



Steelworkers' Archives News

Looking Back at 2020 and Forward to 2021



As 2020 began, the Steelworkers' Archives was off to a good start. Our regular Board and Membership meetings were held through March. Martha Capwell Fox, Historian and Archives Coordinator of the D&L and National Canal Museum, spoke about the Bethlehem Iron Company at our March 9 meeting. Thank you!

In early March, the City of Bethlehem Mayor's office contacted the Steelworkers' Archives, asking us to meet with Mayor Giuseppe Antonio Ruggiero of Bethlehem's Sister City Foiano di Val Fortore in Italy. Mr. Ruggiero is researching Italian immigrants who worked at Bethlehem Steel. On March 6, Les Clore and Susan Vitez met with Mayor Ruggiero (pictured far right), Giuseppe Faioli, and Mike and Maggie Picucci of Bethlehem at our office at Wind Creek to contribute to their research. The two Giuseppes were made honorary members of the Steelworkers' Archives.



Then came the pandemic! Due to COVID restrictions as well as lack of access to NCC, we have not been able to meet as a group since March, 2020. The Board of Directors continued to hold virtual bimonthly meetings to ensure that the Archives continued to function through 2020. NCC will not be hosting community groups during the spring semester and COVID restrictions remain in place, so we do not anticipate in-person membership meetings before Summer, 2021. Virtual board meetings will continue.

2020 was also an election year for the Archives. Under pandemic lockdown, we conducted a successful election through mail-in voting. Ballots were tabulated outside Union Hall by Board Chair Mike Dzwonczyk and Trustee Jeff Zettlemyer on Monday, September 14, our regular meeting day. Fran Ferencin and Earl Kurtz, candidates for Vice President (the only contested office on the ballot), also attended. The officers elected to serve through September 2022 are: Joe Mayer, President; Fran Ferencin, Vice President; Tootie Ferencin, Secretary; and Jill Schennum, Treasurer. Congratulations!

STEELWALKER TOURS

In September, members of the Speakers Bureau convened on weekends at the National Museum of Industrial History (NMIH) Plaza for our *Memories of Steel* talking series in lieu of tours.

We resumed our *Steelwalker* tours on September 27, and they ran through December 27. With the Visitor Center and Hoover-Mason Trestle closed to the public, we reconfigured our tour format.



Les Clore, Mike Dzwonczyk, and Ron Ennis with guest



Don, Les, and Mike with guest

The tours, led by Larry Neff (Saturdays) and Joe Mayer (Sundays), left from the NMIH plaza instead of the Visitor Center and were "sidewalk tours" around the plant site. We followed COVID protocol, i.e. masks, social distancing, and a limit of six tourists per tour. Our well-received tours included tourists from Russia, Texas, Delaware, and the Lehigh Valley. Thanks to all!



Don, Mike, and Les



Mike Pron, Mike Zaia, Les, Mike D

INTERVIEW FOR IRISH PUBLIC TV

We were contacted by Tara Peterman, Executive Producer with RTÉ Irish Public Service Media (News and Current Affairs). She was filming a program exploring the role of the steelworkers union in swing state Pennsylvania in the 2020 election. On October 20, she and her crew set up an interview site in the Ruins West parking lot with the Iron Foundry in the background. Les Clore, Mike Dzwonczyk, Mike Pron, Tom Sedor, and John Weiss were interviewed over a several-hour period by the renowned broadcaster and journalist Richard Downes and filmed by Ilie Mitaru.



L to R: Mike D, Mike P, Les, Tom, and John with Tara, Richard, and Ilie

Note: The program aired on October 29 on RTÉ Prime Time. We hope to have the program available for viewing on our PC in the office and our special events laptop.

STEEPLES AND STEEL

Steelworkers' Archives was awarded a 2020 grant from Northampton County's Department of Community and Economic Development for our highly-regarded *Steeple and Steel* mini-bus tours. However, these summer and fall tours could not be held due to the pandemic. With input and approval from DCED, we repurposed our funding towards the *Last Cast 25* event, November 14 at the NMIH plaza. See below. We sponsored a tent and "jumbotron" TV rental and purchased a laptop computer and accessories to show our slide shows during the event. Thank you, Karen Collis and Northampton County!

LAST CAST 25

November 18, 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the last cast of iron at Blast Furnace "C", the end of steelmaking in Bethlehem. Les Clore, Mike Dzwonczyk, Ed Leskin, Joe Mayer, Susan Vitez, and Don Young helped plan multiple virtual and in-person *Last Cast 25* events in partnership with NMIH, ArtsQuest, Bethlehem Area Public Library, PBS Channel 39, Wind Creek Bethlehem, Northampton County DCED, and Historic Bethlehem Museums and Historic Sites. The planning committee and subcommittees began meeting in 2019, then resumed meetings virtually in August. Thank you to all involved in planning and participating in *Last Cast 25*, including NMIH's Kara Mohsinger and Andria Zaia who are also Steelworkers' Archives members.

On November 12, Les Clore, Mike Dzwonczyk, and Don Young participated in *Last Cast 25: Steelworker Interviews* hosted by NMIH in collaboration with the Steelworkers' Archives. This 45-minute free virtual program informed about 200 students (from James Buchanan, Lincoln, Sacred Heart, Shawnee, Spring Garden, and Thomas Jefferson Elementary Schools) about personal stories of work at the mill and allowed them to ask Les, Mike, and Don questions about their careers at Bethlehem Steel. The moderator was Amber Emory.



Mike, Les, and Don at NMIH for “Steelworker Interviews”

In addition to the Steelworkers' Archives, *Last Cast 25* Education Committee event sponsors were National Museum of Industrial History, Banana Factory Arts Center, and Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites.

Interview recording link provided by Joanne Garcia, ArtsQuest.
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/dSscHAB1IX_c0V1174j-GSyTMG9_8mLDSZyo5a1vcsxkNovdsDLM91cPrCEshBE.n-qwK_hx7fyYTv99

Activities during the *Last Cast 25* event on November 14 included:



Poster to Lamont McClure



Joe Mayer addressing the audience

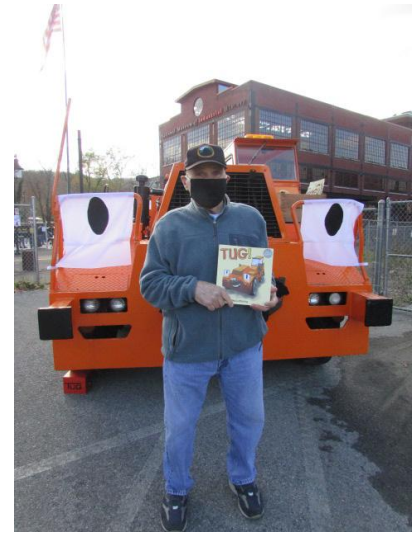
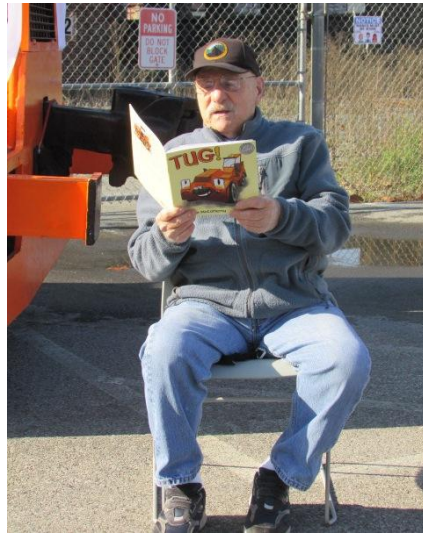
Joe Mayer presented *Last Cast 25* commemorative posters to guest speakers Hank Barnette; Lamont McClure, Northampton County Executive; and J. William “Willie” Reynolds, member of Bethlehem City Council. The poster was designed by Ed Leskin, Joe Mayer, and Don Young and is available for purchase by members and the public. Call 610-861-0600 or email info@steelworkersarchives.com.



Steel beams conserved from Martin Tower were purchased by NMIH and designated for *Last Cast 25*. Lehigh Heavy Forge cut and finished the beams into smaller sections. When signed and decorated by the public, they will be placed in the community. Thank you, LHF, for this generous in-kind donation!

The beam pictured, one of two signed in the Education Center by former steelworkers or family members, will be permanently placed in Foundry Park outside NMIH.

Les Clore participated in *Storytime with a Steelworker*, reading a children's book to a group of children and parents. *Tug!* is a story about a Bethlehem Steel tow tractor with a new lease on life at NMIH. The book was written by BAPL's Catherine McCafferty, illustrated by Jim Atherton, and based on a story suggested by NMIH's Mike Piersa. A copy can be ordered at www.bapl.org/bapl-books.



Other opportunities for Steelworkers' Archives' members at *Last Cast 25* included staffing the registration and display tables; monitoring the Hoover-Mason Trestle and the beam signing; and being tour guides. Members who attended or volunteered included Tracy Berger-Carmen, George and Judy Bloeser, Les Clore, Mike Dzwonczyk, Brian and Diana Ferencin, Fran and Tootie Ferencin, Ed Leskin, Joe Mayer, Larry Neff, Dennis Pearson, Mike Pron, Tom Sedor, Susan Vitez, Bruce Ward, John Weiss, Bob Wilt, and Jeff Zettlemoyer. A thank you from the Steelworkers' Archives Board and NMIH to all who volunteered on November 14.

Left: Sponsorship poster in NMIH lobby.

Steelworkers' Archives was a Premiere Sponsor for the November 14 *Last Cast 25* event.

CHILEAN MINES

On January 23, a webinar entitled *Digging Up Bethlehem Steel's History in Latin America: Chile and Transnational Flows of Raw Materials and People* was presented through the NMIH website. This presentation was co-sponsored by the NMIH, the Southside Initiative and the Steelworkers' Archives. The bilingual presentation by Dr. Cory Fischer-Hoffman of Lafayette College and public historian Javier Rojas, explored Bethlehem Steel's iron ore mines in Chile, which operated from 1913 until 1971. These mines supplied iron ore, shipped through the Panama Canal to Sparrows Point, to many of BSCO's plants. In addition, Bethlehem Steel engineers, geologists, and executives worked on the Chilean mining projects, many bringing families to Chile, and Chileans back to the Lehigh Valley. This talk explored the history of Bethlehem Steel's iron mining operations in Chile, the transnational flows of raw materials and people, and Bethlehem Steel's legacy in Latin America. To watch this webinar, click on this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZTveERdLU&feature=emb_title. To view an exhibit on the Chilean mines, click on this: <http://chile.nmih.org>. If you have any information or contacts with people who worked with Bethlehem Steel's Latin American mines, please contact Dr. Fischer-Hoffman at fischeco@lafayette.edu.

PRESERVING THE LEGACY WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

On February 4, Ed Leskin was the featured guest on the virtual program, *Spin It Social Hour, Where Photographers Share Their Work and Journeys*. The show covered his photography in general followed by a focus on his steel images. Bruce J. Ward also appeared on the program to give his insight as well.

Ed and Bruce discussed the importance of the Steelworkers' Archives during the program and specifically mentioned Richie Check, Les Clore, and Jack Deutsch.

You can view the interview on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWUyTaRftGc>



The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter post from STEFFEN KAPLAN (@SpintSocial) dated Feb 3. The tweet text reads: "On the next #SpinItSocialHour, tomorrow Thursday, Feb. 4th at 9pm EST, right here on Twitter. Preserving the legacy of #steelworkers and 'The Steel' -- through the eyes of Edward Leskin. #Photography #Bethlehem #Pennsylvania". Below the tweet is a promotional graphic for "The Spin It Social Hour" with the tagline "Where Photographers Share Their Work and Journeys" and the date "Thursday, Feb. 4th at 9 p.m. ET". The graphic includes social media icons for Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn, and photos of the host, Steffen Kaplan, and the guest, Ed Leskin. Two photographs of industrial steel structures are also featured.

UPCOMING 2021

What else is in store for 2021? The Steelworkers' Archives is planning events within the current COVID guidelines. There are many opportunities for members to volunteer. Please contact us at **610-861-0600** or our email at **info@steelworkersarchives.com** if you are interested in helping with any of the following:

2021 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Steelworkers' Archives, which we will commemorate with an event. Volunteers are needed for planning and staffing the event(s).

Steelwalker tours resume on Saturday, April 10, 2021. These public tours will be held on Saturdays and Sundays at 11:30 am, leaving from NMIH. We also offer private *Steelwalker* tours, to local groups (e.g. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, family groups). Please contact us if you are interested in being a tour guide.

When appropriate, we will resume speaking engagements. Please contact us if you would like to be involved. Les Clore chairs the Speakers Bureau.

When possible, we will reopen our Wind Creek office to the public. At that time, we need volunteers to staff the office, interacting with the public. Please contact us if interested. Thank you to Earl Kurtz and friend for trouble-shooting and resolving an office computer problem. The donation of a replacement computer to run the slide show is especially appreciated.

We will collaborate with NMIH and other *Last Cast 25* participants on what will be an annual steelworkers reunion in September. Hank Barnette initiated this idea at the *Last Cast 25* event. Volunteers will be needed.

The *Northampton County Festival* is rescheduled for October 16, 2021 at Louise Moore Park. We will send email closer to the event with details and a request for volunteers to staff our table display.

Organizers look forward to resuming the annual *Star of Bethlehem Festival for Kids* in May 2022. We will participate with a table display and distribute "hard hats" to children. Volunteers will be needed.

Dennis Pearson reached out to the Bethlehem Area School District for this year's *Richard Check Steelworkers Legacy Essay Contest*, however the contest is on hold due to the pandemic restrictions. We look forward to holding the essay contest in 2022.

Two special events were cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic. We were to give walking tours for the Society of Industrial Archeology's annual conference and the Road Scholars program visiting the Bach Festival. Status for 2021 is not known at time of publication of this newsletter.

The Steelworkers' Archives is safely working through the pandemic, amid ongoing and ever-changing guidelines, to continue our mission to preserve the legacy/history of steelworkers. We continue to collaborate with many community organizations in pursuing this mission.