

# Newsletter

## 166th Annual Dinner—May 9th



The Society's 166th Annual Dinner was held on May 9th at Bank + Vine Restaurant in Wilkes-Barre. Following cocktails, welcoming remarks by Adam Thalenfeld, Dinner Chairman, Chelsea Strub, Mistress of Ceremonies, Sherry Emershaw, President, and Paul Tweedy, Executive Director,

and dinner, Wilkes-Barre Mayor George Brown provided members and guests with a summary of the 100 year history of Kirby Park. In particular, Mayor Brown detailed the generous support of the Kirby family and comprehensive ongoing and planned initiatives to make the Park even more accessible to handicapped children and adults. He also noted City plans are underway to mark the Park's 100th anniversary with an old fashioned community-wide celebration on **September 7th**— mark your calendar now.

The Society would like to thank the following Sponsors and Donors for their generous support of this year's Annual Dinner:

**Sponsors:**

Trion Industries, Community Bank NA, Theresa Karambelas, Sherry Emershaw, The Luzerne Foundation, Sordoni Foundation & Friedman Hospitality Group

**Donors:**

Kathleen Boyd, Richard Kramer, Constance Wynn, Tish List, Wade Kirby, Henry & Deborah Cummings, Daniel & Colleen Hodakowski, Michelle Knight, Ronnie Schoonover & ValentinXStudios Photography



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## Mark Your Calendar

- June 1 **Museum Reopened** (Saturday 11:00-3:00, Tuesday-Friday by appointment (members free, general public \$5)
- June 1-Jan 1 **Luzerne County Decides Exhibit** in Museum
- June 4-28 **Mr. Hobo Hat Pop-Up Exhibit** at the Osterhout Free Library on South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre
- June 9 **Bradley Huebner** *Meet the Author* at Denison House 1:00-3:00 no charge
- June 30 **Gilded Age Tour** at Wilkes University 11:00-3:00 (\$10 members \$15 non-members, U-12 free)
- July 4 **146th Commemoration of the Battle of Wyoming at the Wyoming Monument** 10:00-Noon; Capitulaton signing re-enactment at Denison House at 1:00; Denison open-house 12:00-3:00
- July 14 **Jayne M. Booth** *Meet the Author* at Denison House 2:00-4:00 no charge
- July 18 **Dining with Friends** at Jonathans, Harveys Lake 6:00-10:00
- July TBA ***A Woman in Grey* Movie on the Lawn @ Swetland Series** 9:00-11:00 no charge, to be shown over two consecutive nights
- August 1 **Railriders' Society Promotion Night** 5:30 (\$15) - contact Mark Riccetti for tickets
- August 11 **Meet the Confederation of Union Generals** at Swetland Homestead 11:00-4:00 no charge
- Sept 7 **Wilkes-Barre City's Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Kirby Park**—watch for event details from the Mayor's Office
- Sept TBA **Dave Patterson** *Meet the Author* at Denison House 2:00-4:00 no charge
- Oct 18 & 19 **Ghost Walk in Wilkes-Barre** 6:00—8:30 (\$10 members and \$15 non-members) call Mark Riccetti for reservations
- Dec 7 & 8 **Festive Traditions at Swetland Homestead** 1:00-4:00 (\$10 members and \$15 non-members)

TBA = To Be Announced

For additional information about these and future events, contact the Society at (570) 823-6244 x 3, email [info@luzernehistory.org](mailto:info@luzernehistory.org), or see us on [Facebook](#) or our website <http://www.luzernehistory.org>.

## Museum Reopens with New Exhibit—*Luzerne County Decides*



Following closure for several months due to building issues, the Society is pleased to announce the reopening of its Museum on **June 1st**. In addition to Saturday hours 11:00-3:00, members (no charge) and the general public (\$3-\$5) may schedule a Museum visit Tuesday through Friday by calling the Society in advance 570-823-6244 x 3.

To celebrate the reopening, a new exhibit entitled *Luzerne County Decides*

will be unveiled at a public reception to be held 5:00 – 7:00 on Friday, May 31st. Featuring buttons, ribbons, pins, pictures, and signs, “Luzerne County Decides” looks back on elections at the local, state, and national levels, from 1836 – 2016. We hope you can join us.

## Gilded Age Tour at Wilkes University

On **Sunday, June 30th, 11:00-3:00**, the Society will conduct a Gilded Age Tour of five historic homes located on the campus of Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre. The homes include: Rifkin Hall (1875); Conyngham Hall (1897); Weckesser Hall (1914-1916); Kirby Hall (1873-1874); and Chase Hall (1917-1918). Each has their own unique history and stories associated with former owners and families. Please note that Rifkin Hall and Kirby Hall are not ADA compliant. Parking will be available and accessed in the lot off South Franklin Street behind the Henry Student Center (84 West South Street), where participants will register, get a tour map, and visit the homes in whatever order they like. Society volunteers at each location will detail the history and significance of each house. No reservations are necessary but encouraged and tickets are **\$10 for members and \$15 for non-members**.



Weckesser (1914-1916)



Rifkin Hall (1875)



Conyngham Hall (1897)

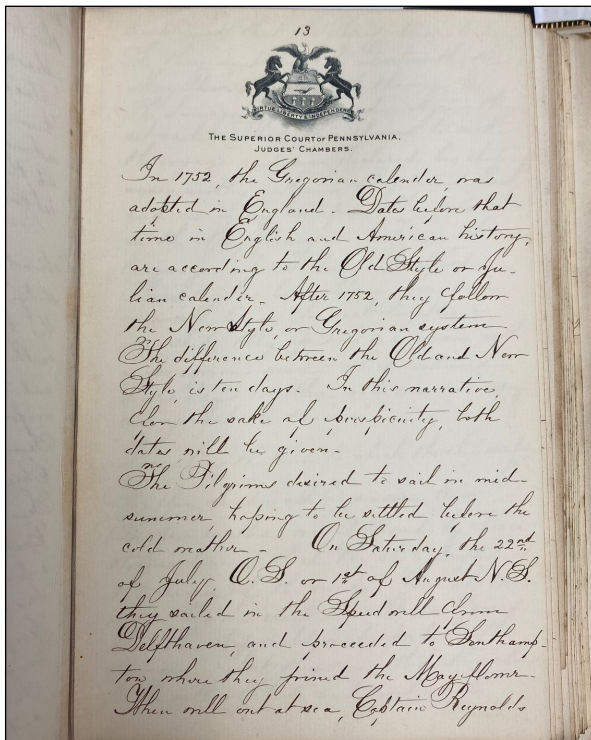
## Found in Collection

### Maria Fuller Rice (MFR)

(Amanda Fontenova)

A collection of curious materials found in our archives are seven bound volumes of historically themed papers, written between the years 1884-1909 by Maria Fuller Rice but simply referred to as MFR (1844-1909). She was the daughter of Congressman Henry Mills Fuller and Harriet Tharpe, and married PA Superior Court Judge Charles Edmund Rice in 1873.

Maria Rice had membership in multiple social clubs and historical organizations, such as Daughters of the American Revolution, the Mayflower Society, and the Thursday Club (a group of prominent local women interested in civic affairs). Many of these clubs would come up with a theme for the year, and each member would basically research and write a report on topics fitting the theme, to be read at their meetings. The papers are generally of a historic nature, and a few are about local history. At least one of her papers was read before the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, the former name of our Historical Society.



The papers span the years 1884-1909 and were gathered and bound together into books by either her husband, Charles, or son, Charles Jr., in 1910, the year after she died. Handwritten, most of the pages are written on stationary emblazoned at the top with "The Superior Court of Pennsylvania, Judges' Chambers." According to her obituary, Mrs.

Rice would faithfully accompany her husband to various cities whenever the Superior Court was in session, so perhaps some of these papers were written while she waited for him.

The Charles Edmond Rice family lived on South Franklin Street in Wilkes-Barre, and were buried in Hollenback Cemetery, along with their sons and Maria's parents.

### 2024-2025 Board of Directors

Will Conyngham, President  
Carol Lavery, Vice President  
Eileen Cipriani, Treasurer  
Jennifer Ochman, Secretary

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Janet "Jefie" Flack\*  
Henry Johnson\*

\*Deceased

#### Ex-Officio:

Paul A. Tweedy, Exec. Dir.  
Mary Walsh, Assistant Dir.

## Meet the Authors at Denison



Each year the Society welcomes to the Nathan Denison House grounds authors whose books explore interesting facets of our history and culture.

**Bradley Huebner** kicks off this year's series on June 9th 1:00-3:00 with his book *Titles for our Town: How Tiny Pennsylvania Communities Produced Basketball Dynasties and Shaped Basketball History During the Golden Age*.

**Jayne M. Booth** returns on July 14th 2:00-4:00 with the 2nd book in her *Rocked in the Cradle of Coal* series entitled *Tell Me About My Father: Wasyl's Story*.

**David Patterson** will discuss his book *The Pinchots: A Family Saga* in September (date to be announced) 2:00-4:00 which focuses on three Pinchot generations who left a lasting legacy of public service, activism, and conservation.

Books will be available for purchase.

## Mr. Hobo Hat Pop-Up Exhibit



Our first pop-up exhibit featured Wilkes-Barre's and the Society's arguably most famous world traveler, Mr. Hobo Hat. Having left Wilkes-Barre in 1922 and traveling via trains, steamships, automobiles, and even rickshaws over 100,000 miles in multiple trips around the world, the hat returned home some years later and was loaned and later donated to the Society in 1959. [Click here to read the blog on Mr. Hobo Hat on the Society's webpage.](#)

Mr. Hobo Hat's latest journey was considerably shorter ... one mile. He traveled to the offices of Visit Luzerne County in April (shown in the photo to the left), the Abide Coffeehouse in May, and will conclude its journey at the Osterhout Library during June before returning safe and sound to the Society in early July.

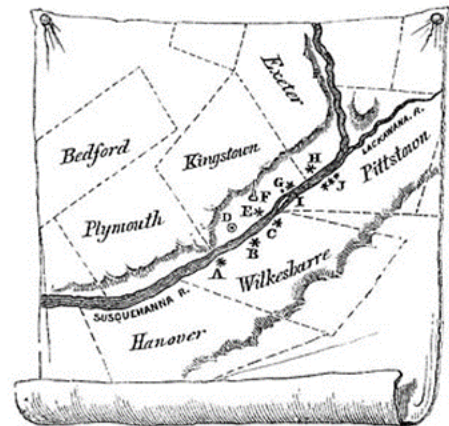
## 146th Commemoration of the Battle of Wyoming at the Wyoming Monument

Although not an event sponsored by the Historical Society, it has long been a supporter and promoter of the annual commemoration of the Battle of Wyoming at the Wyoming Monument held on July 4th., 10:00-Noon. Following the ceremony, the Society and the 24th Connecticut Militia Regiment will host a re-enactment of the Battle's capitulation at 1:00 pm at the Nathan Denison House in Forty Fort. Denison House will also be open to visitors from Noon-3:00. Admission is free for everyone. Shown to the right is the iconic table said to be the very one upon which the capitulation was signed. It was donated to the Society in 1910 and can be seen at Denison House. If you would like more information about the table, [click here to read a blog on the Society's website.](#)



## Early Settlement Along the “Great Road”

The Society is the recipient of a \$5,000 grant from The Luzerne Foundation to provide homeschool and scouting youth (boys and girls) residing in Luzerne County with a unique, educational, and entertaining program entitled *Early Settlement Along the “Great Road”*. Free of charge, this program focuses on explaining, via oral narratives, site visits, and materials, over a half-day experience, the details of two historical events (the Yankee-Pennamite Wars and the Battle of Wyoming) and the importance of two families (Denison and Swetland) to our local history along what was once called the “Great Road”, today’s Wyoming Avenue. The pilot program will be provided through Fall 2024. For more details or to reserve a tour contact Mark Riccetti at (570) 823-6244 x 3 or email [mriccetti@luzernehistory.org](mailto:mriccetti@luzernehistory.org).



## Remembering the Titanic Tea

Board member Bill Lewis and former media personality Dave DeCosmo were featured speakers at our sold out *Remembering the Titanic Tea* held on April 21st at Kirby Episcopal House in Glen Summit Springs. Members and guests were treated to tea and accompanying food, period music, and a wonderful Titanic program.



Some attendees even wore period attire to celebrate the Titanic era theme.

## Election of 2024-2025 Officers



Outgoing President Sherry Emershaw passing the gavel to incoming President Will Conyngham.

At its May 21st Board meeting, the following were elected to one-year terms as Society officers for 2024-2025: Will Conyngham, President; Carol Lavery, Vice President; Eileen Cipriani, Treasurer; and Jennifer Ochman, Secretary. In addition, Drs. Sara Cornell and Thomas Leary were elected to serve on the Board (see page 4 for a complete list of the new Board), effective July 1st. Congratulations and thanks to outgoing President Sherry Evershaw, Vice President Will Conyngham, Treasurer Jennifer Ochman, Assistant Treasurer Carol Lavery, Secretary Adam Thalenfeld, and Directors Will Kresge and Carl Goeringer for their service and support.



# Society Shorts

## Monday Marker Series



January 29th was the launch date on Facebook of what has become our very popular Monday Marker Series. Each Monday, one of the 71 Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission markers is featured located in Luzerne County. Our first installment highlighted the Baltimore Mine Tunnel Disaster in Wilkes-Barre as part of our observance of Anthracite Mining Heritage Month. If you have not already done so, check it out: <https://www.facebook.com/luzernehistory>

## Railriders Tickets

Once again the Society has teamed up with the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Railriders baseball team at PNC Field in Moosic on Thursday, August 1st for a fun night at the ballpark. Tickets are \$15, purchased directly from the Society, and proceeds benefit our daily operations. For more information or to order tickets call (570) 823-6244 x 3 or email [reservations@luzernehistory.org](mailto:reservations@luzernehistory.org). Look for our table located on the ballpark Mezzanine and enjoy a night out at the game.

## Meet the Generals

Sunday, August 11th (11:00-4:00) marks the return of *Meet the Confederation of Union Generals* on the grounds at Swetland Homestead. Patrons will be able to question the Generals about their experiences before, during, and after the Civil War. No charge to attend. The Swetland house will also be open to the public.

## Library Update

Amanda and her part-time volunteers have been very busy since the start of the year. To date, over 6,000 items have been entered and updated in a computer database. Eventually, the database will be used in place of all paper, card-file, or other computer-based indexes used in our Library. A lot of work is still needed to catalog and digitize parts of our collections, so give us a call if you are interested in volunteering. A hardy thank you to dedicated volunteers from the Penn State University Master Gardeners who are hard at work planting and improving the Library garden. Finally, the Society would also like to thank long-time Library volunteer Dave Wright for his time and dedication in helping to keep our research request queue moving smoothly, and entering our existing library catalog into our database. Dave is taking some time off this summer, but we hope to see him back in the Fall. The Library is open by appointment on Tues, Wed, Fri, and Sat; please call or email a day or two ahead to ensure the Librarian receives your appointment request in time as same-day appointments may not be available.

## Movies on the Lawn @ Swetland

July (date to be announced) will be the first of the Society's new Movies on the Lawn @ Swetland Series with a two-part viewing of the 1920 15-episode serial silent film *A Woman in Grey*. Filmed in and around Wilkes-Barre, it tells the story of the murder of Mrs. Haynes, resident of the old Armory homestead, followed by an ever increasing intensity of the struggle for possession of the Amory code, in which lies the secret of the Amory fortune. "Abounding with Thrills. Action, Mystery, and Suspense. The Super Serial Sensation of the Year!" Due to its length, the film will be shown over two consecutive nights. Showings begin at 9:00 so come a bit earlier and bring your blanket/chairs. Pray for no rain.



## Luzerne County Historical Society

The Society preserves and promotes the collective history and heritage of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, at the Bishop Memorial Library and its Museum in Wilkes-Barre City, the Nathan Denison House in Forty-Fort Borough, and the Swetland Homestead in Wyoming Borough.

Renew your membership or become a new member:

Benefactor	\$250	Patron	\$100
Family	\$75	Individual	\$50
Senior	\$25	Student	\$10

Please make checks payable to:

Luzerne County Historical Society  
49 South Franklin Street  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701  
<http://www.luzernehistory.org>

## Staff



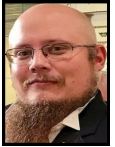
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**Mark Riccetti, Jr, Director of Operations & Programs**

[mriccetti@luzernehistory.org](mailto:mriccetti@luzernehistory.org) (570) 823-6244 x 3



**Amanda Fontenova, Director of Library & Archival Services**

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**The Board of Directors and Staff of the Historical Society would like to thank all new and renewing members for their support. In addition, special thanks is extended to those who generously responded to our Annual Appeal and Annual Dinner patrons and donors. These donations are essential to our operations and allow us to bring you programs, exhibits, research services, and so much more that make our Society better and stronger each day.**

## Administrative Staff Moving to Darling House



Paul Tweedy and Mary Walsh are moving the Society's administrative offices from the Bishop Memorial Library to the Edward Darling House located on the grounds of the Swetland Homestead. Formerly known as the Hancock House, which had served as the residence of the Swetland caretaker, the house was recently renamed by the Board of Directors to honor the family of Dorothy Darling, who generously donated to building repairs and painting after years of neglect. This change will free up badly needed space in the Library. Amanda Fontenova will remain at the Library and Mark Riccetti will divide his time between the two locations. In addition to office

space, one room will accommodate small group meetings and another will be used as a reception area, at least one of our Pop-up exhibits, and Society gift shop. We will retain the same 49 South Franklin Street mailing address and telephone number. Watch our Facebook and website for the official move-in date and please feel free to drop by to say hello and check out our new digs.