



# Cometarian

April Back When 2005

The Student Newspaper of Penns Manor High School

May 2005

## **BACK WHEN Clymer turns 100!**

By Brian A. Church



Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company office building was used until the 1950's, when it would serve as St. Anthony's Convent. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.

**The following article appeared in the April Issue of the  
Cometarian.**

## SPECIAL BACK WHEN

By Brian A. Church

This month, we are going to take a look at Clymer's history as Clymer turns 100 this year! In March of 1905, the location of Clymer was decided by the New York Central Railroad Company. The company knew that the area was rich with coal and wanted to develop a town that could support the coal industry that was soon to come. The railroad decided to not create Clymer as a typical mining town, (a single coal company owning all the mines, stores, and even the em-



New homes being constructed in Clymer. Photo courtesy of *Indiana Gazette* 1980.



Newly constructed Clymer Hardware store 1907. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.

the land in October of 1905, and the officials of the company feared a poor showing due to the fact that it was cold and raining. Much to the surprise of the company, the auction was a success and the lots were sold at an average price of \$306!

Once the town was established, the New York Railroad Company formed the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation, known as the "CBC." This company was only to produce coal for the New York Central Railroad Company. During the first three years, Clymer grew rapidly and in 1908, Clymer was

ployees' homes was typical of a mining town at that time); instead, they created the Dixonville Run Land Company. The Dixonville Run Land Company was to divide the property into lots, sell the lots, and develop a new town that would produce coal only for the New York Central Railroad Company. The Dixonville Run Land Company held the first auction for

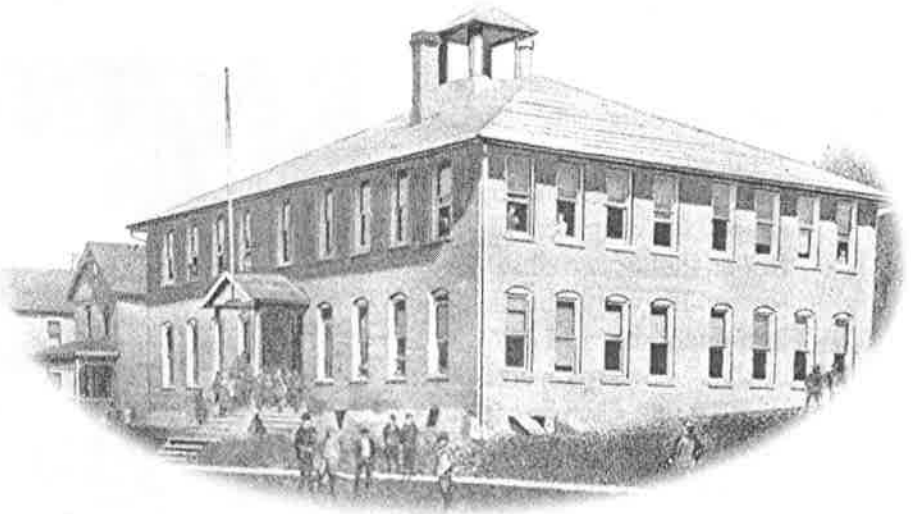


Civil War Veteran's Float, celebrating Clymer's Tenth Birthday. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.

## Clymer Turns 100!

incorporated into a borough. As the town grew, the streets were named after signers of the Declaration of Independence, much like the town itself. The CBC did build some company houses in the town. Most of the company houses were built with cinder block; the houses were then rented out to the miners.

Unlike many other coal towns of the time, other in-



The first school in Clymer, constructed in 1906. It would serve as the elementary for the Clymer School District. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.



Clymer National Bank as it appeared in 1911. The bank would close in the early 1930's due to the Depression. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.

and paving and chimney brick. The plant was the largest brickyard in Pennsylvania by 1910. The plant supplied the bricks which were used to pave some of Clymer's streets. The plant was sold in 1917 and was then renamed Swank's Refractories. The plant then produced clay nozzles of different types for the steel industry until it closed in 1977. Today, Polyvision is located on the old brickyard. Polyvision manufactures chalk boards, smart

dustries developed in Clymer. The Clymer Brick and Fire Clay Company opened after it was discovered that high grade clay was in the area. The company was started in 1907 by John S. Fisher, who later went on to become governor of Pennsylvania. The plant created building brick

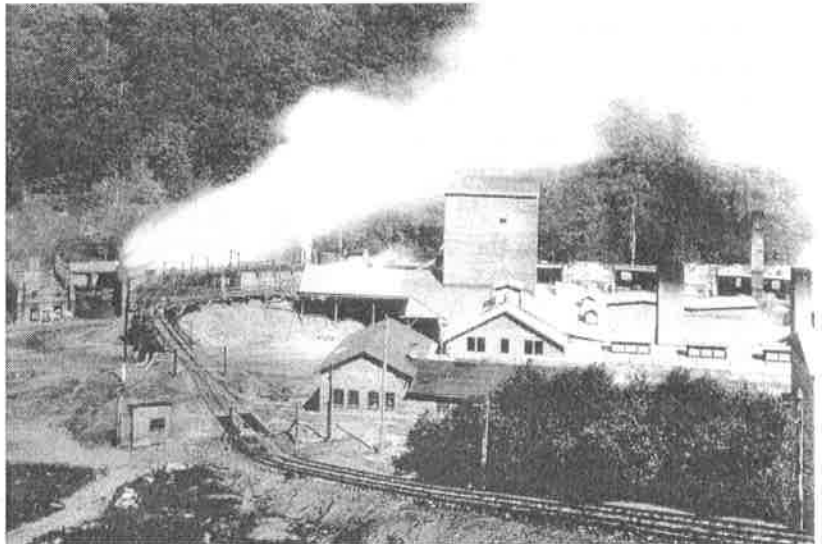


The mining tippie used by the CBC for mine number one. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.

## Special Back When

boards, marker boards, cabinets, and other school-related supplies.

Some of the events that shaped Clymer were the yearly floods that occurred in the spring. Ice would break-up and jam under the “old iron bridge.” Ice jams were so bad in 1919 that Clymer officials used dynamite to break up the ice jams. The floods were a yearly bother to Clymer until the late 1930’s when the drenching of the Twolick Creek was completed. At that time, people in the area thought the floods were a thing of the past, but they were wrong. Clymer would flood again in 1972 and 1977. Clymer would also suffer a minor flood in 1996. The flood of 1977 occurred in June after the entire state suffered heavy amounts of rain. When the water began to rise, firefighters were called in to help



The Clymer Brick and Fire Clay Company Factory. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.

evacuate the residents. The waters were rising so fast that the firefighters’ cars were submerged before they got back to them. Rescues were then made by boat, and Route 286 was closed due to the fact that it was under water. The water was so high it reached Franklin

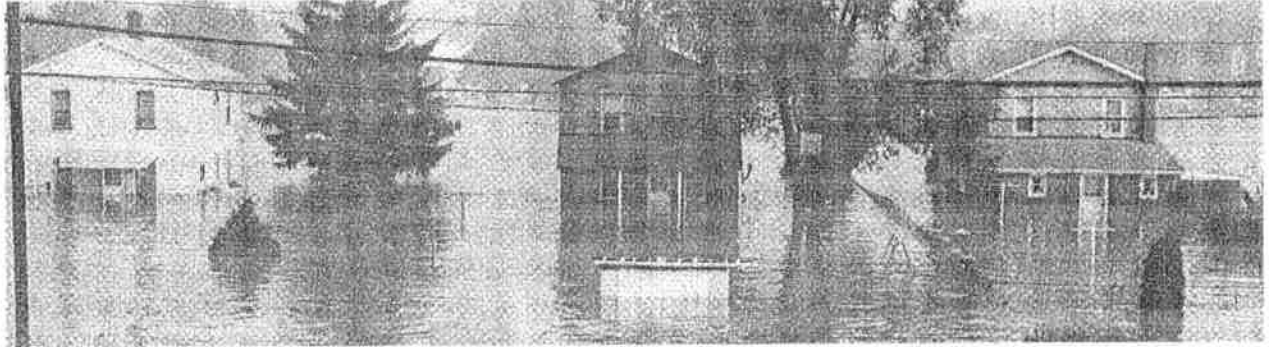
Street and even flooded some lower parts of the street. After the flood, certain parts of Adams, Jefferson, and Sherman Streets were declared flood plains and the houses were removed. In fact, several houses were once located where Clymer Park now sits.

Another event that changed Clymer was a major fire at the Clymer Opera House in 1909. The town was equipped with fire hydrants, but there was no hose to hook up to the hydrants, so the fire spread quickly to neighboring buildings. The fire would have kept spreading if the Indiana Fire Department would not have brought the much-needed fire hose



A look at Franklin Street in 1955. Photo courtesy of John F. Busovicki.

## Clymer Turns 100!



Houses on Sherman Street begin to flood in June 1977. Photo courtesy of *Indiana Evening Gazette* June 1977.

and gotten the fire under control. After the fire, pressure was put on the borough council to create a much-needed fire department, so in 1909 the Clymer Fire Department was formed. Other major fires included a fire at the Clymer Methodist Church and Levison's Department Store in March of 1987, located next to First National Bank. Levison's opened in 1906; they sold clothes, furniture, and appliances. The store went out of business towards the end of 1986. Today, only the left portion



Levison's Department Store in Clymer, as it appeared in a 1980 ad. Photo courtesy of the *Indiana Gazette*.



The Clymer Hardware building as it appears today. Photo by Brian Church.

of the building remains and the magistrate's office is located in the building. Another major fire was the Clymer Roller Rink which had been used as a chemical store facility since the roller rink closed in the early 1960's. The roller rink building, located across from Sheetz, burnt in August of 2001.

The worst mining accident in Indiana County also occurred in Clymer. In August of 1926, there was an explosion at Sample Run mine number one, owned by the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company. Out of the 57 men who worked there that day, nine were able to escape

## Clymer Turns 100!

uninjured, four men were saved from the disaster. The other 44 men in the mine died that day. A memorial for the men who died is located in front of the Clymer Borough Building.

The first school in Clymer was built by Cherryhill Township in 1906 on Hancock Street. Soon after it formed in 1908, Clymer Borough purchased the school from Cherryhill Township. Another school was constructed in 1916 as the high school for the district, until a new high school was constructed on Morris Street in 1923. The new building would not serve as the high school for long, because shortly after a large addition was added to the old high school building, the high school moved back to the old building in 1926. However, the high school continued to use the gymnasium in the new building. Clymer's football field was located at the present day Clymer Park. Clymer School District's education was so good that students were automatically accepted at Indiana University of Pennsylvania upon graduation. In 1952, Clymer School District and Pine Township School District merged to form the new Penns Manor Joint School District. In the fall of



Machine storage and repair building for the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company. Photo courtesy of the *Indiana Evening Gazette* August 1980.

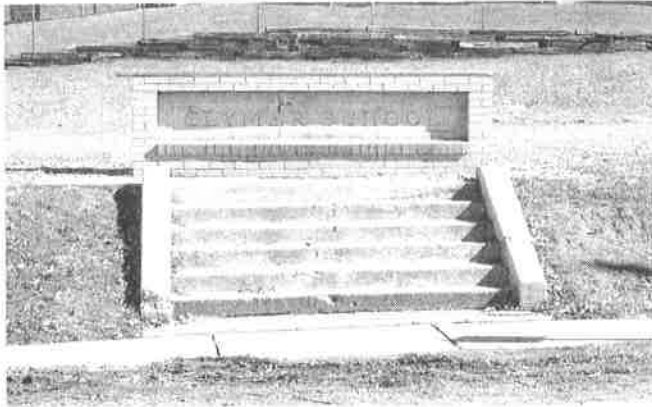


Current picture of the CBC Machine storage and repair building, it is now owned by Clymer borough. Photo by Brian Church.



The burnt ruins of the old Clymer Skating Rink, at the time that it burned, Setter Chemical owner the building. Photo by Brian Church.

## Clymer Turns 100!



The old site of the Clymer School that was constructed in 1923. Photo by Brian Church.

1961, the new Penns Manor Joint High School opened in Kenwood and all of the Clymer schools were closed, except the high school which was converted into one of the four Penns Manor Elementary buildings. In the fall of 1980 the newly constructed Penns Manor Elementary opened, and the last Clymer school was shut down. It would be torn down in the mid 1980's to make way for apartments. None of the Clymer schools stand today.

Clymer's population grew to around 3,100

people at its peak in 1940. In the middle of the 1950's, the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company closed all operations in Clymer. Due to the loss of industry, the population of Clymer has shrunk to around 1,500 people.



The old Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company office building, now houses a dentist office. Photo by Brian Church.



The Clymer National Bank building as it appears today. Photo by Brian Church.

### Special Thanks to:

Mrs. Habel  
Mrs. Lauer  
Ms. Grove  
Mrs. Horn  
Ms. Thornton  
Dr. Sgriccia  
Mrs. McCracken  
Mr. John F. Busovicki  
*The Indiana Gazette*

\*All photos from the *Indiana Gazette* and *Indiana Evening Gazette* were used with permission.

\*All photos in this article from John F. Busovivki are used with permission from his book, *Post Card History Series, Indiana County.*

