

**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF TOBYHANNA TOWNSHIP  
September 12, 2012**

Clymer Library, 115 Firehouse Road, Pocono Pines, Pa.

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*Speaker: Michael Yasenchock, "History of the Wilkes-Barre & Eastern Railroad*

Attendance: 42 members and friends

### **Highlights**

Vice President Scarlett Rehrig called the meeting to order at 10:15 AM. She asked that all stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, bearing in mind the anniversary of September 11th.

Minutes of the meeting of the July 2012 were read, as there was no formal meeting held during the wonderful August Picnic and Fish Fry at the Austin-Blakeslee Preserve. The minutes were accepted without additions or corrections.

Barbara Fox read the treasurer's report – and accepted as read.

Members of the Nominating Committee were introduced: Jack Dodge, Frank McDevitt and Ron Kehler. They made an appeal for volunteers to step forward for the offices of president, vice president, recording/corresponding secretary, treasurer and directors and three members at large.

Candidates will be voted on at the annual membership meeting in November.

Descriptions of position responsibilities are available. The executive board meets twice a year. An audit committee presents an annual report. Nominations can be made from the floor. Officer's terms are two years; director's terms are three years. All interested people were invited to meet with the nominating committee following the meeting.

Fred Tim, director, charged with membership and publicity, announced the forthcoming Annual Dinner Meeting to be held at the Pocono Manor on October 14th. Rick Koval will be the speaker for the program.

The Revolutionary Tour originally scheduled for September had been cancelled.

### **Speaker | Michael Yasenchock – The Wilkes-Barre & Eastern Railroad**

Fred introduced today's speaker, Michael Yasenchock, known to many of us as a noted tenor and as an election judge, who has an extensive knowledge of the history of railroading in our area.

Michael gave a history of the Wilkes-Barre & Eastern Railroad, which had its apex of operations from 1900 to 1904. The railroad was needed to transport anthracite coal from the mining regions ultimately to New York City, and also provided transport to Stroudsburg, opening Monroe County to the trade.

Michael described how the railroad wound its way through Tobyhanna Township via Brady's Lake, crossing Route 940 near Wagner's, crossing the causeway at Pocono Lake, where stonework is visible, along Stony Hollow Road, various depots, a station at Naomi Pines, along Sullivan Trail crossing Route 380; and the railroad yards. He said that

before air brakes were developed the 20-ton coal gondolas required engines to hold the trains back as they went down the grades.

The banker J.P. Morgan bought the NY Susquehanna & Erie Railroad to monopolize the transport of coal, as demand increased. Standardize practices evolved with uniform signaling, and the addition of air brakes, which improved safety. In 1903 steel rails were installed, and flagmen worked at grade crossings.

Passenger service was not a priority for the railroads. Summer resort travelers paid high rates but got poor service, discouraging passenger travel.

There were also labor divisions on the railroad — skilled labor paid well in the shops, but unskilled less so. However, when the anthracite coal miners were on strike, the shops reduced the work force. Pay raises were given to prevent the workers from striking.

Michael noted that 1 million tons of coal passed through the area, each train carrying 11 cars. The ice industry also used railroad transport, and was a big business in that era.

Michael provided some entertaining anecdotal stories and responded to questions and comments from his attentive audience. He also referred to the Penn Pilot website, a project sponsored by the Pennsylvania Geological Survey that offers an online library of historical aerial photography of the state.

Scarlett thanked Michael for a most interesting program. She said that Barbara Fox would collect reservations for next month's dinner program and nominating committee would meet with volunteers, and invited everyone to enjoy refreshments.

The meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by  
*Virginia Foy, Treasurer*