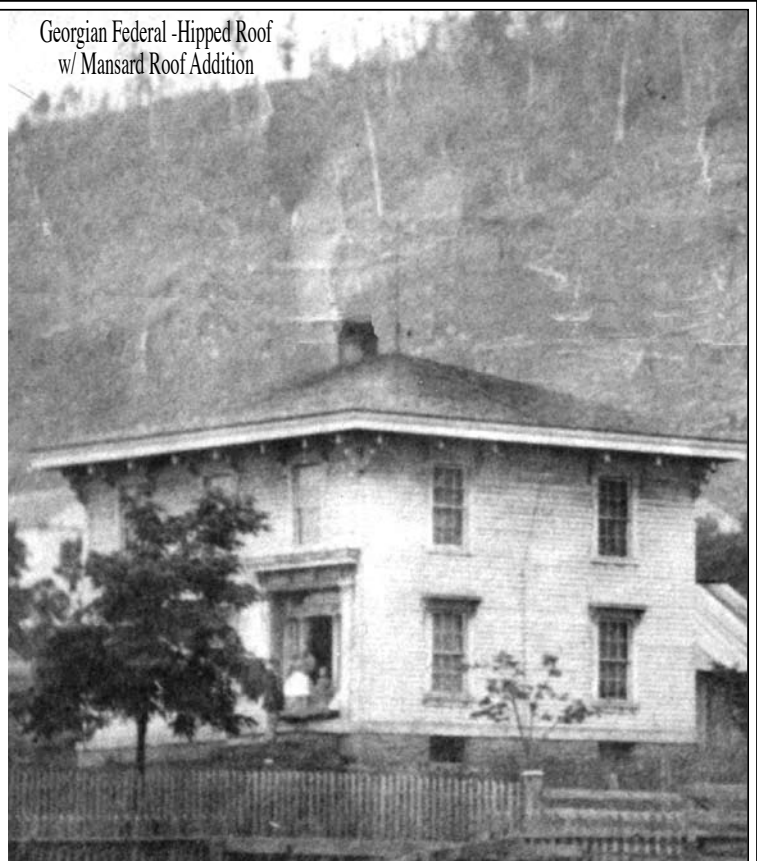
Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church was founded in 1868. The original wooden structure and wooden parsonage were completed in 1876. Just before Christmas, 1904 fire totally destroyed the original wooden sanctuary. The Mass on Christmas Day was celebrated at 10:30 a.m. in the newly constructed Lyceum Theater at the corner of King and Mechanic Streets. The new brick church was completed in 1907. In 2005 extensive architectural renovations were completed.



John G. Coleman Collection

38**1859: Robert King Residence**
110 W. Main Street

Robert King was a direct descendant of Francis King, original surveyor of the proposed town of Smethport. Originally the residence was only a square building made with large wooden beams held together with wooden stakes. The porch and the addition in the back of the house were added around 1900. The house had been passed down from one generation to the next, never leaving the hands of the King family until 1958 when it was purchased by the Nannen family. In 1993 Graham & Carol Nannen bought it from the Nannen family's estate. Much of the interior is vintage, or has been replaced with a special care to preserve the original ambiance of the King house.

Georgian Federal -Hipped Roof
w/ Mansard Roof Addition

39

1904: Charles McKean Mansion 102 W. Main Street

Wealthy lumberman & natural gas tycoon Charles McKean constructed his magnificent neo-classical residence on the northwest corner of W. Main and Mechanic Streets in 1904.

Mr. McKean was born in 1854 in Marvin Creek, the son of Bernard and Bridget Graham McKean.

The McKean family, originally from Ireland, moved to McKean County in 1849 and settled west of Smethport in Keating Township near Marvin Creek. Charles initially worked on his father's farm in Keating Township and then entered in the lumbering business with the former Smethport Extract Company (located at the site of Duffys, Inc. in East Smethport).

Ionic Columned
NeoClassical Architecture



40

1902: Hamilton Building 101 W. Main Street



When Dr. Robert Hamilton returned from the Alaska gold rush he bought the old Kittredge Opera House lot on the corner of W. Main & Mechanic Street. The opera house had burned to the ground in 1898. The lot was purchased and construction on the spectacular brick building began July 5, 1902. Total building cost was \$11,361.00. The building remained in the Hamilton family until 1980 when it was sold by Dr. Hamilton's grandchildren. For many years it was the location of Leonard Johnson Pharmacy and the Johnson Christmas Store.

Entrepreneurial Haven: Mechanic Street looking south 1894

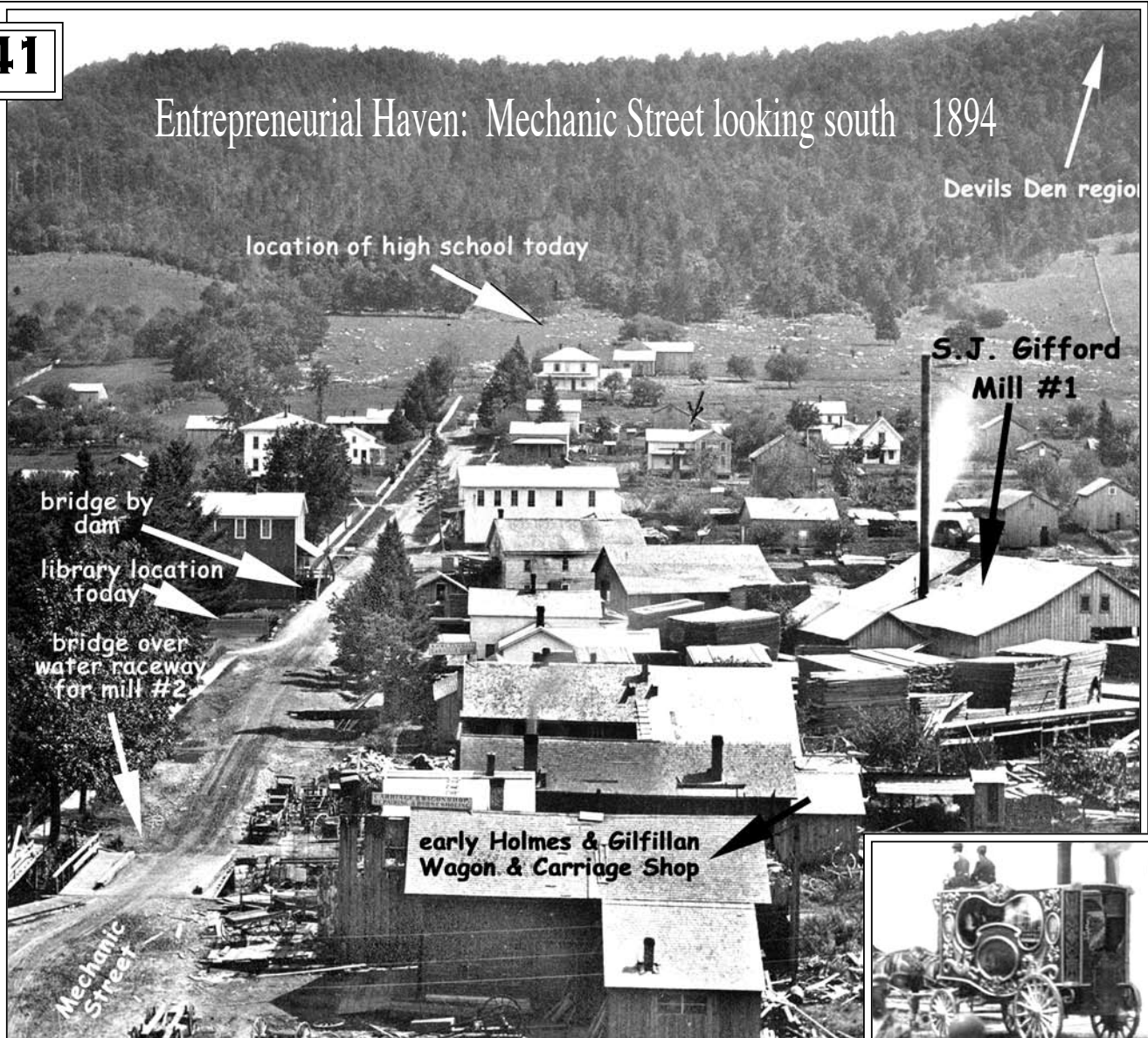


Photo of 1894 Mechanic Street taken from the top of Kittredge Opera House which burned in 1898.

Since its earliest day Mechanic Street was an industrial region of the community. For many years it was the home of carriage makers and blacksmiths. Holmes & Gilfillan originally manufactured fancy wagons & carriages including elaborate, gilded circus wagons and cages. Holmes & Gilfillan were later the manufacturers of Backus Bowling Pinsetters as well as numerous other enterprises.

During the 1890s S.F. Gifford built a giant, steam powered saw mill just north of the dam as seen in the right-hand side of the photo at about midway. In addition to other jobs, 15,000,000 board feet of lumber was cut for the Goodyear Brothers of Buffalo. The bridge in the foreground was a “raceway” to power the 2nd S.F.Gifford saw mill located downstream approximately at the end of Forest Avenue. The mill raceway flowed beneath what is today the center of the (2006) Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit 9 building.

Initially the portion of Smethport on the south side of the dam and bridge was known as Mechanicsburg. Now the southside is officially part of the Borough of Smethport. The large white building in the center of the photo just beyond the second bridge on the right was a boarding house for saw mill employees. If you look beyond the Mechanic Street Veteran’s Memorial Bridge on the southwest corner today you will see this original building.



In its early days, Holmes & Gilfillan manufactured fancy carriages including carved & gilded circus wagons for the famous Sparks Circus.

BIRTHPLACE OF MAGNETIC TOYS 1908

in factory behind 205 Franklin Street.



Mirabel Hamlin demonstrates toy for instructions in 1908.

Inventive entrepreneur William James Kerr was a jeweler in Smethport and also operated Smethport's moving picture "theaterium". In 1908 he began the Electric Toy Manufacturing Company immediately behind 205

Franklin Street in "Kern's Hall". William fashioned tiny tin men originally in his jewelry shop that did tricks with magnets. Thus began the magnetic toy industry in the United States. In 1914 the factory behind 205 Franklin Street was destroyed by a fire and toy production ceased in Smethport for several years.



1908-1914: large toy factory was located only a few feet behind 205 Franklin St.

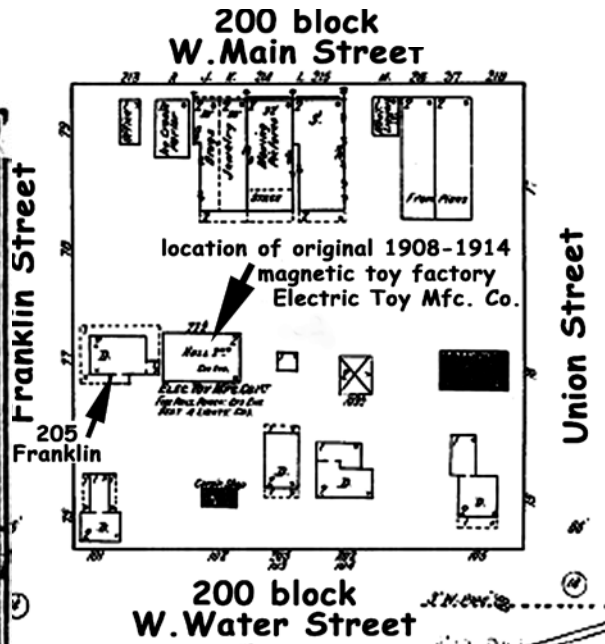
In 1923 William Kerr joined in a partnership with Ralph Herzog and again began producing magnetic toys, this time under the name of Marvel Toy Company. The 1923 operation manufactured in a barn in the alley behind today's Cottage House Restaurant. Marvel Toy Company eventually evolved into Smethport Specialty which continues to produce magnetic toys today.



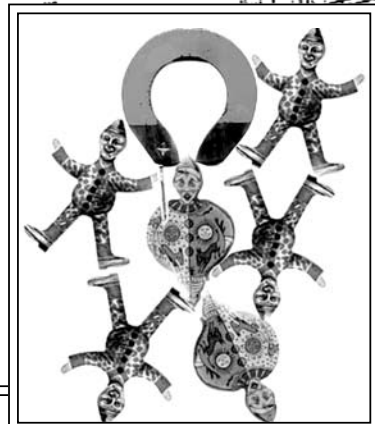
Smethport's William Kerr about 1908



Above: Original box of 1908 Smethport toy.



Metal clowns, magnet & nail in original toy box



43

Cottage House: 202 S. Fulton Street: 1899

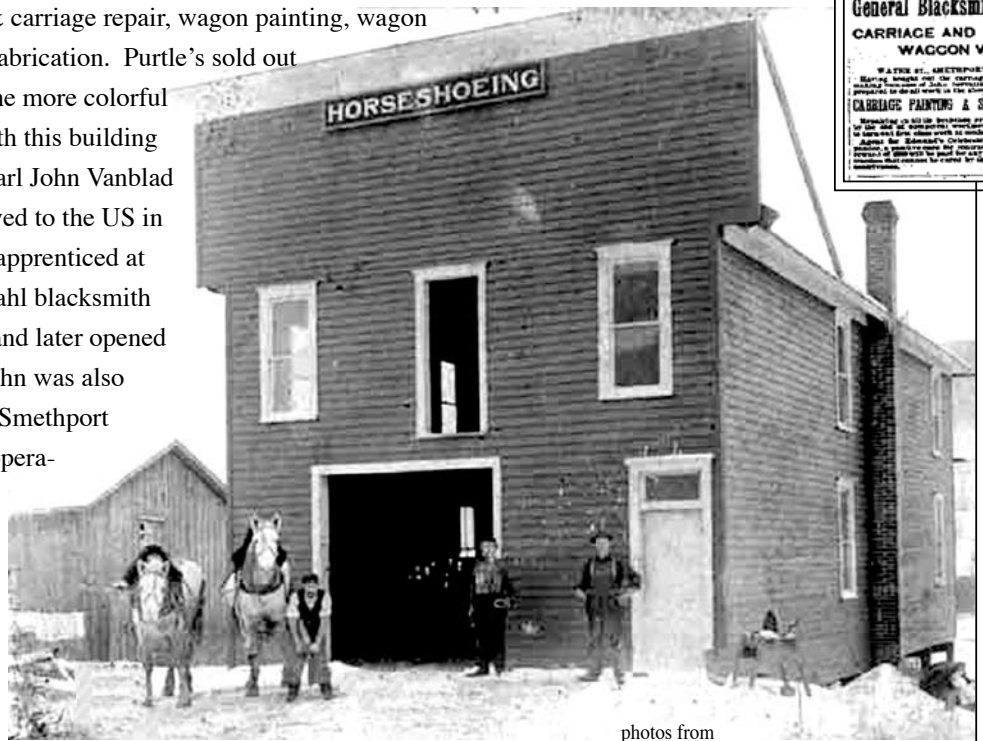
The popular Cottage House Hotel & Restaurant was constructed following the fire of 1898. It was a popular out-of-town vacation spot and was remodeled in 1925 by Clyde Mong, and opened as the Cottage House Restaurant. During the early 1900s the original Cottage House was remodeled and reopened as the Cottage House Hotel. The Cottage House continues its reputation for fine dining today.



44

Purtle Blacksmith Shop 405-407 W. Water 1892

The original Purtle Blacksmith Shop was one of several blacksmithing businesses in Smethport. This is one of the few remaining in Smethport. These original shops had a wide variety of skills from horse shoeing, wagon & carriage repair, wagon painting, wagon manufacturing and basic fabrication. Purtle's sold out to the Vanblads. One of the more colorful blacksmiths associated with this building was Carl John Vanblad. Carl John Vanblad was born in 1875 and moved to the US in 1892 at the age of 17. He apprenticed at the Charles Lilgendahl blacksmith shop on Mechanic Street and later opened his own establishment. John was also heavily involved with the Smethport Hose Company as pump operator for the famous "Henry Hamlin" pumper and as the bell ringer for the department.



photos from

Backus Company 411 W. Water Street since 1906

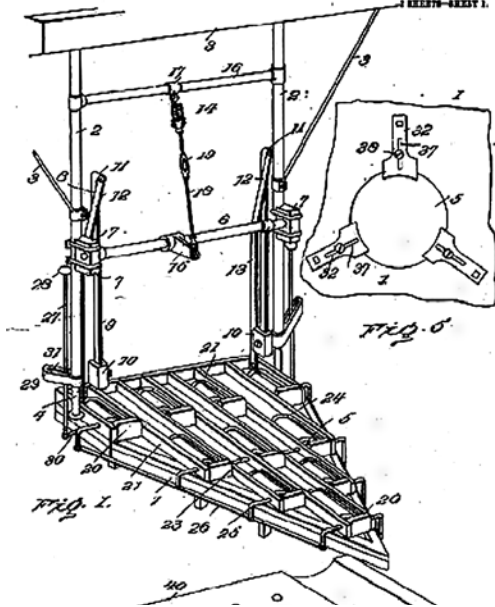
The Genius of J.C. Backus

operated as Smethport Cut Glass Factory 1907-1910
 Purchased by Backus Novelty in 1911.

1910: 1st automotive garage in Smethport & now left side of Backus Building (see photograph at the bottom of the page.)



No. 814,897. PATENTED MAR. 13, 1906.
 J. C. BACKUS.
 PIN SPOTTER AND SETTER FOR BOWLING ALLEYS.
 APPLICATION FILED MAR. 31, 1904.



Smethport Inventive Genius J.C. Backus had a huge impact on the Borough.

Smethport Inventor John Clayton Backus originally started his Backus Novelty Works in a tiny machine shop that stood to the left rear of today's Backus Building. The Backus Company product line centered around the manufacture and sale of J.C. Backus inventions. His umbrella and cape, coat lock systems were originally invented in 1899 and manufacturing began in 1906.

Also in 1906 J.C. invented and patented the first automatic bowling pinsetter in the United States. Manufacture of the pinsetters was by the F.L. Holmes & A.J. Gilfillan Company on Mechanic Street. Eventually Holmes & Gilfillan contracted with Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company to market the Smethport Backus Pinsetters

which were inscribed with the Brunswick trade-mark. J.C. Backus is responsible for many other patents and inventions including the Backus Home Golf Trainer. Backus was also credited for being the "Father of Electricity" in Smethport for his efforts to bring electricity to the Borough.



1906 Backus Coat Lock

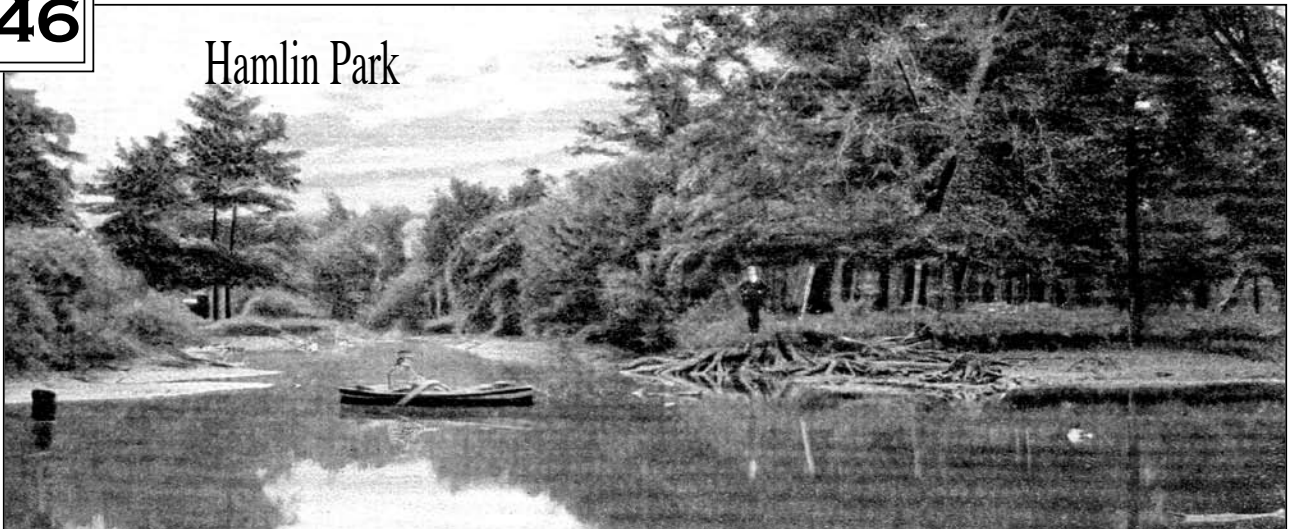
During the early 1930s F.H. Biever and W.L. Pierotti Sr. purchase the company from the estate. From the 1930's until the present Backus Company has manufactured metal products, such as drawn shells for lighter cases, clock cases, and smoking pipe components. Backus Corporation celebrated 100 years of manufacturing in Smethport during 2006.



Today's Backus Company & Chef Specialties

46

Hamlin Park



Hamlin Lake and Hamlin Park were officially created in 1929 when children and grandchildren of Byron and Henry Hamlin purchased and donated the lands “AS A MEMORIAL TO MR. BYRON D. HAMLIN AND TO MR. HENRY HAMLIN.” The family went on to say that they are in the hope that: “coming generations of young people will find much pleasure in Hamlin park-a pleasant daydream of our childhood now come true.” - *Laena Hamlin Rose, Eugenia Hamlin Merrell, Orlo J. Hamlin, Jeanette Hamlin Hammer, Paul D. Hamlin.* Originally the lands were deeded to Bucktail Post 138. Four years latter in 1933 the post deeded the land to the Borough of Smethport. In 1975 a massive park project transformed the swampy grounds into a 32 acre community recreation center.

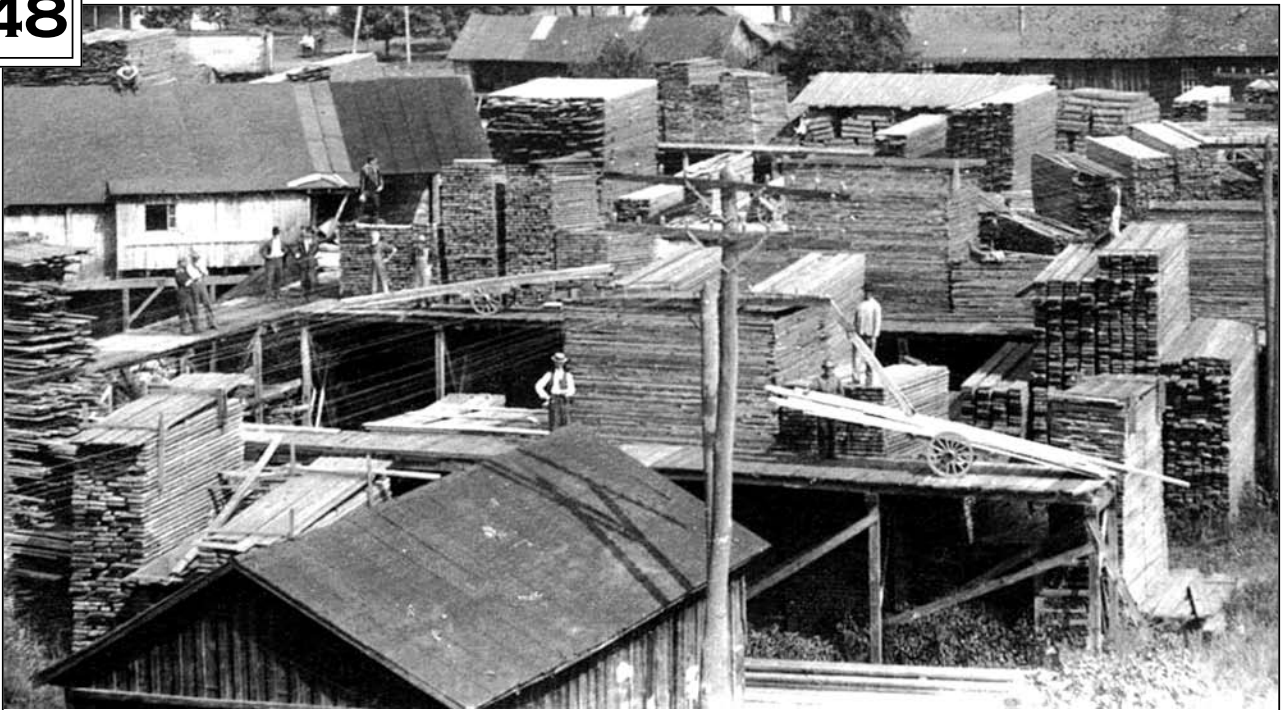
47

Since 1823: Hamlin Lake (Originally Applebee Millpond) South Mechanic Street

Smack-dab in the middle of Smethport you will discover Hamlin Lake and Hamlin Lake Dam. The lake has been a center point for Smethport from its earliest days. Originally built to power an “up and down” saw mill the spillway also powered a grain mill. In 1929 the land and lake were purchased by the Hamlin family which specifications that the Borough build a dam to create a permanent Hamlin Lake. Today Hamlin Lake provides the region with recreational opportunities.



48



Mechanic Street Looking North (toward town) From the Southside of the Dam

The massive Gifford saw mill on Mechanic Street had a raised tram system to move the newly cut lumber to the railroad and to storage stacks that towered above Mechanic Street. This photo was taken about 1903 or 1904 from the top of the boarding house just south of the Veteran's Memorial Bridge looking north toward the business district of the borough.

49

Home of William & Elizabeth Specht 307 S. Mechanic Street about 1865

Georgian Federal w/ Pavilion-hipped Roof

William Specht, dealer in furniture & undertaker, immigrated from Hanover, Germany in 1851, and the same year settled in Smethport. In 1879 he and Carl Sasse, his half-brother & business partner erected the Specht & Sasse Furniture And Undertaking building at 133 Main Street.



Ross Porter photo 2006



William Specht & his half-brother, Carl Sasse owned & operated Specht & Sasse Furniture & Undertaking 133 W. Main St. The Specht-Sasse Building currently is Rick's Primetime Pizza Shop.

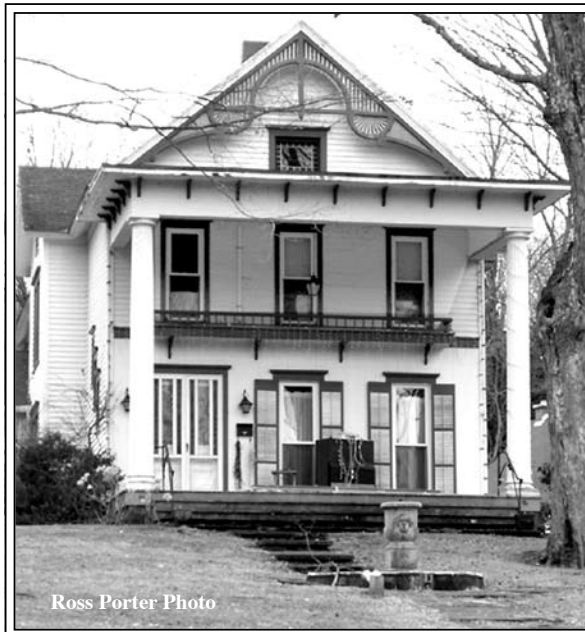


50



S.D. Freeman
Residence of Bucktail
Civil War Surgeon
17 Rosehill Avenue 1892

HOME OF FAMED CIVIL WAR SURGEON
FROM SMETHPORT



Ross Porter Photo

S. D. Freeman Mansion, 17 Rosehill Avenue,

In May 1861, Dr. S.D. Freeman was appointed medical surgeon for the Pennsylvania Bucktail Regiment. During October 1862, he was promoted to surgeon of the United States Volunteers and retained



The former S. D. Freeman Sanitarium
110 E. King St. is now a rental unit.

that post until the end of the war. Following the war, in addition to various military assignments, he built and operated a medical sanitarium located on East King Street. .

51

RoseHill Cemetery East end of Rosehill Avenue

During the early 1890s the Smethport Cemetery was moved from Water Street (today's location of Backus Company) to a hillside scenic location on the Rose Farm on the southeast side of Smethport. Climb the hill and explore the wonderful cemetery filled with Smethport's most famous pioneers.



Smethport's Lost Glass History

52

giant Camp Window Glass Factory 411-407 E. Water Street 1891



During the early 1890s the Camp family built the giant Camp Window Glass Factory on East Water Street between Nelson Street, Mechanic Street and Marvin Creek. The Camp Glass Factory stretched the supermarket lot east through the trailer court. The large Hilton Glass constructed in 1895 also produced window glass in Smethport.

All that remains of the Hilton Glass Factory is the office at 20 Hilton Avenue which has been converted to a private residence.



53

Smethport Bottle Company 325- 321 E. Water Street 1897

Just east of the Camp Glass

Factory was the Smethport bottle factory which was situated in



the area where Costa's Ace Hardware and Radio Shack are presently located. There were several owners including Haines-Flint & Berney Bond Glass Company. It was destroyed by fire in 1918.

The Smethport Cut Glass Company, 1907-1910 was located at 311 W. Water Street (See #). Its glass, however, was actually manufactured in Vineland, New Jersey, and shipped to

Smethport where only the finishing was completed.



Medbury Residence: One of Smethport's "Stations" for the Underground Railroad
 606 E. Main Street Greek Revival: Architect Solomon Sartwell 1828

54



photo credit: Library of Congress Collection

Smethport's shadowy involvement in the Underground Railroad has been documented repeatedly as an important depot for transportation of fugitive slaves on their journey to Canada. Two consistent abolitionists mentioned are Smethport hotel keeper David Young businessman Nelson Medbury. Young's hotel has long been lost but the Medbury home still stands, unrestored, at 606 E. Main.

"As long ago as 1827 or 1828, Smethport was a way-station on the underground railroad leading from the South to the North, whereon runaway slaves used to travel in making their escape into Canada, then a land of freedom to the black man. In other words, runaway slaves striking the Allegheny River at Warren, would take a short cut, the one used by lumbermen in this region returning from Pittsburgh, and reaching what was then known as the "Four Corners" J.H. Beers: *History of the Counties of McKean, Elk, Cameron & Potter*, 1890

****Be sure to check out Earl McElfresh's brilliant "Freedom's Tracks": A Map of the Underground Railroad Crossroads of America Watercolor Map Series available <www.mcelfreshmap.com> McElfresh Map Co. Box 565, Olean, NY 14760 ISBN 1-885294-31-X**



This section was originally located at Gulf Station site and was moved & attached to Medbury House when Gulf Station was built.

The 2006 Medbury House looks much as it one hundred years ago. Note addition on the left that was moved and attached when the Gulf Station was constructed across the street. Ross Porter photo 2006

Smethport Bucktail Re-enactors

Smethport is the home of the famous McKean County Rifles: Bucktail Regiment Company "I", 13th Pennsylvania Reserves, Forty-Second Pennsylvania Volunteers Reenactors.

It was in Smethport on April, 17, 1861, less than a week after the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter, South Carolina, that Colonel Kane arrived from Philadelphia, and summoned men from throughout McKean, Elk & Cameron Counties to answer President Lincoln's call to save the nation's capital.

The McKean County Rifles later became known as the Bucktails because of the distinctive bucktail insignia they wore on their hats. This unusual Bucktail symbol was born in Smethport when recruit James Landre-gan cut a deer tail at the butcher shop beneath the P. Ford Building, across from the courthouse and secured it on his cap. When Colonel Kane saw the deer tail he immediately approved of it and announced that his new regiment would be known as the "Bucktails".

For this reason the Borough of Smethport has been proclaimed the "Official Birthplace of the famous Bucktail American Civil War Regiment."

On April 25, 1861, the McKean County Rifles marched out of Smethport to Driftwood and on into Civil War fame. Along the way other Pennsylvania county volunteers joined the original Bucktails, which evolved into an elite regiment of Pennsylvania sharpshooters known for their courage, focus, dedication and commitment.

The Bucktails, fought bravely in nearly 50 battles in the Civil War and were described as "men of extremely hardy habits, and trained from boyhood to the use of arms".

The original Bucktails represent more than the Civil War era from which they sprang. These original Bucktails represent a spirit that existed here prior to 1861. Kane had selected McKean County because he recognized the spirit of our citizens: fiercely patriotic, ruggedly independent, and skilled in the use of firearms and a wisdom of the woods around us.

The spirit of the original Bucktails also represents a deep devotion to this country, a commitment to the community, a love of family and a recognition of the need to stand and protect our way of life. It was for these very qualities and values that Thom Thomas Leiper Kane journeyed to McKean County to form the McKean County Rifles to defend our union.

Smethport Company "I" Re-enactors today represent the spirit of the original Bucktails, not in granite, not in marble but as a different kind of memorial.

Smethport Company "I" Re-enactors represent a living monument. A living, breathing tribute not just to these Civil War heroes but to these original qualities and values of devotion to country, commitment to community, love of family and protection of our way of life that they fought for. When you see the Bucktail Re-enactors whether in parade, encampment or battlefield, remember we are a humble, living MEMORIAL to these brave and hardy men and the values they stood for.

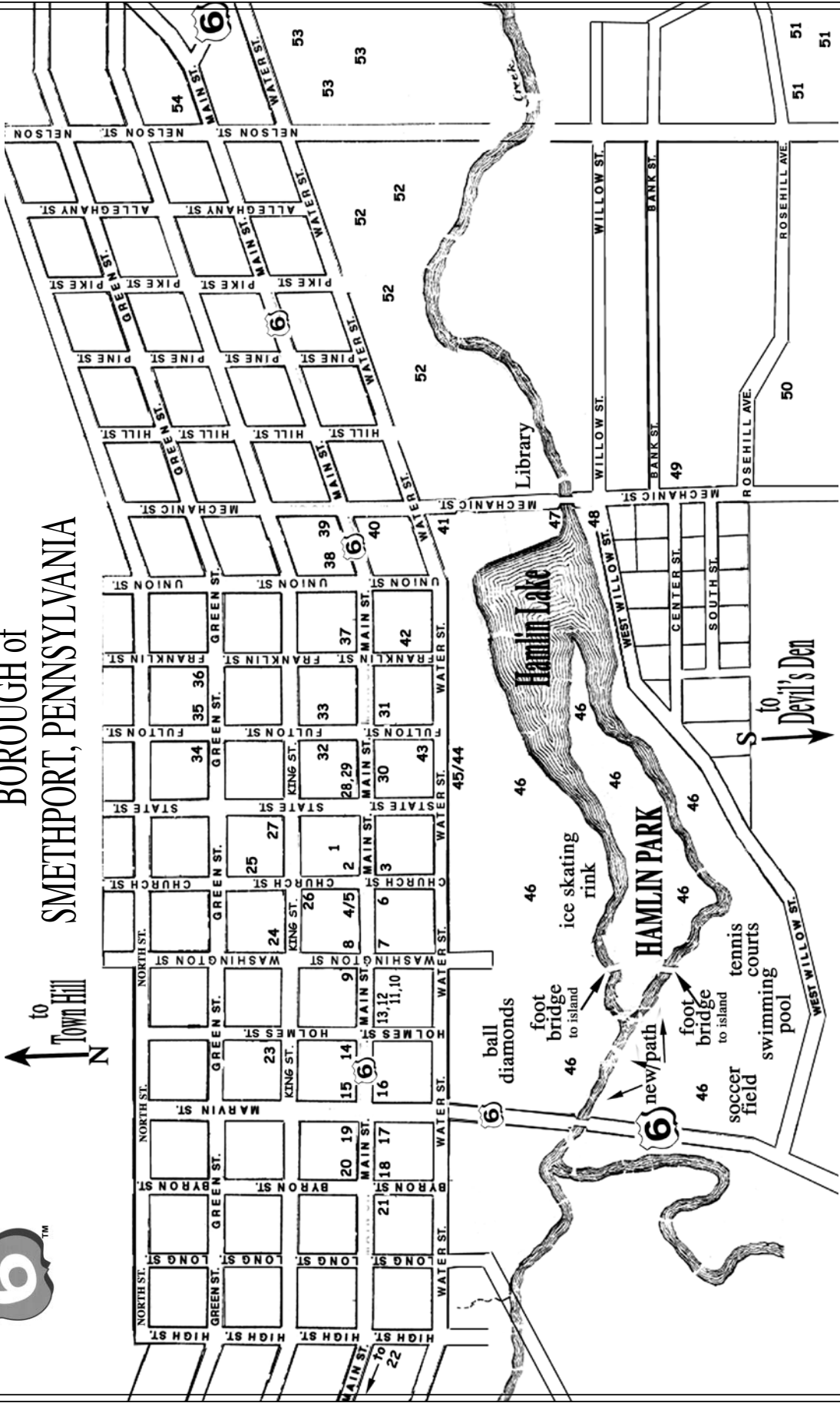
Smethport & the American Civil War
1861-1865



EXPLORE the HISTORIC BOROUGH of SMETHPORT, PENNSYLVANIA



to
Town Hill
N



to
Devil's Den
S