

The *Portage Area Historical Society*
Newsletter

814-736-9223

P. O. Box 45 Portage, PA 15946

June 2006



2006 Displays

On April 1st the doors of the Portage Station Museum opened for the 2006 season with new first floor displays, the theme, "Hidden Treasures." Many wonderful items stored over the years were pulled out of boxes and put on display - the original wooden BAR ANN DRIVE IN sign, a huge clock from HON'S DRUG STORE, draperies from the MOUNTAIN HOUSE, shoe displays from SCHOENFELDS. Even visitors from out of town can enjoy items from a time gone by - a hand-made sled, men's garters, a tin train, a metal ice cream maker. Admission is free, so stop by and reminisce, bring the youngsters and share old memories.



where Portage (Stagers) Auto Wreckers is today. So important was the building that even PA Governor J. W. Geary once stayed there. The building housed "50 men and 50 horses" and had a ballroom on the third floor, a "hot spot" for parties. Barbara got the information for her painting from Mrs. Kiel whose grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. William Russell, owned the building. As a little girl Mrs. Kiel spent a great deal of time at the hotel and was happy to share her memories. If you have not done so, stop by the museum to see this wonderful painting and the other artifacts that tell the story of Plane #2 of the Allegheny Portage Railroad.

PHC Grant

Barbara Yetsko's painting of Plane #2 of the Allegheny Portage Railroad was the inspiration for a grant received from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. On April 6th, fifth graders from Portage Area Elementary School stopped on Route 53 at the site of the Pennsylvania Historical Marker to learn about the Allegheny Portage Railroad. They then visited the museum to continue the presentation in front of Barbara's painting. Dressed in period clothing, Gregory Zaborowsky, National Park Education Specialist, did an outstanding job teaching, telling stories, and singing songs about the history of Portage. Several PAHS board members then led students through the museum telling them about the history of the building and its contents. Students also learned about the history of the Mainline Railroad and finished their tour by watching trains from the platform.

Barbara's large painting of Plane #2 shows a segment of the Allegheny Portage Railroad in a scene from the 1830s. The Washington House, a three-story hotel, was located on the site



2006 Collectible

The collectible for 2006 is our very own Railroad Station, now the Portage Station Museum. Built in 1926, this building replaced the station atop the tracks. Price of the collectible is just \$16.00 (tax included).



New Board Member

Rosemary Cunningham-Pavelko, our newest board member, was born and raised in Portage. She attended St Joe's, Bishop Carroll and Penn State where she met her former husband. Rosie's family moved to Utah after her husband found work in the coal mines. Her daughter, Carol, still lives in the Salt Lake, UT area.

Rosie earned a degree in Business Administration from the College of Eastern Utah. She studied at Utah Valley State College's Mountainland Technology Center, becoming a Certified Computer Repair Technician and a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer. She also studied Web Site Design and Implementation, Internet Routing and Protocols, Novell

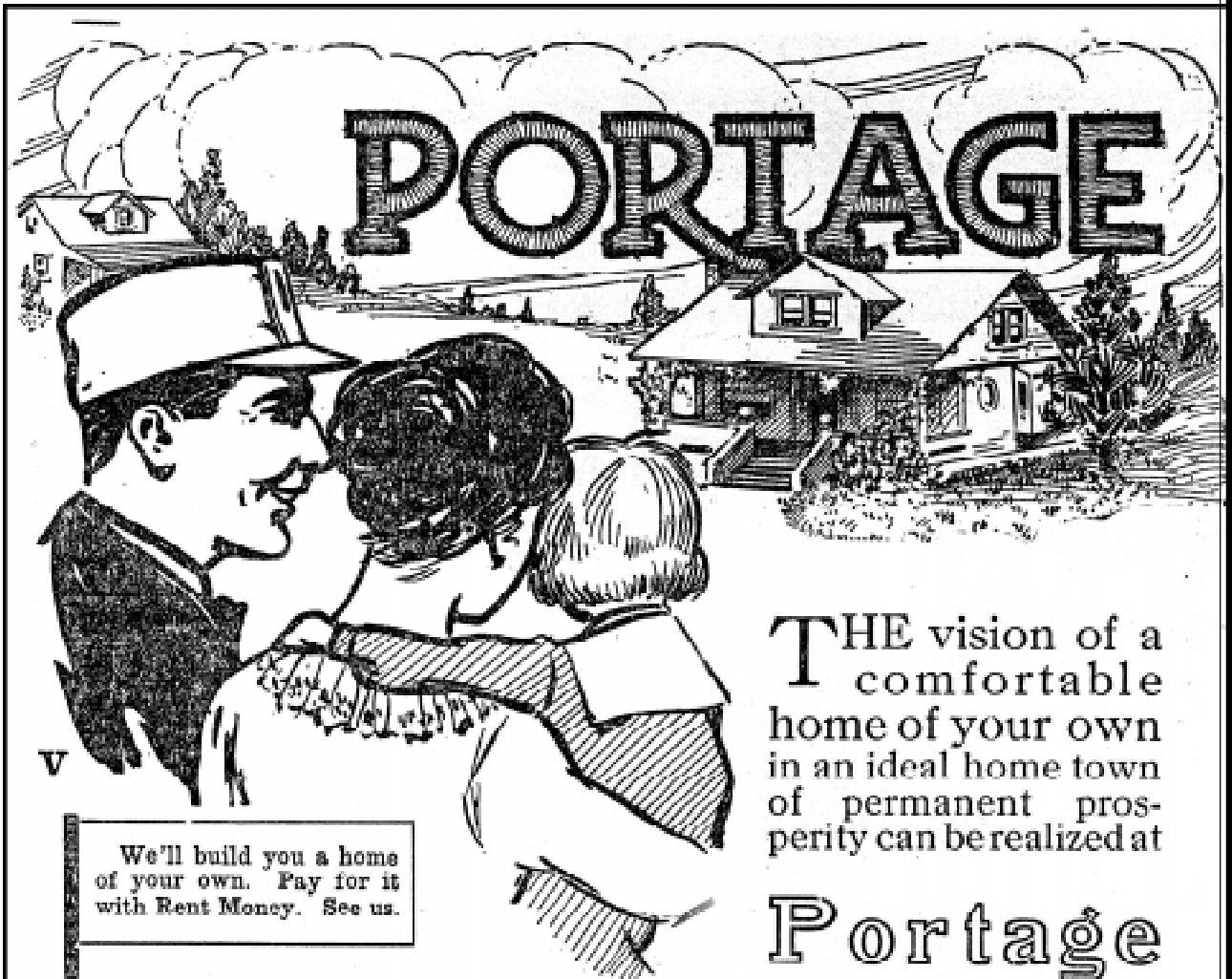


Products, and Linux Operating Systems. She gained experience in the workplace with Quickbooks, Microsoft Office, and digital photography.

Rosie's first job was right here in Portage, at Sedloff Publications, where the Portage Dispatch was published. She belonged to the Folklore Society, an organization dedicated to the preservation of Folk Music in its traditional form. As a member she helped make the folk instruments. When she moved to Utah she worked as a lobbyist for The Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities. She worked with members of both the Utah State Legislature and both houses of the U. S. Congress to try and insure that citizens with physical and mental challenges have as good quality of life and as much opportunity to lead a successful life as the rest of us. For the 2005 Legislative season she was the Utah State Housing Committee Chairman. In May 2005 Rosemary Pavelko returned to Westsylvania. Rosie says, "I'm very pleased to be back home!"

New Computer

Thanks to John Havrilla, the museum has a new computer system, donated by the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. With Rosemary Pavelko's help, museum files



We'll build you a home of your own. Pay for it with Rent Money. See us.

THE vision of a comfortable home of your own in an ideal home town of permanent prosperity can be realized at

Portage

Portage Has Advantages for the Whole Family

For Father

Nineteen different coal interests, a silk mill, a new refrigerator plant, a planing mill, a concrete block factory, a large bakery, etc., assure permanent employment and good wages. Many more good men are needed NOW.

For Mother

Portage is an ideal home town; its modest homes suggest comfort, thrift and permanency. Good churches of many denominations. Cheap fuel, electric lights, natural gas, excellent water, good stores, and a pleasant social life.

For the Children

It is hard to find a more healthful location than the high, well-drained Portage district, a valuable asset for growing children as well as grown-ups. The Portage schools are ably conducted and are housed in the most modern buildings.

Every man in Portage believes in Portage, and is boosting Portage. They KNOW the town has a great future. Its permanency is positive. Portage district has a population of over 12,000 and is growing fast. Many new industries are expected.

MARTIN REALTY COMPANY
 Houses for Rent or Sale Portage, Pa. Desirable Lots for Sale, \$200 Up

This 1916 advertisement appeared in the Johnstown DAILY TRIBUNE (courtesy of Jean Crichton)

are now being converted from the old system to the new. Frances Berzensky has been adding and updating inventories.

Programs & Projects

A special program highlighting the Sonman Mine explosion has been scheduled for the Summerfest weekend. Visitors will be able to view an extensive photo display on loan from the collection of Mr. Robert Sease. The award winning video "63 Men Down" will be shown throughout the weekend. We will also be sponsoring an Antique Appraisal on July 15th at the Portage Moose Hall. Two appraisers, several craft tables, and food will be available from 1-5pm. Plans for the community yard sale are well under way. Don't forget to drop off items at the museum for the Historical Society's sale (or call 736-8679 for pick up).



Jun 10: *Community Yard Sale*

Jul 15: *Antique Appraisal*

Aug 11-13: Summerfest Weekend "*63 Men Down*"

Oct 8: *Songs & Stories "PA's Working Class People"*

Nov 5: *Fashion Show "Bosom Buddies to Bustles"*

Dec 16: *Christmas Light Tour*

The following article, transcribed by the late Nancy Troxel, is a segment of an interview done by Gary Yusko with Mr. Elmer Lang, a long-time Portage resident.

April 8, 2000

Interviewer: *Gary Yusko (Bold - Italic)*

Interviewee: Elmer Lang

Can you tell us about riding the train in your younger days?

Back in those days we didn't have the automobiles you have today and when people traveled, they would use the trains. They didn't have the buses so they used the trains. And they would go to where ever. The only experience I had with the trains was at the big station. At one time it was partly open and partly closed, and it was not only for passengers, it was for freight.

Where was this located?

Up on top. It's torn down now. The mail came in there and then it was taken to the post office. Carl Staley had the Station Express Agency that ran from the station and he delivered and picked up from all around Portage. Part of that station was closed in and it had a pot bellied stove that was quite grimy. Most of the time there wasn't any heat in it. Of course, in those days people dressed for the weather when

they waited for the train. Back in those days, especially on the passenger trains, they (the engineers) prided themselves with being on time. They had a watch on a chain and they lived by it. That was their rosary, so the trains were seldom late. Anyway, in those days the fellows who were inducted into the service, the ones from this area would leave either from here or from the South Fork Station. There might be 100 or 150 boys leaving at one time and I was one of them, 'cause I enlisted back in the latter '40's.'

You left from this station?

I left right out of this station. Yes, we went up there and we waited and they gave us a paper bag lunch and we went to Pittsburgh. We didn't know it at the time, we thought we would go and come home later, but when we got to Pittsburgh and we passed (the physicals), we were put on the train and passed back through here. They (our family and friends) waved to us and that was the last they saw of us. Some they never saw again, you realize that. Then we went East into Cumberland where the military base was. When we traveled back, if we got a pass or leave, we traveled by train. Those (trains) were filthy. The windowsills were coated with grime and dirt.

Why do you think they were so dirty?

Both the coach and passenger trains were coal locomotives. You were sweaty and stuff would stick to you. I rode coaches from Florida when I came home on leave and they were filthy.

Did you ride the trains free when you were in the Military? Did they give you a pass?

If I remember correctly, they paid for our transportation to and from. Yes.

Did your family ever use the freight station?

There were two factors of freight coming in here at that time. You had smaller freight coming in here and the big stuff, say sheeting for a barn or something you bought from a catalog, the big stuff came in over at the freight station. That is also where they loaded the railroad ties to be used for railroad repair. Smaller stuff came in here and the stuff that would move

Museum Hours: Tuesday through Saturday - 12 to 5 pm

Visit our Website @

www.portagestationmuseum.org

Portage Area Historical Society Board

Regis Huschak - President

Ruth Richardson - Vice President

John Havrilla - Treasurer

Mary Kostan - Recording Secretary

Irene Huschak - Corresponding Secretary

Barbara Havrilla, Betty Cann, Ginny McDonnell,

Mary Lou George, and Rose Mary Pavelko.

faster. The stuff that came in over there would take days to get it in and you picked it up over there, rock dust for the coal mines came in over there. Then they took some trucks up to the different mines. So you had two freight stations actually.

Mr. Lang, could you relate some of your experiences in high school, using the station?

Only one. When you went to high school, you paid \$.15 a month class dues and that accumulated for four years. After graduation the senior class would take a trip to Pittsburgh or Hershey or wherever they had decided and that whole group left from the Portage Station. In my class, we

graduated in 1942, we had 42 students. Believe it or not! There were 21 boys and 21 girls. There are a few of them living yet.

Was the train ride comfortable?

Yeah, in a way, but it stopped in Conemaugh and Latrobe and the whole way along the line. Derry was one of the other stops. You had stops all along the line.

So it took quite a while to get there?

But it was an experience so you didn't mind, you got a seat along the side by the windows. Hey, you were coming out of the woods. You got to see the world!



Your membership helps keep the museum doors open! Tell a friend - it's only \$5 / year.

