

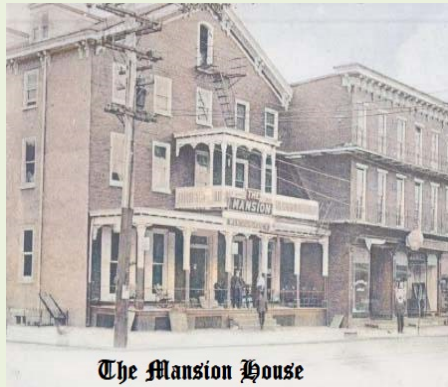


# A Mahanoy City Christmas 100 Years Ago – 1920



In 1920 the population of Mahanoy City was 15, 599 – a decline of 337 from the previous census. The decline would continue in each of the following eight decades so that in 2010 our population was just over 4000, one-fourth of the peak year of 1910. In 1920 Mahanoy City thrived mainly because of the 18 collieries at the eastern end of the Mahanoy Valley. These collieries employed 8857 men and boys who mined over 4 ½ million tons of coal and earned about \$6.00 a day. Two-thirds of the workers were employed in the 11 collieries of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Co. The Lehigh Valley Coal Company’s Park Colliery near Park Place was the most productive operation, mining 464,000 tons of coal in 1920.

Mahanoy City was the shopping hub for that area. Hundreds of specialty stores, restaurants, saloons and mom and pop groceries lined not only Centre Street, but also the side streets.

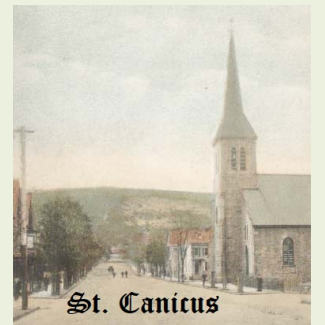


Twenty churches, two high schools and six elementary schools could be found within or on the edge of the borough. There were elementary schools in fifteen local patches that comprised the Mahanoy Township School District : Coles, St. Nicholas, Suffolk, Wiggans, Maple Hill, Shoemakers, Park Place, Morea, New Boston, Buck Mountain, Ellangowen, Yatesville, Jacksons, Robinsons and Hills. There were also schools in Gilberton, Hosensock, Delano, Park Crest and Grier City.

The borough was serviced by two train lines and two trolley lines bringing people from the patches into town to shop, attend church, go to one of the four movie theatres or have a beer in saloons that could be found on practically every block. Town residents rode the train to Lakewood and Lakeside and the trolley to Shenandoah and Ashland.



On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in 1920 Catholics in Mahanoy City had a choice of twenty-five masses to attend in any of the six Roman Catholic and one Byzantine rite churches. . The largest congregation at St. Canicus had a choice of eight masses. Pictured at right is the old St. Canicus Church on the southwest corner of Catawissa and Pine.

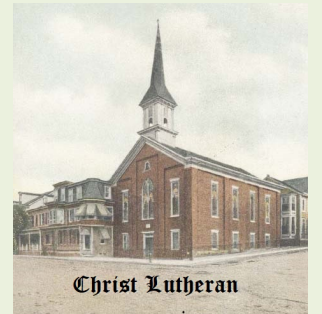


Mahanoy City had two high schools less than one quarter mile apart. In 1922 Coach John Geopfert’s MCHS Maroons would win the state basketball championship.

The borough’s elementary schools in 1920 were the D Street School, the Mahanoy Street School, the Spruce Street School, the Pine Street School and the 12<sup>th</sup> Street School.

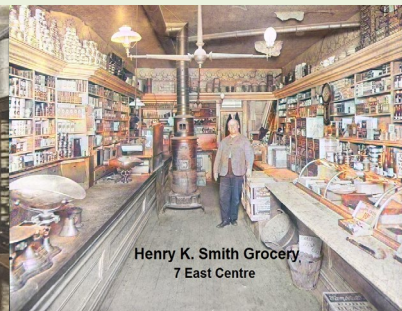
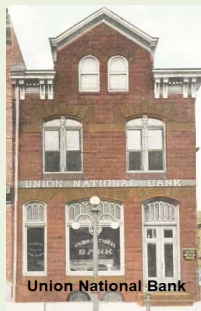
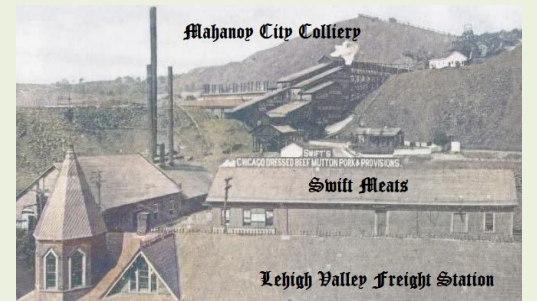
Teachers’ salary in the Mahanoy Township School ranged from \$900 to \$1350 yearly.

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day many of the borough’s thirteen Protestant Churches had Christmas cantatas featuring the young people of the congregation in addition to Christmas liturgical services. Pictured at right is the old Christ Lutheran Church on the southeast corner of Main and Mahanoy.



In 1920 the Reading Railroad offered special round trip excursions to the Philadelphia Mummers Parade. The train left MC at 2:49 AM and arrived in Philly at 6:00 AM. Cost \$3.60. Kids 5-12 - half price.

Swift’s Meats behind the Lehigh Valley R.R. freight station on North Main St. brought in beef and pork from Chicago to provide meat for Mahanoy City’s 20 meat markets.



The Reading Co. had two collieries at the edge of the borough. The Mahanoy City Colliery near Hills Terrace and the Tunnel Ridge Colliery near Coles. North Main St. was the transportation hub, with both the Reading and Lehigh Stations and the Lakeside Trolley barn. The 1919 Mahanoy City Business Directory had over 600 listings. In 1920 Mahanoy City supported 4 theatres, 3 banks, and 6 shirt factories. Besides the showcase Mansion House there were at least seven other hotels. At the beginning of the Roaring Twenties MC also had 23 barbers, 22 confectioners, 14 shoemakers, 13 doctors, 11 tailors, 6 undertakers, and 5 blacksmiths. Perhaps the most astounding numbers though are the 101 grocery stores and meat markets and the 119 saloons.

Pictures above: **Elks Theatre** On Christmas Day 1920 the Elks advertised “The Finest Holiday Show Ever Offered in Mahanoy City”- Admission 10 cents.

**Union National Bank** In the 1930s the Union National moved from the location pictured at 38 West Centre to 1 West Centre and later to 1 East Centre.

**The Fred Bernet Men’s Shop** at 30 West Centre later became Miles & Timm and is currently the site of McNiff’s Irish Pub.

**Luigi Mamarelli Café** at 100 East Pine Street. This property was purchased by Dominick and Norena Capitanio shortly after their youngest child Melina was born in 1920. Melina, a historical society member, recently celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday at Providence Place Senior Living in Pottsville.