

**MARS AREA
HISTORY & LANDMARKS SOCIETY
(MAHLS)**



"Preserve Yesterday for Today and Tomorrow"

December 15, 2020

2020 News, Information and Opportunities

THE YEAR 2020 HAS DEFINITELY BEEN ONE FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS

Dear Members and Friends of MAHLS,

Without a doubt 2020 has been one of the strangest years in our lifetime. It has definitely been difficult to varying degrees for all of us.



Charter Member
Bill Swaney

Sadly, MAHLS has lost long-time members of our Society this year, including Bill Swaney, Charles Norton, Jim Ward, and John Clutter, as well as Mars area resident and long-time supporter Don Aiken. Our deepest sympathies to the families of these wonderful gentlemen.



Charles Norton

MAHLS has weathered the storms of 2020 and we remain a strong and viable Society. In the following pages you will see the improvements that our volunteers have accomplished.

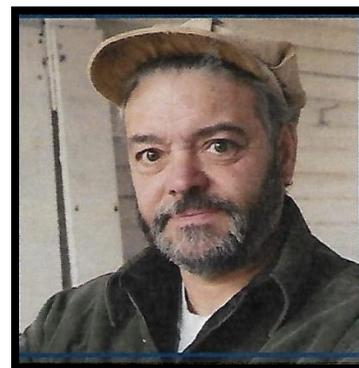
Our new building addition has been delayed until Spring of 2021, as well as our archiving project with University of Pittsburgh Library.



James Ward

The Mars Shortline Railroad had a delayed start, however it was a popular attraction again this year and brought joy to our many visitors.

We thank our wonderful MAHLS volunteers, and the many people and companies who have generously donated to our Society this year.



Charter Member
John Clutter

Best Wishes for a Healthy and Pleasant Holiday and Upcoming Year!

Sincerely, John Watson, President – MAHLS

IT TAKES A LOT TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It takes several key things:

MONETARY DONATIONS – DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS - HISTORICAL DONATIONS

Each is equally important.

MONETARY DONATIONS:

MAHLS was blessed with substantial donations in 2020 from many generous people and organizations. We thank all those who donated to MAHLS in 2020. These funds will be used to grow MAHLS for the benefit of the Mars Area.

DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS:

In order to take advantage of the generous donations mentioned above, it is necessary to have a group of volunteers that are willing and able to spend donation funds wisely, preserve and exhibit donations carefully, and maintain and grow the MAHLS campus professionally. MAHLS is blessed to have such a staff of dedicated volunteers.

HISTORICAL DONATIONS:

Just about every week, someone stops by to donate historical items related to the Mars Area, life in past times, as well as Railroad artifacts. All these items are much appreciated, and MAHLS is dedicated to preserving and displaying these donated items as time and space permits.

SO, LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE THINGS THAT DONATIONS AND OUR VOLUNTEERS ACCOMPLISHED AT MAHLS IN 2020.

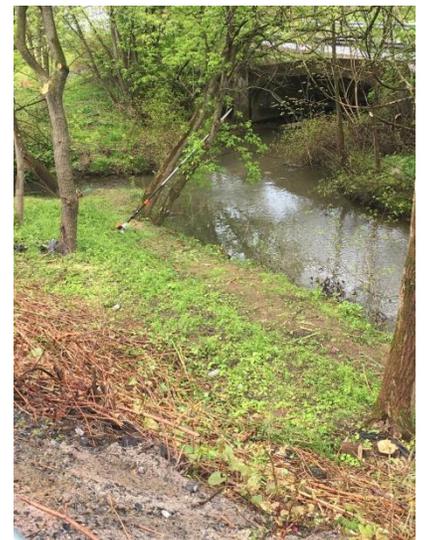
LANDSCAPING:

On the creek sides (North and East) of our campus, there were many trees and other vegetation threatening to fall on our buildings and Mars Shortline train track. This vegetation also blocked the view of Brush Creek and its tributary.

A work crew consisting of volunteers Rich Ellis, grandson Isaac, Gunnar and Bruce Watson, Tommy Spang, Pancho's Tree Service, and equipment supplied by businessman Mike Fleming, all the offending vegetation was removed from these two creek banks.



Starting with a bunch of partially dead trees and ugly vegetation, and after much hard work, you now see a beautiful view of the creeks and banks as you ride the Mars Shortline Railroad. (right photo)



In the Spring of 2021, it is our desire to plant a ground cover plant that is low, bad soil and low water tolerant, and pleasant looking to cover the creek banks. Any suggestions for such a plant would be very welcome.

THINGS THAT DONATIONS, AND OUR VOLUNTEERS ACCOMPLISHED AT MAHLS IN 2020, contd.

MAINTENANCE AND PRESERVATION:

Our volunteer Al Zamba, and a team of volunteers were busy replacing wood and repainting several of our buildings, as well as new gates on our Mars Shortline train tunnel.



Historic Adams Station



Mars Shortline tunnel entrance



Mars Shortline locomotive storage shed

NEW AND UPDATED EXHIBITS:

In addition to skill, it takes a lot of imagination to construct interesting displays and exhibits. Below and the next page are several new and updated exhibits that visitors will find on our campus.

Left photo:

MAHLS engineer / volunteer Bruce Grinager just completed a **full size front-view model of a steam locomotive**....just like the ones that ran through Mars during the late 1800s and into the mid-1900s...see photo on right.



Starting with an actual locomotive bell and headlight donated by Bruce and Bill Swaney respectively, Bruce designed and built this locomotive-front display. Visitors can even pull a rope to ring the bell!

Right bottom photo:

Our **Lost Martian Mine** along the Mars Shortline Railroad got a rebuild of the mine car by MAHLS volunteers, AND a fresh load of Gold / Coal Nuggets! There were several coal mines in the local area in the late 1800s and 1900s.



Volunteer Herman Reedy completed a repainting of the **Butler Gas Engine** (gray-red), and **Oil Well Pump** (yellow-green).

To make this exhibit more realistic, he obtained a flat belt to connect the two machines together, just like they were in the Oil Fields around Mars in the late 1800s / early 1900s.

The Butler Engine was donated to MAHLS by member-volunteer Jan Smith. The Oil Well Pump was donated by Vogel Disposal Co.

THINGS THAT DONATIONS, AND OUR VOLUNTEERS ACCOMPLISHED AT MAHLS IN 2020, contd.



From the photo on the left, Al Zamba and a volunteer team have transformed the **Sleigh** that was donated to us in 2019, to the beautiful restoration pictured on the right....fit for Santa Claus to use.



The sleigh was donated by the Thieleman family. It was used by a member of their family to deliver mail in the Mars area.

MAHLS volunteer Bill Doughty did the beautiful red leather upholstery work.

The ongoing **"Mars in 1925"** S-gauge train layout / diorama, located in our train station-freight room, continues to expand and become more realistic.

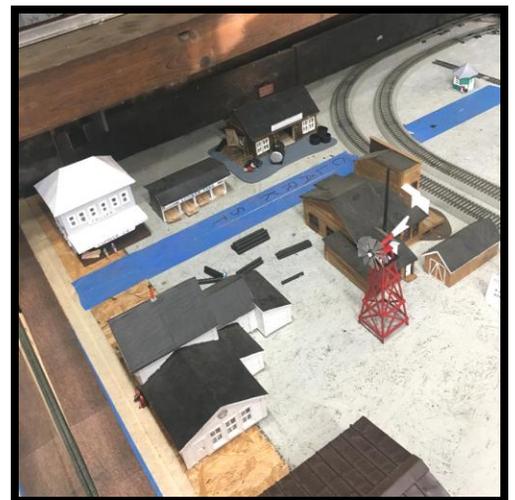


Master model builder, *Terry Colonello* from Adams Twp. has added 16 more buildings to the layout during 2020. In the picture to the right, you will see models that Terry built of the S. H. Roberts Boiler Co., John Sheridan Machine Co., and J. S. Clark Lumber Co. These businesses are also mentioned on following pages.

In the front right of the layout views above is the Ziegler (now **Pfiefer Hardware**) building. The primary components of this model building were printed by volunteer Tom Marcy on a 3D Printing Machine.

During the upcoming 2020 / 2021 winter, we plan to begin adding people, scenery, roads, creeks, and other landscaping.

This train layout was begun in 2018 in our Train Station freight room. It's purpose is to educate visitors about what Mars looked like during the 1925 era in Mars. The reason for choosing this particular time period is that many visitors are not aware that not only was Mars served by a railroad connected to the US national railroad system, it was also served by a local 40+ mile "Streetcar" railroad running from Pittsburgh to Butler via Mars. Both of these model trains are operating on our layout.



SPEAKING OF MAHLS VOLUNTEERS



One of our member - volunteers, "**Buzz**" **Kelly** has the unusual distinction of being a local area historian from two different communities.

Born and raised in the Springdale, Pa., area through first grade, Buzz's family moved to Valencia in 1941. Buzz attended grade school in Valencia, and high school in Mars. He also worked on a local farm and at Treesdale Farms during that period of his life.

In 1954, Buzz moved to Mars and lived in the Dr. Stanton house on Grand Ave., where he still resides today.

During a stint in the Air National Guard and Air Force, Buzz attended Barber School in Pittsburgh, while also working at Treesdale.

In 1958, he started barbering at Jim Wiegand's shop on Marshall Ave., then later moved into a shop of his own on Grand Ave.

Not content doing one job, in 1975 Buzz also took a full-time job at the US Postal Service in Warrendale, Pa. He worked this two-job life until 1985, when he quit barbering and worked at the Postal Service until he retired in 1996.

Being a community minded person, Buzz also joined and became a Lifetime Member of the Valencia and Mars Fire Departments, and is also a Lifetime / Charter Member of the new Adams Twp. Area Fire District 42. He is also a 50-year member of the Masonic Lodge 729 in Mars, as well as a social member of the Mars VFW.

Buzz's hobbies included playing pool at Joe's on Marshall Ave. and having a backroom pool hall in his barber shop on Grand Ave. He also found time (and still does to a lesser extent), to buy and sell antiques out of his garage on Grand Ave.

Being a founding member of the Valencia Historical Society until its merger with the MAHLS last year, Buzz brings a lot of experience to our Mars Society.

As you can see, Buzz has had a lifetime to watch the Mars Area grow and change. Blessed with a great memory and lots of experience in preserving history, he is instrumental in assisting MAHLS in maintaining an accurate portrayal of history in the Mars area.

MAHLS salutes **Buzz Kelly** as a Member and Volunteer of our organization.

SOME HISTORY - MARS BUSINESSES PAST and PRESENT

The advertisements below and on the following pages, were taken from a Souvenir Book that was published for the 21st gathering of the *Oil Men of Western Pennsylvania*, at Conneaut Lake, on Thursday, July 25th, 1907. Thanks to MAHLS member-volunteer, Herman Reedy for obtaining and donating this book to our MAHLS library. We also thank Phil Norton for the following history of Mars Bank and John Sheridan Co.

OIL REGION REMINISCENCES 131

CHRIS GELBACH, President. E. P. SUTTON, Cashier.
 WM. FOWLER, Vice President. A. B. NORTON, Teller.

The Mars National Bank

MARS, PENNA.

Capital Stock, - \$40,000
Surplus and Profits, \$26,800

4 Per Cent Interest Paid on Savings Accounts, Compounded Semi-Annually.

The **Mars National Bank** has an interesting history.

As the oil industry began booming in the late 1800s around Mars, there was a need to cash checks for the workers. So in 1899 the *Mars Cash Co.* was founded. This was the forerunner of *Mars National Bank*. One of the partners in this venture was Clarence Norton, a prominent businessman in the Mars area.

Shortly thereafter, on 11/7/1900 a group of local citizens founded and opened the *Mars National Bank*.

Its first location was in the Ziegler building (currently the **Pfiefer Hardware** location)

In 1925-26, the bank built its own building at its current 2020 location on the corner of Grand and Marshall Avenues.

Some interesting facts and history about the officers listed in the 1907 ad...

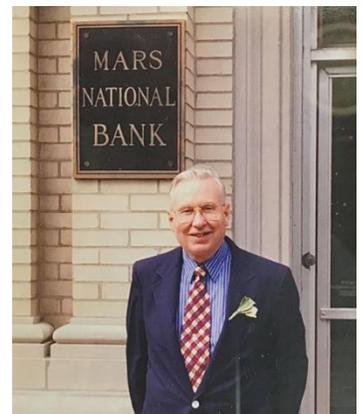
- Christian "Chris" Gelbach listed as President, also owned the Mars Brickyard from around 1900 to 1916.
- Mr. E.P. Sutton became bank President in 1922. A relative, W.J. Sutton, was President from 1930 to 1942. W.J.'s wife Helen was an employee of the bank, and served on the Board of Directors, as did her daughter Patricia, son-in-law Derek van Buskirk, and granddaughter Janet van Buskirk Ballentine. Helen also became a Vice President of the Bank.
- Mr. A.B. Norton, who became President of the bank from 1944 to 1955, was the son of previously mentioned Clarence Norton. The grandson of A. B. Norton, Mr. Charles Norton also worked his way up the ranks in the bank from beginning as a teller following his university years, to President until 1996. Charles was a devoted member and historian of MAHLS until his passing in October 2020.

The **Mars Bank** (as it is now called), has served the Mars Area community well for 120 years, and has been a valued supporter of MAHLS. We salute their outstanding service and thank them for their support.

A.B. Norton performing Teller duties at the Ziegler building location. Ca. 1910



Charles Norton at retirement in 1996



The National Currency Act of 1863 permitted banks to issue currency backed by bonds they purchased. Called circulation, the bills came in \$10 & \$20, three to a sheet to be cut apart and signed. E. P. Sutton signed as president. A. B. Norton-signed as cashier. Mars Bank was authorized to issue \$40M. As the bills wore out more were placed into circulation

MARS BUSINESSES PAST and PRESENT, contd.

The Oil Industry was a huge factor in the growth of Mars during the late 1800s and early 1900s. After Col. Drake drilled the first oil well in 1859, near Titusville, Pa., oil well drilling in Western Pa. became a huge business. Drilling fanned out in all directions from Titusville. Around 1891, oil wells were appearing all over southern Butler Co.

People's Phone No. 11. Bell Phone No. 6.

S. H. ROBERTS

Second-Hand Boilers Bought or Exchanged
SMOKESTACKS MADE TO ORDER

REPAIRING PROMPTLY DONE.	SATISFACTION GUARANTEED.
FLUE WELDING A SPECIALTY.	PRICES REASONABLE.

Mail or Phone Orders Receive Prompt Attention.

Works: Mars, Pa., and

238 East Cunningham Street BUTLER, PENNA.

One piece of machinery used in the drilling process was a steam engine. In order to provide steam to operate the engines, coal or wood burning boilers were used.

The **S. H. Roberts Co.** Mars location was at the corner of Clark and East Railroad Streets. As you can see from their ad, they specialized in boilers for the Oil Well industry.

In the late 1800's, Mr. Clarence Norton and his brothers worked for an oil drilling business in McKean County, Pa. At some point he joined in a partnership with John J. Sheridan and Colestock of Butler to form the **John J. Sheridan Co.** in Mars.

OIL REGION REMINISCENCES 133

Bell Phone No. 5. People's Phone No. 7.

JOHN J. SHERIDAN & CO.

Machinists and Blacksmiths

GENERAL REPAIRING

Of All Kinds Done on Short Notice and in the Best Workman-like Manner.

Braden Gas Engines—New Ball Engines—New Sucker Rods.

AND ALL KINDS OF
SECOND HAND OIL WELL SUPPLIES
ALWAYS ON HAND

The Sheridan Co. sold equipment for the oil and gas wells, such as "fishing tools" to recover the broken drill bits down the holes. The business also specialized in pipe, fittings, tools, and engines, and doing machine shop work for the Oil trade.

As noted previously, many businesses sprouted up in the Mars area around the late 1800s and early 1900s to support the Oil Industry. The oil boom also brought many people, who needed housing.

The **J. S. Clark Co.** supplied lumber products for houses and buildings to accommodate the people and businesses moving into Mars.

Bell Phone 13. People's Phone 2-2.

J. S. Clark

— ANYTHING IN LUMBER —

ALL UNDER ROOF

Lath, Shingles, Brackets, Sash, Mouldings, Doors, Blinds, Etc. Mill Work of All Kinds. Hardwood Interiors. Latest Designs in Front Doors, Porches, Etc. Bolted Derricks to Order.

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Patentee and Manufacturer of the Simplest, Strongest and Most Durable Drilling Machines on the Market. Is Only a Smaller Edition of the Regular Standard Rig. Works Just the Same. Any Driller Knows What That Means.

MARS, - - - PENNA.

In this early era of oil well drilling, the rigs were built primarily from wood. As seen in the ad, Clark Co. also supplied bolt-together drilling rigs (pre-made derrick kits) and other structures included in a complete drilling rig.

Of course, transportation of people, food, and products to the industry became a big factor in Mars as well. There were several Livery Stables to handle the horses and wagons needed to haul supplies to the oil fields. In the 1870s, steam powered railroads arrived in Mars, connecting Mars with the US national railroad system. In 1910, an electric railway was also erected through Mars, running from Pittsburgh to Butler via Mars. Maps and pictures contained in MAHLS archives, show 3 hotels, a movie theater, a brickyard, and many businesses supporting the people and industry coming to the area at that time.

THE MARS SHORTLINE RAILROAD CONTINUES TO BRING JOY AND SMILES TO MANY PEOPLE, AND THEIR PETS!

Although due to the virus Pandemic, it wasn't until the first of June that we got started with the **Mars Shortline Railroad** this year. Also, due to the Pandemic, our ridership was down this year. However, it was still a very good year for the Railroad. The train and the other attractions on our campus, like the caboose, train station, and Plymouth locomotive provided a lot of enjoyment for children, parents, and senior visitors.

MAHLS certainly appreciates the visitors that come to our campus every Friday. Our plan is to start running the Railroad in **late May 2021**. We look forward to seeing you then!



FINALLY A BRIEF PAUSE FOR THE MAHLS CAUSE:

Donations to MAHLS:

We **THANK YOU** for all the generous donations in 2020!

Whether it is volunteer time, historical items from long-time residents, or financial, **any and all donations are greatly appreciated**. Donated items and financial contributions are tax deductible.

Membership and Volunteering at MAHLS has many rewards!

As you can see from reading this Newsletter, the **Society** continues to be extremely fortunate to have hard working volunteers from a wide range of skills. If you are reading this, and not a member, please consider joining MAHLS. 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 break-time every Friday.

If you would like to join MAHLS, please contact our president John Watson (724-272-9588), to discuss what arrangements might be suitable for you. Of course, perhaps you would just like to be a member to support MAHLS, and not do volunteer work. No problem, your membership will be greatly appreciated as well.

There are several MAHLS membership levels available:

Individual.....\$15.00 Family..... \$25.00 Business.....\$50.00 Life Time.....\$400.00

To join as a new member, please email a request to langbc23@yahoo.com, and we will send you an application form.

--- MARS AREA HISTORY and LANDMARKS SOCIETY ----

(a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization)

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