

OCTOBER 2018

Hours

The Osceola Mills Community Historical Foundation's museum is located in the historic Brisbin House on Lingle Street in Osceola Mills, PA. Regular museum visitation hours are from **2:00 until 4:00 on Sundays**; from Memorial Day until the end of October. **The OMCHF meets on the first Wednesday of each month (excluding December through February) at 7:00 pm in the Brisbin House.**

Remember, all are welcome to visit our museum and attend our monthly meetings. The OMCHF wants and needs you! Come to our museum and experience the rich local history of the Osceola Mills area! The displayed artifacts, books, photos, etc. have all been donated by those, near and far, with a warm attachment to Osceola Mills. Community pride is on display at our museum!

President's Report

The OMCHF sends its heartfelt best wishes to founding member **Andy Tocimak** who reached his 100th birthday on July 30! Andy continues to be sharp and still asks about the OMCHF's activities. He is a great example of long life well spent in participating in community activities and service to others. Congratulations, good friend! (Please see the bulletin segment about the July 4th parade).

Also, we sadly note the passing of Andy's wife, **Louise Tocimak**, on August 20, at Colonial Courtyard, in Clearfield. Louise and Andy resided there for the past few years. Louise was a dedicated friend of the OMCHF and served as a past president. She has and will continue to be missed. May she rest in peace!

The 2017-2018 year has been a routinely busy one for the OMCHF. Members again pitched in to clean the museum, and the new roof, with a few glitches, has been repaired and seems to be in long lasting shape.

Museum Tours

Tours for individuals or groups, outside of regular hours, can be arranged by calling 814-378-5748 or 814-339-7778.

Recent Events

The OMCHF museum was open on Sunday, July 1 during the annual car show in town. A good number of visitors toured the museum and some Osceola and Cowtail logo tee shirts and sweatshirts were sold.

July 4th Week: The OMCHF and the entire local Osceola community honored Andy Tocimak by making him our guest of honor in the annual July 4th parade. Andy sat up front, in the parade car, and received the waves and cheers as he went by. His memory was sharp and focused as he recognized and spoke to so many that he has known throughout the years. Not even the downpour, near the end of the parade, could dampen the warm feelings that the community still feels for Andy! Special thanks to Drew Tocimak, Andy's son, for bringing his dad back home to Osceola Mills for the parade!

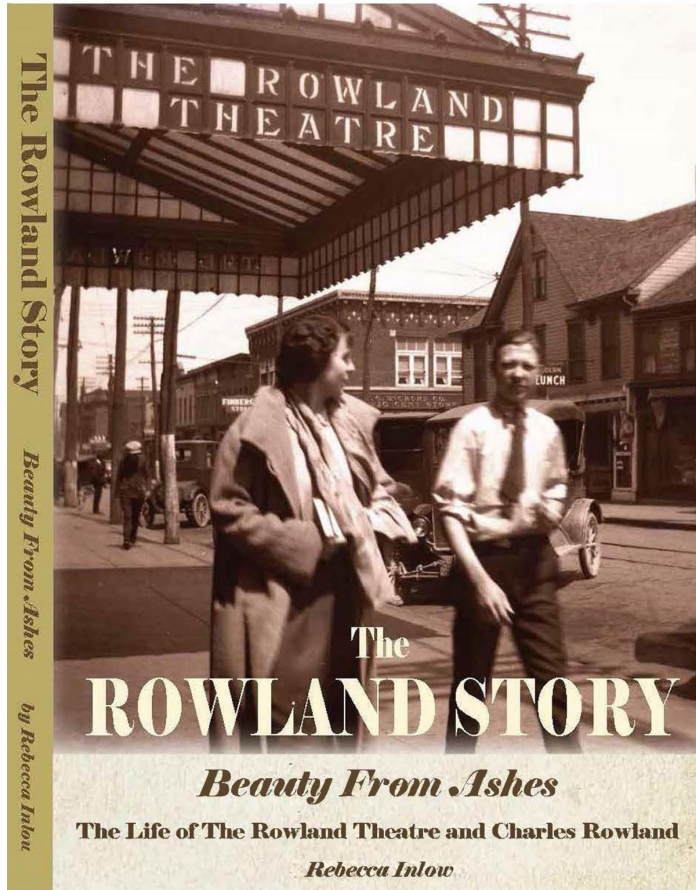


Andy Tocimak in the 2018 July 4th Parade

The OMCHF supported the Osceola Mills Women's Civic Club's annual **Flower Show** in July. The theme was *Small Town USA*. **Christmas caroling** is planned for December.

An Outstanding Book By Rebecca Albert Inlow!

Osceola's own, Rebecca Inlow has recently published her local historical work; *The Rowland Story: Beauty From Ashes*. Her research is obviously top notch and her writing style is uplifting. The book is a professionally done masterpiece!



In it, Becky recounts the personal biography of Charles Rowland of Houtzdale and later Philipsburg. His business career, as a founding corporate officer of the *Alley Popper* railroad; that once made its way from Philipsburg, through Osceola Mills, Houtzdale and on to Fernwood, in Gulich Township, is splendidly written.

The book goes on to trace the history of Philipsburg's Rowland Theater, another of Rowland's successful enterprises, during its heyday and its sad demise in the 1970's.

The most recent years of the Rowland Theater are perhaps its best. A dedicated community group took charge of the theater, worked hard to raise funds for its restoration and operation, and had it placed on the National Register of Historic Places. All of this history is masterfully portrayed in the book, which includes excellent photos and graphics.

Becky Inlow is an integral part of the theater's operation and is a dedicated volunteer in its cause of survival and bringing varied entertainment to the Moshannon Valley area. She is a graduate of Penn State with a degree in Journalism. She worked for *The Progress* for eighteen years; ending her career there as an editor. Becky is employed by the PA Department of Human Services and resides in Osceola Mills with her husband and son.



Rebecca Inlow

Another Big Event!

Osceola Spirit Day: One of the rainiest summers in memory did not stop the annual Osceola Spirit Day from being a great success on Saturday, September 8! It seemed as though as the rain came down; the people still came out. The OMCHF again held its homemade soup sale and sold Osceola logo clothing. Many thanks to all who helped set up and tear down tents and tables, worked at our booths and took part in the planning of this great community event!

The Pennsylvania Railroad Railyard at Osceola Mills (1905-1968)

Written by David Caslow

The prosperity that came to the Moshannon Valley during its golden years was made possible by three railroads, the Pennsylvania (Tyrone & Clearfield), the New York Central (Beech Creek) and the Altoona & Philipsburg (Alley Popper). Until the railroads arrived, it was impossible to get the vast quantities of lumber, coal and clay resources and products to market. Hardman Philips made strong efforts to build a railroad up the mountain but after failing this attempt and experiencing other personal set-backs, the disenchanted Philips sold all of his holdings and returned to England in 1844.

Shortly after, a group of four wealthy investors led by Andrew Curtin purchased 500 acres that would become incorporated as the town of Osceola Mills in 1865. Prior to purchasing this land under the name of the Osceola Coal Company in 1854, Curtin and his fellow investors obtained a charter to build the Tyrone and Clearfield Railroad up the ten-mile ascent of the wild and rugged Allegheny Front to intersect with their future town of Osceola. Many challenges delayed the construction while accompanying financial problems caused the Tyrone & Clearfield to become leased by the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR). After seven years of construction, Osceola Mills became the first town in Clearfield County to have a railroad when service began in 1863.

The excellent quality of coal in the Moshannon Valley and the exceptional marketing strategies of brothers Charles and Edward Berwind of Berwind-White Coal Mining Company created a resounding boom in the area coal business. Two new companies at Sandy Ridge and Retort were also among the largest fire-brick producers in the state and added to the local economic expansion brought on by the coal trade.

Feb 1952



Looking over the Moshannon Coal Company mining offices near Klondike toward the Osceola Yard enginehouse and roundhouse.

The heavy rail traffic up and down the Sandy Ridge mountain created an abrupt demand for engine maintenance and car repair. By 1874, an engine house was built directly across the Moshannon Creek from the town of Osceola. Within ten years, a train dispatchers office was established at the "Osceola Junction", a point where one PRR branch

split to proceed in the direction of Houtzdale and beyond while the other continued toward Philipsburg and Clearfield. During the 1880's, all items hauled down the mountain to the Tyrone Division Headquarters became dispatched from what became known as the "Osceola Yard". These 1880's beginnings led the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) to purchase additional land to expand the yard about one mile to the north, toward Philipsburg.



This is the Osceola Yard enginehouse where light maintenance was done on eight or nine locomotives.

Considerable Osceola Railyard expansion occurred in 1905, when a larger enginehouse was built and the Philipsburg enginehouse was closed. Outside of the Tyrone Headquarters, Osceola became the largest railyard in the Tyrone Division of the PRR. The railyard included offices for a trainmaster, yardmaster and other supervisors. The yard contained a scale for weighing freight cars, an engine house, a sand tower, water tanks and a car repair shop. By the 1920 Census, 161 Osceola Borough residents were employed by the railroad. A total of fifty-five percent of Borough residents had jobs that were centered around coal and the railroad.

The Osceola enginehouse performed light locomotive maintenance for eight or nine steam locomotives. Between 1949 and 1954, these were replaced by diesel powered locomotives. On February, 1949, the Pennsylvania Railroad tested its first diesel engine by hauling 27 carloads of coal up the Sandy Ridge Mountain. After three days of testing, it was determined that one diesel engine could do the job of three steam locomotives. However, the addition of diesel locomotives also had a negative impact, as the number of Railyard work crews was both reduced and downsized. Discontented workers called a strike on May 10, 1950 and completely shut down the Osceola Rail Yard.

Moshannon and Clearfield Branch rail hopper cars that were loaded primarily with coal, bricks, lumber and pulpwood were weighed at the Osceola Railyard before being dispatched to Tyrone. On six days a week, units of forty to sixty hopper cars hauled freight down the mountain to the PRR Tyrone Division Headquarters. Former Osceola Mills

continued —>

Railroad Railyard at Osceola Mills (continued)

resident Rose Danko, was one employee who worked the scales in the years prior to the close of the Osceola Railyard in 1968.



The state of the art Elliot Coal Cleaning plant located on the north side of the Osceola Railyard was in operation from 1949 to 1970.

In 1949, Philipsburg's Lewis Stein, president and general manager of Elliot Coal Company built a half-million-dollar coal cleaning plant at the Osceola Mills Railyard that was one of the first of its kind. The Elliot Coal Company was easily the largest coal producer in the Moshannon Valley and supplied coal to various electric power plants. It's state of the art cleaning plant had two miles of side tracks and could service 160 cars which brought in carloads of coal. The coal was dumped into a deep pit where it was crushed, cleaned and reloaded into railcars on the other side. The cleaning plant was capable of efficiently processing over 500 tons of coal in an hour. Directly or indirectly, the Elliot Coal Company sustained jobs for over 1,200 people. Termination came when the Elliot Coal cleaning plant workers voted in 1967 to affiliate with the United Mine Workers Union and by 1970, the coal cleaning plant was shut down and dismantled.



Osceola Railyard workers take a break to pose with Miss Pennsylvania Railroad in front of the enginehouse during the last years of the railyard.

The demise of the Osceola Rail Yard was also related to the obstacles created by the rugged climb up the Sandy Ridge Mountain. The ascent and descent of the mountain were dangerous ventures with a high rate of accidents and derailling. Climbing the challenging mountain expended a large amount of coal and fierce shoveling efforts from the coal tender to keep the fire going. Brakemen were also pushed to their limits to control the trains traveling down the mountain, even after air brakes were first introduced.

As the onset of the automobile and bus lines such as the Fullington Auto Bus Company of Clearfield caused passenger service to decline in the early part of the century, the growth of state and interstate funded highways allowed trucking companies have an advantage over the freight trains. Ever increasing government regulation of railroads and a change from coal to other kinds of fuels, such as oil, gas and electricity, also added to the railroad decline. By the 1950's, coal production shifted to other areas while the General Refractories and Harbison-Walker brickyards either declined or shut down altogether. With fewer goods to haul, both the Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads suffered economic decline and cut back operations.

On February 1, 1968, the PRR and NYC RR merged to form the Penn Central Railroad. The ill-fated merger quickly fell into a declaration of bankruptcy on June 21, 1970. During the short-lived merger, cost saving moves abandoned rail traffic up the challenging Sandy Ridge Mountain in 1969. The Moshannon Branch rails and all its spurs in the direction of Houtzdale were also dismantled. This action spelled doom for the Osceola Railyard. The yard was moved to Clearfield, resulting in nearly all of the structures being torn down while workers were either transferred or furloughed. Needless to say, it was a sad day for the community when they shut down the Osceola Railyard! The local economy further declined and the sweet sounds of everyday rail traffic faded into the memories of that generation of Osceola residents.



The sand tower is visible behind the two diesel locomotives. The first building to the right was the oil house with the car repair shop located directly behind.

Warmest Congratulations!

The OMCHF extends its warmest congratulations to the congregation of the Osceola Mills Presbyterian Church upon the 150th anniversary of its founding in 1868! For the past century, the Presbyterian Church in Osceola has served as a faith anchor and a vital part of the Osceola Mills Community. The occasion was marked with a special service and ceremony on Sunday, September 9. Jerry Fritz, a prominent local historian and author of the DVD *Osceola, From the Beginning Part Two*, and formerly of Osceola Mills, spoke at the gathering.



Clothing for Sale

The OMCHF continues to sell Osceola Mills and Cowtail logo tee shirts, sweat shirts and ball caps. **These items make great gifts and are a good way to show your Osceola Mills pride!** Please contact Shirley Hollenbach at 814-339-7942 for information regarding designs and shipping.

Tee Shirts	\$12.00	Sweatshirts . . .	\$20.00
Hoodies	\$30.00	Ball Caps	\$12.00

Books and DVDs for Sale

<i>Osceola Mills From The Beginning</i> by Jasper Fritz	\$10.00
<i>Hills of Penn</i> by Jim McNeish	\$6.00
<i>Chief Osceola, Patriot and Warrior</i>	\$2.50
<i>Days and Events That I Remember</i> by Bud Hollis	\$6.00
<i>Osceola Mills Photo Slide Show DVD</i> by David Caslow.	\$12.00
<i>Osceola Mills From the Beginning DVD Volume 2</i> by Jerry Fritz	\$12.00

Books and DVDs can be ordered from the OMCHF. See address below.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND/OR ANNUAL DUES RENEWAL

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone/Email _____

Type of Membership (please list and circle one): _____

Individual \$5.00	Family \$15.00	Organization/Business \$25.00	Lifetime \$100.00
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Please enclose a check payable to OMCHF and mail to: OMCHF
600 Lingle St
PO Box 212
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Memorials and donations accepted

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