History in Our Community

Twin Shaft Disaster

Source: Times-Tribune

Date dedicated: June 1992
Marker type: Roadside
Location: North Main and Union streets, Pittston
Category: Labor, Business and Industry
Marker text:

"On June 28, 1896, 58 men were killed in a massive cave-in of rock and coal here, in the Newton Coal Company's Twin Shaft Colliery. An investigative commission, appointed by the Governor, reported on Sept. 25. Although its safety recommendations would often be ignored, the disaster was a factor that led to a stronger unionization of this region under John Mitchell after 1900."

Fourth-worst mine accident of the 108 in anthracite country

The Twin Shaft Disaster remains the fourth-worst fatal mine accident of the 108 that occurred in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania between January 1846 and January 1959. The worst was the Sept. 6, 1869, fire at the Avondale Colliery in Plymouth Twp., which killed 108 workers and two would-be rescuers, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Another 109 miners died in an explosion in the Mammouth Mine in Mount Pleasant on Jan. 27, 1891, and 92 died in an explosion in Baltimore Tunnel 2 in Wilkes-Barre on June 5, 1919. All those who died at the Twin Shaft are entombed there. The bodies were never recovered and the shaft was sealed. The Newton Coal Co. was owned by Philadelphia bankers, according to the April-June 2003 edition of The Miner's Lamp, the newsletter of the Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum and Iron Furnaces Associates in Scranton. The explosion in what was one of the oldest mineshafts in the region occurred in the sixth, or lowest, vein, under Coxton Farm, just beyond the Lackawanna River, the Miner's Lamp article said.

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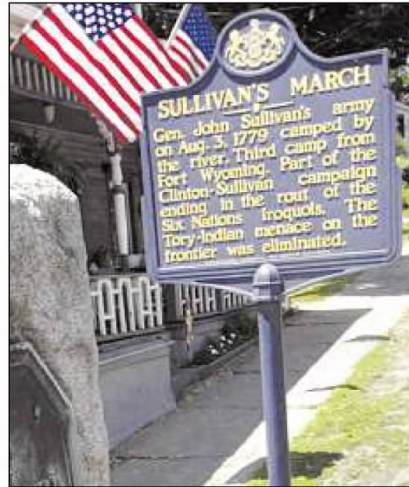
## Sullivan's March

Source:
www.dcnr.state.pa.us/topogeo/gsaabstr/sullivan.aspx

The punitive expedition of Major-General John Sullivan against the British-allied Iroquois Confederacy in 1779 was the outstanding example of "total war" in the American Revolution. Sullivan and his army marched 250 miles into hostile territory in north-central Pennsylvania and western New York, destroying at least 40 villages, burning hundreds of acres of crops, and defeating the Indians and Tories at Newtown, NY, in the only pitched battle of the campaign. The progress of "Sullivan's March" is well described in the many journals kept by participating officers and men.

Sullivan's main army followed Indian trails in making a physiographic transect from the Great Valley to the Genesee River—across Blue Mountain, the Pocono Plateau, the Lackawanna basin, and the glaciated Allegheny Plateau. The route made use of such landscape features as the Wind Gap, the North Branch Susquehanna River valley, and the east side of Seneca Lake. Another brigade under Brig.-General James Clinton followed the North Branch on the Allegheny Plateau from Lake Otsego, N.Y., to a junction with Sullivan at Tioga Point in Athens. The campaign journals provide descriptions of the terrain traversed by both forces and of many individual geologic features observed en route (Spring Falls near Pittston; Buttermilk Falls at Falls and those at Watkins Glen, N.Y.), the western Finger Lakes and the monolithic Standing Stone on the North Branch south of Towanda.

Though the military significance of Sullivan's campaign is a matter of argument, its social and economic importance is beyond dispute. It depopulated a large tract of Indian country just beyond the frontier and introduced a host of land-hungry Americans to the rich bottomlands of the upper North Branch Susquehanna, the Chemung, and the Genesee. The soldiers' journal entries undoubtedly reflect the verbal reports to families and neighbors that spurred a post-war influx of settlers into the former Iroquoian homeland.

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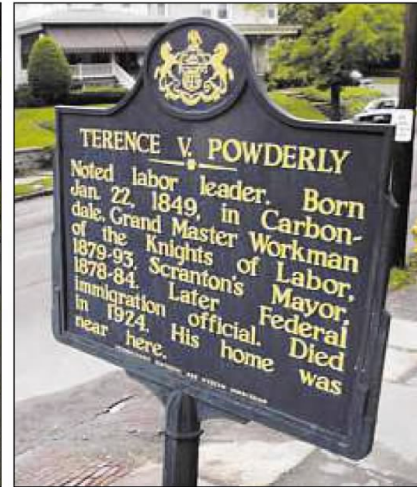
Terrence Powderly

Source:
www.nps.gov/nr/travel/delaware/ter.htm

Born Jan.y 22, 1849, in Carbondale, Powderly became a union man early in his life. Powderly's quest was to promote an all-inclusive union and to promote arbitration as labor's principle bargaining tool. After leaving school at the age of 13, Powderly worked on a railroad and eventually became an apprentice machinist. Powderly was elected president of the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' union, which he joined in 1871. As a result of his union involvement, Powderly was among the first to lose their jobs during the depression of 1873.

Powderly's natural leadership led to his position of Grand Master Workmen of the Knights of Labor. The Knights of Labor, originally a secret organization, was the leading labor organization of the 1880s. Under Powderly's leadership for 14 years, the Knights of Labor promoted the unity of labor and union organization. In an attempt to form a large union the Knights counted both African Americans and women as members. By 1886, with a membership between 700,000 and 1,000,000, the union had become the largest and most influential in the country. During his involvement with the Knights of Labor, Powderly was elected Mayor of Scranton in 1878. He served as Mayor for three two-year terms. As Mayor, Powderly laid the ground work for city hall and helped authorize the purchase of land for the city's municipal building. Powderly was the nation's outstanding labor leader from 1879 to 1893.

The Knights of Labor union collapsed following its peak in 1886, mostly due to its opposition of strikes. The Knights of Labor remained in existence for 13 years, following Powderly's resignation in 1893. Prior to his resignation from the Knights of Labor, Powderly studied law in his spare time and was admitted to the Lackawanna County State and Federal Courts in 1894. President William McKinley appointed him as the United States Commissioner General of Immigration in 1897. In 1907, Powderly assumed a new position as chief of the division of information of the Bureau of Immigration and held that office until 1921. He died June 24, 1924.

State history markers