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Nanticoke, Pennsylvania: Impacts of the Anthracite Coal Industry: A Case Study

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NANTICOKE, PENNSYLVANIA
IMPACTS OF THE ANTHRACITE COAL INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree for

Master of Science
in
Urban Studies

by

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Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents; they gave me ‘roots and wings’, now they will watch me fly. Without their love and dedication, I would not be where I am today. I also would like to thank my grandmother, Mary Pomanek, for all the time she spent and love she gave. She never missed a beat, and was one my inspirations for my thesis.

My research was conducted while I was an evacuee from Hurricane Katrina in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 2005. My work with the Joint Urban Studies Center and my research into Nanticoke helped me to focus on a project and to get me past the emotional state and confusion I had gone through.

Finally, I wish that the anthracite coal communities of Northeastern Pennsylvania would rebound to become once again thriving communities.

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Abstract

The story of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania from 1747 to 2006 is at the same time a look into the economic, political, and social aspects of America. From the birth of the American Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, Nanticoke played an important role in the economic health of the country. Profits from capital investment brought great wealth to the elite of Wyoming Valley and financiers in New York and Philadelphia. The use of immigrant labor to maintain labor costs would presage corporate use of other groups. With the change in technology and the movement of capital elsewhere, Nanticoke faced the trauma of economic hardship and the need to address the human and social cost of the loss of coal mining. The actions taken by the local leadership failed to meet the challenge. Confronting the harsh reality of possible further decline, the community of Nanticoke must take action upon a plan that holds out a possibility of stopping the hemorrhage of its decline, and perhaps even begin a recovery. The people of Nanticoke and their problems are now one being repeated elsewhere in America. The questions raised by what happened in Nanticoke lie at the core of the economic, political, and social questions facing the United States today. Corporate responsibility, quality of life, immigration, and effective urban planning are just some of the issues that Nanticoke's story poses for the rest of America.

Chapter 1

Introduction

My interest in the Wyoming Valley of Northeastern Pennsylvania is a personal one. I was born and raised in this area, went to school, made friends, and have my family roots here. My family's association with the Wyoming Valley dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. My ethnic heritage is diverse—Polish, Lithuanian, and Syrian. My extended family experienced everything from cultural prejudice to family members dying in a mine subsidence, to health problems resulting from mining coal, to members achieving the “American dream.” I began to realize that my family and I were not the only Valley residents who experienced such events. When coal was *king*, Wyoming Valley attracted immigrants not only from traditional areas such as England and Germany, but also from the new wave that came from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. My grandparents worked long hours under deplorable conditions to eek out a living for their families. As the economy changed, my ancestors adjusted with jobs in industry, service, and local government. They confronted a depressed area, stripped of its mineral resources, and flooded, leaving the job market scarce, economic conditions poor, people sick, and many young people deserting the Valley. As with so many other families, I can count first cousins in states from New Jersey to Washington, and from California to Georgia and Virginia. The question of why Wyoming Valley's greatest export is its people has always puzzled me. After some initial research, I came to realize that the economic conditions mentioned above were a normal pattern for the Wyoming Valley over the past 200 years and that there may be a wider application to other American areas.

Pennsylvania was part of the United States that seemed to be blessed by being at the center of the American Industrial Revolution. Mining, manufacturing, agriculture, and

commerce marked the cities of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Bethlehem, Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, Altoona, Erie, and dozens of other towns. At the turn of the twentieth century, the city of Wilkes-Barre alone bragged a population of nearly 80,000 inhabitants. Eventually, changes occurred—the economy shifted as new fossil fuels were exploited and as a shift in business moved westward and southward. Why didn't this prosperous area adjust to the times? The area that includes the Valley is surrounded by natural beauty that today still contains about 400,000 people with an opportunity for them to attend one of more than ten colleges or universities. Within a two-hour driving distance, you have Baltimore, New York City, and Philadelphia, which offer not only a rich cultural experience, but would seem to make the area a “hub” for commerce and industry.



Figure 1. Map of Northeastern Pennsylvania

However, the area failed to keep up with the times. The debate of what went wrong goes to the central argument heard today—capitalism and its social responsibilities. As mining became less profitable, many coal mining operations switched to strip mining as a cheaper means

of getting to the mineral. This led to thousands of acres left barren except for slag heaps and a grayness that added to the feeling of exploitation. Coal companies tried to limit their liability of renewing the land. Bankrupt corporations could not be held accountable. Miners suffered health problems and this suffering did not only affect individuals but families. The need to escape from the mines led to alcoholism, which remains a problem today—a bar on every corner was a common remark. Did the political leaders do enough? Seeing the loss of jobs and population, what action did they take? Were they pawns of the coal barons? Did they ignore the problem? Did they not understand the ramifications of the changing economy and business atmosphere? And, if not, why did they not seek outside expert advice?

Are other parts of America now experiencing similar conditions? Is manufacturing still economically viable when workers in Indonesia or India will work for a fifth of what it would cost in America? As technology advances in the 21st century, will the jobs requiring intensive labor be outdated and eliminated? If minimum wage jobs are the fastest growing category of jobs, what does this do to the ordinary workingman or woman? What happens to the family unit when the husband and wife are required to work several jobs just to survive? At what point does a democratic society begin to fail as the quality of life declines? What happened in the community of Nanticoke may be a microcosm that can provide insight into a recurring social-economic-political problem. America is more than just its large cities or sprawling suburbs. It is, in some ways, the nameless and numerous towns and small cities that make up the country. Are there any applicable lessons to be learned from what happened in Wyoming Valley? If insight can be gained into how an area that once seemed the beneficiary of economic success declined, there is hope that other towns and communities may avoid the heartache and dislocation of economic decline.

This research fills a gap in the literature on Nanticoke by making a direct connection to the problems the city faces that have been caused by the anthracite coal mining industry. Much of the literature on the city of Nanticoke, which was collected by donations from residents, has not been processed. My thesis allowed for some of that information to be presented and analyzed.

In approaching the topic, I relied on several methodologies. First, as I was dealing with local history, I used, wherever possible, local histories and sources. The Osterhout Library, the local public library, has an extensive collection of local history that cannot be found in any other location. Adjacent to the central branch, is a local museum that houses artifacts. Just down the street, The Wilkes-Barre Historical Society exists that houses documents, as well as the private letters and diaries of prominent individuals of Wyoming Valley. Local residents have formed the new Nanticoke Historical Society that contains information that has been donated by the area people pertaining to the town of Nanticoke. Presently, local citizens are acting as curators as they begin to process and record this information.

A second methodology that I have relied upon is personal interviews. I have spoken to individuals who still remember the lifestyle that miners lived in as indicated in my interview with the coal miner's daughter. I expanded the breadth of the interviews to include the stakeholders from Nanticoke. I sat down and talked to local politicians, local businessmen, senior citizens, and students within the South Valley region.

The third methodology I pursued was to review published materials about Wyoming Valley and Nanticoke in particular Ciesla's *History of Nanticoke City and Newport Township*, Poliniak's *When Coal was King: Mining Pennsylvania's Anthracite*, and *The Wyoming Valley: An American Portrait* by Edward Hanlon and Paul Zbiek. Other sources were archived through

the publishing's of the Redevelopment Authority of Nanticoke, various Investigation Reports conducted by Forest and Parks Committee, Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Industrial Forestry Committee, Wyoming Valley Junior Chamber of Commerce, as well as various articles from local newspapers such as the *Sunday Independent*.

Chapter 2

Nanticoke: Early Settlement to the End of the Coal Industry

This chapter explains how Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, developed from the early days of being a European settlement in 1747 to the last days of the coal mining, which closed in the late 1950s. This section will place Nanticoke in the historical, economic, sociological context of the Wyoming Valley in which Nanticoke is found. In addition, this chapter will discuss patch towns, transportation history, and sociological trends.

History of Wyoming Valley

The Wyoming Valley is located in the Appalachian Mountains in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The expanses of mountains on the eastern and western sides of the valley are called the Endless Mountains. The western boundaries of Wyoming Valley are labeled as Plymouth, Larksville, and Back Mountain, whereas the eastern side is designated Penobscot, Wilkes-Barre, and Wyoming Mountain. The entire area is also referred to as the Pocono Mountains.

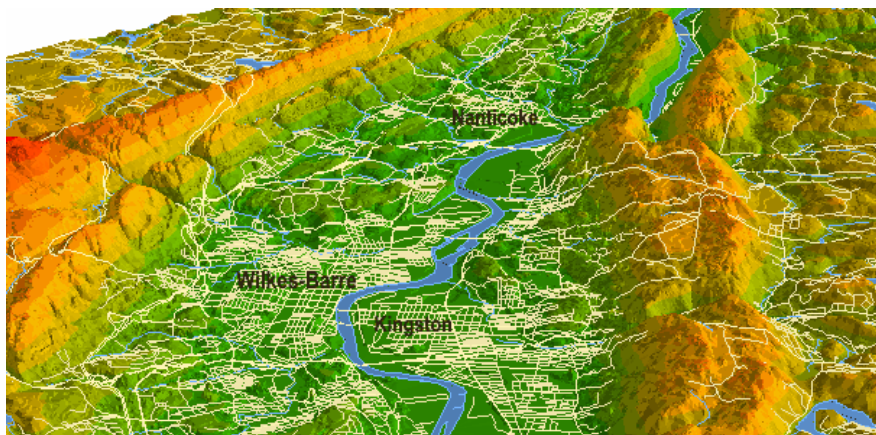


Figure 2. Map of the Wyoming Valley

The division into eastern and western halves, as well as an important physical feature of the Wyoming Valley is the Susquehanna River. Beginning in upper New York State, the Susquehanna River is 444 miles long with a 27,500-square-mile watershed (Hanlon & Zbiek, 2003). The Susquehanna River derived its name from the Susquehannock Indians, one of the first tribes to settle near the river. The name Wyoming Valley also is of Native American origin coming from the Indian word “Wyomink”, meaning the expansive land. The first Indian settlers declared the 16-mile stretch between the joining of the Lackawanna and Susquehanna Rivers down until the gap between the Plymouth Mountains as Wyomink, the Wyoming Valley of today (Hanlon & Zbiek, 2003). The Wyoming Valley had a great deal to offer the many Indian tribes that settled in this area. Miles of mountains provided protection from Europeans and other tribes, while the abundance of wild game was a continuous source of food. The rich soil permitted agriculture and the river was a source of water, transportation, and fish.

Numerous Native American tribes settled in Wyoming Valley. Some were quite well known such as the Iroquois who settled in 1675, as well as obscure tribes such as the Shawnees who settled in 1701. As with other areas, the Wyoming Valley assumed many of the names of the tribes that had settled here. In the early eighteenth century, the Piscataway, Nanticoke Mahicans, Mohegans, Nanticoke Tuscaroras and Delaware Indians had villages in the area. Europeans adopted these names for their town’s name as Nanticoke, applied them to geographic features as the Delaware River or Delaware Water Gap, and they remain today as high school team mascots like E. L. Meyers Mohawks. In 1681, King Charles II of England granted Wyoming Valley as part of a land grant to William Penn; however, European settlements in the Wyoming Valley did not appear until the 1760s. The first English settlement was established in 1762 (Hanlon & Zbiek, 2003).

Although the Indians were the first to discover coal in Northeastern Pennsylvania, they quickly discovered that anthracite coal was not hard enough to make weapons. The economic significance of this geological treasure would wait until 1768 when Obadiah Gore discovered that coal would burn much longer in a forge than any other fuels of the day. The next important discovery occurred on February 11, 1808, when Jesse Fell invented a way to circulate air into open shafts for the recovering of the new fuel, coal (Ciesla, 2003). Anthracite has a high density and luster and the highest carbon count, making anthracite the finest burning coal. Coal became the preferred fuel to heat homes, businesses, and factories. This revolutionized the area as it spread across the Valley and began the coal mining industry. Anthracite coal would play a major role in the Industrial Revolution of America and would remain so until the advent of petroleum (Hanlon & Zbiek, 2003).

The largest field of anthracite coal sits directly under the Wyoming Valley. Unknown to many at the time, “king coal” would be both a blessing and a curse to the region. The Wyoming Valley coalmines were an industry heading for disaster from the start. In the early nineteenth century, small companies controlled mining of coal. At first, these small companies attracted laborers, which resulted in towns being set up all throughout the Valley. Neither state nor federal laws regulated these early coal companies. In addition, miners were not yet organized into labor unions. It was a very chaotic situation where money as the profit motive was the only remaining constant. Landowners began to get rich through mineral rights, selling acres of land and maintaining ownership of all the minerals below the surface of the land. This in turn allowed for the landowners to make a profit from all coal mined on land that they did not own.

The coal mining industry evolved into a practically totalitarian system wherein the reins were kept on miners by mine owners through the control of wages that held miners at or below

poverty level. Not only were the wages of miners controlled, but also mine owners exerted their control over the miner through providing the necessities of daily life. Mine owners built homes to rent to the miners so that their workforce was near the job site and mine owners had stores that sold the groceries that the miner's family needed. Mine owners even sold the tools the miners required for their work—picks, shovels, lanterns, hats, etc. Working long hours and under dangerous conditions, a miner would earn, on an average, about \$30 a month to support his family. From this pay, the miner paid \$4.50 rent for a one-family, company house, \$7.50 for food, usually to a company store and about \$0.50 for health care. The remaining wages of \$17.50 were then used by the miner to purchase his own working implements, i.e. pick axe, shovel, lantern, etc., clothing, and the basic necessities for life, all of which were again bought at the company store. It was not unusual for a mining family to be in debt to the coal company (Hanlon & Zbiek, 2003). When over-production occurred, wage rates dropped to \$0.80 a day, and many miners only worked two or three days a week. To give some perspective, according to Miller & Sharpless (1985), an 1818 estimate of a sixty-ton shipment of coal sold for \$1,320, with a profit of nearly \$1,000. A city could consume nearly 10,000 tons of coal annually (Miller & Sharpless, 1985). In 2003 dollars, the purchasing power of the profit made from 10,000 tons of coal was about \$2,400,000; whereas, a miner's wage would have the equivalent purchasing power of roughly \$431.00 a month (Money Converter, 2006). "On average, production grew at the rate of 5,476,724 tons per decade from 1830 through 1880, with the largest single increase- 17,830,796 tons- occurring in the 1870 to 1880 period. By the late 1870s, entrepreneurs in the northern coal region were mining almost half of the total output of anthracite coal in the United States" (Davies, 1985).

The Wyoming Valley did not develop as fast as the surrounding areas because of the mountainous terrain. It proved to be extremely difficult to lay tracks for the trains in the low-lying mountains. The result of the lack of trains left the Valley isolated and resulted in the loss of business opportunities. However, a canal system was developed along the Susquehanna River between 1816-1825, allowing the relatively easy shipment of coal out of the Valley to New York and Maryland. A surge in population for the Wyoming Valley began in the 1830s with immigration from the British Isles, especially Wales, and from German states. The migration of mine workers from Europe contributed to the current ethnic and religious environment of Wyoming Valley and Northeastern Pennsylvania's culture (Hanlon & Zbiek, 2003).

When immigrants began to settle in the Wyoming Valley, they were ushered into houses, jobs, and a new lifestyle very dependent upon the coal mining companies. Many did not speak English and were grateful, at that time, to receive help from the coal mining companies. Eventually, they realized that this proffered hand from the company was not altruistic and some felt that they were slaves to or owned by the company. This handling of immigrants resulted in a class division between the new immigrants, best illustrated by placing the Welsh families on one side of town, while the Irish were on the other. Class division continued for every other group of immigrants entering the Wyoming Valley and created pockets of ethnic groups based upon country of origin and religion. Each group, because of language or religion, had to have their own church and their own school. For example, Methodists established a school in 1844 called Wyoming Seminary, which today is a private school with kindergarten through twelfth grade. In 1875, Irish Catholics started St. Mary's School and St. Ann's Academy two years later, with both today remaining as parochial elementary schools (Hanlon & Zbiek, 2003). Although schools were established, often children had to leave school at the age of ten to work, thereby

only receiving a third grade education. Additionally, children were discouraged from attending school because many could not speak English. Male children were destined to work in the mines as breaker boys with the responsibility of insuring that coal being sent down chutes for sorting functioned properly and no useable coal was lost, and female children worked in the textile industry in mills producing cotton, lace, linen, silk and woolen materials. Female children were also maids in wealthier homes (Miller & Sharpless, 1985).

The 44-year span between 1870-1914 brought the largest influx of eastern and southern Europeans as well as the Middle East into the Wyoming Valley. Immigrants came from many countries such as Italy, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Hungary, and Syria to work in the mines. “In 1880 only 1.7 percent of mine workers came from those regions, [southern and eastern European nations] but by 1900, 46 percent of a vastly increased labor force came from Slavic lands and Italy” (Hanlon & Zbiek 2003). Immigrants having their own stores, schools, and religious institutions were now developing Patch towns, which derived their name from the small piece of land that houses were built on. The class division and cultural divide created struggles among and between immigrants; those who wanted to become Americanized often found themselves at odds with those who wanted to maintain traditional European lifestyles. This struggle for identity among the immigrants left a mark on Wyoming Valley that remains apparent today. Certain parts of the Valley are still referred to by their ethnic origin; Nanticoke is known as the “Polish town”, while Plains is the “Irish town.” Religious institutions also reflected these divides. Italian immigrants attended the Holy Rosary Church, whereas German Catholics attended mass at St. Boniface Church. Not until the decline in population would these ethnic churches begin to lose their identity and become territorial churches. The animosity between

cultural groups has remained and, unfortunately, become another negative aspect that is still prevalent.

The elite social-economic populations of the Wyoming Valley flourished from control over the mines and investments in patch towns. Members of the wealthy and powerful upper class began to build their homes along the Susquehanna River. The riverbank became prime real estate as more and more “coal barons” lined it with their luxurious houses and mansions. Hotels with elaborate cornices and mansard roofs overlooked the urban centers. Businesses such as The Boston Store, Kresge’s 5-and-10 Cent Store, and Woolworth’s, dominated the downtowns with large storefront windows, creating a friendly and enjoyable urban center. The canals offered rides for the wealthy to view the beautiful parks and green open spaces along the banks of the Susquehanna River. Poverty was one concept the immigrants could agree upon. At first, the miners organized themselves into mutual aid societies. Each miner would contribute a certain amount of money each month in return for some insurance that, should he become ill or unable to work, his family would be able to obtain food and shelter. Eventually, the miners turned their attention to the conditions of their work. They began to rally and to strike. Some of these groups turned to violence, as in the case of the Molly McGuires, an Irish organization that used explosives to shut down mines. Other laborers took the more conventional route of joining a union as the United Mine Workers of America (UNM). The UMW demanded higher wages, safer working conditions, retirement benefits, and health benefits. Mine owners opposed these demands and there would be strikes and strife. The worst event was a strike in 1902. Tensions had been building between the coal owners and the miners. The dispute eventually saw the miners go out on strike. For 152 days, the mines were shut down, and the nation faced a serious coal shortage. Responding to what was becoming a national issue, President Theodore

Roosevelt promised to get the coal production back on track, by organizing a strike committee for arbitration (Ciesla, 2003).

History of Nanticoke

The community of Nanticoke was representative of the general history of Wyoming Valley. In 1747, the first European settlers built their homes along the Susquehanna River and named their new community after the local Indian tribe—Nanticoke. The geography of Nanticoke appealed not only to the Native Americans, but to the Europeans as well. It was a valley surrounded by beautiful wooded mountains, easy river access, plentiful wild game, and flat land for agriculture. During the next forty years, the Europeans drove out the Indians (Ciesla, 2003).

During the first half of the nineteenth century, coal mining began to flourish and with it, the growth of towns (Ciesla, 2003). The coal industry attracted a far different type of immigration to the valley. In the British Isles, Wales had a long history of coal mining. Not surprisingly, Wales became one of the areas that the new immigrants came from. Later, large numbers of Eastern Europeans came to the valley. Nanticoke's ethnic heritage reflected this influx of immigrants. Family trees include Welsh, English, German, Irish, and Polish surnames (Dublin & Harvan, 1998).

It was in Nanticoke that the Susquehanna Coal Company became the first company to mine the area around the Wyoming Valley, developing the land and placing their coal breaker on the banks of the Susquehanna River. This location had access to water transportation and later a railway system for the shipment of coal. As the Susquehanna Coal Company prospered and expanded, the city of Nanticoke began to develop south of the river, too (Bartoletti, 1996). This pattern of community development following in the footsteps of coal companies opening up coal

mines would be repeated throughout Wyoming Valley. With this basis, the coal mine owners expanded their economic power by owning most of the businesses in town. The blue-collar jobs were in the mines. The coal industry made coal-mining cities into businesses; the city's only purpose was to make a profit (Sies & Silver, 1996).

Analyzing a map of Nanticoke in 1872, there were three major roads. The first road led from the town to the mines, which permitted the workers to reach the mines and the transportation of the coal itself. The second road connected Nanticoke eastward towards Wilkes-Barre, which was a leading commercial and business center at that time. The third road led westward to the mining community of Plymouth.

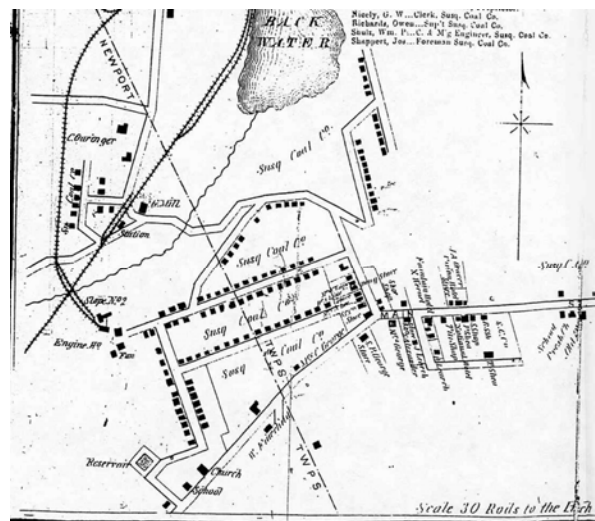


Figure 3. Map of Nanticoke 1872

All roads were functional, utilitarian, and responsive to the needs of the coal company (Ciesla, 2003). This crossroads was, and will be in the future, vital for the urban center of Nanticoke. Private concerns were opening up stores, and collieries, which are the actual coal mines and the buildings needed to process the coal; state and local government built bridges and roads; public utilities were providing light and water throughout the town. Coal was king and the cities of

Northeastern Pennsylvania were thriving. The turn of the century brought hope of a thriving future for years to come with the construction of mines and breakers which sorted and split coal into useful sizes, power plants, railroads, streets, schools, firehouses, churches, stores, saloons, electric lines, water lines, sewer lines, gas lines, and homes. As industrialization increased, a positive correlation with urban living began as many families moved from farming communities into the cities to find work.

Patch Towns

Patch towns were named for the land on which the coal companies built houses for the miners and their families, usually a small area within walking distance to the mines. For example, Nanticoke once started out as many smaller patch towns that consisted of three to four houses (CoalSpeak, 2004). Once the coal companies' expanded, the patch towns would increase in size, forming villages, towns and then cities. The house faced the main street while a long yard used for gardening was in the rear of the house and an outhouse usually marked the end of the property (Corlsen, 1954). Small towns haphazardly developed around the colliery, which is the actual coal mine, physical plant and outbuildings. In the beginning, a few houses were spread out on land near the entrance. Paralleling the increased production of coal, coal companies would build towns, mostly consisting of either row houses or concrete villages. The company owned units of wooden, two stories, or double block, shacks clumped together by ethnic groups made up the so-called patch towns.



Figure 4. Photograph of Patch Town in Luzerne County

Mine owners lived away from the vicinity of the mines. Their homes were often located along the Susquehanna River bank; the houses were elegant and spacious. On the other hand, class of workers divided the patch towns, and the layout of the village was the same in all coal-mining towns. At the beginning of the street, there were large single houses where the mine bosses and supervisors lived with all the most available comforts for the time. The next section was the miner's homes, usually separated by ethnic origin, which consisted of two rooms plus a kitchen, and a big room downstairs and a big room upstairs where the children slept. The outside was wood and covered with strips of cardboard or cloth to keep out the rain. These houses, which were usually shared by two or more families, had farm animals in the yard and, last but not least, the single outhouse. At the end of the streets or on one side of the street would be where the unskilled workers lived. The main water pump was a gathering place used for everything from drinking to laundry, was shared by many families (Bartoletti, 1996). Miller and Sharpless (1985) have best described the miner's living conditions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by stating, "Not far from every breaker and pit head are the simple homes

of the people who remain in the region. The buildings are strung together in long rows and some of them are sinking into the earth. They are cleaner now, these homes, for poverty and decline have at least brought purer air.”

Miners and their families living in the coal company’s residences were literally owned by the coal companies. Not until the mid 1950s, as the coalmines closed down, did people purchase these homes and become homeowners (Dublin & Harvan, 1998). Even as coal attracted capital investment, many people in the Wyoming Valley suffering from poverty in the early 1900s, since there was no extra money to save from the low wages paid by working in the mines. In addition to rent, miners paid for rudimentary health care, where mine owners would charge a fixed fee to the miners and miners would receive a determined amount of medical assistance. This was also the beginning of city taxes. Miners had to pay an additional fixed fee for police officers to patrol the town. There was really no division between the public or private life of a miner and his family, as almost every aspect of their life was completely controlled by the mine company.

Concrete City will be used to gain a better understanding of the conditions in which miners lived. Concrete City was a coal mining town located between Hanover Township and Hanover City, about two miles from Nanticoke, and built by the DL&W Coal Company to house mine employees and lower level bosses. It was called Concrete City because everything but the window frames was constructed of concrete. The complex consisted of twenty double homes, 25ft. by 50 ft., and two stories high. The homes surrounded a courtyard including a swimming pool, flower gardens, and recreational facilities for families. The outside had porch-style canopies over entrances for protection from the weather. DL&W Coal Company even built a school for the residents. Concrete City became a ghost town due to the area being declared by

local inspectors as unsafe from mine subsidence; however, many local residents claimed that it was due to the company not wanting to install a sewer system to support more modern types of bathrooms. Failing to destroy Concrete City by dynamiting it, now the area is a Pennsylvania State historical site (Coal Region, 1994).



Figure 5. Photograph of Concrete City

Concrete City is much like the Yorkship Garden Village, when comparing towns that were built by companies to house their employees. The mining company, solely to provide housing for mine employees, built Concrete City. During World War II, other companies built Yorkship Garden Village to house their industrial employees. The main differences between the two residences were that Concrete City did not have any architecture or appealing visual aspects. Concrete City also did not have as much open green space; the green space was enclosed between neighboring buildings, and barely enough room for a children's game of baseball (Coal Region, 1994). Yorkship Garden Village residents probably had better living conditions because they were working directly with

Another common characteristic of Concrete City and a trend in Northeastern Pennsylvania was planning "ethnic neighborhoods" (Sies & Silver, 1996). With immigration from Eastern Europe, many of the immigrants were not familiar with the language or culture of America. They often relied upon fellow ethnic or religious members who preceded them to help adjust in their new environment. In addition, the coal companies employed individuals who would also assist new immigrants into housing units. Newly arrived immigrants gravitated to

those neighborhoods wherein their own ethnic and religious affiliations lived. Nicknames of areas such as “Irish Town” or “Little Warsaw” remain reflective of this settlement.

The Miner’s House

In an interview with a coal miner’s daughter, she recalled the design of a typical coal worker’s house. The coal miner’s daughter stated,

“I was born and raised in a little single house next to the row houses. We had three small bedrooms, one bathroom containing a tub, sink, and toilet that had to be shared by six people. They had to light gas lamps using matches, as there was no electricity. The lighting was not good and the heat from the coal stoves did not always warm the upstairs so the house was cold. There were no refrigerators in the homes--there were iceboxes. Each day or two, you bought a piece of ice from the iceman who went door to door with his ice truck. He brought the ice into your house with huge tongs and put it in the icebox. As the ice melted, it went into a pan under the ice-box and you had to empty the pan each day, and sometimes twice a day.”

The homes were gradually updated with modern conveniences such as central heating, electric lights, electric refrigerators, electric stoves, etc.

The miner’s daughter married a policeman and moved over a few city blocks into a house that was owned by a coalmine supervisor, so it was much bigger than all the other houses in the area and had its own driveway. The physical structure of the house was an expression of wealth that only the coal supervisor could afford. Her basement, designed to store canned/jarred goods, contained a large coal bin or storage area. The ceilings in the house were 12 feet high and the front door with stained glass windows on top was eight feet tall with four locks on it, for safety purposes, as the supervisor was afraid of being killed since there was a lot of unrest with the miners because of the conditions under which they worked. Finally, the family kept an old parlor stove in the kitchen fireplace for additional heat, but in the winter on very cold days, you still had to place coal in it and take out the ashes.

The distinctive feature missing from coal miner's houses in northeastern Pennsylvania was the lack of closets. Home construction at this time did not include large closets, as it increased the cost of the home and larger homes were expensive to heat. The only closet space available would be a very small one in the parent's bedroom, forcing most people to add wardrobes to store items such as clothing. Another feature common throughout immigrant-populated areas was that the houses were built close together with no driveways, as very few people had cars.

The houses of Nanticoke and the surrounding area follow the pattern of adding front and back porches to housing units. Porches functioned as both a social atmosphere and as a shaded area for hot summer days and protection from snow in the winter. However, one other aspect of the porch specifically in coal mining towns was related to death. The coal miner's daughter mentioned that when mining accidents occurred, the bodies of the men were sometimes left on the porch for families to discover. The bodies would be taken from the porch and were then viewed in the parlor or front room of the miner's house. The back porch was also used as a changing and washing place, as there was no place to change to prevent the coal dust from getting into the house.

The first signs of locker rooms came about during the mining times when companies would offer the miners a personal space to store clothing and tools used for work. They also had available to them an area to wash and clean up after a day in the mines. At the entrance of this locker room type space was a large container of water used for washing one's boots off in order to keep the washroom clean (Corlson, 1954).

Transportation

The first major infrastructure developed in Nanticoke was the canal. Mine owners funded the construction of canals as many of the first mineshafts were near water and canals offered an inexpensive form of transporting coal. These systems were developed because the natural flow of both the Susquehanna and Lackawanna Rivers were unpredictable. The Susquehanna River is very shallow and makes maneuvering boats difficult. Additional problems with the canal occurred with current patterns and lack of final destinations. Dredging was one of the first solutions to using the river as a transportation highway (Petrillo, 1986). In 1828, a canal system was developed and it ran from New York to Virginia. The waterway system became a great employer where young male children would work by guiding the mules pulling boats along the canal and men worked to build the canal ways. Many types of storage units, boats, and pathways for mules provided employment opportunities, but these blue-collar jobs did not lift workers out of poverty and the majority of the population still lived below poverty levels. Over the next eighty years, until 1901 when the canal system became obsolete, coal fueled the manufacturing of iron and a railway system that spanned across the United States, which ultimately decreased the importance of the waterway transportation system in Northeastern Pennsylvania (Petrillo, 1998).

The first use of a railroad was in 1840, a 2.5 mile stretch of rails linking a coal mine and canal basin. Eight years later, a locomotive was used on the same track. Eventually, there were eight railroads crossing through the Nanticoke area: Delaware & Hudson; Delaware & Western; Delaware, Lackawanna, & Western; Illinois & Western; Lackawanna & Bloomsburg; Lehigh Valley; New Jersey Central; and Pennsylvania Railroad (Ciesla, 2003). The 1860s brought prosperity to most of the communities in the area. Coal was king, production was high, and

increasing demand required a sound infrastructure of railways. The Lehigh & Susquehanna Division of the Central Railroad began construction in 1861 for a railway system into Nanticoke. The Nanticoke Branch was completed in 1866 due to construction delays from the Civil War. By 1888, streetcars and trolleys became more prevalent in adjacent cities as they began to dominate the short distance mass transportation market. It was not until 1893 when a trolley and streetcar system was chartered for Nanticoke. All trolleys and streetcars had main passenger stations at the crossroads of the three main streets in Nanticoke. The main streetcar servicing company was the Wyoming Valley Traction Company (Ciesla, 2003).

As cars and buses developed over the next fifty years, streetcars and trolleys joined the canal system as obsolete modes of transport. After the coalmines closed in 1959, railroads lost their economic need and declined. Today, Luzerne County, where the Wyoming Valley is located, is home to a plethora of major interstate highways. These include Interstates 80, 81, 380, 476, and state routes 6 and 11. The average commute time is twenty minutes from the suburban community of Nanticoke to central shopping areas of Wilkes-Barre, a far leap from the average fourteen hours using a canal system, only 150 years ago. Luzerne County Transportation Authority is the leading mass transportation system in the area, running sixteen routes within the area. In place of a railway system, Martz Trailways and Auto Bus are now used for long distance trips (Infrastructure Report Card, 2003).

Currently, 46 percent of Pennsylvania's major roads are in poor or mediocre shape and 42 percent of the bridges are structurally deficient and functionally obsolete (Infrastructure Report Card, 2003). The number one problem Northeastern Pennsylvanians have is the deplorable condition of the roads because of potholes. Often times this is due to the weather patterns, especially the freezing and thawing in winter and lack of city authorities to repair the

roads. Many of the major roads have been developed into a business region of retail, commercial, and industrial sectors, while connecting residential areas. The main roads in Nanticoke are scaled to the use of horse and buggy. The main streets were never widened, only paved over from their original size. The smaller sized streets are currently causing traffic flow problems with the onset of larger cars and 18-wheelers delivering inventory to stores in the city.

The original purpose of transportation in the Northeastern area of Pennsylvania was to support the exportation of coal. However, the transportation patterns are now designed to connect neighboring towns to meet the social needs of the residents (Sies & Silver, 1996). Two factors contributed to make this possible, the geographical layout of the towns developed during the coal mining area and the centralization of transportation system.

Sociological Trends

Another main feature of Luzerne County and specifically Nanticoke is the remains of a social era gone by. Due to the many nationalities of immigrants, there is a church on every block and a bar on every corner. However, there is some truth behind it. Settlement patterns from the mines grouped immigrants of the same nationality together. Since there was no common language at the time, each immigrant group in turn created a congregation and eventually a church.

A divide in the socio-economic areas developed as well between those who were the coal barons and those who were the coal miners. The coal miners worked for wages that would circulate back into the pockets of the coal barons, who had a monopoly over the city. Many of the coal miners were poor immigrants, whose employers did not want to spend money on city life. Poverty ran rampant during years of the coal industry and thereafter, even when Nanticoke saw its largest population in 1930 at 38,130 (Ciesla, 2003). Overall, the coal companies had met

the basic standards of a neighborhood unit, even though they owned all the property (Sies & Silver, 1996).

The Anthracite Aristocracy

The mid to late nineteenth century brought about an aristocracy to the upper class of the Wyoming Valley. The class defined and separated themselves through six main characteristics according to Dr. Edward Davies, professor of American History at the University of Utah and a native of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (Davies, 1985). The characteristics were lineage, ethnicity, religion, education, occupation, and birthplace. Lineage consists of Connecticut Yankee and First Family, Colonial stock, Non-colonial stock and unknown. The upper class of Wyoming Valley was 72 percent Connecticut Yankee and First Family lineage. While ethnicity was mainly British, Scotch-Irish, German, and other, the valley's elite had a dramatic change between the years 1848-1856 and 1870-1885. The nine-year period between 1848-1856 shows a majority of British ethnicity, while the later years show an increase in the other ethnic categories. This change is a reflection in the immigration patterns of the coal region. The immigration patterns of different ethnic backgrounds also accounts for a decrease in the populations primarily who were Episcopalian to religions such as Presbyterian and Methodist, since many immigrants were not the same denomination. Educationally, the elite of the Wyoming Valley reflected the patterns of education itself, the more schools and higher education opportunities that were offered, the more education was required to define who the elite were and those who were not. Later in the nineteenth century, more schools were built as a response to increased demand of the upper social classes for education. The upper classes, after being educated, were then able to hold occupations as lawyers, merchants, coal operators, bankers, manufacturers, and other professionals (Davies, 1985). Another important factor to determine upper class was having a

kinship tie to someone in the urban center of the Wyoming Valley, the city of Wilkes-Barre. This last characteristic became important since most of the jobs for the educated were in Wilkes-Barre. Many young scholars came to live with and participate in apprenticeships with the elite of this urban center. These scholars secured their upper class ranking through marriage and business partnerships (Davies, 1985). As time progressed, innovations and city transportation allowed kinship ties to become even stronger between the elite of Wilkes-Barre and those of surrounding communities in the Wyoming Valley. According to Davies (1985)“In fact, improvements in transportation and communications facilitated these ties and brought members of both groups into far closer association.”

The next chapter in the social elite of the Wyoming Valley happens in the period between the 1880s and 1890s when coal production was at its highest output. “In the Wyoming Valley, the upper class had managed to maintain considerable local control over the anthracite mining operations through the 1880s” (Davies, 1985). The family owned companies began to merge into larger companies that were often owned by businessmen of New York City and Philadelphia. In this process, the elite of the valley began to invest in the larger cities and companies, making way for a new breed of elite to the Wyoming Valley. Investors began to branch out from the urban center of Wilkes-Barre into surrounding communities into the insurance, utility, and railroad industries. By the early 1990s other ethnic groups had control or standing within these new industries. The Greek, Polish, Irish, German, and Slovak were now leaders in communities throughout the Wyoming Valley (Davies, 1985). After the Depression, the defining characteristics of the upper class were divided into smaller subcultures. Lineage and religion now played the defining role between ethnic groups and within that smaller population, economics and politics began to define the leaders of those specific communities. Social traits of

the ethnic communities and very close kinship ties were reinforced through entrepreneurial activities and similar economic objectives. Ethnicity still plays a vital role in the leadership of the valley and Wilkes-Barre city continues to be the urban center of the Wyoming Valley even into the twenty first century. Wilkes-Barre city's political game maintained this power by keeping certain ethnic populations in control of surrounding communities through social and economic networks. Before the turn of the twentieth century, the upper class still had investments in the area and this in turn facilitated long-term social change and division of cultural groups (Davies, 1985).

The Wyoming Valley has a history of damaging dichotomies, from economics to religious beliefs. For decades, the struggle between the rich and the poor has been the cause of social conflict. At the heart of this conflict, there were the miners just making a living, while the elite of the society would build a downtown of grandeur. The elite would travel by stagecoach or take the canal, while poor families might never get the chance to travel at all. The economic struggles of the miners appear to have been carried down to today. Occupation caused a competitive war among both the lower and upper classes. The elite competed over education and the number of lawyers, entrepreneurs, and doctors in their family, while the lower classes often gloated about a miner having an underground versus aboveground job. Today's senior citizen population, who were the children of the miners and sometimes miners themselves, recall the economic difficulties of the collapse of the coal industry and the health risks their families lived with. This population had very little education, but knew what a good day of work was worth (Crock, 1941).

The religious dichotomies can now be seen in a glance at any community in the Wyoming Valley. Churches of all denominations, Protestant, Orthodox, Catholic, and

Methodist, are now permanent landscapes of the valley. Even religion can be broken down into rich and poor church establishments or even by nationality; the Irish Catholics had one church and the Polish Catholics another. According to *The Sunday Independent's* article even in the late 1930s religious ceremonies were held in native tongues of Slovak, Polish, German, and Italian (Sunday Independent, 1937).

The miners themselves were a united force, but union wars were just another ingredient to add to the conflict in the valley. Each union representing a certain group and demanding different actions left many miners standing alone. According to Crock (1942) “The very nature of the anthracite miner’s occupation tends to produce a characteristic type, individualistic to a degree...Courageous, if not reckless, before constant physical peril, the anthracite miner has proved himself ready to tell his superiors where to go if they should offer too much or too detailed advice.”

In addition, language has also played a part in social struggle. When non-English speaking immigrants would come and replace the English-speaking workers of the coalmine, the non-English speaking immigrants were hired for less pay than those who could argue their wages. All of these dichotomies have bred exclusiveness throughout the community leading to divisions and intolerance since the eighteenth century from when the Wyoming Valley was first settled. A past full of hatred and ethnocentrism has skipped very few generations.

Hopes of a more diverse and understanding social environment began when intermarriage was socially accepted in the late twentieth century. Even up until the 1970s, couples of different cultural and religious beliefs had a hard time finding a church that would sanctify their vows. Cultural affiliation still plays a role in social interaction. There are bars and clubs that still carry strong ethnic identification—North End Slovak Club or the Polish Alliance. Presently, influxes

of Latinos have made their presence felt in the north end and east end of Wilkes-Barre. Another positive characteristic was community pride, because the different groups kept to themselves, very closely bonded communities existed, and a sense of community pride was valued. The isolated groups have also kept many characteristics of their home nations. For example, the Wyoming Valley is home to many types of bazaars, each having ethnic identity to them. The Tomato Festival in Pittston, home of many Italian immigrants, has stands of Italian dishes and pastries. St. Mary's Church in Wilkes-Barre, an Orthodox church with many families having ancestors from Syria, has a bazaar filled with baklava, tabouli, and sights of the Dupkee dance on the stage.

The patterns of social conflict over the history of the Wyoming Valley have not faded from the current social atmosphere. One of the earliest ethnic groups to come to Wyoming Valley was the Welsh, where they established themselves as miners and mine bosses. In the late nineteenth century, a new wave of immigrants entered the Valley. These immigrants came from Eastern Europe and settled in large numbers in the surrounding communities of Nanticoke, Glen Lyon, Alden, and Wanamie. The coal companies had deliberately sought out these new laborers to depress the wages of mine workers. Before 1990, Nanticoke had 25 percent more native-born than foreign-born elites (Davies, 1985).

Chapter 3

The Price Paid

Chapter 3 presents the political, economic, and environmental impact of the anthracite coal industry on the city of Nanticoke. From the collapse of political leadership to the contaminated Susquehanna River, Chapter 3 will describe the coal industry's problems. Finally, this chapter will address the attempts by Nanticoke city officials to redevelop their community for over twenty years.

Current Mined Land

The main industrial hazards to the miners were health complications, environmental causes, and negligence from the mining company. Breathing in coal dust caused miner's asthma and eventually lead to a disease commonly referred to as black lung. Environmentally, cave-ins happened when the tunnels gave way and miners became trapped. Miners died from the weight of material or from lack of oxygen. Finally, gas explosions were caused when mines were not properly vented and ignited as from the open flame of a miner's lamp (Corlsen, 1954).

The dangers of mining were not only underground, but affected the surface of the city. Mine subsidence continues to be a threat to the Wyoming Valley today based on a history of cave-ins causing an occasional death and millions of dollars in repairs to homes and roads. Mine fires continue to be prevalent today as smoke rises out of the mountains surrounding the valley.

The coal industry also caused environmental damage and left future generations with health problems. The Luzerne County water sources are polluted with acid mine runoff, a problem that has plagued this area for some 200 years (PA DEP, 2003). Particulates have caused black lung that occurs when coal dust covers the walls of the lung, contributing to emphysema, bronchitis, asthma, and heart conditions. Luzerne County, where the Valley is located, has one

of the highest rates of cancer and heart disease in all of Pennsylvania (PA DOH, 2005). The coal miner's daughter mentioned earlier recalls the health hazards a mine town caused.

“The miners breathed rock dust and coal dust while working and they all died young from a lung problem, which is called miner's asthma or black lung. Some of them chewed tobacco to keep their mouths moist and kept spitting out the tobacco juice mixed with coal dust. My dad died when I was 20, and I was glad because he suffered so very much. He was bed-ridden and he gasped for air to breathe as he lay in bed. It was horrible. All through my high school years, my father was sick from working in the mines.”

No studies have been conducted that have determined a direct linkage between the coal industry and current health ailments in the county today, only speculations have been made.

According to Miller and Shayles (1985), “like the extractive industries, anthracite mining took from the earth and gave nothing back. When the huge profits had been made and coal had started to yield to other fuels, the larger companies abandoned the anthracite region, leaving behind a trail of destruction.” The mines have caused many land use problems. Much of the land cannot be built on because the mines are not very far below the surface and subsidence can happen at any time without notice.

For example the Glen Alden Mine killed 300,000 fish in the Susquehanna River on October 2, 1961, when the company decided to dump 19 million gallons per day of acid mine water into a near by creek which runs in the Susquehanna. This runoff flowed down the river for about 50 miles (Department of Environmental Protection, 1961).

Franklin Kury (1997), lawyer and former secretary to the House Conservation Committee wrote that, “coal, steel and railroads were our hallmarks, and their operation produced great wealth for the entrepreneurs who developed them. But the price that our state paid for that economic success in damage to our natural environment was never considered or even appreciated until well after the damage had been done. Pennsylvania led the world in steel,

railroads and coal, but we also were leaders in the great numbers of abandoned culm banks, mine-drainage polluted streams, and land scarred by the ravages of unregulated mining.” (Kurry, 1997).

The Honorable Kathleen A. McGinty testified before the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee on September 8, 2004 that 220,000 acres of abandoned mine lands were covered with culm in all of Pennsylvania that includes roughly 258 million tons of waste from coal. That waste has caused 2,200 miles of polluted streams has scared the landscape and continues to cause coal refuse fired that contribute to air pollution (McGinty, 2004).

All these examples show the coal industry not only exploited the miners but the very land on which they lived. The long-term affects of damage to the environment have still not been addressed. The anthracite coal industry raped the land of its natural beauty including forests lining the mountains that where cleared for collieries. The Susquehanna River that was once used for fishing cannot be used any longer, as a food source and the land on which the collieries were placed have not served the community any good. The geographic nature of the Wyoming Valley was promising to the miners. In times of economic struggle, miners would hunt deer, small game and bear, while the river offered other sources of protein through fishing. Even today hunting is still an important activity and local school districts give students and faculty the day off on the first day of hunting season (Corlsen, 1954). The only current green space within Nanticoke’s designated downtown area is Patriot Park, encompassing one city block. The park contains a few benches and a statue to honor the fallen miners of the coal industry. Patriot Park is not used very often and considered an unsafe area by many of the residents because of the presence of young people and drugs. A mixture of residential and commercial buildings with

large storefront windows surrounds the park. No other green space exists in the downtown area; however, there is green space along the riverfront, right outside the downtown area.

For many years between the 1930s and 1970s, the land on which the collieries existed was almost forgotten; nothing was ever developed on it. Over those forty years, depression was rampant, job availability decreased, and the coal industry left Nanticoke and neighboring towns to fend for themselves. Eventually, the area suffered economically due to mine fires, the Susquehanna River breach in 1956, and the advancement into new fuels contributed to the ruination of the area.



Figure 6. D. L. & W. Loomis Colliery in Nanticoke, PA

The famous Knox mine disaster, which occurred January 22, 1956, was a disaster that caused the death of coal mining in the Wyoming Valley. The mining companies thinking of money and not safety allowed the drilling of a coal tunnel to get too close to the Susquehanna River. With less than 6 feet between the mine and the river, the pressure became too great and the river entered the mine, trapping men below the surface and leaving them with no escape

route. The river created a whirlpool into the mine pulling billions of gallons of water down into the mine and it could not be stopped. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration Knox Mine disaster report 1959, out of 82 miners, 70 survived and 12 were lost (U.S. Department of Labor, 1959). All of the underground mines in the Valley were flooded and closed forever.

The land in the Wyoming Valley suffers from stripped forests making pathways to the black diamonds that are known as mine entrances. Streams and rivers were damaged from raw sewage of the patch towns, and acid runoff from the mines has made the Susquehanna one of the dirtiest rivers in America. A deteriorating breaker or two and old coal buildings that are no longer structurally sound can still be found, and smoke rising from the mountains marks underground mine fires. In addition to environmental damage, the coal industry has left an indelible human cost. Death and loss of limb was a daily occurrence on the job, and became an acceptance of life. Coal companies seemed oblivious to the losses; they had many more workers to pick from who would risk their lives. The passage of time has witnessed the death of those who toiled beneath the surface. One of the last memories many family members have is of the suffering of the last days of their grandfathers.

America takes great pride in its history and especially in becoming a major economic powerhouse. The American Industrial Revolution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created many opportunities for Americans. Nevertheless, this achievement came at a price that seems to be ignored. The cost of fueling this industrial revolution came in no small part from the labor of thousands of immigrants who came to Northeastern Pennsylvania and the Wyoming Valley. Coal would propel America—coal to heat homes and businesses, coal to drive the engines of industry, coal to produce the very steel that marked this new age. According to

Miller and Sharpless (1985), “No other American industry inflicted more heedless destruction on men and the environment than anthracite mining.”

The decline of economic vitality can also be traced back to a bitter labor dispute in 1902, when mine workers rallied against the local mine owners. The quarrel escalated and the mining of anthracite coal nearly came to a halt. Coal owners turned to the federal government for help, where President Theodore Roosevelt eventually insured through mediation that the production of coal would begin again (Wiebe, 1961). Although the strike ended, capitalists became less willing to put money into the area and, with the passage of time; this reluctance played a role in the economic decline of the region.

Once the mines closed and the strip mining operations filled in, a new use for the land became industrial parks. Another use was a mall, in which you can feel the building shaking from the unbalanced and settled fill in the mines. Until recently, there had been a lack of land development and utilization of the Susquehanna River. The water is contaminated with acid run off and the river has been ignored since the mining industry used the canal system. Currently, plans are underway to redevelop coal-mining land into green space where the Susquehanna Coal Company was located in Nanticoke.

The Nanticoke community land near the Susquehanna River is a flood plain, giving residents another reason not to develop areas near the river. In the 1930s, the Wyoming Valley suffered a flood and in order to provide protection, a dike or levy system was constructed. In 1972, Hurricane Agnes struck Northeastern Pennsylvania and after a week of heavy rains, the Susquehanna River rose and breached the dikes. The very heart of the Wyoming Valley was destroyed; homes, schools, businesses, and hospitals suffered from water damage and the destruction cost millions of dollars. Although people took pride in their efforts to recover, the

1972 flood damaged the area. There was a steady exodus of people and businesses from the hard-hit cities of Wilkes-Barre and Nanticoke. As the population shifted, economic interests followed. The Wyoming Valley Mall located about 10 miles from Nanticoke, which was just opened in 1972, received an immense boost to its fortunes whereas downtown shops closed. The repercussions continue to be seen today, more than thirty years later (Agnes, 2004).

Nanticoke land subsidence has an unclear history. Many of the instances have been unreported, but of those that have, here are a few of the most damaging. In April 1943, the abandoned Centennial School caved in (Sunday Independent, 1943). The following year, also left Nanticoke to clean up the streets of Prospect, Kosciusko, and Middle Road while that fall, Broad and Maple streets also caved in due to mines (Sunday Independent, 1944). That winter the Glen Alden Coal Company offered to buy the areas devastated by mine cave-ins (Sunday Independent, 1944). The Pulaski School was closed in April 1947 when the basement flooring was discovered to be pulling away from the building proper (Times-Leader Evening News, 1947).

The problem of mine subsidence has resulted in insurance companies refusing to cover the cost of repairs under the normal homeowners insurance. Surface damage caused by mines occurs when the coal and rock shifts, resulting in sags or cave-ins after the shafts have been dug. Although the coal companies were supposed to leave a system of pillars or artificial supports in the mines, they were too often overlooked or simply just failed to work. Presently, residents of Wyoming Valley must purchase separate mine subsidence insurance in addition to their regular homeowners insurance. Coverage is not always total replacement cost. Moreover, municipal and county governments have passed regulations concerning zoning laws about mined land and the infringement of property rights (Anthracite Subsidence Commission, 1943).

One of the hidden social *costs* of mining was what mining did to the workers, their families, and their heirs. One of the daily activities of a miner was to purchase a beer after a long day of work to relieve stress and to clear one's throat of coal dust. Although , as refreshment and recreation this activity is not in of itself a form of alcoholism, alcohol consumption was high and remains so in the area. Today the Wyoming Valley has one of the highest percentages of alcoholism in Pennsylvania. More than any other drug, alcoholism with its entire attendant social, economic, and health problems linger from the era of coal (Corlsen, 1954).

Political and Economic Consequences

The muddled political arena of Nanticoke can be attributed to the coal industry. The private coal companies formed not only socio-economic divides but cultural stratification as well. The city's ethnic affiliation is the Polish heritage, one that was pushed to the forefront of city identification. Nanticoke is known to be an area for last names ending in "-ski" and one of the few places still selling halushki, a Polish cabbage dish, at football games. On the other hand, strong family and neighborhood ties are also accredited to settlement patterns reflected in those of the coal mining times. This has caused a very hostile political battle over current improvement efforts in Nanticoke. Due to the personal ties going back through history, the city has both a city council and municipal authority. The municipal authority started by Congressman Paul Kanjorski was formed in order to keep a political hand in the area when competition from other political leaders began to threaten Congressman Kanjorski. The city council and municipal authority have been fighting over land and ownership in the downtown area for better than fifty years. Currently, the municipal authority owns all the property in the downtown area that was demolished. The municipal authority has made detrimental decisions to the downtown area of Nanticoke. Demolishing the buildings has taken away the aesthetic appeal

of the 1920s style buildings in the downtown area, and they have built a large modern building on one of the main streets, which does not fit the scale of the surrounding buildings. Public support is divided as is the city council and municipal authority. The city council has collaborated with a plan for the South Valley Partnership to form a strategic plan to make Nanticoke an urban hub for the surrounding municipalities of Glen Lyon, Newport Township, Plymouth Township, Wanamie, and West Nanticoke.

Another problem that Nanticoke faces comes from demographic problems--nearly 30 percent of the population is 65 years of age or older (U.S. Census, 2004). The city has tried to meet the needs of the elderly by including wheelchair accessible sidewalks, a number of pharmacies and doctor's offices, and many living spaces for this aging population. Nanticoke is missing the eighteen year old to thirty-five year old population. The declining population of this group has resulted in problems for city development. On many occasions, older residents, who do not like change, have used their political influences, leaving no options for city planning improvement efforts. While on the other hand, the remaining population of younger generations is too few in number to make a difference or have adopted the attitudes and positions of their grandparents. The demands for city planning and beautification movements have yet to spark the interest of the residents in Nanticoke.

One more problem with the downtown area is the lack of desire by the residents to use this area. The center of the city meets where the three main roads intersect. Sitting on each of the corners are Burger King, a senior citizen center, Rite Aide, and medical office. The downtown does not contain the traditional square design but all of the civic buildings are located on one of the three main streets. The actual infrastructure in the downtown area is in need of

repair, the sidewalks are damaged, lighting is inadequate, and nearly all of the buildings are in need of a face-lift.

Nanticoke is an inexpensive city to live in and is considered a suburb of Wilkes-Barre, the local hub with a population of 40,000 (U.S. Census, 2004). The city of Nanticoke now contains a mediocre school district serving pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. The 2004-2005 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Greater Nanticoke Area School District had the highest percentage of students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 11, fall below basic math and reading skills than another other school district in Luzerne County (PDE, 2005). The Luzerne County Community College draws a population of 16,000 students to the area on any given day.

Restaurants are in the form of a handful of pizza shops and bars and there are no commercial retail areas. The area suffers from absentee landlords, and many times one discovers housing units falling apart and with ordinances not being upheld. The renting population is 30 percent, one of the highest rates in Pennsylvania (U.S. Census, 2004). Nanticoke is far from what Joel Garreau calls an “edge city,” referring to an independently surviving city, not in need of a major metropolitan center (Sies & Silver, 1996). Nanticoke is a good distance from maintaining itself, let alone the surrounding municipalities.

Currently the residents of Nanticoke and the surrounding municipalities continue to pass through the city and many are disgusted by the poor conditions. Residents travel an average of twenty minutes to both work and shop outside of the southern part of the Wyoming Valley (U.S. Census, 2000). Although traveling out of the area does not bother many residents, something has to be done.

Historic resource protection has also been a recent event in the Nanticoke area. The only standing coal breaker, a building in which coal is broken into smaller pieces and processed, in

the neighboring town of Ashley has been declared a historical site and will be refurbished into a coal mining museum. Other sites such as Eckley Miner's Village, Concrete City, and McDade Mine Tour have been refurbished for tourism in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Many of the remaining coal buildings, such as The Delaware Company headquarters, are now structurally unsafe from lack of care over the past fifty years, since the last mine in the Wyoming Valley closed. The Historic Society of Nanticoke was initiated forty years ago, and is currently working to collect information from newspapers and residents. The Historic Society of Nanticoke consists of a few volunteer staff members who are active in the community.

Today, there are no manufacturing concerns in Nanticoke and only limited production plants in the coal-mining region. When the mines initially closed, clothing and shoe factories provided temporary employment. With the transfer of factory jobs overseas, these industries collapsed. Even these industries, when in operation, provided men and women with low wages, thereby perpetuating poverty. The largest employer in Wyoming Valley is the Wyoming Valley General Hospital. Employment remains essentially unskilled and service oriented. With the high number of colleges and universities in the area, Nanticoke, as well as the other communities has yet to capitalize on these areas of education to try to develop twenty first century jobs. This lack of economic opportunity contributes to the continuing loss of population. There is the constant refrain from parents, political leadership, and economic managers that the young people are leaving.

Nanticoke is known as a bedroom community, suffering from what Sies and Silver (1996) call "democracy's challenge." The city of Nanticoke has lost its economic base with the demise of the coal industry. The rates of poverty, crime, and drug abuse are on the rise along with the immigration of minority populations. The Greater Nanticoke Area High School has one

of the largest drug counseling programs in the area. Nanticoke, along with other mining towns, failed to adapt to the changing times. Political leadership failed to address city planning. Business leaders and educational leaders, especially those of the surrounding universities and colleges, did not pull together to address the economic changes. Up until August 2005, no comprehensive plan or working paper had been developed to improve the city. Nanticoke continues to suffer from the consequences of the coal industry. Progress has slowed since 1930 and has reached stagnation.

Nanticoke's population in 2000 was 10,955, dropping from 1990 to 2000 by 10.7 percent. The decrease is much higher than Pennsylvania's state average of 3.4 percent or Luzerne County's average of 2.6 percent within the same 10-year period. Over the next forty years, Nanticoke could lose half its population with a projected estimate of 5,350. One concerning characteristic is that 23.3 percent of the population is 65 years of age or older which may account for 29.9 percent of the residents of Nanticoke having disability status (U.S. Census, 2000).

The racial breakdown of Nanticoke is 98.8 percent white with less than 1% in the categories of Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander and all other races. The Wyoming Valley has seen an increase in the Hispanic or Latino populations and estimates show the next census should show a more diverse racial breakdown (U.S. Census, 2000).

The average household size is 2.21 and the average family size is 2.88. Nanticoke was 9.4 percent above Pennsylvania's average renting population and housing vacancy was 2.6 percent above the state average as well (U.S. Census, 2000). This leaves Nanticoke to be labeled, by community members, as a bedroom community. With a large number of absentee landlords and the high levels of renters, a common complaint heard is that renters contribute to

the problem by not caring about the community through the lack of maintenance of their property.

Economic characteristics are also not very promising. The Nanticoke population of 16 years of age or older in the work force fell 8.2 percent below the state average. The median household income falls behind the state average by \$13,937 and behind the county average by 1.29 percent. Similar below average trends are also seen in the median family income when Nanticoke falls below the county average by \$7,891. Luzerne County has 3.4 percent less families below the poverty level than Nanticoke. (U.S. Census, 2000).

| Demographic Characteristics | Nanticoke | Luzerne County | PA State |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Total Population | 10,955 | 319,250 | 12,281,054 |
| Population 65 years and over | 23.30% | 19.70% | 15.60% |
| Population 25 years and older with disability statue | 29.90% | 22.30% | 18.60% |
| Total housing units | 5,487 | 144,686 | 5,249,750 |
| Occupied housing unites | 88.40% | 90.30% | 91.00% |
| Owner-occupied housing units | 61.90% | 70.30% | 71.30% |
| Renter-occupied housing units | 38.10% | 29.70% | 28.70% |
| Population 25 years and over high school graduate or higher | 75.00% | 81.10% | 81.90% |
| Population 25 years and over Bachelor's degree or higher | 10.90% | 16.40% | 22.40% |
| 16 years and over in labor force | 53.70% | 58.30% | 61.90% |
| Mean travel time to work in minutes | 22.1 | 21.20% | 25.2 |
| Median household income (1999 dollars) | 26,169 | 33,771 | 40,106 |
| Families below poverty level | 11.50% | 8.10% | 7.80% |
| Individuals below poverty level | 15.80% | 11.10% | 11.00% |

Figure 7. Demographics Chart 1

Downtown Nanticoke is a rundown, underused area within the city. During field observations, I noted that the pedestrian traffic was minimal even around the peak hours of lunchtime between 11am and 1pm. Most of the pedestrian traffic was 65 years of age or older and did not appear to have problems walking in the current infrastructure. However, the problem areas are apparent and need to become a smooth and continuous surface.

The downtown area has inadequate lighting allowing for an uninviting atmosphere in the evening hours. This insufficiency also allows for the increased level of crime in the same focus

area. Along with the lighting, overhead coverage is dismal as well. The normal weather patterns of northeastern Pennsylvania require that overhead protection should be placed in a downtown area to protect pedestrian traffic. The designated walking areas are not clearly marked for both the driver and pedestrian. The busiest street corners are very dangerous to cross.

The streetscape of downtown Nanticoke is also deteriorating. The most notable is the lack of care for the buildings, they all look rundown and in need of repair. There are no signs of landscaping and barely any other sign of grass, trees, or gardens. The current amenities are in need of repair; trashcans, lights, and telephone poles need to be refurbished, while there are no bike racks, kiosks, or street furnishings. Advertising is also a part of the streetscape and for Nanticoke it is also in need of repair. Many of the signs were self-made painted by the owner of the business on the window. The advertising signs need to be placed in new locations because they could not be seen and were not properly used. There are no guidelines or rules the city supplies business owners to oversee signage consistency and visibility.

The natural and manmade features are very few. Patriot Park consists of one block in the upper part of the downtown area, consisting of one coal mining statue, a few benches, and one swing set. The park is underused and in dire need of renovations. The next feature is the Susquehanna River in the southern part of the city. Although the mines have closed, the river is still subject to drainage from old mine shafts. In addition to the acid mine runoff, the slow movement of the river at this point has resulted in large sediment islands that slows the speed of the river. These islands pose a threat for future floods as they help the water level to rise by slowing down the flow of the river during a flood. Unfortunately, removal of these sediment islands risks the possibility of breaking the riverbed into the mineshafts below. This area is not in use. Finally, the last features are the old buildings; a few coal company buildings are intact

but are declared structurally unsafe. Along most of the downtown area and three main streets, building architecture is from the early twentieth century. These buildings have not been taken care of and, in a few years time, will be as useful as the old coal buildings. In addition to building problems, Nanticoke has had an increased drug and crime problem.

Redevelopment

The Nanticoke Master Plan Report was presented in November of 1958 with a focus on land use and neighborhood analysis. At this time, Nanticoke was facing an economic crisis with the collapse of the coal industry. With no other resources, the residents of Nanticoke began to leave the town to live elsewhere in the Wyoming Valley. Nanticoke occupies about 3.4 square miles or 2,180 acres of land and has elevations ranging from 520 feet to 900 feet. The highest sections of town are mostly residential with the commercial and central business districts at the lower elevations. In 1958, 55 percent of Nanticoke was developed and 18 percent of the developed land or 395 acres was occupied by the coal industry infrastructure. In descending order, the second largest use was residential, followed by streets, agriculture, public, industrial, and commercial uses. The remaining undeveloped land, approximately 700 acres, is either unsuitable for development or unusable because of subsidence and flooding (Candeub, 1958).

The coal industry infrastructure consists of strip mining where the first layer of the earth is removed and then the mineral coal is removed. This is a very invasive form of quarrying that is detrimental to the environment. Mine shafts are long tunnels in which the miners descend into the mines; it is usually the only way in and out of a mine, similar to excavation. Breakers are large buildings use to process the anthracite coal once it is mined. The coal is filtered out of the rocks or slate, cleaned, and broken down into smaller pieces. Culm piles are giant waste piles of the remains from the breaker, often coal dust, rock, and unusable coal. Residential areas consist

of mainly single-family units, followed by two-family units, low apartments, and high apartments. The city blocks range from 850 feet long to 1,000 feet long in residential areas with very few streets while the central business district has many small blocks consisting of many secondary streets and alleyways. Public uses by highest percentage are the cemetery, then educational facilities, public buildings, and recreational areas. Industrial uses predominantly consisted of transportation, specifically railroads, occupying about 115 acres of land. The commercial uses were concentrated in the central business district; however, a few commercial uses were sprawled throughout the residential areas. The vacant land available, only 175 acres, has frontage on open streets or alleys for residential development (Candeub, 1958).

Overall, land uses have not changed between 1958 and 2005; many of the problems are recurring. The residential areas are adjacent to the remains of the coal industry and railroads, while the downtown suffers from lack of parking and inadequate loading areas for larger inventories. The neighborhoods have had slight improvements, as in many homes getting aluminum siding, but many are still blighted. Another problem that remains is what to do with the mixed residential-commercial buildings scattered throughout Nanticoke, leaving space for both upper and lower apartments and small inventory commercial uses. What also remains is inadequate room for new industry; the remaining land with relatively low elevation is not suitable for industrial development because of the lack of utilities, flooding and subsidence. Another characteristic left from the coal mining industry is the problem with the downtown or central business district area. This area continues to still have the largest population of rented housing units due to family poverty passed down over the years and the infrastructure of the actual units. Renting housing units has also been below average, continuing the pattern of a bedroom community. The housing conditions overall have barely changed, the area is still

unattractive and progress has not allowed for any new economic development. The coal industry left the city of Nanticoke with economic and social liabilities lasting over 100 years.

Housing characteristics have also remained the same over the last fifty years with the average of 6,000 housing units, most of which are single or double family structures. The only housing characteristic to change was the percentage of homeowners increased roughly 20 percent in the past 50 years. In 1950, 22 percent of the housing in Nanticoke did not have bathroom facilities or hot running water. The conditions of these housing continued to deteriorate until the Redevelopment projects began in the late 1950s (Candeub, 1958). Over the next two decades, housing improvements were major focus areas for the redevelopment projects the city of Nanticoke was conducting, until 1972 when Hurricane Agnes flooded the Wyoming Valley and the redevelopment project turned into quick fix recovery efforts for the cleanup of the flood.

The first signs of redevelopment ideas for the city of Nanticoke began in the late 1950s. After the last coal mine closed, the city was left in shambles; the downtown area was deteriorating, the housing units were deplorable and the population nearly decreased by half its size. Many of the residents began to find employment outside of the city and only continued to live in Nanticoke because of family ties. In a research project conducted by a local college student in 1959, an apathetic public felt that Nanticoke was past the point of “no return” and dismissed many of the efforts of the Redevelopment Authority, Planning Commission and the Planning Advisory Board. The Redevelopment Authority, Planning Commission, and the Planning Advisory Board were established by the city of Nanticoke to help redevelop the city and all the positions within these groups are made up of elected members of the community. Despite the public’s opinion, the city of Nanticoke, and those dedicated to redevelopment, made slight improvements (Nannual, 1960). A few examples in the early stages of the improvement

efforts were property acquisition under the redevelopment project, citywide communication projects, and funding for the planning and survey of the downtown area, Market Broadway Street Project began. The Market Broadway Project started to develop a commercial district for the downtown area (Nannual, 1960). Community leaders dedicated to the projects were trying to gain resident involvement and instill a sense of responsibility to the citizens of Nanticoke. Education at the elementary and secondary levels received emphasis as an important factor in any recovery, and many children went back to school. Nanticoke even received an award certificate from a state-sponsored competition the Pennsylvania Community Betterment Contest in April of 1956 leading to the city of Nanticoke now calling themselves the Pioneer City of Re-Development in Luzerne County. The Urban Renewal Program was broken into four main phases: redevelopment, rehabilitation, conservation and new development (Nannual, 1960).

The Urban Renewal Program characteristic of redevelopment consisted of city property acquisition, demolition, and the sale of land, mentioned above. Funding was addressed through federal and state grants to assist in the costs of improvements. The next characteristic, rehabilitation was primarily focused on improving the conditions of deteriorating residential and commercial buildings. The focus was to include more public space through the use of parks and recreational areas, while additional efforts were made to infrastructure such as streets and utilities. The conservation phase of the Urban Renewal Program addressed the need of community participation and awareness of planning and started neighborhood associations. Conservation also includes creating a housing code, city ordinances and revising the building code. The last concept of the Urban Renewal Program, new development looked at building both public and private housing units and to incorporate a scanning process for new development in the downtown area.

The final report presented by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Nanticoke, in 1976, states that there was a 100 percent return on Federal and State urban renewal funds of \$15 million dollars invested in Nanticoke out of a \$16 million dollar budget (Final Report, 1976). The U.S. Department of Housing and Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, the Community Development Block Grant Program and private developers and citizens financially supported the Redevelopment Authority. The central business district received a total of \$4 million for construction, 86 property acquisitions, the relocation of 116 families, 45 individuals, and 64 business and 111 structures were demolished over a 13 year period between the first discussions of redevelopment in 1957 to the completion of the downtown area in 1970 (Final Report, 1976). The rehabilitation process affected nearly 1,200 housing units to include everything from modern utilities such as bathrooms, to façade improvements. Roughly, two million dollars was spent by the Redevelopment Authority on infrastructure for the reconstruction of street, sidewalks, alleys, and curbs (Final Report, 1976). A new sewer system was installed or refurbished through the Urban Renewal Program. The efforts of the Redevelopment Authority are commendable in that even into the 1970s, some streets in Nanticoke were still dirt roads. The modernization of residential and commercial units was necessary but much of the city lost its aesthetic appeal. Where once large storefront windows of commercial structures would invite consumers, closed buildings now replace them. Those commercial buildings that were in decent condition during the redevelopment project of the 1960s and 1970s have been ignored and are now in deplorable condition. The newly paved streets, alleys, and sidewalks have all been left to deteriorate.

The outcomes of the redevelopment project were short lived and were only projected by the Redevelopment Authority for about a twenty-year period. The city of Nanticoke has not

made any significant efforts to continue urban renewal nor was any long-term comprehensive plan developed. Nanticoke has only continued to suffer from an economic crisis, before without modern utilities and now with modern utilities. The Redevelopment Project is a dichotomy in that it was needed, but the terrible infrastructure has remained the same.

Chapter 4

What Will the Future Bring?

This last chapter will review the importance of Nanticoke to the southern part of Wyoming Valley as well as the opinions of community stakeholders about what it will take to revitalize the town. I present the recommendations for Nanticoke’s redevelopment. Finally, I will draw upon what some could perceive as lessons from Nanticoke that can have applicability and warning to other American cities that may suffer from loses of industry.

Why Nanticoke?

The story of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, is one that has been overlooked. The dismissal that the area is an *old mining town* that represents the past overshadows the needs of Nanticoke’s current residents. Not only is the city of Nanticoke dismissed but the surrounding municipalities that make up the south valley region are also overlooked. The choices that Nanticoke makes will determine how successful the entire south valley region is in surviving the economic and social consequences. The following graph shows a comparison of statistical demographics to gain a better understanding of the entire south valley region.

| Demographic Characteristics | Glen Lyon | Nanticoke | Newport Township | Plymouth Township |
|---|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Total Population | 1,881 | 10,955 | 5,006 | 2,097 |
| Population 65 years and over | 18.80% | 23.30% | 18.70% | 16.70% |
| Population 25 years and older with disability status | 36.60% | 29.90% | 28.10% | 20.20% |
| Total housing units | 1,089 | 5,487 | 2,166 | 899 |
| Occupied housing unites | 76% | 88.40% | 82.65 | 91.30% |
| Owner-occupied housing units | 59.70% | 61.90% | 70.00% | 83.70% |
| Renter-occupied housing units | 40.30% | 38.10% | 30.00% | 16.30% |
| Population 25 years and over high school graduate or higher | 74.00% | 75.00% | 69.00% | 83.70% |
| Population 25 years and over Bachelor's degree or higher | 5.70% | 10.90% | 9.90% | 12.20% |
| 16 years and over in labor force | 57.00% | 53.70% | 46.70% | 62.80% |
| Mean travel time to work in minutes | 26.9 | 22.1 | 25.2 | 22.3 |
| Median household income (1999 dollars) | 24,271 | 26,169 | 32,073 | 36,324 |
| Families below poverty level | 16.90% | 11.50% | 9.30% | 6.90% |
| Individuals below poverty level | 22.20% | 15.80% | 14.00% | 9.90% |

Figure 8. Demographic Chart 2

The revitalization of Nanticoke is important because the southern part of the Wyoming Valley needs an urban hub. Looking at the table above, many of the statistics are the same; the municipalities are suffering just as much as the city of Nanticoke. All the areas have high rates of a population 65 years of age and older and a high percentage of residents having disability status. The statistics vary for those representing both categories of below poverty level; this is due to Plymouth Township and Newport Township having slightly different demographics. The business patterns of Nanticoke are dismal but the surrounding municipalities are in worse shape. In Glen Lyon, there are 14 businesses with 45 employees. The manufacturing business is involved in electroplating, plating, polishing, and anodizing while the retail business is a gasoline station with a convenience store. The other service businesses include a consumer electronics repair and maintenance business, a funeral home, a religious organization, and two civic and social organizations. Driving through the municipality of Glen Lyon, many of the daily necessities and needs of the population cannot be met causing the residents to drive to other areas. It is also inconvenient for those residents to pass straight through Nanticoke into the adjacent city of Wilkes-Barre because of the variety of goods and services offered.

The businesses in Plymouth Township are also minimal. The manufacturing businesses are: soft drinks, yarn, converted paper products, commercial lithograph printing, ready-mix concrete, and non-ferrous metal and fabricated metal. There are a variety of retail stores that meet basic needs, such as: convenience stores, grocery, beer, wine, & liquor stores, gas stations, heating oil dealers, office supply stores, gift stores, tobacco, new and used car dealers, furniture, appliance, pharmacy, tire, and auto parts stores. Newport Township's businesses include only a few auto repair shops; the residents must leave the area for every other necessity.

Overall, the municipalities of Glen Lyon, Newport Township, and Plymouth Township would prosper from the revitalization of Nanticoke. Regionalization would offer the municipalities and Nanticoke city services that they do not receive and would financially help the entire area. Other positive aspects of regionalization would assist the Greater Nanticoke School District in providing more children the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. Residents would live in healthier neighborhoods and the joining of these communities could potentially bring in more residents and even become part of the tourist industry in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Nanticoke acts as one of many examples of coal mining towns as to what can go wrong when a community fails to make the needed corrections. Looking at the literature on coal mining towns, they all suffered in similar ways. From Whitesville, West Virginia, and Prince, Utah, to the mountains of Fengcheng, China in the Jiangxi Province, all the coal-mining towns repeated the destructive pattern that Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, underwent. The coal companies began to develop small towns around the mine entrance. The more the industry skyrocketed, the more control the mine owners exerted over the miners. For example, the miners lived in company towns and shopped at company stores. Without any competing market, prices were kept high, and nearly all the wages a miner would make went back into the pocket of the coal company.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Association of Miners, the top five underground coal-producing states are West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Illinois. In 2005, the average miner's age was 50 years and the hourly wage was \$22.05 (Reuters 2006).

A prevalent fear among miners was the knowledge that a miner could lose his job at any time due to the recruiting efforts of the companies who would actively seek out new immigrants in order to insure lower wages. In addition, miners also lived in fear of the actual jobs, which they performed; it was common to lose a family member or friend on a daily basis.

The areas around Fengcheng, China, mined 70 percent of China's coal. The article in *China Daily*, states that the miners live in one-story row houses. A miner's monthly income is equivalent to \$87 U.S. Dollars. Most of the families from Fengcheng received little or no education. The women in this community can only find jobs cleaning homes and offices of the coal company officials. Some of the children have been sent off to live with family members and friends in other parts of China in order to work and make some money so their family can survive (*China Daily*).

The most recent area comparable to Nanticoke would be Buckhannon, West Virginia, the home of the twelve miners that recently died. In an article written by the Associated Press in 2006, printed profiles of the men in the Sago mine disaster showed every miner who died was a second or third generation miner. Samantha Lewis, widow and mother of three, was quoted as saying, "It's [Mining] just a way of life. Unless you're a coal miner or you have a college degree, you don't make any money." The people of Buckhannon live in a town marked by poverty that originated from coal mining years ago, and continues to force people to work in the mines to make a living. Statistically, Buckhannon is identical to Nanticoke. The median income for a household in Buckhannon is \$23,421, and the median income for a family is \$36,975. The per capita income for the city is \$12,959. Families below the poverty level are 15.8 percent of the population compared to 24.8 percent of individuals. Out of the total population, 32.7 percent of those under the age of 18, and 11.2 percent of those 65 and older are living below the poverty

line (U.S. Census 2000). The city of Buckhannon even has West Virginia Wesleyan College in their town, when only 23.3 percent of the city receives a bachelors degree or higher. Another statistic in common is that 24.3 percent of the Buckhannon population has a disability (U.S. Census 2000).

Madrid, New Mexico, is the oldest coal-mining region in New Mexico. In 1899, Madrid's population was 2,900. Today, Madrid has a population of 149 (U.S. Census 2000). In 1919, Oscar Joseph Huber had images of redevelopment and healthy communities. Huber tried to help the city of Madrid from a depressed coal-mining town by building elementary and high schools, a hospital, company store, and even an employees club. Miners were required to participate in community events and donate \$0.50 to \$1.00 a month to the community. Huber's ideas led to Madrid's famous Christmas light celebrations. However, the ideas of Oscar Huber failed to save the community. Today the city is on the Turquoise Trail of tourist sites to see in New Mexico and its only function is as a tourist attraction. Once again, the coal industry exploited the Madrid community and, in spite of the bright future Huber envisioned, the city was lost. No industry has tried to move back into the area, the population has decreased to below 200, and artists and craftspeople inhabited the old coal town in 1970 (Turquoise Trail 2006).

Snezhnoye, Ukraine, is another town suffering from mining. *The Independent Press Moscow Times* (2005) claimed that, "Since 1991, about half of the town's population of 100,000 has moved away. Among those who have stayed, the average age is rising and the official unemployment rate is close to 50 percent." The article continues to say that many of the families in this area have no other choice but to work for the mines. The mines have closed and with that so have the local schools, which the coalmines funded. The town used to take pride in its

children winning national musical or ballet competitions. Illegal mines are still running which only allow miners to earn \$300 - \$400 U.S dollars a month (Francesca 2005)

The patterns of destruction are repetitious when addressing the impacts of the coal industry. Coal is an industry that poisoned the environment, ruined land, and devastated thousands of families, in not only the United States but also around the world. However, one old coal-mining town in the southern part of Wales called Ashington has had some promising experiences. Ashington experienced the failure of the coalmine and steel industries, but then turned to the service industry. Ashington was suffering until Dow Corning built a silicone manufacturing plant in Ashington. Due to the need for a highly skilled work force, Dow Corning is assisting local schools to improve their math and science curriculum. Dow Corning invites field trips to the plant in order to spark interest so that the next generation of scientists will come from the local work force. The Welsh Assembly Government, now seeing potential in Ashington, has allowed funds to flow into the area to develop, the waterfront, and police force, which has resulted in the reduction of crime rates. By no means is Ashington the ideal town to live in, Ashington needs much more help, but the path of development leaves this town with hopes of a bright future (Jones 2005).

It is in this last example of Ashington that Nanticoke stands in stark contrast. Just like Ashington, Nanticoke confronted its loss of the coal industry with some attempts at providing employment—light industry, small commercial stores, and the service industry. Like Ashington, these efforts did not turn the economic situation around. However, unlike Ashington, Nanticoke did not use the assets available to them—the Luzerne County Community College. In addition, Nanticoke did not attract the interest of replacement economic opportunities even though the people of Nanticoke have a reputation of being good workers. Moreover, Nanticoke's political

leadership at the community, state, and federal level did not take a comprehensive action to attract business or industry. The lack of concern, from first the coal companies and then the political leaders in Nanticoke, has caused the city to decline. Using Ashington as an example, Nanticoke might rebound under a joint effort from political, economic, and community involvement.

Stakeholders in the Community

Throughout the interviews that were conducted with stakeholders in the city of Nanticoke and the surrounding municipalities many patterns were apparent. One strong opinion mentioned by the Nanticoke and surrounding municipality stakeholders was the problem of municipal political turmoil. The Nanticoke city council, which is elected every four years, faces competition from another politically elected body, known as the municipal authority. The municipal authority and the city council are political structures that have dampened the community spirit and created a hostile environment, where residents must choose a side. Furthermore, Congressman Paul Kanjorski and State Representative John Yudichak are both prominent figures on the community and state levels. Their negative personal and political conflicts have caused problems in the development of Nanticoke.

Another problem area most interviewees mentioned was crime and drug related activity. The heaviest area of drug trafficking would be Patriot Park and the largest demographic involved in drugs would be high school- age students according to an article printed by a local drug rehabilitation program (GNA Taskforce, 2004). Crime is also on the rise; many have mentioned that there has been a recent increase in the number of break-ins.

Related to political turmoil, many business owners mentioned that the business community is not very welcoming to new business and it is very hard to become established.

There is currently no Nanticoke Chamber of Commerce; however, a few business owners in Nanticoke belong to the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce. Nepotism has gone so far in the Nanticoke community to the point where even long time residents of Nanticoke cannot help themselves. One stakeholder mentioned that it took almost two years to establish their business and directly linked the troubles to favoritism throughout the community. However, business owners said that they try to keep everyday business purchases within Nanticoke and if new business came in they would deal with them first before going into Wilkes-Barre.

The ethnocentric beliefs of many of the residents have brought about negative feelings towards the migration of minorities. Although the actual number of minority residents of Nanticoke is quite small, the belief that the incoming minorities are the reasons for more drugs, crime, and the destruction of both the residential and commercial areas is strongly held by many of the stakeholders interviewed. From interviews with some political leaders and residents, the negative comments refer to outsiders, meaning not born in Nanticoke, as the ones responsible for the declining conditions of the city. Some of the community members believe that the large numbers of houses for rent are in worse condition because of the increasing renting minority populations not taking care of their property.

Other complaints and concerns from stakeholders in the community were parking in the downtown area, the deplorable conditions of the streets and the lack of dining facilities. In some cases, many business owners felt they did not have a good place to take clients for a lunch meeting or anywhere else acceptable to take guests.

Nanticoke does not meet the needs of its residents, therefore forcing them to go to the neighboring city of Wilkes-Barre. During the interview process, residents did not mind driving to Wilkes-Barre to eat or shop because of the large variety offered. They did not view the drive as

a burden and said that driving was always worth the trip. The main items residents would go for were retail, food and entertainment.

The only sources of entertainment in Nanticoke are the neighborhood bars and the Greater Nanticoke Area High School sporting events. High school football games were considered a men's club atmosphere, a place to be seen, or to form relationships in order to carry on business. The limited resources for Nanticoke residents send them to Wilkes-Barre Township to go to the Arena, or to the Scranton Cultural Center. Related to entertainment are the natural features the environment supplies to this area. Stakeholders saw tourism opportunities for the Wyoming Valley because of the location in between the Appalachians Mountains and the Susquehanna River. The natural environment of the Wyoming Valley could be used as a marketing technique not only for Nanticoke, but also for the entire region.

Stakeholders also mentioned the gap in age demographics. Those involved in the community were 40 years of age or older. A missing population of 20s and 30s were not involved in community activities, politics or even the job market. This missing demographic can be traced back in two ways. First, there are no opportunities for the Greater Nanticoke Area School District students to become involved in anything but sports. The sports teams receive the most attention at school and the community has regional sports leagues. If a child is interested in anything but sports, there are no opportunities to explore that field outside of school. Second, the Wyoming Valley is home to about 10 colleges and universities. Many of the students from this area continue their education within the Wyoming Valley or Northeastern Pennsylvania, but very few of those students return home after graduation. The job market has been closed since the coal industry left and there is a very weak social atmosphere drawing those students back into the area after college.

Nanticoke is home to Luzerne County Community College (LCCC), mainly a commuter campus with an older population. LCCC offers a variety of programs that very few other schools have to offer. More than once during the interviews, community stakeholders mentioned that the College was not involved enough within the community or with the Greater Nanticoke Area School District. The amount of intellectual assets produced within Nanticoke is not harnessed, and eventually escapes to other communities' nation wide.

The second set of interviews conducted was with college age students. Those who were involved in activities on campus at Luzerne County Community College said that very few people ever become involved in activities because it is a commuter campus. The demographics are also a hindrance since many students are older and have children. Those interviewed would like to become more involved in the community since they believe they are a vital part of Nanticoke. Some of the needs the students have are for a children's center, school supply store, and coffee house and café type of restaurant. Currently, the location of LCCC makes the downtown area of Nanticoke inaccessible and inconvenient. The students said that if the downtown was revitalized and offered variety, they would not mind driving the few minutes into town. As they are college students, many find it more economical to drive to Wilkes-Barre for basic needs than to spend a few extra dollars on local merchants. After talking with commuters, all agreed that they never go into the downtown Nanticoke area, but carry on with their shopping needs closer to the places they live and would most likely avoid running errands in Nanticoke if something became available.

For the college- age population, students mentioned that there is no room for personal or career growth. The job market is failing and there are very few jobs within the technological fields. Many of the jobs available are service jobs and do not require a degree and have no room

for growth. The social atmosphere is closed except for bars, restaurants, and a few movie theatres. Many of the students said that they would not stay in the area after school because they believe it will never change and if it does, it will only get worse. However, one good point students made was that they feel safe within the community and hope to live in a community like Nanticoke to raise their future children.

Throughout the entire interviewing process, one main and very important theme kept arising, that is, community pride. Whether it is business owners using other local businesses or the morning stop for coffee, everyone said that the residents of Nanticoke are true to each other within their social groups. The pride within the community makes Nanticoke a great place to raise children. Also mentioned was the loyal behaviors and hard work that made business owners proud to hire local residents. While on the other side of community pride, it is also Nanticoke's worst enemy. Because the social groups are loyal and tightly woven, they leave very little room for change or building any new relationships.

Recommendations

After conducting research on the city of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, I would make the following recommendations. The first issue to address would be the infrastructure, to repair sidewalks, roads, and lighting. The repair and maintenance of roads would allow for not only a visual appeal, but a safer driving area as well. While the crossroads of the downtown is a dangerous intersection, installing a neutral ground or median along Main Street, would slow down or deter traffic. In addition, a Main Street Project could be incorporated to raise funds for the improvements on Main Street and allow for community involvement.

The side walks need to be continuous and level due to the high percentage of the disabled and those who are 65 years of age or older. Improvements on the sidewalks would allow for a

friendlier environment and encourage people to walk the downtown areas and try new stores. Lighting of the streets and private business property is also necessary. The downtown at night is very uninviting and can lead to dangerous situations. Additional lighting would help both aesthetically and for safety reasons.

Improvement efforts can be maintained through a program Luzerne County has recently established called the Municipal Cooperation Commission. This is a community toolkit used to help municipalities find local resources for improvements. The Municipal Cooperation Commission is also a way for Nanticoke to build relationships with the surrounding areas in the south valley and all of Luzerne County.

Another recommendation would be to address civic areas. Open window front stores surround Patriot Park. The addition of small shops, such as a coffee house, deli or card shop, would focus more pedestrian traffic to this area, allow for more benches, bike racks and shaded areas in the park, along with a small stage for community activities. Building a neighborhood focused center would allow for community development, create a place to meet your neighbors, and break down the social barriers from which Nanticoke suffers. Another civic space that includes green space would be the area around Mill Memorial Library. This area could benefit from walking paths as well as being used as a center for children's activities.

Another possibility would be consolidating police forces and use surrounding area officers when needed. More of a police presence would make residents feel safer and encourage a crime free environment. Another suggestion is to create a strong neighborhood watch program, allowing residents to unite against crime and drug related activity.

The downtown and business areas should look into creating a Chamber of Commerce or having the requirement of joining the Wilkes-Barre Chamber. This would create a supportive

environment for business owners and reduce the hardships new owners have to face. The business community could then establish rules for signage, landscaping, and beautification projects. Ordinances should be established for both commercial and residential areas, with fines when not adhered to. Another suggestion for city clean up is to have a day dedicated each month to allow the residents to take on community tasks, such as picking up garbage off the streets or painting the local equipment at the park.

Parking solutions are always the hardest to address. Many of the stores on South Main and Prospect Street have no parking at all and are not accessible to consumers. The heavy traffic on the streets deters pedestrians.

The housing problems are numerous and need to be addressed. One suggestion would be to make absentee landlords more responsible for their property. Another is to build housing for the demanding markets, such as those people affiliated with Luzerne County Community College. Staff, faculty, and students would all benefit from more housing in the area by renovating the second floor of the downtown buildings into lofts. This would allow for a dense mixed-use area within the downtown and supply the consumer for the revitalized markets. Affordable housing would also speak to young parents or couples thinking of starting families.

Nanticoke and the surrounding municipalities of Glen Lyon, Newport Township, Plymouth Township, and Wanamie need to speak as the South Valley. Allowing for a regional approach on the business, tourism, and community level would attract visitors and new members into the community. This area has a lot to offer and combining and marketing as a region may give this area an economic boost.

This region should then capitalize on the environment to use the mountains and river as recreation facilities, either as a small weekend adventure or a day trip for fishing or hiking. In

addition to recreation, have community activities such as a farmers market or a program that allows local students to show their talents. Incorporate a community center that would include an indoor space for activities, gym, and a center that runs children's programs year round. This would meet the needs of children not active in sports, provide a safe play area for parents to allow their children to play and provide a way for the community to become healthier. Another idea would be a small movie theater, offering affordable tickets.

Business and economic leakage can be addressed through the involvement of surrounding colleges and universities offering their services such as a Small Business Development Center. Networking with the resources the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce has will also provide a foundation to address the leakages.

The retail currently in Nanticoke only meets the needs of the 65 years of age or older population. They have access to their doctors, therapy, and pharmacy. The younger generations and families have to drive about 20 minutes for family style dining, to get supplies for a school project or buy a new outfit for an interview. The store space available cannot have large inventories and cannot be expensive, causing problems for many business owners. One idea is to create a retirement community, incorporating more services to meet the needs of the elderly, such as a driving range, a sit down dining area or a driving service. While on the other hand to draw younger generations back into the community with opportunities for family growth, the options might be, a community center and small stores geared towards day-to-day needs.

Finally, ordinances should be developed for rental properties. Guidelines need to be set and enforced for business' addressing advertising signs for consistency and visibility. There is no landscape or façade to most of the downtown and business district. Adding this feature would make a more inviting area. Future possibilities of sidewalk cafes need to be addressed.

All these recommendations need to be assessed and improved every year by the Redevelopment Authority in order for Nanticoke to become the urban hub of the south valley. Regrettably, it would appear that Nanticoke would fall short of this goal. On February 28, 2006, the city of Nanticoke applied for Act 47 of the Pennsylvania Code that declares the community to be in distress. Under this act, the capital, Harrisburg, becomes involved in all aspects of Nanticoke's financial dealings—budgets, taxes, fees, and planning. Nanticoke faces a 2.8 million dollar deficit, with little hope of meeting its bills or paying the salaries of its employees. Nanticoke may not only be a forgotten town, but a dying one as well.

Ramifications

Addressing the questions from my introduction will bridge the gap between the problems Nanticoke has faced to those American cities will encounter. Did the political leaders do enough? Seeing the loss of jobs and population, what action did they take? Political leadership took several forms. First, the political leaders during the height of the coal industry were the coal company owners' themselves. Through their concentration of wealth, the coal owners influenced local governments in their actions. For example, coal industry started out without regulations. Later, the coal owners helped to limit other industries from coming into the Valley thus reducing the job opportunities of the residents. Political activism on behalf of the residents was not a priority for the coal barons, money was. As the coal industry declined, the coal owners relinquished their dominant political power. Whereas the coal owners could have assisted in the transition from coal to a more diversified economy, they did not. The local politicians who were another form of political leadership, therefore, faced the situation alone. Local politicians were individuals that spoke out about their community's needs; for example, there would be a Polish Catholic political leader as well as an Irish Catholic political leader. Stopgap plans such as shoe

and apparel factories did provide short-term relief. However, rivalries between the political leadership of Nanticoke terminated hopes of long-term solution. The rivalry between the city council and the municipal authority stymied the development of a coherent plan of action. Currently, the politics in Nanticoke are still suffering from the lack of leadership--half the people follow one leader, and the other half another. Although both sides are trying to improve the city for residents, these efforts are overshadowed by the political turmoil and nothing is being accomplished.

Were they pawns of the coal barons? The coal barons exploited the miners. When mine workers began to react to the coal companies by organized efforts, the coal companies actively sought labor from other areas. The immigrants from Eastern Europe were encouraged to come to Wyoming Valley. The new immigrants were provided with lodging and grocery stores accepted their credit. This altruism on the part of the coal owners was in reality a means of keeping wages depressed. If the workers from Poland or Lithuania would work for less, then others would do the same to keep their jobs.

Did they ignore the problem? The coal barons ignored the problem. Their primary interest was profit. If the bottom line required laborers to paid substandard wages, the coal owners would see that wages were kept low if it meant bringing in immigrants from Eastern Europe. If the control of the labor force required other job opportunities to be reduced, then coal owners would use their political advantage to insure that coal mining had few rivalries. The very fact that coal companies would dump dead miners on the porches demonstrated the lack of concern for their employees.

Did they not understand the ramifications of the changing economy and business atmosphere? I fully believe that the coal barons knew exactly what was happening to the coal

industry. The strike of 1902 was a turning point in the coal industry. Investments turned to other industries such as petroleum. There was the exiting of coal barons to the cities of New York and Philadelphia. At first, local governments and politicians may not have recognized the impact of what was happening, but they did react to the new circumstances. For example, the closure of the mines saw the labor force move into the apparel and shoe industries. Plans for downtown Nanticoke were drawn up as in the construction of the Kanjorski building.

In addition, if not, why didn't they seek outside expert advice? Local politics limited what government would do. Leaders fought turf wars as to what direction should be taken. Business advice remained local. It would not be until the late twentieth century that state and local planning commissions would try to provide overall guidance. Wilkes-Barre had a local chamber of business, but not until the late 1980s, when new leadership took over, did it try to expand its goal to encompass the larger Wyoming Valley. Before this, efforts were disorganized and badly directed.

Are other parts of America now experiencing similar conditions? In at least two ways, the story of Nanticoke is relevant to what is happening in America today. First, Americans are faced with losing their livelihood to changing economic conditions. Recently, Delco a major supplier to General Motors has decided to close its American plants because its overseas labor operations cost less. Union workers in America have responded that any further concessions on their part will see a reduction in their quality of life. The closing of the coalmines was the major step in Nanticoke's decline. Second, the current situation with the Latin population is very similar to the immigrants of the coal industry. Among the strongest supporters for liberal immigration laws are industries and businesses. Latino workers are noted for their hard work, their seeming acceptance of poor working conditions, and their willingness to work for minimum

wages. Many Americans resent the Latin population for these very qualities as they force American born workers to accept the same employment conditions. Presently, Congress is unable to reconcile these conflicting sides. The Eastern European immigrants met the same hostility when they entered the mines in Nanticoke.

Is manufacturing still economically viable when workers in Indonesia or India will work for a fifth of what it would be in America? Manufacturing of large number of items as household, apparel, sport items, small appliances, and some electronic goods will not see a comeback in the United States. International corporations will always seek to maximize profits. Manufacturing of other products such as aerospace, heavy equipment and automobiles may still find themselves competitive in America. The changes in manufacturing technology as the use of robots would equalize labor costs. Moreover, national defense needs would require that some heavy industry remain in the hands of American production. Nanticoke does not have the economic base to create such industries.

As technology advances, will the jobs requiring intensive labor be outdated and eliminated? With each advance in technology, jobs have adjusted. The introduction of steam driven machinery saw the decline of cottage industries and the rise of the factory system. The use of robots in manufacturing cars, for example, saw a decline of line workers, but an increase of workers who had the skill to operate the robots. Technology will continue to cause upheavals in employment. What may be surrendered in physical labor might be replaced with labor requiring abilities that are more cerebral. The loss of jobs though does carry serious social and human costs. It is here, rather than intensive labor, that technology may play a far more significant role. Nanticoke has not acted on the fact that Luzerne County Community College lies within its borders and could be used as a training center that could help develop new skills.

If minimum wage jobs are the fastest growing category of jobs, what does this do to the ordinary worker? The lack of good paying jobs places additional burdens on men and women to compensate for quality with quantity. It is not unusual for minimum paid workers to hold down two or even three jobs. This puts adults and teenagers in competition for the same jobs. It also puts enormous strain upon the family unit. The job opportunities within Nanticoke itself are mostly minimum wage jobs. This is one reason why the majority of Nanticoke residents travel outside their community for employment.

What happens to the family unit when the husband and wife are required to work several jobs just to survive? The demands of working multiple jobs put a strain on the family unit. One problem is childcare. When both parents must seek employment, then the presence of young children requires some sort of day care. Even when children are of school age, the families of Nanticoke still face care of sick child or the cancellation of school due to inclement weather. Problems after school present themselves. If no parent is available to watch the children, then the likelihood of children seeking support and affirmation may come from the street. One of the concerns mentioned by a few residents of Nanticoke was the rise of drugs, gangs, and unsafe conditions of some neighborhoods. One more consequence that is related to both this question and the previous one is the breakup of the family unit. The lack of employment opportunities has led to many families or children of families leaving Nanticoke to begin life elsewhere. The continuing decline of population of Nanticoke is evidence that the trend continues.

At what point does a democratic society begin to fail as the quality of life declines? Many of the residents of Nanticoke are descendants of immigrants that came to America to find a better life for themselves and their families. Although coal mining was a dangerous and underpaid job, it provided hope to the immigrants that children will do better. Democracy is

dependent upon this hope—the American Dream. With the demise of the coal industry and with the continuing problems of the community, this dream seems out of reach for many of the residents. It is in such an atmosphere that some people's worse instincts come out. The resentment of Blacks or Hispanics, or accusations that the root of social problems like drugs lies with them comes out. People will turn to those who promise solutions to problems.

Are there any applicable lessons to be learned from what happened in Wyoming Valley? The purpose of this thesis is to apply the events of the Wyoming Valley as a warning to the rest of the American society. First, the immigration situation of Eastern European coal miners who were encouraged to come to America as laborers was seen as a threat to the English and Welsh miners who were already working in the mines. Eastern Europeans were resented because they could not speak English and had different cultural practices and more importantly were taking over the jobs of the English and Welsh, because the new immigrants were working for lower wages. This problem in Nanticoke is repeating itself today with the Hispanic immigrants. Second, as communities face the loss of important industries, it is important for the local leaders to organize and to make effective plans to offset the hardships involved. Third, the human cost of coal mining upon the people of Nanticoke and Wyoming Valley parallels the debate about what are the responsibilities of companies to communities. Do companies have a moral and ethical responsibility to its employees and the neighborhoods—living wage, health care, and environment—or are its interests to its shareholders only—the bottom line?

Conclusion

From the very first discovery of coal by the Native Americans up through the demise of the industry in the 1950s and 1960s, coal has been a mixed blessing for the people of Wyoming Valley. The anthracite industry brought wealth and power to the few, but scarred the lives of

thousands. At first, the early years of the industry seemed one of prosperity, growth, and optimism. The demands of the American industrial revolution of the nineteenth century required the mineral resources of Northeastern Pennsylvania. As coal owners reaped the profits of the industry, the social-economic-political benefits remained a privilege for the few. The ordinary miner found his relative position one of hardships and constraints. Working from sun up to sun down, the miner's existence was hard labor filled with the ever-present danger of a cave-in. Wages hardly met the needs of their families. In addition to the low wages, the miner often lived in company owned homes, and bought their food in company owned stores. The escape from the drudgery and danger of the job led to the use of tobacco, consumption of alcohol, and belief of a higher authority to provide justice.

The human cost of the coal industry has been largely ignored. The community of Nanticoke represents, in many ways, just what the "butcher's bill" was. Attracted to the availability of work, immigrants came to the area to make a better life for themselves and their families. The immigrants lived in neighborhoods where their own ethnic or religious groups were a majority. When the industry declined, they found their opportunities to be limited. The coal industry's stranglehold on the economic and political life insured that the dependence on the single commodity of coal would leave the area destitute. The road system and living accommodations and almost all other aspects of life in Nanticoke were consumed by the demands of the coal industry. With the closure of the mines and the rise of petroleum, Nanticoke scrambled to find some economic relief. Light manufacturing, such as the apparel industry, rose and fell just as quickly. Once again, Nanticoke's factories could not compete with the cheap labor costs of those in South America and in Asia. Injury and death during the era of coal left many families without fathers and sons during a time when males were the breadwinners. The

human face of the remnants of the coal industry can be measured by the high incidence of cancer and alcoholism. What was once a means of release for the coal miner has left a legacy of addictions to their grandchildren and great grandchildren. In relation to other areas of Pennsylvania, the communities within the Wyoming Valley have one of the highest percentages of heart disease and cancer. There are unaccounted social and health care costs “where there was a bar on every corner.”

Class division was also a consequence of the coal industry. It started by coal companies corralling groups of foreigners into housing units, and then using their national identity for placing them into specific parts of town. Today, ethnic tensions are an excuse for nepotism. Neighborhoods continue to be described by ethnicity as in Nanticoke being the Polish section. Present, local politics is often determined by the ethnic or religious affiliations. “A balanced ticket” does not always refer to political philosophy, but having an “Irishman” and a “Pole” on the ballot.

The study of what happened to Nanticoke has a broader application than local interest. In many ways, Nanticoke and the coal region parallels what is happening in America today, in communities throughout the land. The triumph of capitalism of the Gilded Age of the 1890s, and the heyday of the coal industry saw a small minority of Americans reaping the benefits of the work of many. Currently, the debate of tax breaks for the richest 1 percent of Americans has taken on social as well as political overtones. The era of conspicuous consumption of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century reads as if it was about the 1990s and early twenty-first century.

Add to this scenario the influx of immigrants and the loss of jobs and Northeastern Pennsylvania can be found almost everywhere. When President George Bush spoke in India

recently about the outsourcing of jobs, some Americans discovered that the jobs they once had were being done elsewhere as it was more profitable. The talk of better jobs from better education also belies the fact that India and China, just to name two, are producing engineers, doctors, and other highly trained professionals. Within the nation, the influx of Hispanics has raised the alarm. Many Spanish-speaking immigrants are willing to work for less money and accept harsher conditions than American born workers. The fear of loss of quality of life has resulted in resentment of Hispanics. The people of Nanticoke saw their livelihood crumble and disappear. The quality of their life declined and they have yet to recover.

Communities from the east coast to the west coast confront the same dilemmas that Nanticoke did. The decision-making process that the community leaders are following could lead them along the path of Nanticoke's or not. The study of Nanticoke can offer warnings and guidelines. If a small powerful economic group overly influences the political leadership, there is a real chance that the town will end being a bedroom community for some other city. If the political leadership is divided and combative, there is a good possibility that their young will leave and not return. If there is a failure to analyze the problem, to draw up an action plan, and to implement that program, then the city has a good chance of failing. Nanticoke has recently applied to Harrisburg to be declared a "distressed city." In an article from *The Sunday Voice*, a local newspaper, dated February 26, 2006, Nanticoke is \$2.89 million dollars in debt and may reach bankruptcy by midyear. Nanticoke's newly elected mayor and city council members want to declare Nanticoke a "distressed city" designation by Pennsylvania in order to begin recovering the deficit. Once under Act 47, the state will provide Nanticoke with a financial coordinator and they will be eligible to borrow interest-free money. In addition, in accordance with Act 47,

Nanticoke will be allowed to raise taxes. The failures that Nanticoke has gone through can be used as an example to warn other communities on the verge of destruction.

What happened to Nanticoke raises the wider question of what kind of America will be in the twenty-first century. Capitalism has proven itself as the dominant driving economic force. As technology develops, jobs and the lives that they made possible will undergo drastic changes. Competition will always have its “winners” and “losers.” A lesson of Nanticoke shows the human cost that is sometimes ignored. Responsibility to the workingman and woman must play a role in economic, social, and political decisions. To ignore the cost of “the bottom line” is to open up potential problems. What happens in a democracy when the majority of its citizens find their quality of life declining? What happens when parents recognize that their children will not have it better than they did, and may even have it worse? The study of Nanticoke is more than a parochial interest. It contains lessons that apply to a wider audience so that other communities may not end up being forgotten.

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