NORWIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We preserve our local history, promote the history of the Norwin Community and embrace the opportunity to educate the Community about the people, places and events that comprise the history of Irwin, North Irwin, and North Huntingdon Township.

2023 WINTER NEWSLETTER

THE BEGINNING OF THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY

This Irwin Park exhibit describes the formation of the Lincoln Highway Association, as well as the beginning of the highway.

Did You Know?

Norwin Area History Trail

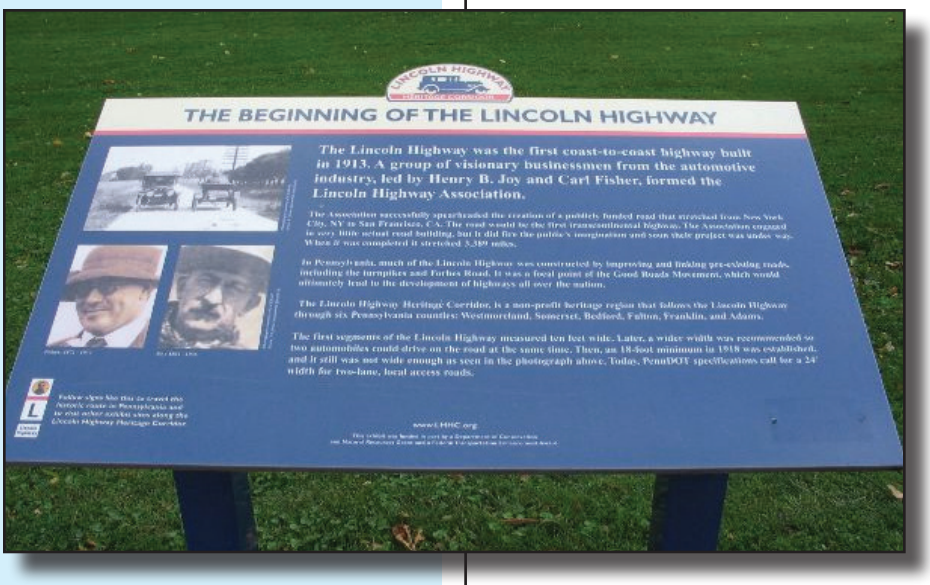
DRIVING TOUR OFFERS VALUABLE HISTORY LESSON

by Bob Cupp

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) has recognized well over 2,000 historical sites by erecting distinctive blue and gold metal markers along the state's roads and highways. In addition to the PHMC historical markers, many communities have erected their own markers and plaques, honoring local historic events and places. There are an abundance of historical sites throughout Westmoreland County. These roadside exhibits raise awareness of the rich history of our local communities.

The Norwin area has an unusually high concentration of historical sites, identified with markers erected, over time, by various civic groups and other organizations. Two early transportation routes passed through the area, initially, bringing a steady stream of pioneer settlers and, later, enabling passengers and goods to be transported across the state.

Most of the early Pennsylvania roads followed Indian trails, because the natives chose their routes over the easiest terrain. Braddock's Military Road followed the earlier Nemacolin's Path, along what later became the Mount Pleasant Turnpike, connecting present-day Routes 31 and 30. It is now known in North Huntingdon as Clay Pike.



The Pittsburgh to Philadelphia Turnpike, also known as the "state road," was built along what, eventually, became the Lincoln Highway, over what is now Pennsylvania Avenue in Irwin, and North Huntingdon's Old Trail Road and Center Highway.

The Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor (LHHC) is a non-profit heritage region that follows the Lincoln Highway through six Pennsylvania Counties: Westmoreland, Somerset, Bedford, Fulton, Franklin and Adams. Over 75 exhibits, honoring the Lincoln Highway,

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have been installed in these counties, including several in the Norwin area.

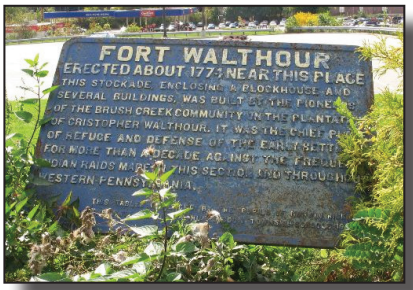
Norwin residents have an obvious appreciation for the wide variety of historic events that occurred here, as well as the historic houses that remain here today. Along a 3.2-mile stretch of these early Norwin area roads, there are nine historical marker sites and four Lincoln Highway Exhibits, creating a "history trail" through the heart of the Norwin community.

The "trail" begins along Pennsylvania Avenue near Kohl's Department Store, continuing west through Irwin and North Huntingdon, and ending along Clay Pike at Circleville. Visiting the sites along this route will allow your imagination to take you back in time for a history lesson unlike any that's available in a classroom setting.

FORT WALTHOUR

Christopher Walthour built a stockade and blockhouse to protect the early Brush Creek settlers from Indian attacks. This historical marker overlooks the Kohl's parking lot and the nearby GetGo gas station near what is believed to be the fort's original location.

FORT WALTHOUR: "Fort Walthour -- Erected about 1774 near this place -- This stockade, enclosing a blockhouse and several buildings, was built by the pioneers of the Brush Creek community on the plantation of Christopher Walthour. It was the chief place of refuge and defense of the early settlers for more than a decade against the frequent Indian raids made in this section and throughout western Pennsylvania. -- This tablet is placed by the pupils of Norwin High, Irwin and North Huntingdon Township Schools, 1936."



BRUSH HILL CHRISTMAS

In 1769, Col. John Irwin purchased 300 acres of land that became known as Brush Hill. In 1798, determined to build a house "that neither the Indians nor the Devil can burn down," he erected this distinctive stone house there, along the east side of what is now Brush Hill Road.

BRUSH HILL: "Built 1798 by Col. John Irwin, first member of the Irwin family to settle the area. Bequeathed 1818 to his grandson, John Irwin Scull, son of John Scull; founder of Pittsburgh Gazette, first 'mansion-scale' house west of Allegheny Mts. and the center of a 300 acre plantation. Designated a National Historic Site, Oct. 14, 1975.-- I.N.N. Bicentennial Association, 1976."



THE BEGINNING OF THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY (LHHC): This exhibit describes how the width of the road has changed from a 10-foot width to 18 feet in 1918 and, finally, a 24-foot minimum required by PennDOT standards for two-lane local access roads today. (Located in front of Irwin Park.)

THE JOHN IRWIN HOUSE

Located at the busy intersection of Irwin's Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, hundreds of cars pass the John Irwin house daily. The stately old home, admired by generations of locals and visitors, is now occupied by several businesses.



JOHN IRWIN HOUSE: "Built 1836 by John Irwin, nephew of Col. John Irwin, this brick structure served as an inn for stagecoach passengers on the Gbg. - Pgh. Pike at Tinker Run. In 1851 John Irwin laid out the original plan of lots for the town of Irwin between this house and the Pennsylvania Railroad. -- Welcome Wagon Club, Irwin - North Huntingdon Sponsor - 1976."



IRWIN HISTORY MURAL (LHHC)

This eye-catching mural depicts Irwin's history with five coal miners from the Biddle Mine standing across the bottom, an approaching trolley and vintage automobiles. The Old Shay Ale Brewery and "Swede" Woolard's Gulf Station are also pictured. In the upper left corner is an image of the first traffic signal installed in Irwin. The former Penn Gas and Coal Company, Shaft No. 2, is pictured in the lower right corneer (painted on the side of the Remote Control Systems building at 75 Pennsylvania Avenue, across from the Queen of Angels School).

FULLERTON HOUSE

Located at the corner of Old Trail and Jacksonville Roads, the 1798 Fullerton House is on the National Register of Historic Places. This stone structure served as Jacksonville's first general store and second stagecoach inn. Humphrey Fullerton IV, operator othe establishment, laid out the Jacksonville Plan of lots in 1810.

THE MCINTYRE HOUSE 1840's-1890's

This historical marker can be found along the south side of Old Trail Road, in the heart of what was once known as Jacksonville.

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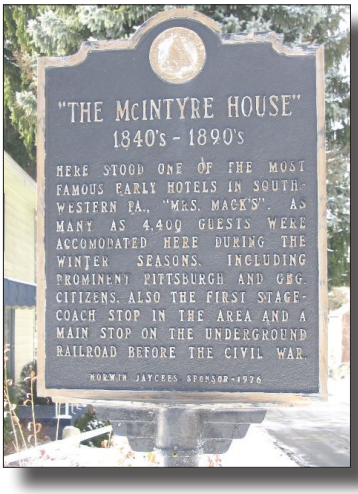
TRAVELING THE HIGHWAY (LHHC): This exhibit provides a 1930's view of the Lincoln Highway, featuring automobiles and trolley tracks. (Located at ComTrol, 500 Pennsylvania Avenue)

IRWIN HISTORY MURAL (LHHC): This eye-catching mural depicts Irwin's history with five coal miners from the Biddle Mine standing across the bottom, an approaching trolley and vintage automobiles. The Old Shay Ale Brewery and "Swede" Woolard's Gulf Station are also pictured. In the upper left corner is an image of the first traffic signal installed in Irwin. The former Penn Gas and Coal Company, Shaft No. 2, is pictured in the lower right corner. (Painted on the side of the Remote Control Systems building at 75 Pennsylvania Avenue across from the Queen of Angels School).

JAMES IRWIN HOUSE: "Built by James Irwin, brother of Col. John Irwin, after his arrival here in 1783 from Indelone, County Tyrone, Ireland. This house was originally a log structure. James founded the village of Jacksonville and his son, John, founded the town of Irwin. -- I.N.N. Bicentennial Association, 1976."

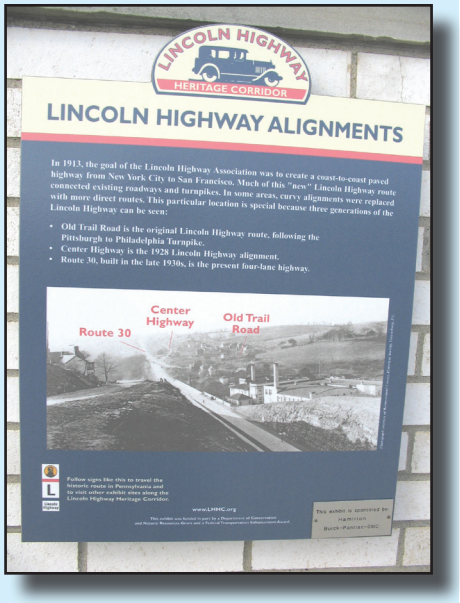
THE FULLERTON HOUSE: "This stone structure, built circa 1798, owned by the Fullerton family, served as the first general store and the area's second inn on the 'King's Highway' (later renamed the Gbg.-Pgh. Pike). Humphrey Fullerton IV, operator of the establishment, laid out the plan of lots of Jacksonville in 1810. -- Township of North Huntingdon Sponsor - 1976"





THE MCINTYRE HOUSE 1840's - 1890's: "Here stood one of the most famous early hotels in southwestern Pa, 'Mrs. Mack's'. As many as 4,400 guests were accommodated here during the winter seasons, including prominent Pittsburgh and Greensburg citizens. Also the first stagecoach stop in the area and a main stop on the underground railroad before the Civil War. -- Norwin Jaycees, Sponsor - 1976."

EARLY HIGHWAY TRAVEL AND LINCOLN HIGHWAY ALIGNMENTS (LHHC): This central area of North Huntingdon Township is known as Jacktown Hill. The western section of Old Trail Road has changed little since the 18th century when stagecoaches traveled the early turnpike. Much of the "new" Lincoln Highway route connected existing roadways and turnpikes. This particular location is unique because three generations of the Lincoln Highway can be seen. Old



LINCOLN HIGHWAY ALIGNMENT

Three generations of the Lincoln Highway can be seen on the exhibit - Old Trail Road, Center Highway and Route 30.

THE LARIMER HOUSE

William Lrimer, Sr. entertained many prominent guests in his 1790 log house. Oveer the years, many hundreds of Norwin area residents have also visited the historic Larimer House.

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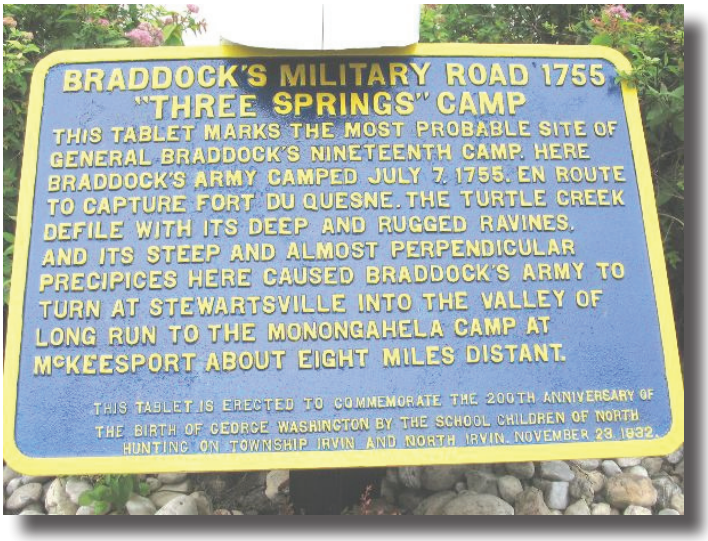
Trail Road is the original Lincoln Highway, following the Pittsburgh to Philadelphia Turnpike. Center Highway is the 1928 Lincoln Highway alignment. Finally, Route 30, built in the late 1930's, is the present 4-lane highway. (Info located inside the front door at the North Huntingdon Town House.)

BRADDOCK'S MILITARY ROAD – "THREE SPRINGS CAMP": "This tablet marks the most probable site of General Braddock's nineteenth camp. Here Braddock's army camped July 7, 1755, en route to capture Fort Du Quesne. The Turtle Creek defile with its deep and rugged ravines, and its steep and almost perpendicular precipices here caused Braddock's army to turn at Stewartsville into the Valley of Long Run to the Monongahela Camp at McKeesport about eight miles distant. -- This tablet is erected to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington by the school children of North Huntingdon Township, Irwin, and North Irwin, November 23, 1932."



This "Braddock's Military Road" historical marker was erected in 1932 to commemorate the 20th anniversary f the birth of George Washington and was refurbished in 2005 for the 250th anniversary of the British General's defeat in the French & Indian War. It's located in North Huntingdon near the corner of Clay Pike and Robbins Station Road at Circleville's First National Bank office.



THE LARIMER HOUSE: "Larimer's Mansion Farm -- This house, on the 'King's Highway' was built by Wm. & Ann Larimer, Sr., circa 1790. It was the homestead of Gen. Wm. Larimer, Jr., one of the founders of Denver, Colorado. Here Wm. Henry Harrison (Old Tippecanoe) and Aaron Burr were entertained. -- Norwin Rotary Club Sponsor - 1976."

ADAM SAAM: "Adam Saam 1735 - 1809 -- Colonist -- In 1752 came from Germany to America in ship 'Richard and Mary.' Soldier in the First Battalion of the 60th or Royal American Regiment of Foot under Major General Sir Jeffrey Amherst for 6 1/2 years. Discharged at Fort Pitt, Pittsburgh, as a Sergeant September 24, 1764, by Col. Henry Boquet. Participated in the Battle of Bushy Run. His Blockhouse near this site was the principal refuge

For additional information, visit the Norwin Historical Society's web site at *www.norwinhistoricalsociety.org*, or the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor's web site at *www.lhhc.org*.

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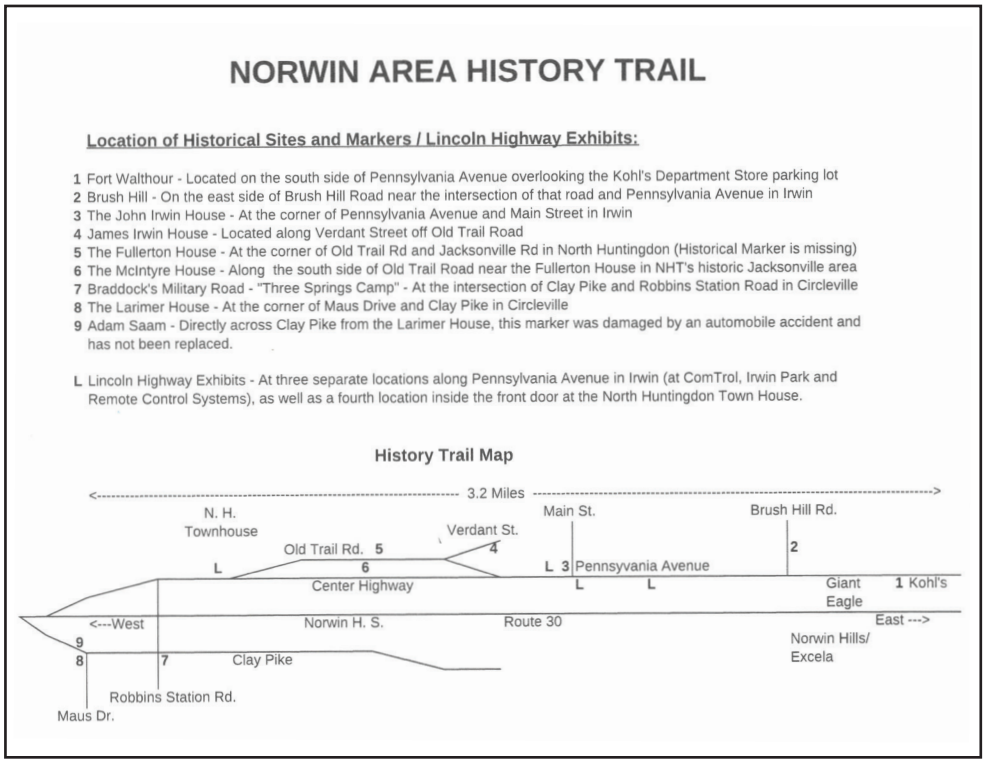
for settlers in the neighborhood. Patented 290 acres of land near Circleville, called "Eversham" where he died in 1809. Buried in Brush Creek Cemetery.- Erected by David McKee Chapter, Daughters of the American Colonists, McKeesport, PA."

Sometimes, in the course of our hectic everyday lives, we fail to recognize the historical significance of our own communities. It isn't necessary to travel to Gettysburg or Williamsburg to find historical treasures; they're all around us. We just need to slow down for a moment and rediscover them, because the future of our towns depends on understanding and preserving their pasts.



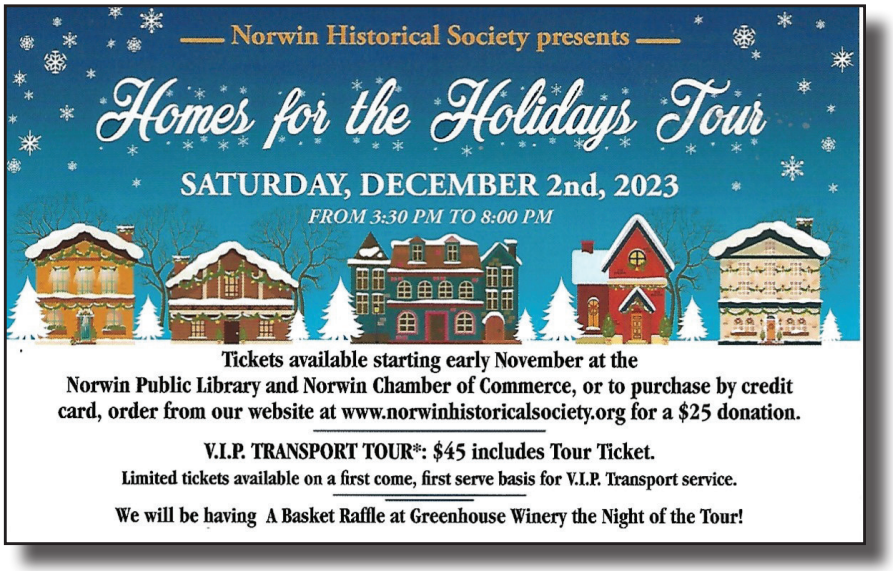
NORWIN AREA HISTORY TRAIL

Location of Historical Sites and Markers / Lincoln Highway Exhibits:

1 Fort Walthour - Located on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue overlooking the Kohl's Department Store parking lot
2 Brush Hill - On the east side of Brush Hill Road near the intersection of that road and Pennsylvania Avenue in Irwin
3 The John Irwin House - At the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Main Street in Irwin
4 James Irwin House - Located along Verdant Street off Old Trail Road
5 The Fullerton House - At the corner of Old Trail Rd and Jacksonville Rd in North Huntingdon (Historical Marker is missing)
6 The McIntyre House - Along the south side of Old Trail Road near the Fullerton House in NHT's historic Jacksonville area
7 Braddock's Military Road - "Three Springs Camp" - At the intersection of Clay Pike and Robbins Station Road in Circleville
8 The Larimer House - At the corner of Maus Drive and Clay Pike in Circleville
9 Adam Saam - Directly across Clay Pike from the Larimer House, this marker was damaged by an automobile accident and has not been replaced.

L Lincoln Highway Exhibits - At three separate locations along Pennsylvania Avenue in Irwin (at ComTrol, Irwin Park and Remote Control Systems), as well as a fourth location inside the front door at the North Huntingdon Town House.

History Trail Map



Norwin Historical Society presents

Homes for the Holidays Tour

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2nd, 2023

FROM 3:30 PM TO 8:00 PM

Tickets available starting early November at the Norwin Public Library and Norwin Chamber of Commerce, or to purchase by credit card, order from our website at www.norwinhistoricalsociety.org for a $25 donation.

V.I.P. TRANSPORT TOUR*: $45 includes Tour Ticket.

Limited tickets available on a first come, first serve basis for V.I.P. Transport service.

We will be having A Basket Raffle at Greenhouse Winery the Night of the Tour!

The Lincoln Highway Experience Museum

offers a **slice of pie, a cup of joe, and a fun place to go!**

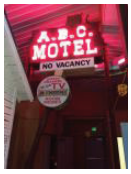
Discover 100+ years of Lincoln Highway history at the largest museum in America dedicated to sharing the story of the first coast-to-coast highway. Located ON the Lincoln Highway between Latrobe and Ligonier, PA, in the beautiful Laurel Highlands, the Lincoln Highway Experience is a roadside attraction dedicated to roadside attractions!



Lincoln Highway Experience Museum (Johnston House) on Route 30 E, Latrobe, just before the Kingston Dam.

The Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor and Lincoln Highway Experience Museum work to promote and preserve the historic Lincoln Highway and inspire others to travel the 200-mile Lincoln Highway Corridor in Pennsylvania—learning how this one road changed America in 1913.







LHHC preservation includes large scale artifacts like the 1938 Serro's Diner and 1937 Packrd automobile (L), the ABC Motel neon sign (C), and the fire station mural in Abbottstow,n PA (R).

The museum is open year-round, Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-4pm, with the last visitors admitted at 3pm. Admission includes use of individual Audio Wands, a Lincoln Highway Postcard, and a slice of pie and cup of coffee or tea inside the 1938 restored Serro's Diner.

Learn more about the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor and Lincoln Highway Experience Museum at www.lhhc.org

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

LINCOLN HIGHWAY HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Designated one of 12 Heritage Areas by Governor Tom Ridge in 1995, the 501c3 (nonprofit) Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor is administered by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

NORWIN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DONATION FORM

DATE_____

Thank you for your interest in donating to the Norwin Historical Society! Your financial donation helps us to continue in our mission to preserve our local history, promote the history of the Norwin Community and embrace the opportunity to educate the Community about the people, places and events that comprise the history of Irwin, North Irwin, and North Huntingdon Township.

NAME_____ TELEPHONE_____

ADDRESS_____

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EMAIL_____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED $_____

Are you interested in helping us as a volunteer? _____Yes _____No

If you also have artifacts or documents that you believe would complement our collection, please tell us about them:

DESCRIPTION OF ITEM(S): __Book, Records, Publication / __Artifacts or objects / __Photographs / __Art

_____

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Norwin Historical Society
304 Main Street
PO Box 623
Irwin, PA 15642

YOUR DONATION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED. THANK YOU!

All questions should be directed to our website or to the address below.

REV 11/2020

NORWIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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2023 WINTER NEWSLETTER

TO:

Your gift to the Norwin Historical Society helps to preserve our history!