



Mars Area  
History & Landmarks Society  
(MAHLS)

December 15, 2016

**News, Information, and Opportunities**

**Important Notice !** The MAHLS annual membership banquet is scheduled for 6:00 PM, Wednesday, January 11, 2017, \$22.00 / person, at Luciano's Restaurant. Please RSVP to Chris Clutter at 724- 625-1115, or email her at [cclutter@duganandassociates.com](mailto:cclutter@duganandassociates.com). Each person is asked to bring a re-gift, to gamble for another re-gift, by playing a card game. 2017 MAHLS dues may be paid at the banquet, or sent to our Mars mailing address.

Hello **MAHLS** Members and Friends:

Have you stopped to see our **MAHLS** campus this Fall? As a result of all the hard work of our member volunteers this year, a beautiful new **Pavilion** has been added!

**BUT FIRST....A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT:**

**O. M. G. !!! It's almost 2017!**

2016 was a beehive of activities for us!

This newsletter, courtesy of Bob Lang and Charles Norton, has a description of the many MAHLS accomplishments. With the supreme guidance of our Historian, Mr. Norton ... who has devised a guide for finding our treasures ... many of which are hidden in plain sight. This really is an incredible newsletter that should be read several times, then passed around to family and friends.

One of our biggest treasures at MAHLS..... (pausing for effect).... is our ..... MEMBERS! We have a wonderful crew of dedicated workers. It amazes me how well we get along – friendships, kinships, soul brothers/sisters, the general bonding between all of us – this is why we keep coming back AND how we accomplish the wonderful things we work on!

I wish every one of you **a Merry Christmas** and **a Happy Earth New Year!**

Sincerely, John Watson

P.S.: I managed to juggle around some funds, and each of you should be getting an 18% pay raise this year! There's no need to thank me... I do like a good Vodka, though....just saying.



## AND NOW... A VERY LARGE *THANK YOU*, TO ALL OF OUR MEMBER VOLUNTEERS!

Due to the persistence, professionalism, and downright hard work of our members, a beautiful new **Train Waiting Station / Event Pavilion** has been constructed on the East side of our property. As you can see, this new building (hiding behind the Station), matches exactly the color and architecture of our existing B&O Railroad Station, and is a wonderful addition to our MAHLS campus



This **Pavilion** started from many Friday break-time discussions among the members in 2015, followed by design details worked out by our capable and experienced construction members, Bill Doughty, Ernie Kuhs, and Rich Ellis. Due to interminable delays in obtaining a building permit, construction only got going in earnest in late Spring of this year.

The building is a basic, 20ft. x 40 ft. pole building which has been dressed up with a metal roof, fish scale shake siding on the gables, decorative cornice work, and handrails.

Member Ron Nacey, along with his crew, provided the professional skills necessary to lay a 6" thick cement floor in the building.

Members, Al Zamba and Bob Jackson did a great job with the molded edges on the railings and posts. Bill Doughty duplicated the overhang support detail to match the train station. Bob Jackson has done a professional looking job of painting, which was a real challenge because most of the lumber was recycled, and required putty and sanding before applying the finish coat of paint.

Most of the members have been involved in some way with cleaning, stacking, preparing an aggregate base, and placing the "herringbone" patterned brick walk-ways, which will surround the building as well as the area along the train track loading / unloading area. Thanks to the generosity of the town of Mars, the brick was recycled from a decades old brick paved street (Lincoln Ave.) in Mars.

The building is topped off with a beautifully designed and constructed cupola, with a lighted, electric clock. Member Bill Doughty designed and built the cupola. Bill (aka. Reddy Killowat) Swaney designed and built a unique, remote clock setting device, so that the clock can actually be set from out in the driveway!

A great picture of the volunteers who worked on the building is included in the collages. (Note: Curtis Bowers, Ernie Kuhs, Jerry Brunson, and Bob Lang are missing from the photo).

In addition to being a train depot, the **Pavilion** will also be used for events such as family picnics, birthday parties, flea markets, and many other small community and Society events. Events can / or cannot include rides on the train. *Anyone* considering an event should contact our President, John Watson at 724-272-9588.

## SO WHAT DOES OUR NAME, “*Mars Area History and Landmarks Society*”, REALLY MEAN?

Let’s talk about **Landmarks** first. For our purposes, these are items that were prominently displayed in the Mars area over the years. They could be buildings, signs, railroad devices, and other items of this type, that are easily recognizable.

Of course the most obvious **Landmark** on the MAHLS campus is the restored B&O railroad station, built in 1897. Another somewhat overlooked Landmark is the Pennsylvania road sign that says “STAR OF MARS”. Once located on the Mars-Valencia Rd. in the 40s thru 60s, near where our caboose is currently located, it is now in our driveway on the right, just as you enter our campus. By the way, the “Star of Mars” is only one version of how Mars got it’s name.



Now, let’s address the word **History** in our name. This is a part of our Society that is not as obvious as the **Landmarks**. Our collection of historical items includes thousands of documents, some displayed in our buildings, and some not displayed due to space constraints and/or lack of digital equipment for archiving the items. These items include letters, pictures, event posters and descriptions, maps, yearbooks, and many other items donated by long-time local families and businesses in the Mars area.

Our MAHLS **Mars Historian**, Charles Norton, has written the following guide / description of what the Mars Area History and Landmarks Society has collected over the years in our mission to preserve the history of the Mars area.

*"Inside and outside the restored 1897 Mars B & O Station are collected and donated items of Mars Area history. These include the history of the railroad, the Butler Short Line Electric Railway, and the Borough of Mars.*

*In the original B & O Station passenger waiting room are five display cases that contain historical items from the Mars Centennial, Treesdale Farms, Mars Schools, Mars businesses, and general Mars history dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the present. There is a picture gallery on six movable panels where framed historical pictures and posters are displayed. For persons interested in genealogy there is a very complete collection of Mars High School yearbooks dating to 1916 when the High School located on Crowe Avenue opened.*

*In the center of the Mars Station is the original Station Master’s office where items of railroading history are on display. An operating telegraph key, along with wooden “Order Delivery Hoops” displayed on the wall, show visitors how messages were transmitted to moving trains before there were cell phones. Young visitors find the display of typewriters and adding machines of interest. Two display cases contain railroad lanterns, crystal radio sets, telegraph keys, and many items of interest to railroad buffs. The 1897 Mars B & O Station wood burning stove sits in its original location. The freight room of the station has a display of three model Short Line electric cars that are made exact in every detail. A railroad maintenance crew hand car that was made by Historical Society Vice President, George Lazzo, from original drawings of the Sheffield Co. is displayed in the freight room. Restored is the Mail Push Cart that was used for many years to carry mail from the station to the Post Office on Grand Avenue. One wall of the freight room is filled with tools that were used on the railroads. These are labeled for identification as are most of the displays in all rooms. The lights in the freight room are original Mars Borough street lights in use 1929 to 1980.*

*Around the Historical Society grounds are items often overlooked. There is a Crossing Signal that was originally located at the Mars B & O Station crossing on Marshall Way. A Block Signal, donated by B&P Railroad Co. (current owner of the line), originally was located at the Hutchman Road crossing. The Crossing Gate that served the Evans City railroad crossing was donated by the B&P railroad and restored by the members, with guidance from railroad employee and friend Matt Olejarz. Mars Kiwanis Club donated the flag pole in 2005. The small Plymouth Engine located on the Society's rail siding donated by Michael Lazzo (brother of member George Lazzo), was used to move train cars around in a rail-yard. It was restored by help from businesses and Society volunteers. The street lights located along the rail line are from a now closed Pittsburgh restaurant called the Victoria Station.*

*The Oil Storage building that was located beside the 1897 Train Station, has been reproduced from original pictures and now serves as our rest room building. Towering 40 foot over the Society's campus is an operating windmill. Used to pump water, it was manufactured in early 1900 by the Aermotor Co in Chicago, Illinois. Found in Wisconsin by recently deceased MAHLS member Cliff Atkinson, the windmill was restored on site by the members. It is typical of many windmills that were common in early Mars before borough water was established in 1905.*

*At the entrance to the Historical Society's campus is the restored Adams Station, a rural passenger waiting station for the Pittsburgh Butler Short line. Inside are pictures and historic items pertaining to the Short Line when it passed through Mars on Clay Avenue from 1904 to 1931. Of interest inside the station is a chandelier that hung in the Marsonian, a party car that could be chartered for special occasions. Other displayed items include a Tomlinson link and pin coupler from a trolley, fare counters, Union buttons worn to show dues were paid, and a section of rail that was found nearby.*

*The All-purpose building at the end of the campus houses several historic displays. A replica of the 1950 Mars Motion Picture Theatre has original ticket booth equipment. The lights from the marquee flash around the corner theatre replica. Collected and maintained by member Jerry Brunson, is a display of movie projectors used in the film era. An interesting display from the oil boom era includes an operating model of an oil well that was built c1930 by Mars resident Les Shannon. On one wall are displayed signs of past Mars businesses. In a display case are milk bottles from eight local farm dairies that served Mars in mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, before pasteurization, as well as a collection of soda fountain milkshake machines.*

*In the office area of the All-purpose building are file cabinets that contain documents, pictures, and newspaper articles. There is information on family histories, businesses, churches and philanthropic organizations that pertain to Mars and Mars Area history past and present. These items are in folders and have been cataloged for reference.*

*Unfortunately, space constraints prevent displaying many historic items owned by the Society. These are in storage in a loft located in the All-purpose building."*

As you can see, the MAHLS has a fascinating collection of the history of the Mars area. Anyone interested in seeing our collections, wants to research a particular subject, or wants to donate items, is welcome to visit with Charles and other members of our Society...on our normal open day of Friday, and other days by appointment.



## THE MARS SHORTLINE RAILROAD:

Many more families came to ride our miniature railroad this summer, as well as several MOMs groups from the North Hills area. Reliable operators, Curtis Bowers and Jeff Campbell, kept the train operating on run days, with Rita Garvy welcoming the riders.



One great new change occurred this Fall, when the train signup / loading / unloading operation was moved to the East side of the new **Pavilion**. This included a new siding with Mars brick walkways lining both sides of the track for passengers to walk on. This makes our train experience so much more pleasant and authentic.

Jan Smith was really busy....in addition to helping to keep the train on track and helping with the **Pavilion**, he finished his small "city" along the train route, prior to the tunnel. He added a Horse Shoeing storefront to the General Store and Terry's Quilts storefronts that he has already built. Jan also built a **"Lost Martian Mine"** portal (entrance) along the track on the North side of the All-Purpose building. This mine portal showcases an old mining car that was donated to MAHLS many years ago. You can see Jan's creations on the attached picture collages.

Member Bruce Grinager donated his artistic abilities, by painting a railroad themed "Steelers Steamer" mural along the northwest curve of our railroad. You will also see a picture of this scene in one of the collages.

One new and unique addition was built by, and donated to us by the **MOMs Club of Cranberry North**...it's a **Toy Train Table** for children to play at while they are waiting for, or after riding the train. This table was so popular with the children, that many mothers had difficulty convincing their children to leave it when it was time for them to leave. Thanks so much ladies for the very generous and useful gift.



MAHLS hosted several birthday parties, as well as MOMs club outings this Summer. Riding the train was part of each event. The MOMs usually brought lunches and crafts for the children to do while not riding the train, or playing on the train table. MAHLS furnishes tables with seats for the events, as well as bathroom facilities, and of course a staff of volunteers to assist as needed.

The operation times for the Mars Shortline RR remain every Friday from 10AM to 2PM, and the second Saturday of every month (May-Oct), from 1PM to 4PM (always weather permitting). Come take a ride!

## DONATIONS TO MAHLS:

This year we received several private historical and monetary donations, as well as grants from the Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau, and the Friends of Bantam Jeep Association. We are very thankful for these donations and grants. They certainly have helped us to advance our mission of providing a first class facility to preserve the history of the Mars area, and a place for the community to enjoy and learn.

As always, **any and all donations are appreciated**...time, historical items from long-time residents, or financial. Donated items and financial contributions are tax deductible.

## THE MAHLS Website and Facebook PAGES :

Our website and Facebook pages continue to be popular references for people to keep up with goings on at **MAHLS**. If you haven't looked at them recently, take some time to do so...there's always something new. Check them out at:

**Website:** [marshistory.org](http://marshistory.org) **Facebook page:** [www.facebook.com/marshistory](https://www.facebook.com/marshistory)

## BEING A MEMBER OF MAHLS HAS MANY REWARDS!

As you can see from the above news, the **Society** continues to be extremely fortunate to have hard working volunteers from a wide range of skills. The accomplishments of the volunteers are amazing....especially when the only official work day is Friday. Some members also show-up unofficially on other days during the week to work on special projects, and/or continue projects they normally work on during the Friday sessions.

No matter what your skill level or interest, there are many rewarding opportunities available at MAHLS...and of course you haven't lived until you've sampled Judy Ellis's baked goods at 10:30AM breaktime every Friday.

Please stop in on a Friday, or contact one of our members if you would like to get involved. If Friday is a bad day for you, please consider contacting our president, John Watson (724-272-9588), to discuss what arrangements might be suitable for you.

**AND IN CLOSING.....**we want to share with you a stunning sunset picture of our MAHLS campus, taken in 2013 by, and available from Mike Gianechini of G&G Studio Creations, 122 Irvine St., Mars, Pa. 16046 ([gandgstudio.mike@gmail.com](mailto:gandgstudio.mike@gmail.com)).



Thank you, and we look forward to seeing you at the **Mars Area History and Landmarks Society** sometime soon!

### Mars Area History & Landmarks Society

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