



Archives

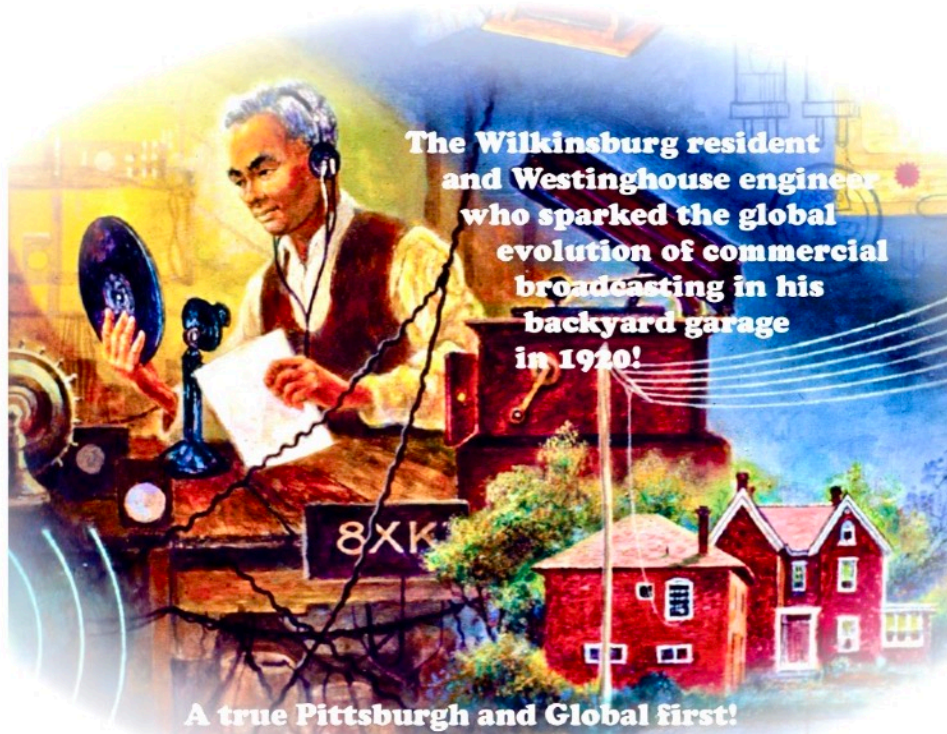
APRIL
2024

WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 30, ISSUE 3

National Museum of Broadcasting to present a commemorative birthday event you won't want to miss. Visit nmbpitt.org to register to attend and read about the Museum project.

You're Invited!!

A Celebration of the 150th Birthday of Frank Conrad



Saturday

May 4, 2024

1-4 p.m.

IT'S FREE, BUT YOU MUST

REGISTER BY APRIL 29

Wilkesburg Train Station

901 Hay Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15221

Enjoy birthday festivities, music by DJ Simms, a silent auction, historical displays, broadcast personalities, the beautifully restored train station and more!

The key presentation will be an engaging panel with distinguished broadcasters, past and present - Jack Bogut, Sally Wiggin and Bill Flanagan - moderated by WQED FM's Jim Cunningham.

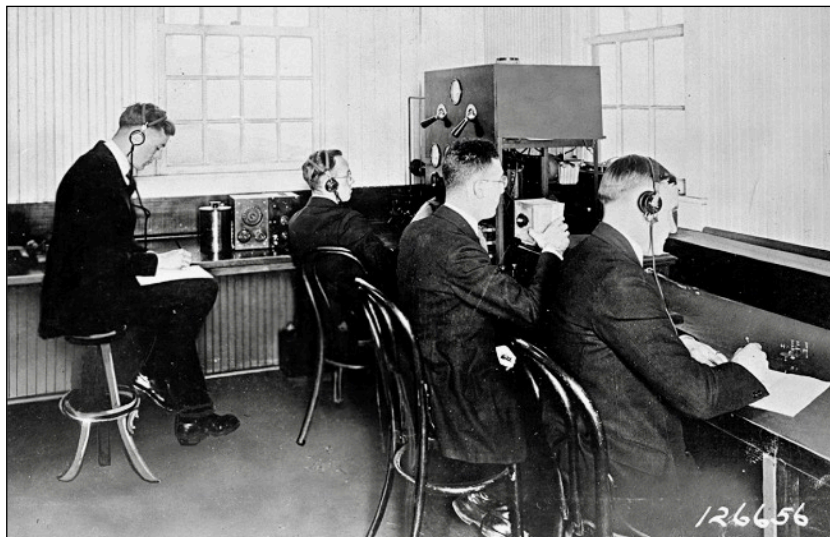
Proceeds will benefit the National Museum of Broadcasting in Pittsburgh - where it all began! It's free, but **you must register by April 29**. Register at nmbpitt.org



This bronze plaque is located on the wall of the ballroom of the Edgewood Club at 1 Pennwood Avenue in the Borough of Edgewood. It was a gift from Westinghouse Electric on the fiftieth anniversary of the Incorporation of the Borough. The words on the plaque are printed below:

THE FIRST RADIO PARTY

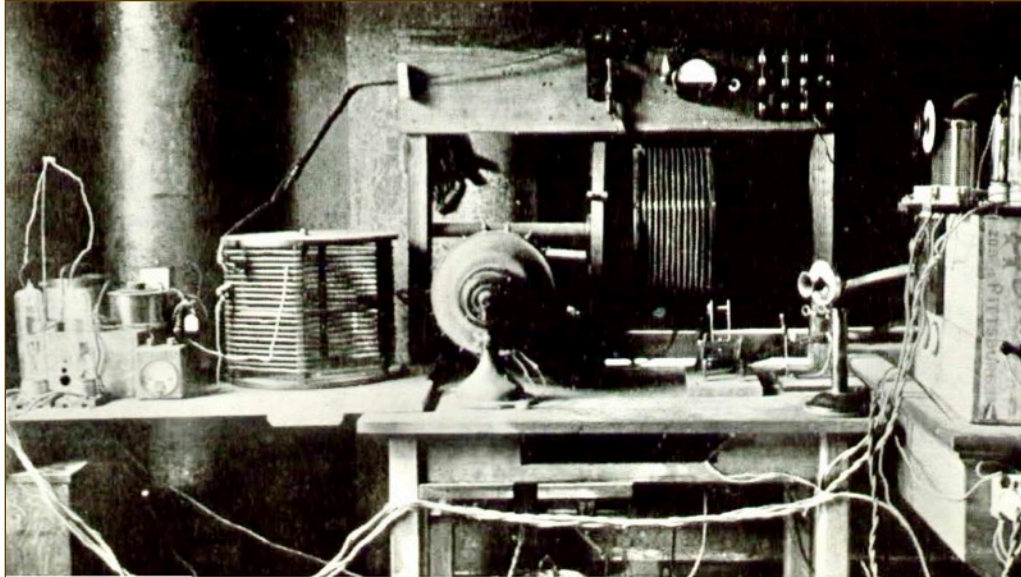
HERE, NOVEMBER 2, 1920, THE FIRST RADIO PARTY ASSEMBLED TO RECEIVE BY LOUD SPEAKER A BROADCAST FROM WESTINGHOUSE STATION KDKA. APPROXIMATELY THREE HUNDRED PERSONS HEARD THE HARDING-COX ELECTION RETURNS AND TRANSCRIBED MUSICAL SELECTIONS. DR. R. R. JONES WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING AND DR. L. W. CHUBB IN CHARGE OF TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTS. THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC AND MANUFACTURING COMPANY AND DEDICATED BY DR. FRANK CONRAD, RADIO PIONEER, DECEMBER 15, 1938, DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INCORPORATION OF THE BOROUGH OF EDGEWOOD.



November 2, 1920 these Westinghouse employees were stationed in East Pittsburgh to transmit by radio the 1920 Harding/Cox Presidential election results. A few miles away in the Borough of Edgewood the Edgewood Club gathered over 300 people and a loudspeaker to hear KDKA broadcast the election results, the first radio party ever assembled. Frank Conrad was stationed in his garage to transmit if necessary.



This 1919 image shows Frank Conrad's large home and detached garage located at the corner of Penn Avenue and Peebles Street in Wilkinsburg. Frank Conrad began working at Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company in 1890 at the young age of sixteen. An amateur radio enthusiast, he began broadcasting recorded music in 1919. Much effort was expended to save the site for a museum of broadcasting, but funding was not available. The property was sold and is currently the site of a Wendy's restaurant. Conrad's house was demolished but the historic garage was deconstructed and stored to eventually be rebuilt as part of a broadcasting museum celebrating the birth of radio in the Pittsburgh area.



This image shows some of Conrad's amateur radio equipment in his Penn Avenue workshop garage. He was licensed as 8XK and built a transmitter to broadcast music several nights per week in Pittsburgh. In 1920, his pioneer work in radio led to the establishment of KDKA, the worlds first broadcasting station to offer continuous programming. Frank Conrad (May 4, 1874 – December 10, 1941) received an honorary Doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh in 1928. In 1930 the American Institute of Electrical Engineers awarded Conrad the Edison Medal. He was posthumously inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame in 1953.

Wilkinsburg Public Library celebrates 125 years in 2024

2024 is the 125th year of the Wilkinsburg Public Library serving the people of Wilkinsburg. Last month's March 2024 Archives newsletter featured the early history of the library, Part 1, from 1899-1930. This issue, Part 2, continues Library history from 1930 to 1960. The Library will host a 125th celebration on September 14, 2024.

1932 the library, along with the rest of the country, was deep in the midst of the depression. The hours were cut back due to decreases in the Borough budget and books were much harder to buy. Circulation, however, rose to 225,011 and a registration campaign in 1931–32 added 7,306 new borrowers. My 1933, registration leapt to 8,254 with 25,143 books on the shelves.

In the five years following its thirty-fifth birthday, the library at the Royal Building received a much-needed cleaning and repairing. The Woman's Club of Wilkinsburg suggested the addition of a memorial shelf of books. Clubs and individuals could now donate books in honor of, or in the memory of others.

In 1937 an additional room on the first floor of the Royal Building became vacant and Council gave permission to rent the space for a children's library. The woman's club worked diligently and with their help and the generous donations of many clubs and individuals in the Borough, a children's room was created. In the months to follow a stamp club was begun and later, puppet shows were given for the children.



1937 view of the Children's Library rooms in the first floor of the Royal Building on Pennwood Avenue.

In the adult department, a course in child psychology was given. Speakers were made available through the Works Progress Administration and were often used. Due to difficulties in obtaining new fiction titles, the idea of a one-day shelf of books came into being. All new fiction books could be borrowed for a period of only one day with a two cent fine for each succeeding day. The fine money went toward purchase of additional books.

The years 1939–40 were to see a most exciting change in the physical structure of the library. December of 1939 brought the closing of the doors of the Royal Building library. On January 2, 1940 the library moved to an expansive area in the newly completed municipal building on Ross Avenue. For the first time since its beginnings, the library moved its collection into a building constructed with the library in mind. Specifications had been made for shelves and reading areas properly arranged for library use.

The actual move was made over the Christmas and New Year's holidays. To the small staff, the idea of moving tens of thousands of books seemed daunting. The plan was put in place to ask patrons to borrow as many books as possible at the old location and return them

all after reopening. Literally thousands of books were moved in this way. The children's department moved from one small room to a large area on the third floor of the new building. Money from the sale of equipment and linoleum in the old children's room went toward the purchase of new books. For the first time there was room for a play area for the children as well as a separate room for storytelling.

Even with the addition of many new books the staff found the collection far short of filling the shelving area. A plea went out to the residents of the borough for 10,000 books. The public replied with new and used books by the score. It took less than four months for the library to reach its goal, and by April 26, 1940, 10,677 volumes had been donated. In the first two weeks in its new location the library added 500 new patrons. Additions were made to the collection of written music and suggestion was made to add phonograph records. Registration swelled to 10,369, nearly 1/3 of the population of the community.

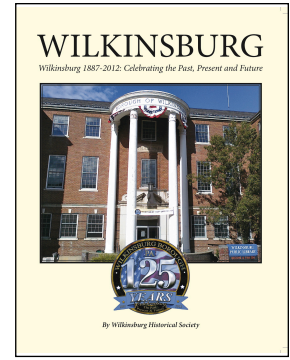
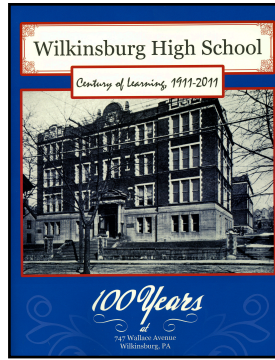
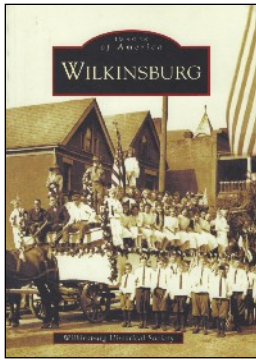
The next twenty years were to see subtle changes and additions to the growing institution. After forty-two years with the library, Mr. Evans retired in 1942. Miss Lowry, herself in the thirty-fifth year of service, was made librarian, March 11, 1943.

During World War II the library participated in the war effort by collecting books for the soldiers overseas. Victory Book Week in March of 1943 netted over 1000 books. The steel strike in 1945 brought many new patrons to the rosters. Not since the days of the depression was the library so busy or so full of people. The 1947 the sound age came to the library with the addition of a music area, a record player and a collection of records donated by the Civic Club.

In 1951 patrons and staff were saddened by the death of Mr. Evans. In 1957 a financial section was added to the collection. The end of the 50s saw the yearly circulation rise to more than 175,000.



1954 image of children enjoying books and games in the Children's Library on the third floor of the Borough Building.



These are the three books that the **Wilkinsburg Historical Society** wrote and published during the past twelve years. They help to promote and preserve the history of Wilkinsburg and raise funds for the various projects of the Society. All three books are still available to purchase from the Society. Another way to support the activities of the Historical Society.

On the far left is ***“Images of America - Wilkinsburg”***, a 128 page soft-bound book printed by the Arcadia Publishing Company. It includes over 220 black and white photos depicting the history of our town from the early land patents in the late 1700s up to the 75th celebration of Wilkinsburg in 1962. The book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$20.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The middle book above is ***“Wilkinsburg High School - Century of Learning 1911-2011”***. This book chronicles the history of the local high school from its early start in the late 1880s, the creation of the magnificent structure in 1910, and each decade since with highlights of the events that were important in the lives of the students and the Wilkinsburg community. For over 100 years the Wilkinsburg High School served the Borough of Wilkinsburg students and this book has several hundred photos showing much of this important history. This *Century of Learning* book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$15.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The book on the far right is ***“Wilkinsburg - 1887-2012, Celebrating the Past, Present and Future”***. This book was produced by the Historical Society in 2012 to recognize the 125th anniversary of Wilkinsburg’s incorporation as a Borough. This soft-bound book has 196 pages and includes chapters on the history of Wilkinsburg, the celebrations from the past, information about Wilkinsburg’s government, and all the events that occurred during the 125th celebration. There are several chapters about the clubs and organizations in Wilkinsburg as well as the churches and worship centers in the Borough. The “future of Wilkinsburg” section recognizes advertisers and sponsors who helped to fund the creation and printing of the book. This book, originally \$15.00, is now available for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

<p>Make check or money order payable to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society Orders can be mailed to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O.Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235</p>			
Images of America - Wilkinsburg	(\$20.00 + \$3.00) = \$23.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Century of Learning 1911-2011	(\$15.00 + \$3.00) = \$18.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Wilkinsburg 1887-2012	(\$10.00 + \$3.00) = \$13.00	Quantity_____	Total _____
Name_____		Address_____	
City_____	State_____	Zip _____	



Don't miss out on **The Wilkinsburg Sun**, a free monthly community newsletter published by the volunteer Wilkinsburg Community Newsletter Board, with the support of the Wilkinsburg Borough, the Wilkinsburg School District, the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation. The Sun accepts submitted articles provided they are related to Wilkinsburg and are civic-minded.
<https://wilkinsburgsun.wordpress.com>

Sign up to receive The Sun by email at:
<http://eepurl.com/v0iBP> and friend The Sun on Facebook.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society has a website, to share more information about the history of Wilkinsburg. wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com
 Mailing address: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is published monthly, March through November.

We do not usually publish the Archives during the three Winter months of December, January and February.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society yearly dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society are:
 \$20.00 INDIVIDUAL Member, \$35.00 FAMILY Membership
 \$10.00 STUDENT or ASSOCIATE Members Please keep your membership dues up to date.
 Contributions are needed for "Lights for Lincoln", to get improved lighting for the Lincoln Plaza area. Abraham Lincoln stands in the dark after sun-down. Your donation can help us illuminate this outstanding area overlooking the Lincoln Highway.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society - Membership application
Help promote the valuable history of Wilkinsburg.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
 E-mail address _____

() \$20 Individual membership
 () \$35 Family membership
 () \$10 Student or associate membership
 () \$ _____ Additional donation

Please make check payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**
 PO Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Anytime is a good time to pay your dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society. We have many preservation projects going on, and providing displays for Wilkinsburg events. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your membership dues. Please use the address on the form, our PO box.