

# **PRESENTATION PROJECTS**

## **LIFE ABOVE GROUND AT THE BREAKER**

This project involves gathering information from the abundant resources in our archives to build a presentation about life for the worker in a breaker. This may evolve into a skit for a living historian. Check out books such as [Kids on Strike](#) and [Growing Up in Coal Country](#). See the Resources tab on this website for more ideas.

## **LIFE BELOW GROUND FOR THE MINER**

This project involves gathering information from the abundant resources in our archives to build a presentation about life for the worker below ground. This may evolve into a skit for a living historian. Check out books such as [Kids on Strike!](#), [Breaker Whistle Blows](#), and [Growing Up in Coal Country](#). See the Resources tab on this website for more ideas.

## **LIFE OF A MINER'S FAMILY**

This project involves what life was like for a miner's family such as living conditions in the patchtown, scrip, child labor, education, clothing, schooling, food, and recreation. This may evolve into a skit for living historians. Check out the following books: [A Coal Miner's Bride](#), [Anthracite Tears](#), [Growing Up in Coal Country](#), [The Coal King's Slaves](#), [Another Civil War](#), and others listed under the Resources Tab on this website.

## **LIFE OF THE COAL BARON**

This project involves what life was like for the owner of the coal mine. Who were they? What issues and worries confronted them? What impact did they (and their money) have on the local economy/culture? This may evolve into a skit for living historians. You can find information about them at the Luzerne County Historical Society. Names to look for include: Charles Parrish, Conygham family, Matthias Hollenback, Pardee family near Hazleton, Asa Packer family in Mauch Chunk (Jim Thorpe).

## **TELL ME LIKE IT WAS**

This project involves interviewing former miners about their life underground. A willingness to research the specific topic, develop interview questions, and have or be willing to learn video and audio recording skills are a must for this project.

You can also listen to interviews by contacting:

King's College D. Leonard Corgan Library, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.  
570-208-5900

If you are researching the Knox Mine Disaster, you can read *Voices From the Knox* by Robert, Kenneth, and Nicole Wolensky. Check the Reference tab on this website for more information about the book.

### **DISASTER STRIKES!**

This project works with project 006. Once the list is compiled, a presentation of slides and appropriate narration should be made into short movie. This may also evolve into a skit for local historians to use. Information should be digitally accessible, organized, and able to be searched by keyword.

Check out the demise of the Market Street Bridge in the early 1800's due to ice, the various mining disasters such as the Baltimore Tunnel, Twin Shaft in Pittston, Avondale in Plymouth, Knight Shaft in Exeter, Knox Mine disaster, floods such as the 1936 and 1972 (Agnes), and a tornado strikes in 1890! The 1902 Anthracite strike and others could also be used.

Youtube has videos of each of the floods. See the Reference list for specific book, newspaper, or digital selections. 1936 flood: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOCT5KJfrR0>

You can also include the Lattimer Massacre and the Wyoming Massacre.

### **TO GET FROM HERE TO THERE**

We did not have an "A" train, but we did have lots of ways of transporting our goods and ourselves. This project would involve showing the various ferries, canals, trollies, steamboats, and trains that went throughout our region. The list would include the mode of transportation, dates utilized, maps of routes. Recollections of those who traveled on them in more recent times may be included in this presentation. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and able to be searched by keyword.

You can utilize books such as [Steamboats on the Susquehanna](#) by Charles Petrillo, [Wyoming Valley Trolleys](#) by Harold Cox of Wilkes University, [Bridging Change](#) by Sally Teller Lottick, and [Kingdom of Coal](#) are other good resources for canals and railroads. Two men prominent in the early canal industry here were Josiah White and Erskine Hazard. Check out the Canal Museum at Easton, PA.

<https://canals.org>

**Address:** 2750 Hugh Moore Park Rd, Easton, PA 18042

**Phone:** (610) 923-3548

Railroads included the Delaware and Hudson, the Reading Company, the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and more! Check out the link and visit Steamtown in Scranton.

<https://www.nps.gov/stea/index.htm>

## **WE HAD A LOT OF FUN**

What did people in the Wyoming Valley do for fun? We would like this project categorized into various decades such as the 1880's, 1890's and so on. This presentation would involve pictures, sound effects if possible, and appropriate narration. Did you know the first night college football game involved a school from the valley? Look for Wyoming Seminary and the first night football game. What was shin-kicking?

Sembrat, Steve. "Rock drilling, 'scientific shin kicking' among games people played" Times Leader. (Wilkes-Barré, PA), November 11, 2011.

"Scientific Shin Kicking." New York Times. query.nytimes.com. January 13, 1883.

All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

You can also check Youtube and books for Sans Souci Park, Hanson's Park, Angela Park, Rocky Glen Park. Zoos including those at Kirby Park and Nay Aug were also popular attractions.

## **IMMIGRATION**

What groups came here and why? Where did they settle? What patterns and influence did they have? This project looks at immigration into the Wyoming Valley from 1860 to 1940. Immigration statistics and maps of pattern of settlement are included in this project. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

Books you can use: [Coal Miner's Bride](#), [Luzerne County History of the People and Culture](#)

## **WAS COAL ALL THERE WAS?**

No, we had quite a number of support industries and other areas such as textiles like the Wilkes-Barre Lace Mill, ice harvesting at Bear Creek, lumbering at Ricketts Glen, and iron works such as Hazard Wire Rope Company and Sheldon Axle Works. This project would involve the research of other industries besides anthracite, and putting together a thirty-minute presentation about those activities using appropriate photographs and script. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

Books to use: Ghost Towns of North Mountain by Charles Petrillo, Valley With A Heart by William Kashatus, Chapters in Wyoming Valley History by Sheldon Spear.

## **STRIKE!**

Our area has a rich labor union history. What unions were here? Who was involved? What issues confronted the worker and the management? How were the issues resolved? What is the outcome of this history? This project should be turned into a paper and possibly evolve into a skit. There are many conflicts here. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

People to check out: Min Matheson ILGWU labor organizer, Terrence Powderly leader of the Knights of Labor, John Mitchell.

Books to use: Kids on Strike!

Articles to search for: Anthracite strike of 1902; trolley strikes in Wyoming Valley

## **PROMINENT POLITICIANS**

Who advocated the abolition of slavery in Congress? Who helped to get route 81 so close to us? This project would involve making a list of the top twenty-five politicians from this area and their accomplishments. The author would be responsible for a ranking system. This would include the early colonial years through the 1970's. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

People to search for: Dan Hart former mayor of Wilkes-Barrè, Dan Flood, U.S. Congressman, Charles Miner former U.S. Congressman

Books to use: Valley With A Heart, Chapters in Wyoming Valley History, Bridging Change and more in the Resources section on this website.

## **MOVERS AND SHAKERS**

Every community has its leaders. Who were ours in business and civics and religion?

This project would involve making a list of the top fifty from this area and their accomplishments. The author would be responsible for a ranking system. This would include the early colonial years through the 1970's. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

People to watch: Min Matheson ILGWU labor organizer, Ellen Webster Palmer founder of the Boys Industrial Organization, Dan Flood U.S. Congressman, Charles Miner U.S. Congressmen, Dan Hart mayor of Wilkes-Barre, John Fine governor of PA, Henry Hoyt governor of PA and buried in the Forty Fort cemetery, F. M. Kirby

business innovator, Amadeo Obici of Planter's Peanuts, musicians and artists, and Broadway and film stars.

Books to use: Books to use: [Valley With A Heart](#), [Chapters in Wyoming Valley History](#), [Bridging Change](#) and more in the Resources section on this website.

### **DISASTER AT THE KNOX MINE**

This project involves reviewing the archival footage we have along with books and interviews to develop a storyboard and possible DVD of the story of this disaster in which twenty-two men perished in 1959. There is quite a story of heroism here and you may be able to interview one of the men primarily involved in the rescue effort from underground! All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

Names to look for: Joe Stella, Myron Thomas, Esther Tinsley administrator of the Pittston Hospital.

Books to use: [Knox Mine Disaster](#), [Voices from the Knox](#)

### **SCALE THE VALLEY**

This project involves making a portable 3-D representation of the physical features of the Wyoming Valley. It must be built to a scale to be determined by the participant and monitor. Prominent locations of disasters and events and towns would be included. A wish would be to put the map into "layers" on a computer so that the physical features could be shown, the towns "laid" on next in the order of their appearance, followed by disasters and significant events. If the coal layers under the surface could be added this would be a WOW project!

### **EMERGENCY!**

We know to call 911 today for help. This project will investigate who was called for help starting in the 1800's. Trace the development of early emergency fire, police, and ambulance services to 1970. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

Suggestion: interview a local fire/ambulance service to learn their history.

### **MYSTERY AND MAYHEM AND DISASTERS**

Every community has mystery and mayhem in its history; ours is no exception. Research the mystery of the haunted house in West Pittston (Smurls) that made headlines in the 1980's as well as other unsolved happenings. Look into Civil War riots in Pittston and later peaceful marches that turned violent in Lattimer (near Hazleton). Of course, we remember the Agnes flood of 1972. That was the worst natural disaster to hit us, but not the only one. There are other floods (1936) and

even a tornado! All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

Check out: the Alec Campbell murder in the 1930's in Pittston over union organization, the murder of Freda McKechnie at Harvey's Lake in the summer of 1934 by her boyfriend, Good Friday bombings in Wilkes-Barre in 1936, and others.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

Nationally prominent architects have left their mark in Wilkes-Barre. This project will involve taking photos of prominent buildings that are characteristic of a particular architectural style such as Greek, classical, Roman, Art-Deco. Other styles may be added. Information would include: construction date, construction materials (and where from), cost, and is the building still in use. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

Books: Architecture of Wilkes-Barre

Names to look for: Frederick Olmsted (Central Park designer), Bruce Price (designer of Château Frontenac in Quebec), and Peter ?? are just three of the nationally known architects who worked in Wilkes-Barre.

## **048 WHERE WAS IT?**

This project is connected to in that it is about buildings. We want to see photos of present day buildings and photos of what was there before them. For example, the Hotel Sterling in Wilkes-Barre was not the only building on that site. What was there before that and what did it look like? What was it used for? The Wyoming Valley Hotel used to be on River Street in Wilkes-Barre near Wilkes University. What occupies that site? Old theaters such as the American Theater in Pittston or the Forty Fort theater may be a good place to start. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

## **THE FAIRER SEX**

Women have played important and prominent roles in our valley history. We want to know more about them. Notables such as Hannah Swetland and Betsy Denison were married to founders of our Wyoming Valley. Others like Ellen Webster Palmer and Min Matheson were crusaders who impacted hundreds if not thousands of lives. We need descriptions and photos (if available) of fifty notable women.

## **INVENTORS**

Did you know that the camera used in Hollywood for decades actually has its roots here in the Wyoming Valley? Many also vehemently argue that our own Father Murgas should be credited with the invention of the wireless radio and not Marconi. This project involves research and lots of digging to find other inventions and inventors with their roots here in the valley. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

People to look for: Lyman Howe and his Animotoscope, Father Murgas—fly fishing, wireless communication, Dr. Stanley Dudrick and the IV, and others.

### **THE BIGGEST, THE FIRST, THE ODDEST**

Our valley was once home to the largest silk lace manufacturing plant in the world. We also sit on top of the largest anthracite deposits in the world. And, perhaps the first lawsuit ever filed in the U.S. about bartenders serving visually intoxicated persons was done here—back in the 1800's! Frederick Douglass said the Wilkes-Barre would be as famous as Boston in the cause of the abolition of slavery. We are looking for 100 of these tidbits. We can get you started and have places to look. This project will entail looking at microfilm of old newspapers for part of the research. This information will be in a list format with 25 of the most notable pieces highlighted in one-page descriptions. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

### **SPORTS**

Northeastern Pennsylvania was once a breeding ground for major league baseball players including Hall of Fame inductees. Have you heard of Pete Gray the one-armed wonder from Nanticoke? Other professional sports such as football, basketball, hockey, and auto racing have people from our valley as players, coaches, and referees. This project will entail gathering a list of notables in the collegiate and professional from the sports world (not limited to those already mentioned) with short descriptions of their lives including hometown, birth/death date, years played, notable accomplishments. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

People to look for are also listed throughout the online book.

### **WAR HEROES**

War heroes instantly come to mind from Revolutionary War on through our storied history. Medal of Honor winners are buried here along with thousands of others who gave their time and in many cases their lives to the service of their country. Who are they and what did they do? This project will involve digging through the archives of newspapers to find their stories as well as stories about police, firefighters, and other community persons who performed heroic deeds. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

People to look for: Revolutionary War—Zebulon Butler, Nathan Denison buried in Forty Fort cemetery; War of 1812—James Bird buried in Forty Fort cemetery; Civil War--Eugene Beaumont, Edmund Dana buried in the Hollenback Cemetery, Robert Bruce Ricketts in Ricketts, Henry Hoyt buried in the Forty Fort cemetery; World War I—Asher Miner; World War II--Joe Toye from Rock Street in Pittston buried in

Reading, Gino Merli Scranton. Names from the Korea, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf war heroes may be found at their respective organizations.

## **THE ARTS**

Two-time Tony award winner Broadway designer Santo Loquasto has his roots in our valley. James Karen, a graduate of Coughlin High School is from here too. Ham Fisher was the nationally syndicated cartoon strip author of Joe Palooka. We have a world-renowned coal sculptor in Mr. Patience from West Pittston. Other names such as Herman and Joe Mankiewicz who were Hollywood writers and directors, Russ Morgan and Hugo Winterhalter musicians are just a few of the highlights.

There are many more who have made our Valley proud. This project will involve digging out the names and accomplishments of those involved with stage, screen, and print media. All information should be digitally accessible, organized and searchable.

Check out the online book and the DVD *Scratching the Surface* for more names.