



# Archives

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2025

WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME 31, ISSUE 1

## **Penn Lincoln Apartments to be built on Penn Avenue at Center Street.**



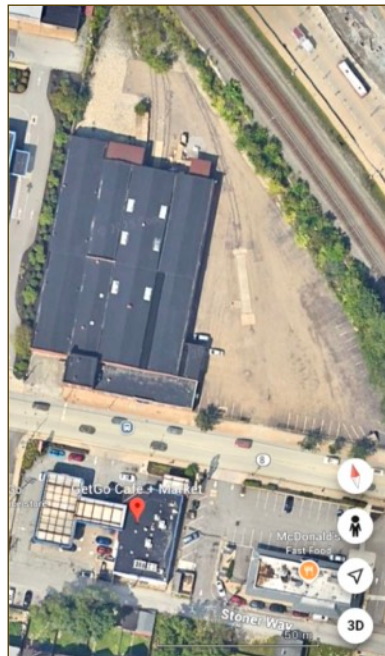
The NW corner of Penn Avenue and Center Street shows where the Penn-Lincoln Hotel stood from 1927 to 2014. The hotel was evaluated and deemed not practical to renovate. It was razed in 2014, and new plans for this piece of real estate began. The Penn Lincoln Apartments will soon be a reality, featuring 41 affordable, 1-2 & 3 bedroom units. It will also feature 12,000 square feet of retail space on the first floor.

Several governmental agencies, along with local organizations, ACTION-Housing, Hosanna House and others collaborated for this new endeavor. Groundbreaking was February 28, 2025 and attendees included: Leon Haynes, CEO and President of Hosanna House, Sen. John Fetterman, US Rep. Chris Deluzio, State Rep. Abigail Salisbury, State Sen. Jay Costa, Borough Council members, WCDC CEO Tracey Evans, Mayor Dontae Comans and others.



This 1940s postcard image of the 1927 Penn Lincoln Hotel shows the design by famed architect Benno Janssen. It featured retail space and offices on the street-level floor. The Lincoln Restaurant and a spacious ballroom were incorporated as well. The ballroom was the venue for many wedding receptions, banquets, and other large gatherings. The dance hall was also a meeting space when notables came to Wilkesburg. The hotel was six stories high and had 150 rooms. It had steel framing and concrete floor slabs. The exterior was brick with stone and terra cotta trimmings and designed in the style of Northern Italian architecture. It was cross shaped, giving all guest rooms windows.

**Wimco (Wilkesburg Iron and Metal Co.)** was initially organized in 1915 at 401 Penn Avenue as a specialty metal fabrication business. It began as a family business owned and operated by the Gross family brothers Charles, Morris and Leonard. Wimco eventually switched to non-ferrous metal recycling and relocated to the McKeesport area.



The Wimco location at 401 Penn Avenue included two and a third acres. It was vacant for awhile, then sold in January 2023 to an LLC corporation with plans to build an Aldi grocery store. This parcel of land had a Pennsylvania Railroad siding onto the property, making it a useful business property. In 1962, Charles Gross was treasurer of Wilkesburg's Diamond Jubilee 75th Anniversary. At the Jubilee, his Wimco lot featured a bright silver-painted steam locomotive on the railroad siding.

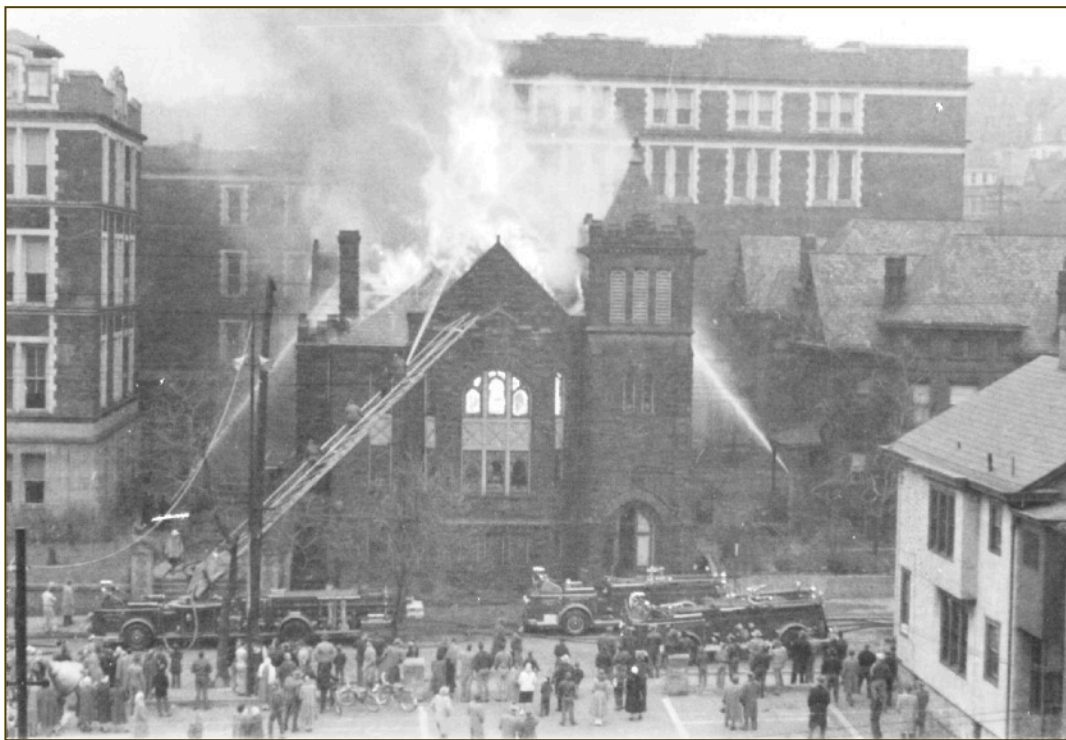


The 1915 Wimco industrial building could not be repurposed so the building was razed in 2024. After demolition and construction Aldi held its Penn Avenue grand opening January 30, 2025. It joins over 165 other Aldi stores across Pennsylvania, over 2500 stores across the nation. This new development will bring more shoppers and travelers to the Borough.

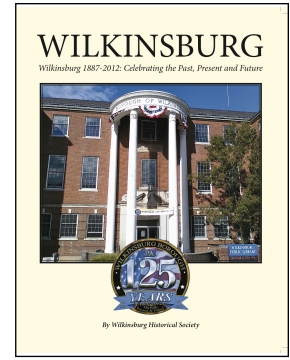
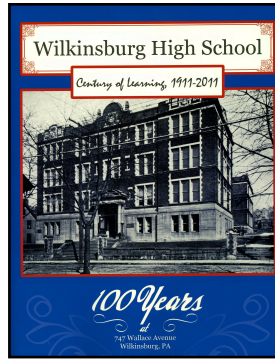
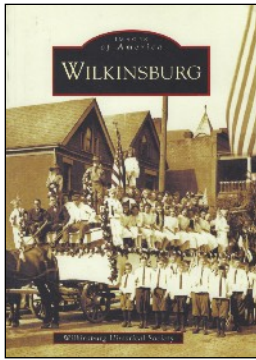
**Wilksburg Baptist Church** on Wallace Avenue was bought from the Methodists in 1893. It was occupied by the Baptists for 62 years, then lost due to fire February, 1955.



Originally a Methodist Church, this Wallace Avenue edifice was sold to the Wilksburg Baptist Church in 1893 and extensively remodeled. It was located right next door to the Wilksburg High School after the school was built in 1910 and dedicated in 1911. The left image is from 1907. Above image on right shows the burned out building in February, 1955.



This disastrous fire was Saturday, February 26, 1955, seventy years ago last month. It began in the furnace room and spread quickly through the sanctuary dome and roof of the church. This photo was taken by a man who was staying in the Penn Lincoln Hotel and viewed the fire from his window. The Wilksburg High School is seen behind and beside the burning church, on Wallace Avenue. The teams of Wilksburg firefighters were able to keep the flames from damaging the school. The severely damaged church was bulldozed shortly after the fire and a new Wilksburg Baptist Church was built and dedicated June 23, 1957. Visit [wilksburgsacredspaces.com](http://wilksburgsacredspaces.com) for a website of Wilksburg's historical churches.



These are the three books that the **Wilkinsburg Historical Society** wrote and published during the past twelve years. They help to promote and preserve the history of Wilkinsburg and raise funds for the various projects of the Society. All three books are still available to purchase from the Society. Another way to support the activities of the Historical Society.

On the far left is ***“Images of America - Wilkinsburg”***, a 128 page soft-bound book printed by the Arcadia Publishing Company. It includes over 220 black and white photos depicting the history of our town from the early land patents in the late 1700s up to the 75th celebration of Wilkinsburg in 1962. The book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$20.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The middle book above is ***“Wilkinsburg High School - Century of Learning 1911-2011”***. This book chronicles the history of the local high school from its early start in the late 1880s, the creation of the magnificent structure in 1910, and each decade since with highlights of the events that were important in the lives of the students and the Wilkinsburg community. For over 100 years the Wilkinsburg High School served the Borough of Wilkinsburg students and this book has several hundred photos showing much of this important history. This *Century of Learning* book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$15.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The book on the far right is ***“Wilkinsburg - 1887-2012, Celebrating the Past, Present and Future”***. This book was produced by the Historical Society in 2012 to recognize the 125th anniversary of Wilkinsburg’s incorporation as a Borough. This soft-bound book has 196 pages and includes chapters on the history of Wilkinsburg, the celebrations from the past, information about Wilkinsburg’s government, and all the events that occurred during the 125th celebration. There are several chapters about the clubs and organizations in Wilkinsburg as well as the churches and worship centers in the Borough. The “future of Wilkinsburg” section recognizes advertisers and sponsors who helped to fund the creation and printing of the book. This book, originally \$15.00, is now available for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

<p>Make check or money order payable to: <b>Wilkinsburg Historical Society</b>          Orders can be mailed to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O.Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235</p>			
Images of America - Wilkinsburg	(\$20.00 + \$3.00) = \$23.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Century of Learning 1911-2011	(\$15.00 + \$3.00) = \$18.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Wilkinsburg 1887-2012	(\$10.00 + \$3.00) = \$13.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Name_____		Address_____	
City_____	State_____	Zip _____	



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](http://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.