Appendix C

About Lackawanna County

Lackawanna County is the youngest of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, having been formed on August 13, 1878 from the northern part of Luzerne County after a long dispute. The court system first opened on October 24, 1878. The first election of county officials was conducted on November 4, 1879. There are 40 municipalities in Lackawanna County.

Despite its relative youth, Lackawanna County has played a large role in not only the development of the State and Country, but also the world.

From the river to the county, the term "Lackawanna" is abundant in Northeastern Pennsylvania. It is derived from a Lenape term that translates to "stream that forks." Appropriately, the Lackawanna River does indeed fork. The river rises in two branches along the modern boundaries of the Susquehanna and Wayne County lines. At around 40 miles in length, the Lackawanna River is the major tributary of the Susquehanna River and a major waterway for both modern and historic peoples of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Lenape Tribe of Native Americans was the original inhabitants of the area that would become Lackawanna County. A number of Lenape gravesites historically existed on the river near what is now Scranton but were eventually destroyed. According to Horace Hollister's *History of the Lackawanna Valley*, one of the destroyed graves may have belonged to Capouse, a Lenape chieftain who was visited by Count Zinzandorf, a Moravian missionary, near the river in about 1750. However, in the late 1700's European settlers traveled from Connecticut to the valley because of the rich iron ore deposits used to make iron and steel. Soon, blast furnaces and forges began populating the landscape, marketing their product to neighboring towns. Small businesses followed the forges and modest communities began to form. Slocum Hollow, located where Scranton is today, opened a post office in 1811.

Another valuable asset to the area would soon be discovered. Anthracite coal lay underneath the entire region. Perhaps the first to realize the importance of coal were brothers John, William and Maurice Wurts. The brothers purchased land in what is Carbondale today and began mining. The brothers then formed the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company. The idea was to transport coal from Carbondale's mines to Honesdale via a gravity railroad and from Honesdale to Roundout, New York, by a canal. From Roundout, the coal was transported down the Hudson River to New York City. With the success of the gravity railroad and canal system, additional gravity lines were extended from Carbondale down throughout the valley.

In 1847, the Scranton brothers invited their cousin, Joseph H. Scranton, who was a successful Georgia merchant, to invest in the growing industry. George secured a contract from the Erie Railroad to produce "T" rails for a line from Port Jervis to Binghamton. Conversion of the small iron-mill to a rail-producing factory was both expensive and risky. The project was completed on December 27, 1848. In the same year, a U.S. Post Office was established in the town then called "Scrantonia" named after the Scranton family. Also, during this time period the first wave of

immigrants from England, Wales, Ireland, and Germany was beginning to settle in the region.

The Scranton's, realizing that money was located in coal, began to concentrate on its mining and transportation in the 1850's. Their efforts led to the formation of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad. The railroad company controlled a network of coal mines that had mined and shipped two million tons of coal by 1868.

Coal, steel and railroads played huge roles in the development of late 19th and early 20th Century America. The industrial boom was happening here, and in Europe, and these three items were in great demand. Lackawanna County happened to manufacture all three. This led to a very prosperous time in Northeast Pennsylvania. Residential settlements popped up wherever coal was mined and, despite lacking access to ports or navigable waterways, the economy ran smoothly because there was a need for "black gold", steel and rail ties.

Lackawanna County enjoyed nearly a century of growth and prosperity. In the 1880's, the first electric streetcar system in the United States was built in Scranton, thus earning it the nickname "The Electric City". Coal breakers dominated the skyline of every community in the County and modern-day America was being built off the resources of Lackawanna County. Silk factories became an important part of the local economy, with the first one opening in Scranton in 1872. Many institutions of higher learning were formed during this period as well including Keystone College in La Plume (1869), St. Thomas College (now known as the University of Scranton, 1888), Marywood College (now a university, 1915) and many more.

This time also saw many immigrants coming to the area in search of employment in the coal mines. Scores of Irish, Polish, Italian and Russian immigrants took to the mines and thus the rich, ethnic history of our County began to take form. The fingerprints of this heritage can be seen throughout our County today. Vaudeville also played a role in the history of the area.

The area is rich with outdoor amenities and Lackawanna County maintains four county parks. The County has also seen revitalization through arts and culture in recent years.

The ethnic diversity found in Lackawanna County is a diverse tapestry. with the earlier immigrants coming from Ireland, Italy, Poland and Germany. The black community has a rich history here as well with roots in the Underground Railroad and the area now sees newer immigrant groups such as Latinx, Bhutanese-Nepali, Congolese among others.

For more information visit www.lackawannacounty.org