

### **Family Surname Files**

A collection of papers including correspondence, newspaper articles and family trees that have been donated or gathered by the Society. They encompass eight full filing cabinets and contain over 13,000 surnames. Transcriptions of Luzerne County wills for the years 1787-1896 are also included in the Files.

### **Vertical Files**

Newspaper clippings files arranged alphabetically by subject pertaining to locations and events in Luzerne County history. Clippings range in date from 1800s to present day. An index of subjects and sub-categories is available to easily find what you are looking for.

### **Books**

Thousands of volumes - local histories, family histories, biographies, local literature and poetry, etc. all indexed by title, author, subject, and surname. Some volumes of particular use to genealogists are:

History of Luzerne County - H.C. Bradsby (1893)

Genealogical and Family History of the Wyoming and Lackawanna Valleys - Hayden, Hand (1906)

Families of the Wyoming Valley - G. Culp (1855-1890)

A History of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, PA - Harvey, Smith (1909-1930)

### **Manuscript Collection / Archives**

Contains various items, including collections of personal papers and correspondence, receipts, records, ads, booklets, etc. donated to LCHS over the years. Index is arranged alphabetically by subject, surname, place name, or event.

### **Photograph Collection**

Indexed alphabetically by subject or surname, our photo collection consists of nearly 10,000 photographs, slides, stereographs, and postcards showing many aspects of life in Luzerne County over the years.

### **History of Wilkes-Barre and Luzerne County**

Edward Phillips

Mr. Phillips spent over 30 years indexing newspapers and local histories. This work is arranged in eight volumes. There is a surname index. Each tabbed area is for a particular volume and part. When conducting any type of search each tabbed area must be checked.

### **City Directories**

1871 - 2004

Alphabetical listing, similar to a modern phone book, containing information such as the head of household, spouse, occupation, address of occupation, and home address. May also note if a woman was widowed. Some directories also include a street index that could be searched by address.

### **Maps**

Indexed by place name, a few our collection contains are: 1873 Luzerne County Atlas; 1882, 1894, and 1904 Wilkes-Barre Ward maps; 1933 Sturdevant Atlas (a fire insurance map); Sanborn Atlases of Luzerne County communities for the early to mid-1900s.

### **Annual Reports of the Department of Mines (Anthracite)**

1870 - 2000

A book produced each year giving the reports of the Mine Inspector of each mining district in Northeastern Pennsylvania, giving production statistics, locations of coal company offices and the names of their mines/collieries, improvements and new construction, and *for the years 1870-1920 only*, the names of miners who were injured or killed in mining accidents.

\*Over the years the name changed to PA Department of Environmental Resources/Protection, Annual Report on Mining Activities

### Wilkes-Barre Record Almanac                      1886 - 1962

The Wilkes-Barre Record was a local newspapers that published an almanac each year. The dates mentioned were the year the Almanac was published, however the information contained in them was for the previous year. The following is a sample of the information you will find in a typical year:

- Capital Crimes (1896-1958) – Murders that were committed in Luzerne County along with notes concerning the crime.
- Fatal Accidents (1897-1932) – Residents who met with accidental death other than those in the mines or on the railroads.
- Marriages (1897-1906) – Luzerne County residents who were joined in wedlock and reported the event to the paper.
- Mining Affairs (1899-1962) – A brief synopsis of the different aspects of mining in Luzerne County, often including disasters, records of those killed at various collieries in the county, strikes, anthracite mining statistics and a list of mine inspectors and candidates.
- Railroad Fatalities (1896-1931) – Persons who met with death on the railroads of Luzerne County.
- Death Record (1886-1962) – Any death of a resident of Luzerne County, exclusive of the Hazleton region, 10 years of age and over, that was reported to the paper, can be found.
  - 1886 through 1893, deaths were listed in the local summary section, which was divided into the months of the year.
  - 1894 through 1917, the entries were made for the entire year and alphabetized by the first initial of the individual's surname.
  - 1918 through 1962, when a listing was provided, it was done so in paragraph form for each month.

### Microfilm

#### Newspapers

Daily and weekly local newspapers ranging in date from the early 1800s to 1949. Newspapers are not indexed, so a date is needed to search for an article, obituary, wedding announcement, etc. Some of the titles held include the *Wilkes-Barre Record*, *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*, *Luzerne Union*, *Pittston Gazette*, *Hazleton Sentinel*, *Hazleton Plain Speaker*, *Plymouth Weekly Star*, *Shickshinny Mountain Echo*, and *Luzerne Democrat*. We do not have all of the newspapers for all dates - please see the Librarian for a complete list of names and dates.

#### Federal Census                      1790 – 1930                      Luzerne County 1800 through 1930 on microfilm

The census documents the people living in a particular household in each township of the county and includes names, ages, occupations, and place of birth. The 1790 census is in book form. We also have census indexes, 1800 – 1870, which list alphabetically, the names of the heads of household, the county, the city or township and the page on which the name is found in the original census record.

- A fire at the Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C., destroyed the **1890 census**.
- The Federal Census is taken every 10 years and cannot be released to the public for 72 years.
- The 1940 census was the last census released; it is available free online at FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com, and through the National Archives.

**The following records on microfilm were taken from original records held at the Luzerne County Court House:**

**Births 1893 through 1905 \***

The county held birth records until 1905. Birth Registration Returns are arranged by year and may contain some or all of the following: name, sex, color, date of birth, place of birth, the number of children the woman had at the time of birth, of them the number of children surviving, father's name, father's age, mother's name, mother's age, where the parents resided, occupation of the father, birthplaces of the parents and the date the birth was recorded. Records after 1905 are maintained by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics.

**Delayed Births 1877 through 1905**

Act of July 16, 1941 provided an opportunity to register births that had not been previously registered. They are arranged in somewhat of an alphabetical order.

**Deaths 1893 through 1905 \***

The county held death records until 1905. The register of deaths are arranged by year and may contain some or all of the following information: name, color, sex, age, marital status, place of birth, place of death, cause of death, if due to an illness then the length of the illness, place of interment, date of interment, occupation, name of parents and the date the death was recorded. Records after 1905 are maintained by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics.

*\*Birth / Death Records – It was not mandatory to record births or deaths in Luzerne County prior to the state taking over in 1906, therefore a large number of births and deaths were never officially recorded. Utilizing church and cemetery records may be the only documentation you will find prior to 1906.*

**Marriage license docket 1885 through 1950**

The index provided is arranged alphabetically by the man's surname as well as the woman's maiden name. Next to each of the listings is a license number. The license number is needed to locate the marriage record on each roll.

Wilkes-Barre Record - March 9, 1926

*An article stating the Register of Wills office discovered that 800 of the 3,600 marriage licenses issued in 1925 were never returned. Letters were sent to the applicants directing them to notify the priests, ministers or justices who married them to return the license at once. The marriage is not considered legal until returned to the Register of Wills office.*

**Grantor/Grantee Index to Deeds 1787-1907**

These indexes are arranged alphabetically. If you knew of the present owner and wanted to know from whom they purchased the property, you would use the Grantee Index. If you knew the name of a property owner and wanted to know to whom the land was passed, you would use the Grantor's Index. The following is a list of the information included in each entry: grantor/grantee's name, volume number, page number, date of deed, date of record, and location of property.

**Index to Orphans Court 1787-1874**

This index includes the following: intestate (without a will) and testators' (with a will) names, the type of proceedings (ex. Petition for sale, order for sale, return of sale, sale continued, account confirmed, guardian appointed, guardian discharged, citation awarded, proof of contract, sheriffs' return, order to mortgage, petition to mortgage, bond approved and division of personal estate), the year, court docket number and page number.

**Some of the Records available at the Luzerne County Court House (Judicial Services and Records)**  
200 N. River Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711

**Register of Wills and Clerk of Orphans Court      9:00am – 4:30pm      570-825-1668**

Births                    1893 – 1905  
Deaths                   1893 – 1905  
Marriages                1885 – Present  
Probate Records        early 1800s – Present

**Prothonotary's Office      570-825-1745**

Naturalization        1830 – 1906 (after 1906, held by U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization)

**Recorder of Deeds Office      9:00am – 4:30pm      570-825-1641**

Deeds                    1787 – Present  
Mortgages               1787 – Present

**Records Available Elsewhere**

**Veteran Affairs Office**    77 Water Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711    570-706-3960  
Military Discharge Records up to 1950

**Cemetery Records**

Wilkes-Barre City Cemetery – records kept at City Hall, corner of Market and Washington Sts.  
Hollenback Cemetery, Forty Fort Cemetery – held at the cemetery  
Church cemeteries – kept by the church; consolidated parishes should have records from the old churches, unless that denomination has a central records archives

**\*Location of Early County Records\***

1752 – 1772    The territory of Luzerne was included in Northampton County.  
Records can be found in the Court House at Easton, PA.

1772 – 1786    The territory of Luzerne was included in Northumberland County  
Records can be found in the Court House at Sunbury, PA.