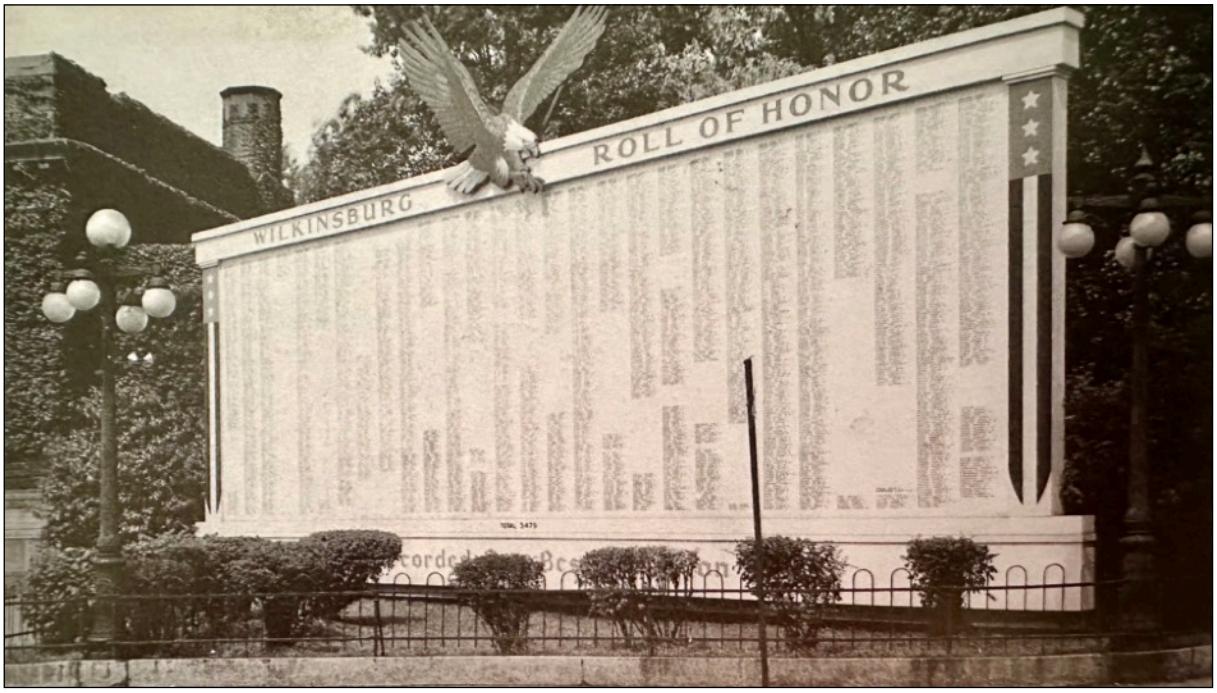
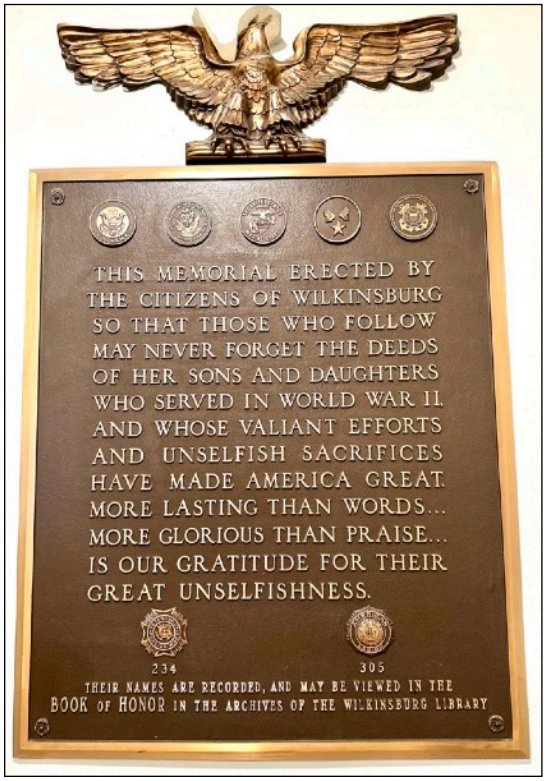
Archives

July
2024

Wilkinsburg Historical Society Newsletter
Volume 30, issue 6



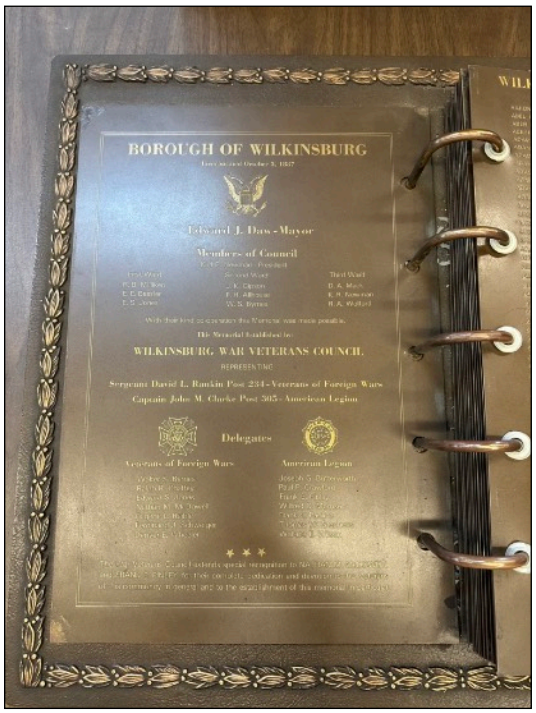
This large billboard was erected next to the train station during World War II to recognize Wilkinsburg's men and women who were serving in the military. There were over 4000 names.



After WWII Wilkinsburg citizens wanted to create a permanent bronze plaque to honor those who had served. Veterans groups were committed to making sure that all Wilkinsburg WWII military members were named individually. Veterans of former wars (WWI, Civil War, Revolutionary War, Spanish-American War and War of 1812) are individually named on the large bronze Honor Roll plaque in the lobby of the Borough building. About 2000 World War I veterans are named on that wall-sized bronze plaque.

By the end of 1945 work had begun on the removal of the interim Wilkinsburg honor roll in front of the Pennsylvania Railroad station on Hay Street. Names of those who served in the armed forces from Wilkinsburg and were posted on the temporary billboard were accurately recorded. The temporary roll of honor had high maintenance expenses. A War Memorial Committee of the Borough Council was created to report any recommendations.

Plans for a suitable WWII Honor Roll were discussed for nearly 25 years. The cost and size requirements for a wall plaque nearly twice the size of the Borough building lobby Honor Roll made the project impractical. In 1966 a new committee was formed, the Wilkinsburg War Veterans Council. A new proposal to Borough Council changed the depiction to a small wall plaque in the lobby (see first page) and a large bronze Book of Honor with each name of those who served engraved in bronze. This book was created by Matthews Bronze in the early 1970s and permanently installed in the Wilkinsburg Public Library.



The WWII Book of Honor was completed in 1972-73 during the time when Edward J. Daw served as Mayor of Wilkinsburg. Every name of the 4000 men and women who served in WWII is alphabetically listed on the bronze pages.

Special Lincoln Highway Retro Reunion event will be held August 23-24-25. Details are in these next three pages with a registration to let organizers know that you're coming!

Join us for our second annual

Retro Reunion on the Lincoln Highway

Friday, August 23, 2024 thru Sunday, August 25, 2024

Join us for one or ALL of the events. Pay separately. Complete registration form to RSVP and pre-pay.

Our reunion is scheduled to include the Great American Banana Split Celebration in Latrobe, PA. Did you know that the banana split was invented in Latrobe in 1904? Small town celebrations along the Lincoln Highway are the best places to be. Join us and friendly neighbors in Mister Rogers home town.

Go to https://bananasplitfest.com/ for more information.

LODGING: A limited number of group rate reserved rooms are available at the SpringHill Suites of Latrobe at 115 Arnold Palmer Drive. Call 724-537-7800 and mention "Lincoln Highway Retro Reunion" for our group rate of $154 plus tax. Breakfast is included with your room. Rate only available until July 24th!

You may also go directly to this link to book your group rate.

https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1711113892317&key=GRP&app=resvlink

Retro Reunion Schedule

Friday Evening 7 PM - Tin Lizzy Restaurant

259 Main Steet, Latrobe (Youngstown)

Saturday 10 AM - Lincoln Highway Experience

Guided Tour $10 per person

3435 Route 30 East, Latrobe

Saturday Noon - Picnic Box Lunch at museum

$10 per person

Saturday PM –Great American Banana Split Festival

Downtown Latrobe

Free Car Show 1 to 4 PM

Mister Rogers Park

Saturday 7 PM –Dinner at Valley Dairy Restaurant

229 Colony Lane, Latrobe

Sunday 10:30 AM– Dedication of Replica 1928 Concrete

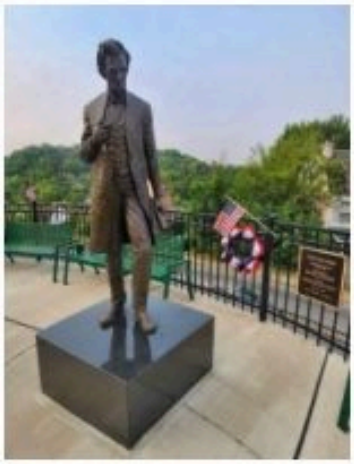
LH Marker Barnhart Funeral Home
505 East Pittsburgh Street, Greensburg

Lunch Noon –Primanti Brothers, 830 East Pittsburgh Street

Greensburg Points of Interest:

Giant Muffler Man at Lug Nutz Tire and Auto

Lincoln Highway Mural 112 E Pittsburgh Street



Sunday 2:00 PM-Dedication of Lincoln Statue plaque

Lincoln Plaza, Wilkinsburg (Group Photo)

Wilkinsburg Points of Interest:

Peppi's –1940's National Brand Diner

1928 LH Original Concrete Post—Forest Hills

Sunday 4:30 PM - Dinner at Roman Bistro

2104 Ardmore Boulevard, Pittsburgh

Retro Reunion Registration

Friday, August 23, 2024, through Sunday, August 25,2024

The PA Chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association is planning a casual weekend of activities, but we need your registration to help ensure that we have enough seats/meals available for each event. You may come and go as you please, but please register no later than Friday, August 16, 2024. See you along the Lincoln Highway in August.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Make checks payable to PA Chapter LHA, c/o Mindy Crawford, 447 Carlisle Street, Hanover PA 17331

Questions? Call Tom Davidson at 223-254-8182 or email Tom.Davidson2642@gmail.com

1) REGISTRATION FEE FOR RETRO REUNION: **$10.00 per person** Total: _____

Friday, August 23, 7:00 PM Dinner at Tin Lizzy, 259 Main Street, Youngstown PA 15696

Meals are ordered off the menu and pay for what you order. Number attending dinner: _____

2) Saturday, August 24, 10:00 AM Guided Group Tour at the Lincoln Highway Experience

3435 State Route 30 E., Latrobe PA 15650 **$10.00 per person** Total: _____

Saturday, August 24, 11:30 AM - Catered Picnic Lunch at Lincoln Highway Experience

$10.00 per person Total: _____

Saturday, August 24, afternoon visit Great American Banana Split Celebration in Latrobe

Go to www.bananasplitfest.com for details. Special surprises for Retro Reunion guests.

Many free activities are available throughout the day.: Number attending festival: _____

Saturday, August 24, 7:00 PM - Dinner at Valley Dairy Restaurant, 229 Colony Lane, Latrobe PA 15650

Meals are ordered off the menu and pay for what you order.: Number attending dinner: _____

Sunday, August 25,10:30 AM 1928 Concrete Marker (replica) Re-Dedication at Barnhart Funeral Home

505 E Pittsburgh Street, Greensburg PA 15601 Number attending dedication: _____

Sunday, August 25, noon : Grab lunch at Primanti Brothers, 830 East Pittsburgh Street, Greensburg, PA 15601

Sunday, August 25,2:00 PM Wilkinson Historical Society - Plaque dedication at Lincoln Statue, Lincoln Plaza

Intersection of Lincoln Highway and Penn Avenue, Wilkinsburg PA - Number attending: _____

Sunday, August 25, 4:30 PM Farewell diner together at Roman Bistro, 2104 Ardmore Blvd, Pittsburgh PA 15221

Make checks payable to PA Chapter LHA, c/o Mindy Crawford, 447 Carlisle Street, Hanover PA 17331

Total Payment Enclosed = $_____

St. Mark AME Church celebrated 112 years in Wilkinsburg on June 30, 2024.

The history of St. Mark AME Church goes back over 230 years to include the earliest beginnings of the African Methodist Episcopal church and its founder, Richard Allen. Born a slave in 1760, Richard's owner was involved with the Methodist Church and allowed his slaves to attend services. Richard loved the Wesleyan Methodist accessible interpretation of the Gospel and their complete opposition to slavery. He was a passionate believer in racial equality. At the age of 17 he had the chance to work hard on his own time to earn money and buy his freedom. He learned many trades to earn the money: brick maker, shoemaker, chimney sweeper, wood splitter and itinerant preacher. Within 3 years, in 1780, at the age of twenty he bought his freedom for $2000 Continental money, about $72,000 in today's dollars.

In 1786 Allen became a preacher at St. George ME Church in Philadelphia but could only conduct segregated sermons. As the Black membership grew, they were required to sit in a separate balcony, so Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and their 40 followers just walked out. Allen started the original American Civil Rights movement, not at the back of the bus in 1955, not at the lunch counter in 1960, but in 1787. Richard Allen was fighting injustice and rejection.

In 1787 he founded the Free African Society the first independent Black denomination. Richard Allen purchased a parcel of land that was formerly a blacksmith shop and founded the Mother Bethel Church, whose name means 'House of God'. It was the beginning of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. Bethel AME members wanted to be independent of interfering white Methodists who wanted to oversee all of their church activities. In 1799 Allen was the first African-American to be officially ordained in ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1816, Bishop Allen organized a meeting in Philadelphia to form the larger national African Methodist Episcopal Church where all are equal in the eyes of God. Free Black people could worship without racial oppression and enslaved people could have dignity. AME congregations were established in many north east cities including Pittsburgh and did not limit membership by race. The anvil from its blacksmith shop beginning is still a symbol of the AME church representing the lasting strength of our Lord and Savior that never ceases. Bishop Richard Allen died in 1831 at the age of 71 and is buried in the basement of Bethel AME church in Philadelphia. Mother Bethel AME church is on the oldest parcel of land in America continuously owned by African-Americans, as it was purchased in 1787.

In 1912 125 years had passed since the founding of the AME denomination. The national AME Church denomination grew greatly with over half a million members by 1912. In Wilkinsburg, 1912, the Borough was celebrating its 25th anniversary of incorporation. It was often called the "Holy City" because of the large number of Churches in Wilkinsburg.

However, for Black residents there were no options where they felt inclusion in the faith and inclusion in the pew. Wilkinsburg's Black residents wanted to create a church of their own, by following the AME doctrine established by Richard Allen.
On March 19, 1912 under the leadership of Rosa Washington, this group met in the home of Betty Sterling at 1312 Montier Street to organize themselves. Perhaps this was the time that the name "St. Mark AME Church" was chosen. Their first worship service was held June 26, 1912. That location is just 200 feet along Montier Street where a garage currently sits. The number of participants was large, so they rented a storefront at 1314 Montier, next door to Betty Sterling's house for a larger satisfactory worship space. The presiding Elder Askew, of the St. James AME Church on Euclid Avenue in East Liberty further organized the new Church. Rev. Bentley preached the Organization sermon and chose for his text, Luke 12:31 "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."
The first hymn sung was: "O For a Faith That Will Not Shrink" written by William Bathurst in 1831. It is also known as 'For Victorious Faith'. (Hymn 428)

Rev. James Davenport served as the first pastor from June 1912 until the convening of the Pittsburgh Annual Conference in September 1912, where Bishop Shaffer appointed Rev. J.H. Dandridge as the pastor. St. Mark AME Church was Wilkinsburg's first primarily African-American congregation.

In April 1918 a property at the corner of Glenn Avenue and Montier Street became available to purchase and it included a home for a parsonage with a large vacant part of the lot.
It was just 200 feet from their rented storefront worship space.
The members made plans to utilize most of the space of their new vacant lot. Over the next few years the members of St. Mark AME Church built a 12 course block foundation about 3,800 square feet. It was roofed over, fitted with a kitchen area, furnished and by 1923 provided a fine worship and fellowship area. St. Mark's members believed that an opportunity would come in the future when they could build a full church auditorium sanctuary.

In 1927 the Borough of Wilkinsburg widened Swissvale Avenue, necessitating the nearby Calvary Presbyterian Church to build a new red brick church (now Covenant Fellowship Presbyterian Church) and deconstruct their former yellow brick building. In 1929 the building components, doors, windows, trim and yellow bricks were all sold to the St. Mark AME congregation. The members themselves used their own wheelbarrows and muscles to move the building parts from the dismantled church and wheel them down the street to create their own architect-designed structure on their existing foundation.

It is generally believed that Louis Bellinger one of Pittsburgh's first Black architects was the architect who designed the St. Mark AME church as he did complete some remodeling work at the Church in the late 1920s and likely designed the entire structure. It has elements of Romanesque and Gothic Revival style, and incorporated all of the building materials that were recycled by the members of St. Mark AME.

During these past 112 years, 21 ministers have served and each one has helped the members carry on the faith and keep the vision alive. St. Mark AME Church is where God is worshipped in spirit and in truth. Services are held every Sunday at 11:00 AM.

the Wilkinsburg Sun

inside

Wilkinsburg's Home Rule Charter's Public Hearing Is July 16

Don't miss out on **The Wilkinsburg Sun**, a free monthly community newsletter published by the volunteer Wilkinsburg Community Newsletter Board, with the support of the Wilkinsburg Borough, the Wilkinsburg School District, the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation.
The Sun accepts submitted articles provided they are related to Wilkinsburg and are civic-minded.
https://wilkinsburgsun.wordpress.com

Sign up to receive The Sun by email at:
http://eepurl.com/v0iBP and friend The Sun on Facebook.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society has a website, to share more information about the history of Wilkinsburg. wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com
Mailing address: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is published monthly, March through November.

We do not usually publish the Archives during the three Winter months of December, January and February.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society yearly dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society are:
$20.00 INDIVIDUAL Member, $35.00 FAMILY Membership
$10.00 STUDENT or ASSOCIATE Members Please keep your membership dues up to date.
Contributions are needed for "Lights for Lincoln", to get improved lighting for the Lincoln Plaza area. Abraham Lincoln stands in the dark after sun-down. Your donation can help us illuminate this outstanding area overlooking the Lincoln Highway.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society - Membership application
Help promote the valuable history of Wilkinsburg.

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
E-mail address _____

( ) $20 Individual membership
( ) $35 Family membership
( ) $10 Student or associate membership
( ) $_____ Additional donation

Please make check payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**
PO Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Anytime is a good time to pay your dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society. We have many preservation projects going on, and providing displays for Wilkinsburg events. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your membership dues. Please use the address on the form, our PO box.