



## The history of 'hard coal'

*Interpret lives of nearly unrelenting labor*

**By Natalie Gelb Solfanelli**

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley relies on its many historic and cultural partners to fulfill its mission of telling the region's story through preservation, interpretation and education.

This month, I have invited Chester Kulesa, site administrator of the Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum and the Scranton Iron Furnaces, to share some background information regarding these two significant historic sites.

If you have not visited either of these locations, you are missing an opportunity to see, understand and enjoy the land, people and industry of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley!

The Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum, located in Lackawanna County's beautiful McDade Park (adjacent to the Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour) - and Scranton's Iron Furnaces located at 159 Cedar Avenue - preserve, document, and interpret for citizens and visitors the evolving heritage of the people who lived and worked during the 19th and 20th centuries in Pennsylvania's anthracite coal or "hard coal" region.

Museum goals are to present exhibits, tours, educational programs, special events, and publications that broaden understanding and appreciation of the people who came to work in the mines, mills, and factories.

To accomplish this, it is critical to work with other groups in partnerships, such as the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, whose valued guidance and support enhance the mission and goals of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and plan for long-term sustainability.

The museum and Iron Furnaces are owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, with support from the Anthracite Heritage Museum and Iron Furnaces Associates.

Created by the Pennsylvania legislature to comprise the northern portion of the Anthracite Museum Complex, this three-unit group of museums and historic sites located in northeastern Pennsylvania also includes Eckley Miners' Village.

They were formed to preserve and interpret the history, technology, and culture of the region.

This initiative occurred in response to public interest and to calls from historians such as S. K. Stevens, Philip Klein and J. Cutler Andrews, in the 1950s and 1960s, for more emphasis of regional and local history, and for studies of ethnic groups. (Salay 1983: xi)

The Anthracite Museum complex was developed to cover many aspects of life and work in the region and serve as an educational entity for area residents and visitors - many who come as part of annual school tours. This is often coordinated with the Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour. The museum also contains an archives and library.

The Anthracite Heritage Museum and Iron Furnaces Associates (referred to here as "the associates") were organized in 1982 as a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization to assist the PHMC to fulfill the mission of the museum and Iron Furnaces.

The associates provide a direct link between these two properties and surrounding region and are the community friends' support group for the museum and Iron Furnaces.

All are welcome to join the membership. (Visit [www.anthracitemuseum.org](http://www.anthracitemuseum.org) or call the museum at (570) 963-4804 for more information.)

Over the past 28 years the associates have made significant contributions in areas of increased community support and involvement; underwriting several staff positions, establishing a museum store, aiding with educational programs, and initiating, in 1983, the Anthracite Museum Press to publish scholarly and popular works on the history and of culture in the region.

Please visit us and become a member! The Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sundays, noon to 5 p.m. The Scranton Iron Furnaces is currently closed for the winter.

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