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Etna Celebrates its 125th Anniversary Part One: Etna's beginnings and glory years

By Frank X. Sowa

In Part One: Etna's Beginnings and Glory Years, the Guyasuta Gazette will look at Etna from a historical perspective from the 1600's up to the 1930's. In Part Two: Etna's Community and Milltown Years, the Guyasuta Gazette will look at the families that settled in Etna that have established multiple generations who have lived in Etna, some dating back to the early 1800's, and how those communities grew up in the Great Milltown that Etna was from the beginning of this Century through the 1960's. In Part Three: Etna's 125th Anniversary, the Guyasuta Gazette will look at Etna's more recent history and people, looking at the community changes since the 1960's, the merger of Etna High School with Shaler, and the devastating floods.

It is interesting that many in Etna know little about the communities grand roots. They know even less about the significant world figures that had some impact on the Etna area over the years — names like George Washington, Chief Guyasuta, General William Wilkins, the Marquis De Lafayette, George Croghan, James Fenimore Cooper, Walt Whitman, Charles Dickens, Henry Spang, J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller — all have their names tied to Etna's beginnings.

Few have learned in their history classes

that Western Pennsylvania's entire iron and steel industry had its humble beginnings not in the Monongahela Valley, as the Steel Heritage people might want us to believe, but in Etna along the Allegheny River. Few have learned that the world industry for natural gas production was the product of Etna called the "Peoples Natural Gas Company," or that steel piping has its roots there at the Spang Chalfant Company. Where would the oil behemoths be today, if it weren't for the breakthroughs in steel piping technology that had its roots in Etna. In all, Etna is the heart and soul of a lot of the growth in Western Pennsylvania, and in this paper's three-part series which will be published in this July issue, as

well as the August and September issues, the Guyasuta Gazette will attempt to bring alive some of that history.

The Borough of Etna was founded in September 1869, at the site of one of the first trading posts west of the Alleghenies, established in 1747 by George Croghan. Before that, Etna, which is located at the juncture of Little Pine Creek and Big Pine Creek where they flow in to the Allegheny River, was a Seneca Indian community, and was made famous by the "father of our country," George Washington in the early 1740's.

According to George Washington's journal,

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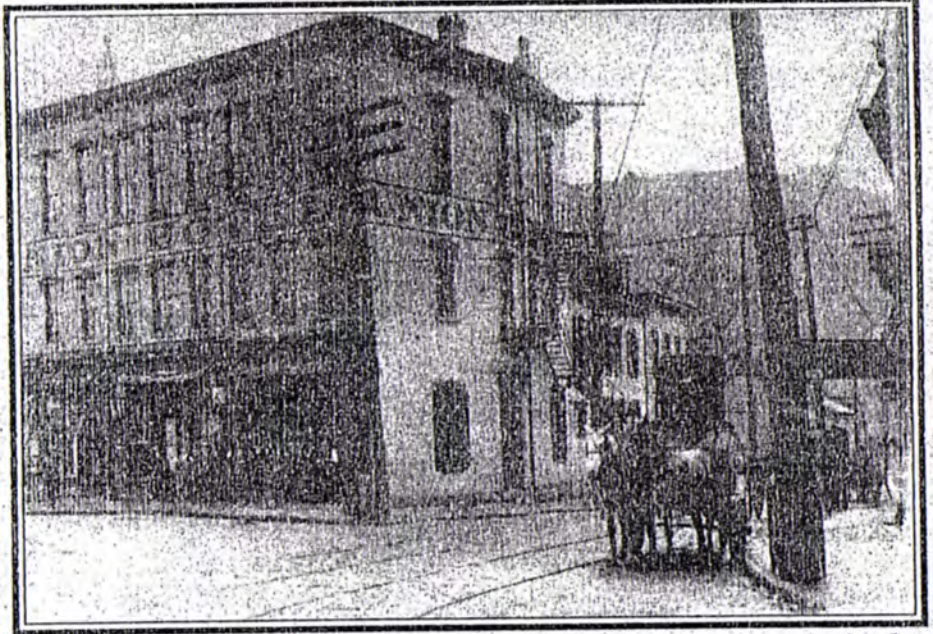
Communities are said to be the assemblage of many functional institutions, and the people associated with them. The church, industries, the community organizations, the government, and the school are considered the key institutions that breathe life into a community. As the Borough of Etna prepares to celebrate its 125th Anniversary of incorporation on September 16, 17 and 18. The Guyasuta Gazette has decided to take a look back at the roots of Etna, and how the borough grew into the community that it is today.

THE SENECAS IN THE ALLEGHENY RIVER

while surveying in the winter for the Virginia Land Company he and his guides came under hostile Indian attack near the mouth of Big Pine Creek (future site of Etna), and barely escaped using Big Pine Creek as their escape route. It was just south of Etna, where he almost drowned when Washington slipped under ice flows as he fell from a raft while crossing the Allegheny River.

The Senecas who lived where Etna is today, were ruled by "Great Chief Guyasuta," in the 1700's. They were a proud and advanced hunting, trading and warrior tribe who found the Pine Creek Valleys and the Allegheny rich with natural food and mineral treasures. It was a great place to establish a settlement and an excellent location to trade with other Indian communities in a huge trading network that reached as far north as the Hudson Bay in Canada, as far east as the Atlantic Ocean, as far west as the Iron fields in northern Minnesota, and as far south as the Inca tribes in South America. In the 17th and 18th Centuries the Senecas and other local Indians expanded their trade to also deal with the "whiteman" trading peacefully with both the French, and British fur traders at a site near the mouth of Big Pine Creek. In fact, Guyasuta was one of the Indian chiefs who befriended George Washington and helped to guide him to his first meeting with the French, moving up Pine Creek to a location somewhere near where Evans City sits today. And, it was also Seneca scouts who informed the British about the construction of Fort Duquesne by the French, a development that could have altered history should the French have reinforced Pittsburgh before British garrisons marching on the Point forced Fort Duquesne's surrender.

Croghan, the famous fur trader, was a former Dublin Irishman with a "rough-hewn" reputation. He had married a beautiful Sen-



The Union Hotel, shown here circa 1903, on the corner of Butler and Main Sts. was a meeting place for the world's financial moguls and businessmen. The list included J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie and many others. The hotel still stands, and is known today as Mitchell's Deli.

eca Indian princess and established his trading post at the mouth of Big Pine Creek on the Allegheny River, a few years after Washington had surveyed the area for the Virginia Company. Through help from his Indian connections, and primarily the Senecas, Croghan was able to become one of the largest, most well-known (and possibly wealthiest) trader west of the Alleghenies. His trading territory extended from Erie and Buffalo, to Louisville and parts of Kentucky, throughout the Connecticut Western Reserve lands (now Cleveland and most of Ohio), and the holdings of the Virginia Company (now most of West Virginia and Southeastern Ohio). His trading post boasted of over 200 horses and pack mules, 130 canoes, and a multitude of rafts.

Croghan would trade guns and powder, cloth, home furnishings, and farming tools for furs and wild animal meats. His trading meth-

ods were despised by the French fur traders, and the Jesuit priests who also laid trading stakes to areas north of the Allegheny River, because he offered guns to the Indians as well as white settlers, he made more generous offers for the furs and meats than the French which cut in to their profits, and he promoted permanent settlements with his sale of farming implements — something that concerned the Jesuits, who feared Indian uprisings.

Croghan along with Simon Girty, of which Girty's run was named after were true mountain men. Girty, who lived a mile downriver (where Millvale stands today) was a friend of Croghan, and did his trading at his post. Girty travelled with the Indians throughout the tri-state area, hunting, trapping and trading from

the 1750's through the 1770's. He came to respect their ways.

A loyalist to the British Crown always, Girty aided the British against the French in the French-Indian War with his knowledge of troop movements through the western territories in what is now Ohio. Girty became a British Agent during the Revolutionary War and organized brutal attacks against area settlers during and after the war. Girty taught his adopted savage brothers how to scalp the dead to throw fear into the enemies — an uncommon practice among Indians until Girty. Disowned for his terroristic ways by his new country, Girty became an adopted son of local Indian tribes. In 1814, Girty died fighting for Tecumseh in Ohio and Indiana against the white-man. Eastern journalists wrote many articles about the "white savage" Girty, and about his friend Croghan and their frontier antics. James Fenimore Cooper, was said to have used stories about Croghan and Girty to create some of his "noble savage" fictional characters that made his writings famous.

Eventually, the Senecas did not like the British incursion and settlements on their prized hunting grounds, and the clearing of the forests for farming. When Chief Pontiac decided to side with the French to drive the British colonists out of the New World, Guyasuta decided to join the French against the British. It was Seneca Indians who attacked the British soldiers under Washington who were moving to reinforce Pittsburgh during the French-Indian War. When the British won the French-Indian War and established Fort Pitt at the Point (Pittsburgh), they made peace with Guyasuta, and agreed to protect his hunting areas.

Guyasuta was loyal to the agreement, and even fought first on the side of the British during the Revolutionary War, but later changed sides and fought against the British when British garrisons tried to clamp down on his fur trade to American colonists demanding that taxes be paid. Congress and Washington rewarded him by making him and his tribe landowners in an area just north of Etna along the Allegheny (near where the boroughs of Sharpsburg, Aspinwall, Fox Chapel and O'Hara and Indiana Townships stand today).

After the Revolutionary War, soldiers were given land deeds by Congress in areas west of the Allegheny Mountains as payment for their services to the country. Because of the population growth, as a result of people moving west over the Allegheny Mountains, Allegheny County was created in 1788 from parts of Westmoreland and Washington Counties (with the river town of Allegheny (North Side) as its hub. It was later divided into seven townships, including Pitt Township, which occupied all territory north of the Allegheny River within Allegheny County, including what is Etna today.

One of the first land owners in the Etna area was General William Wilkins, who became a federal judge and U.S. Senator. Wilkins, after which Wilkinsburg and Wilkins Township were named, built a large mansion on what is now Freeport Street finishing construction in the early 1800's. The "Blue House"

stood there until it was finally torn down in 1938. It became a meeting place of the Good Templars and Odd Fellows in the 1900's. His large tract of land included all of what is now the Borough of Etna, and a good part of Shaler, Millvale and Reserve. The Marquis De LaFayette, the famous Revolutionary War general was guest in the Wilkins house for the entire summer of 1824.

From 1790 through 1805, Scotch-Irish immigrants came into the Etna area looking for employment on the construction of the new Pittsburgh-Freeport Road which was being built along the Allegheny (today's Freeport Road). These immigrants settled near the Allegheny River where Etna is today, and were quickly followed by immigrants from Germany and Switzerland who had left the Rhine River Valley and other European centers as a result of the Napoleonic Wars. These immigrants liked how similar the Etna area looked to their homelands, and set up trades to support the construction of new roadways and Pennsylvania Canal which was completed in 1830. The Canal ran along the Allegheny River, through Etna and today's North Side of Pittsburgh. The Pennsylvania Canal connected Pittsburgh with Johnstown, Harrisburg and Philadelphia and allowed for the first time "easy" trans-Allegheny Mountain travel. It was not a financial success, but it did improve travel time until the Railroads replaced it in the mid-1800's. It also brought such famous authors as Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain and Charles Dickens through the Etna area on their way to the west. In some of their writings, they even commented on the beauty of the "Big Pine Creek" area.

In 1825, General Wilkins sold his land to David Anderson who laid the property into small town lots, and resold the properties to the immigrant families. He called the community "Centreville." Centreville immediately became the home to an iron mill, a grist mill and a lumber mill. Overnight lodging facilities, shops, and a restaurant, also eventually grew there, and a village was born. In 1828, Henry Spang and his sons purchased and greatly expanded the existing iron mill, initially to manufacture farm implements for local residents and settlers who were moving west into Ohio and Indiana. In 1838, the community changed its name to "Stewartstown," naming the area after one of its leading residents. It remained Stewartstown until Etna was incorporated thirty years later.

The Etna area grew rapidly during the mid-1800's driven by greatly expanding job opportunities in the iron mills and nearby coal mines that supported the Spang mill, and a new ironmaking blast furnace, known as the Isabella Furnaces built in 1865, and located at the mouth of Big Pine Creek along the banks of the Allegheny River. The Isabella Furnaces ironmaking capabilities were greatly enhanced after the Civil War to keep up with rising demands. In these boom years, both Spang and Isabella hired many immigrants. Many families who came to the Etna area at this time were from Austria, Hungary, the Balkan States, Italy, Poland and the Ukraine, and moved to Stewartstown specifically to work in the mills and in the surrounding mines. The first fire company in the area was established in 1874, and the first fire station established after borough incorporation was set

up in 1916. These two companies continue to provide service in Etna Borough.

Spang Company, who had continued making farm implements, added iron pipe in 1840 — becoming the first manufacturer west of the Alleghenies, and one of the largest producers of iron pipe in the United States at the time. Spang's decision to build a larger production capacity facility paid off handsomely before, and after the Civil War, as iron pipe quickly replaced the use of wooden pipe in urban water mains. He quickly grew the facility again, taking on financing, and reorganizing into the Spang Chalfant Company in 1858. The result was the development of an entirely new industry in Western Pennsylvania — the "iron and steel industry" — an industry that grew to be the largest in the world. It started out of humble beginnings in Etna.

Until 1840, agriculture was the primary base of the local economy, but the Spang Chalfant Company and other industries that chose to locate along the Allegheny River and Big Pine Creek in what was to become Etna, made it more lucrative to mine for iron and coal, and soon these industries became the most important source for revenues for early settlers in the area.

Moving coal from mines in Shaw's glen (which became Glenshaw), the Shaler area of Pitt Township, and from other points north (along what are now Middle Road and Saxonburg Boulevard) into Stewartstown to fuel the growing industrial facilities was hazardous and difficult. Wagons were able to move only about 3-6 miles per day. To the north, the municipality of Butler was growing in commercial importance, and there was growing demand to connect Butler with Pittsburgh.

In 1847, along the same time that Shaler Township was formed and named after Judge Charles Shaler, work began on a second major highway through Etna — the Butler Pike (now Mt. Royal Boulevard). It was completed in 1852, and became a key trade route moving goods out of Pittsburgh north towards Erie, and south from the Great Lakes. Four years later, Butler Pike was supplemented by the Butler Plank Road which connected the growing community of Glenshaw with Stewartstown (Etna), and by Middle Road and the beginnings of Saxonburg Boulevard. The village that was to become Etna was now a transportation hub. The roads also made it possible to travel at least 10-20 miles each day.

In the late 1840's, other new industries were developing around Western Pennsylvania, and Etna was destined to play key roles in all of them. Oil Production, Riverboating, Canals, the early Railroads, Coal Production, and the beginnings of Natural Gas Production all had ties to the Etna area.

When searching for oil, the drillers began to use iron pipe to bring the oil to the surface. Riverboats were refurbished along the Allegheny River near today's Etna. The Pennsylvania Canal, which cut through the heart of what was to be Etna was a boon to trade and mail dispatch with communities all along the Rivers, along Pine Creek, and along the major highways that cut north from Pittsburgh through the area. Etna was also one of the last stopping points on the canal route, before they reached Pittsburgh, for travellers to cities in the west — cities like St. Louis. Railroad speculators, and oil and coal magnates like John D. Rockefeller moved through Etna, and Pine Creek, and along the Allegheny River buying up right-of-ways on the speculation that a Railroad would eventually be built through Etna to deliver people and cargo from points north to Pittsburgh. Local mining immigrants from Scotland and Germany continued to build the coal industry.

By September 1868, the industries in the village had grown so much that there was a constant glow from the fires of the industrial furnaces of Stewartstown. When the furnaces were opened for improved oxygen flow (to make them hotter) fire and sparks of ash erupted fifty-to-one hundred feet into the night sky, lighting up the riverside community for miles. Riverboat and canal travellers commented about how as they rounded the bend on the Allegheny River which was a quiet-wooded bank, "the combination of the glowing sky, and the rumble of the industrial operations filled the air and aroused the senses — as if one were witnessing the eruption of a volcano." It must have been a notable site, because early sources of information on the area indicate that the name of Etna was finally chosen for the borough, because the topography of the area surrounding the town was similar to that found around the famous volcano in Sicily, Mt. Aetna. Etna, the borough, was born.

In 1870, the Robber Baron era was beginning, and companies who understood production efficiencies worked to monopolize all segments of their industry. Spang Chalfant was no exception. In order to provide the now even larger iron mill facilities with enough fuel to keep them running around the clock, to meet booming market demand and to cut fuel costs, Spang Chalfant Company, along with banking and industrial magnates from Pittsburgh and Butler, began to sell stock in a new venture known as "The Peoples Natural Gas Company." It was to be the first natural gas company in the entire world, and it was to use Spang Chalfant six-inch pipe laid just west of Big Pine Creek through Glenshaw, to link gas wells in Butler to the industry and community of Etna — a gas line of 17 miles.

As a result in 1874, Spang Chalfant was the first industrial facility in the world to switch over to piped-in natural gas to heat their furnaces and provide lighting. And, Etna was one of the first communities in the world to purchase the excess gas, and use it to light and fuel the community, along with all of its industries. The distribution pipeline through the end of the Nineteenth Century was extended in to Pittsburgh, making Etna the hub for natural gas distribution, until even better-financed competitors out of Pittsburgh began to cut in to Peoples market share. The technique of piping natural gas over long distances, was the beginning of the present-day natural gas distribution networks that extend across all areas of each continent throughout the world. And, the Peoples Natural Gas Company, now a part of Consolidated Natural Gas, has remained one of the largest distribution pipeline owners in the world, and still maintains its pipe routes in Etna.

Not long after laying the gas line, Spang Chalfant Company had another major breakthrough in ironmaking technology. Because the natural gas burned cleaner, and more evenly, they were able to refine the process of making steel-alloy pipe which had a significant superiority over iron pipe. Soon, steel pipe replaced iron pipe in use with water utilities and within the oil and gas industries, and all of Spang Chalfant's former customers were now digging up their iron pipes and replacing them, providing an even larger market for the company.

In 1875, Spang Chalfant Company began to look for a more economical way to get raw materials from Butler, Freeport and other points north to its facilities. Highway travel at 1-4 miles per hour was entirely too slow. Forming another venture with many other Pittsburgh industrial magnates, with J.P. Morgan, the pre-eminent banker of the late 1800's, and J. Edgar Thompson (who went on to create the Pennsylvania Railroad) they formed a narrow gauge railroad company called the Pittsburgh-Butler Railroad that connected Pittsburgh with Butler and Freeport and ran through Etna. It was completed in 1877, and had a average speed of between 8-12 mph. The investment group liked their success, and met often to take a look at the operation. They had meetings in Pittsburgh's downtown, and in Etna's Union Hotel (now Mitchell's Deli) on the corner of Butler and Main Streets.

Three years later, the rail lines were replaced with steel track and were made of standard gauge giving them higher speeds on the level areas of between 12-18 mph. with top speeds near 40 mph. (By comparison, today's trains which run through Etna are capable of speeds of around 100 mph. but travel through the borough at 25 mph.) This railroad was sold to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1920, which merged with the Chesapeake & Ohio (Morgan's Railroad) in the 1970's. Hence, it has remained under the same management since its beginnings.

As a result of the modern advances in and around Etna, other major industries began to locate near the borough. Roessing Bronze Company, makers of brass and bronze ingots opened just north of Etna in 1891, followed in 1895 by the Glenshaw Glass Company.

In 1888, because of the natural gas pipelined through Etna which also fueled the Isabella Furnaces, and because of the steel-making breakthroughs at Spang Chalfant which caused the iron making furnaces at Isabella to switch over to ferro-manganese production (a critical component of steel), another steel entrepreneur began to eye Etna as an ideal location for one of the major steel mills in his empire. His name was Andrew Carnegie, and he was a frequent guest at the Union Hotel as well, while he worked out the details to make Etna a part of the Carnegie Steel empire. He never got the chance to complete any deals though. In 1900, J.P. Morgan bought out Carnegie, forming the United States Steel Company. Morgan and his officers, no strangers to Etna because of the railroad business, took over the Isabella Furnaces in a hostile takeover in 1909, using the purchase to effectively remove the pricing advantages of steel pipe made at the Spang facility. The U.S. Steel facilities remained open through the mid-1950's.

In 1900, Etna also established its first electrical utility plant, as was common in the early days of electrical power. The plant provided electricity for lighting and industrial use to Etna and parts of Shaler, and most were linked into the service by 1903. Early service was rationed and could not be used until after 4 p.m. In 1909, the electric plant caught fire and was destroyed. It was replaced with a new upgraded facility that provided unlimited service. That facility continued to produce power into the late 20th Century. Other industries joined Etna in the early 1900's: Enamel Metals Company in 1905; Sheridan Machine Shop in 1917; Etna Concrete Block Company in 1918, Pittsburgh Saw & Tool Company, National Valve Manufacturing, Etna Broom, and Pittsburgh Broom were just a few of the early companies.

The Butler Short Line Electric Railroad, which connected Pittsburgh to Butler via Etna along Mt. Royal Boulevard began trolley car passenger service in 1907 and continued with many service upgrades until 1931, when Ford's inexpensive Model T automobiles along with fairly good roads around Pittsburgh made such rail service uneconomical.

Formal education started in Etna as early as 1837. Between 1840 and 1900 six elementary schools were built in Etna. In 1915, the first high school in Etna started operation as a classroom in the Wilson Elementary School. The Etna High School served students from as far north as Butler, until the neighboring communities were able to develop their own programs. Increased enrollment in the high school made it necessary to construct first a wing at the elementary facility, and later a new building, which served Etna from 1925 to 1971 when state mandates forced the facil-

ity to close and merge with the Shaler Area School District.

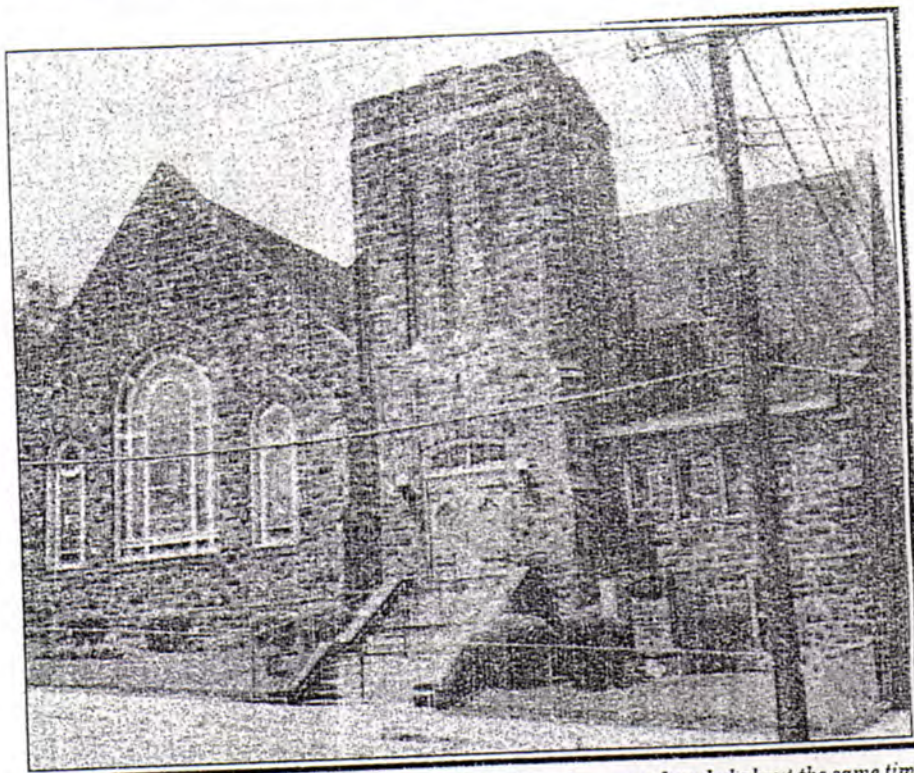
Etna's education system was said to be one of the most advanced programs of its time, founded on principles used in the German school systems (an approach that the Pennsylvania Department of Education is now trying to redeploy via Outcomes Based Education). The program was nationally-recognized for its excellence throughout its tenure, and even in the days preceeding the merger with Shaler. The first parochial school in Etna was All Saints Roman Catholic School founded in 1902.

Six churches provided the religious roots in Etna. The First Congregational Church was established in 1849, and was of German and Swiss origin. Calvert Memorial United Presbyterian Church was founded in 1868 by Scottish immigrants. Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1900. Presbyterian Mission Church was founded in 1902, as was All Saints Roman Catholic Church. And, the Church of the Nazarene was founded in 1929. Churchgoers also had an abundance of churches to attend besides these in the neighboring communities of Glenshaw, Millvale, and Sharpsburg.

The Depression Years took their toll on Etna forcing many businesses to cut back or close, and others to lose their ownership. Etna's largest employer, Spang-Chalfant was no exception. In 1930, the Spang family sold their business to National Supply Company which operated the mill until the early 1960's, when National Supply merged with Armco Steel out of Butler. Eventually, this merger led to the shutdown of the Spang-Chalfant facility, which was purchased by the Tippins Machinery Company (Etna's current largest employer). The Spang-Chalfant mill's facilities still exist. They are the large buildings owned by Tippins off of Butler Street.



During the Robber Baron days, companies sought to monopolize their own activities. Spang Chalfant was no exception. Shown here is the Spang Land Company circa 1874. Courtesy of Etna Antiques.



The Calvert Memorial United Presbyterian Church, shown here, was founded about the same time as the borough of Etna. It was built in 1868.

Part Two: Etna's Community and Milltown years

Between 1885 and 1914, Western Pennsylvania led the American transition into a modern industrial society, and Etna was right in the middle of it. Andrew Carnegie, George Westinghouse, R.B. Mellon, Andrew W. Mellon, Henry Clay Frick, Charles F. Speer, J.L. Dawson, John Richetson, A.W. Painter, General Fitzhugh, Chief Justice Shiras, Albert Childs, Major Phipps, S. Shoyer Jr., Max Moorhead, and Etna's Charles Spang, Cambell Herron, and John W. Chalfant became the "movers and shakers" of the Pittsburgh industrial era by forming the Duquesne Club in Downtown Pittsburgh.

These capitalists, almost singlehandedly, made Western Pennsylvania the center of capital goods manufacturing for the entire world. Etna's industry grew solid during that era centered around some forty different capital goods manufacturers and their supporting suppliers. The Spang Chalfant & Company Pipe Mill operation, which included the Vesuvius and Mt. Etna Railroad, the Pittsburgh and Butler Railroad, the Peoples Natural Gas Company, the Spang Land Company, the Isabella Furnaces, and many other smaller operations in and around Etna were by far the largest economic vehicle in the community. Spang's monopoly on Etna, that began in 1828, was thwarted in 1909, when J.P. Morgan's U.S. Steel Company took over the Isabella Furnace Works, creating two major corporations to be supplied in Etna.

During the Carnegie Steel days in the late 1800's, Andrew Carnegie competed heavily with Spang Chalfant for control of much of the pig iron business throughout the United States. But, the Etna Isabella furnace proved nimbler, and its workforce more productive, and the proud and stubborn Etna firm held out against the best of the competition. J.P. Morgan, on the other hand, recognized early, that all men have a price. J.P. Morgan's purchase of Carnegie Steel in 1900, made Carnegie the world's first billionaire. The deal with Spang and Chalfant in 1909 for Isabella was much less, but it gave Spang the money it badly needed to upgrade and refurbish its pipe mill, the oldest in America, so that it would last into the 1950's.

The prosperity, and geometric growth of the factories and the dynamic quality of Etna during this boom period prompted hundreds of

laborers to ignore the horrendous environmental conditions, and move into the mill operations in Etna, in the hope of getting a piece of the "American dream." They flocked to the mills, foundries, machine tool, fabrication, and capital goods shops that sprung up in Etna, where they often found housing in local boarding houses and apartments that sprung up in Lower Etna, and along Butler, Walnut and Main Streets, or if they were supervisors or above, they found residence in Spang, and U.S. Steel company housing that was built up the hillsides of Goat Hill, Cabbage Hill and Locust Hill, and further into Shaler, Glenshaw, Sharpsburg and Aspinwall.

The blue collar laborers often worked for below-subsistence wages, put in long-hours, and worked under prevailingly dangerous working conditions. By the turn of the century, cost-cutting "vertical integration" often had manufacturers replacing highly-skilled workers with unskilled immigrant labor as quickly as technological advances permitted, forcing wages still lower.

To counteract the growing power of the corporations, skilled craftsmen began to form craft guilds in Etna that eventually organized into locals of the larger area labor unions. According to Duquesne Club records, Samuel Gompers' labor movement was of deep concern to both Spang and Chalfant in 1881. And, by 1890-1895, when Chalfant was president of the club, the industrialists spent much of their meetings planning reactions to the confrontational labor tactics. At first, such tactics were to incorporate to minimize liabilities, which Spang Chalfant did in 1899. Later, by the 1920's, the firms started what they called "welfare work" programs — programs for the benefit of the communities in which they operated. It was through these "welfare work" programs, that true relationship between the company mill and worker families began. And, it was through these that the industrialists were finally able to overcome the growing power of the labor unions.

Spang Chalfant & Co.'s welfare work included a bureau of medicine, where all employees were treated free by Dr. William E. Hart, a graduate of John Hopkins Medical School; a dental parlor, providing free dental work, run by Dr. H.A. Anderson who graduated from the University of Michigan; a bureau of civics that each year gave the borough of Etna lots of money for "Etna Day", area beautification projects, company picnics at National Park (an amusement park in Aspinwall) and West View Park (an amusement park in West View); a company compensation bureau that built and supplied senior laborers with company housing and utilities; a public affairs bureau that allowed outside groups such as the Eastern Service Star Legion, the Sewing Club for Young Girls, the Fireman's Club for Young Boys, the Women's Club of Spang Chalfant & Company, and the Ex-Service Club to hold meetings in their meeting facilities.

In addition to these, the mill companies like Spang Chalfant and U.S. Steel offered extensive recreational opportunities. Both companies boasted of a number of very successful semi-professional sports teams in baseball, football, tennis, track and field, wrestling, swimming, boxing, bowling and basketball. Spang Chalfant operated two outdoor swimming pools, one indoor swimming pool, a gymnasium, a wading pool for children and a "modern" playground, and numerous facilities for "indoor amusement and sport." In there rec-

reational facility, which is Etna's Elks Building today, Spang Chalfant spent \$450,000 to build Etna's first banking institution, the Etna First National Bank which was completed in 1926 (just in time for the 1929 Stock Market Crash). Spang Chalfant also put money into building a number of Etna theaters including the "Helena Theatre" on Butler Street (next to the First national Bank of Etna building) that was purported to have the finest collection of pipe organs in Pennsylvania.

In 1906, the heyday of early American baseball, the Spang-Chalfant, semi-professional team known as "Our Boys," played an exhibition baseball game at the West Etna Ballfield against the Pittsburgh Pirates. Schools and businesses in Etna closed for the game, which ended in a disputed score.

In 1911, Etna faced a devastating flood, one of many to plague the community over the years. The flood waters rose high enough to literally lift box cars off the tracks and slam

them into the production buildings of Spang Chalfant. The flood cost Etna dearly. Production figures which outperformed most of Western Pennsylvania, virtually guaranteeing job security fell as workers took months to reconstruct what had been lost. Lives were also lost as the torrential currents pulled people out in an undertow to be washed up miles downriver on the Ohio. It took weeks to restore electrical and gas utilities.

But, with the commitment of local industrialists, bankers from the Duquesne Club, and the government assistance of Pennsylvania, Etna recovered. In 1916, Etna was flooded again. This flood wasn't as devastating as the 1911 flood, but it began a pattern that still has not been solved.

A number of Etna companies aided the war efforts during the Spanish-American War and

World War I, and the Spang Chalfant Company was no exception. During these wars, the companies paid a lot of respect to the veter-

ans, and spent a lot of time aiding their spouses who remained behind. The Etna companies produced a great variety of munitions, in addition to pipe, car forgings, pipe coils and bends, and other articles of iron and steel. They also helped fund the Etna Ex-Serviceman's Club, a forerunner to today's Veteran's of Foreign Wars.

Etna was also a home to the early women's suffrage (voting rights), temperance (anti-drinking), and Salvation Army movements, with parades through the borough staged about once every other month. These movements never had the involvement that was seen in other localities nearby — where such involvement made them nationally famous.

With the growth of the factories, Etna's blue-collar saloon business, and the breweries to serve them, took off as well. By 1907, Etna had six operating mini-breweries, and "a saloon, tavern or bar on every street corner." These facilities became the home of "all

kinds of unruly behavior, and even murders." They also became the target of the local Temperance Movement which peaked around 1916, and died in 1917 when Congress passed a law prohibiting the manufacture of all liquors, with the exception of beer and wine. By 1919, when the National Prohibition Act, also called the Volstead Act took effect, much of Etna's saloon business had gone "underground," operating as private clubs and speakeasies.

In that year, Etna also counted 163 businesses within its borough. While 96 of those businesses were listed as suppliers of the Spang Chalfant pipe mill alone. A study by the government of housing conditions in the mid-twenties, showed that over half were not connected to any utilities. They had no running water, no electricity, no telephone. This helped Etna qualify for some federal assistance.

During the Roaring Twenties, Etna matured from a dirty, booming milltown, to a community with steady and profitable growth. Although still covered with soot from the still growing mills and foundries, the city began to take on new life as the retail district, with its entertainment facilities began to take off. New freedom was found in Henry Ford's automobiles, and Ford had one of its largest dealerships just outside of the Spang Chalfant pipe mill on the way into Sharpsburg. The auto, and shipments of goods by delivery truck

and by flatbed to the businesses of Etna; began to replace the horse and buggy and the train around Etna. By the middle of the decade, the community was filled with "troublesome automobiles that were dangerous because they hit and killed people," and ordinances had to be passed to control their parking and driving through the borough.

During this period, the horsedrawn streetcars were totally replaced by electric streetcars; and eventually by the automobile. The old steam locomotives, some as old as the Civil War, were replaced with new high-powered steam locomotives, and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, the Pittsburg and Northern Railroad, and the Spang Chalfant Company's Railroad took over the Etna tracks. At about that time, trains began moving briskly up the Pine

Creek to Butler, Evans City, New Castle, Youngstown, Akron, Cleveland and other points west serving the area with prompt passenger service and freight service to manufacturers throughout the Midwest. By the late 1920's, records indicated that steam trains would move up and down the two laid tracks on this route consistently about every twenty minutes. The Butler Short Line, and the Harmony Line which were interurban electric trolleys reached their peak traffic flow during this period as well.

Within Etna, the community spirit grew. In addition to the civic events, and those planned by the local corporations, unions threw functions, and private parties abounded. Wealthier managers of the mills threw some lavish parties at their estates reminiscent of the Great Gatsby at their estates that dotted Etna's hillsides, or at their summer homes in nearby Glenshaw. Tennis, lawnsports and bowling became the pastimes for this more sophisticated crowd, while team sports were the choice of the blue collar workers. Etna also built its first playground in 1924.

With the passage of Prohibition's Jones Law in 1929, which provided that persons convicted of manufacturing, importing, exporting, selling and transporting liquor could be fined \$10,000 and sent to jail for five years, Etna's fledgling brewery business died. During Prohibition, Etna was home to "at least four speakeasies (two located near the corners of Butler and Main Streets on the second floors of the local buildings)." Etna's "brew" came from homebrewing, or from larger stills that were operating in secret in places such as in one of the the Shaw Houses in Glenshaw. Prohibition was big business to local crime groups throughout the Depression Years, and Etna and Sharpsburg, milltowns that loved their

liquor were major selling areas. Crime, though always present in the area, expanded into local union activities, liquor distribution, gambling and prostitution in Etna during this period of the late twenties. Unlike other area communities who called themselves "quiet suburbs during the twenties," one would have to call Etna "vibrant."

By 1930, there were over 3,000 residential structures in Etna. The population had shown steady increases since the 1870's with the most numerous population between 24 and 34 years old. Only 16 percent of the population was over age 65.

When the Stock Market crashed in October of 1929, the U.S. plunged into the Great Depression, and took Etna with her. Recovery, at first, was guaranteed by all involved, to be rapid. In fact, in March of 1930, local economists "touted the resiliency of the American marketplace, and how it was able to take such a massive hit, and keep on functioning as if nothing had happened." But, Etna's largest employer, Spang-Chalfant didn't wait to see if the economists were right. In 1930, the Spang family sold their business to National Supply Company which operated the mill until the early 1960's, when National Supply merged with Armco Steel out of Butler. A number of the largest employers in Western Pennsylvania did the same, forcing major downsizings, or moves to sell off their operations. Smaller supplier firms were caught totally off guard and unprepared. These industrialists sat through the Depression Years on the cash from the sale of their companies. The average resident wasn't so lucky.

Just three years after the economists' rosy predictions, on Saturday, March 4, 1933, the Stock Exchanges closed because of bank difficulties. Pennsylvania's governor, Gifford



George Maurer Duwall was one of the first fatalities from Etna during World War II, giving his life on April 2, 1942. A poster was created in his memory.

Pinchot, ordered all the banks in the state to close. The Pittsburgh Stock Exchange closed, and banks in Allegheny County were not permitted to operate again until March 14. In Etna, it was the end of the borough's gilded age. By 1934, both Spang Chalfant and the Isabella furnaces had shut down. The effect on the average citizen was severe. Of the 163 businesses mentioned earlier, only 43 survived the Depression. Over 1,300 of Etna's young residents left the borough during the Depression in search of job opportunities elsewhere. Etna would never be the same.

Adding devastation to depression, Western Pennsylvania was hit with record flooding on St. Patrick's Day of 1936. On that March 17th, flood waters in Etna reached the second stories of many of the downtown buildings. Downtown Pittsburgh waters peaked at 42 feet above flood stage. With life savings lost in the Depression, and the floods wiping out what was left, Etna could not hope to recover without outside assistance. Some of this came through when Etna was declared a disaster area and the government stepped in with its first plans to end flooding in the district.

During the last half of the 1930's, and into the 1940's Etna began a slow road to recovery as work projects of the Roosevelt Administration and World War II production reopened the major mills in Etna, and with them, many of the supply businesses. The war buildup brought hiring at the mills up to all time highs. But, federal monies could never replace the private monies that had been invested in Etna at the turn of the century. Etna slipped from being the center of the industrial world to a second-class suburb of Pittsburgh. In the 1940's Etna sent its best and brightest to fight the Nazis and the Japanese Empire. Many of Etna's young never returned. Etna's population aged overnight to where over half were of retirement age or better.

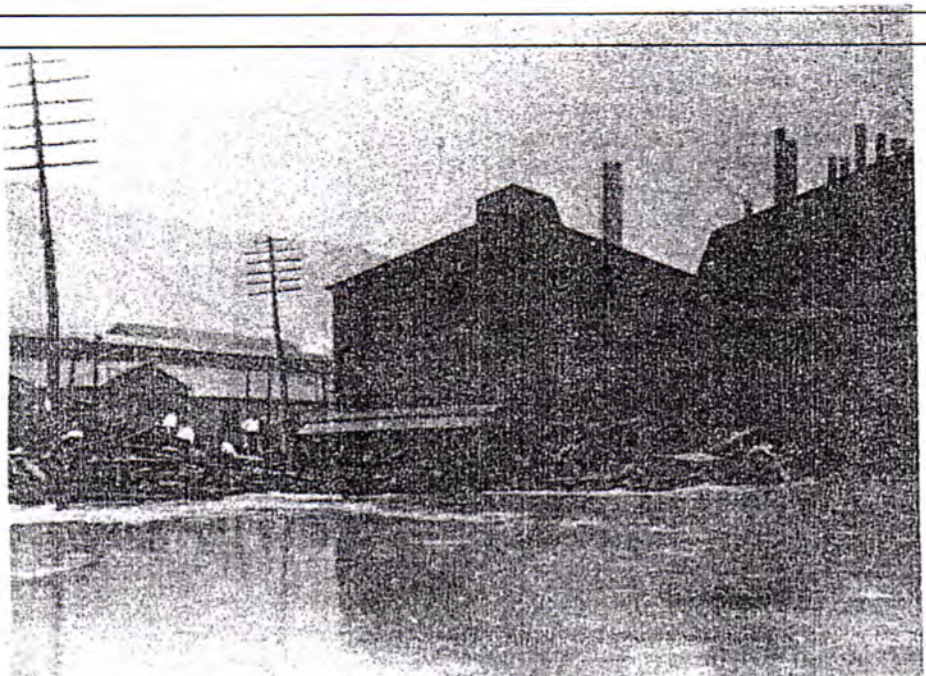
Etna also fell behind in maintaining its housing standards. Etna was cited in a 1943 study as having some of the worst housing conditions in the Greater Pittsburgh area. While this meant federal subsidies, it was a bad blow to a community that was trying to fight to get back on its feet. New residents looked toward the greener pastures north of Etna borough.

By the 1950's, the post-war boom had brought Etna back to life. New suburbs needed sewage piping, and the aging Spang-Chalfant facility, now owned by National Supply, grew rapidly in the late forties and early fifties to meet that demand, while the old Isabella furnaces also increased outputs. Etna's major employers, and retail district, began hiring again. But the freedom of the automobile, made it easy for workers to live throughout the Pittsburgh area and commute to work. The appeal of living in Etna was not as great as it was in the 1920's. Still Etna began to look like the great milltown it had become again, and its future looked deeply rooted in iron and steel manufacturing.

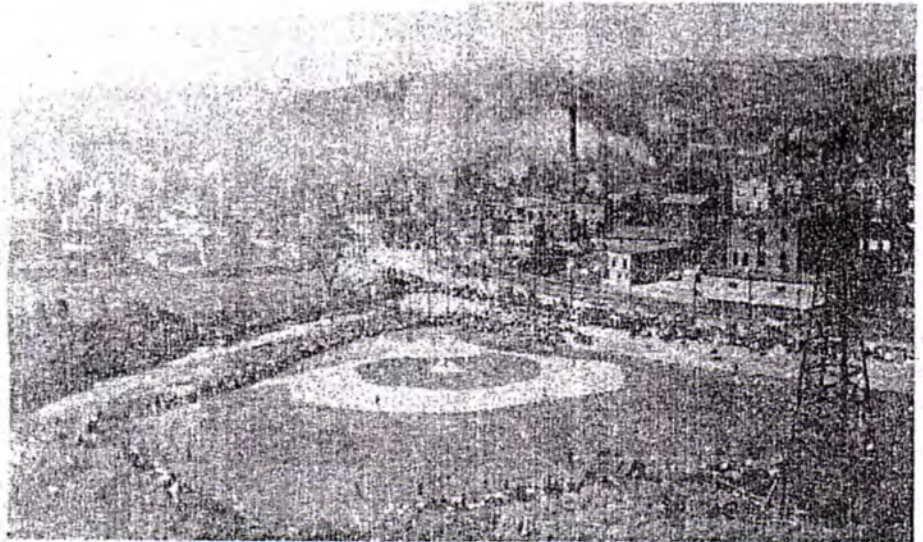
The revival of Etna brought forth an effort to revitalize the downtown. Many buildings were either torn-down, or they were refaced with modern fronts that covered up the older, outdated architecture. With government support, Etna Borough, instead of the corporations, took the lead in such revitalization. By the mid-1950's it looked like Etna would survive and grow.

Then a new kind of disaster hit. The outmoded facilities at Spang-Chalfant and Isabella were replaced by more productive, modern steelmaking facilities located elsewhere throughout the United States. They both closed during the decade of the fifties bringing Etna to its feet once again, and wiping out the steel industry that had made Etna such a proud community for so many years, forever.

The 1960's began with Etna seeking new ways to revitalize.



The September 15, 1911 flood, one of many to hit Etna through the years, was devastating to local businesses. The Spang Chalfant pipe mill shown here was under water for almost three days. Notice the railroad car that had been picked up by the flood waters and thrown against the building (seen in the middle of the picture).



The Etna "Our Boys" took on the Pittsburgh Pirates in an exhibition game shown here, at West Etna field in 1906.



Etna in the 1920's was a true milltown with over sixty-three-percent of the employment at either at the Isabella furnaces (seen top middle with the smoke plumes) or at the Spang Chalfant pipe mill (seen near the church steeple in the lower right). Boundaries that