



# The Inkwell

45 E. Corydon Street, Bradford, PA 16701

814-362-3906

August 2009

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## Summertime, and the Living is – Busy!

It's been a strange sort of summer. Lots of rain, and very cool. August is the busiest time of the summer in Bradford, with four different events or festivals held in one month. The Don Raabe Big 30 Football Classic is the first weekend, the Italian Festival is the second weekend, the OIL 150 celebration with a parade and shooting of an oil well was the third weekend, and finally, our own Crook Farm Country Fair is held the last weekend of the month. And then school starts.

The Don Raabe Big 30 Charities Classic is a high school football all-star game held in the Twin Tiers region of western New York and northern Pennsylvania. The game is held annually each August at Parkway Field in Bradford. Each team consists of players from a 15-school district area in each state (15+15 being the "30" indicated in the game's title). New York's team covers mostly Cattaraugus County and portions of Allegany County, while Pennsylvania's team covers a five-county area including Warren, McKean, Cameron, Potter and Elk Counties.

The Italian Festival is usually held near St. Rocco's Day, which is August 16. This festival lasts for three days, filled with authentic Italian food, dancing, games, and lots of former residents returning to town to visit friends and family one more time before school starts.

The OIL 150 celebration was held on August 22, with a 90-Unit parade down Main Street, and a real oil well shot in the afternoon. The festivities mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of oil discovered at Titusville, which was the beginning of the oil industry in the United States.

The last weekend in the month is the annual Crook Farm Country Fair. This marks the 30<sup>th</sup> year that the fair has been held at the historic Crook Farm. The Fair will be held August 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>, from 9AM to 5PM each day. Admission is \$5.00. Join us for handmade crafts, great food including corn on the cob, funnel cakes, chicken, ribs, salt potatoes, ice cream, burgers and dogs, cotton candy, and baked goods; listen to good music and learn about the history of the farm. To many, the Crook Farm Country Fair is a tradition that they share with their family and friends. We invite everyone to come on down to the fair!



John W. Nelson, Sr., one of Bradford's finest magicians. See inside this Inkwell for more information!

# Come to the Fair!

## 30th Annual Crook Farm Country Fair



**Saturday & Sunday**  
**AUGUST**  
**29th & 30th**  
**10AM-5PM**



**Admission**  
**\$5.00**

Children under 12  
**FREE** with adult

Proceeds go to the preservation and restoration of the Farm, Bakery and Spring School Program

Seaward Ave. Ext., Bradford, PA  
Foster Brook Exit - Rt. 219  
Turn right, follow signs, approx. 2 miles

### Demonstrations & Events

- Chair Caning • Blacksmith
- Quilting • Farm Tours
- Weaving • Pony Rides
- Candle Making • Story Tellers
- Stringed Instrument Repairs
- Basketweaving • Juggling

### Entertainment Saturday

#### MAIN STAGE:

- 12PM-12:50PM: CHURCH STREET BLUES
- 1PM - 1:50PM: VAN WAGNER - PENNSYLVANIA'S TIMBER HERITAGE IN STORY AND SONG
- 2PM - 3PM: CHURCH STREET BLUES
- 3PM - 5PM: OLD TIME ROUND & SQUARE DANCE

### Entertainment Sunday

- 10:30AM - 11:15AM: THE DOERFEL FAMILY BAND GOSPEL SING AROUND
- 11:15AM - 12:00PM: VAN WAGNER - JOURNEY THROUGH PENNSYLVANIA'S TIMBER HERITAGE IN STORY
- 12:15PM - 1PM: DOERFEL FAMILY BLUEGRASS
- 1PM - 1:50PM: SQUARE DANCE W/KEN BLACKMON & THE CROOK FARM ALL STARS
- 2PM - 3PM: DOERFEL FAMILY BLUEGRASS
- 3PM - 5PM: OPEN STAGE W/FESTIVAL PERFORMANCE STAFF & JAMMERS

### All Weekend - Various Times

- Ed Hanson - Civil War Fiddler
- Van Wagner - Musician/Storyteller

### All Day Saturday & Sunday

BRING YOUR INSTRUMENT & VOICE  
TO JOIN THE PLAYING & THE  
SINGING AT OUR JAM TENT!

### Food

**Chicken & Ribs 12-4PM**  
**Corn Roast 12-4PM**

Salt Potatoes • Hot Dogs • BBQ Pork  
Sausage Sandwiches • Soft Drinks  
PLUS... Popcorn • Ice Cream • Funnel Cakes  
Sno-Cones • Cotton Candy

**SATURDAY - APPLE PIE BAKING CONTEST**

**SAT. & SUN. - KID'S CORN SHUCKING CONTEST**

### Crafts

Woodworking  
Sewing • Weaving  
Painting • Stonework

### Fuzzy Farm

Come see the  
Alpacas!

### COUNTRY BREAKFAST

Sunday - 9AM-Noon  
\$5 Adults\* • \$3 Children\* Plus Fair Admission

Tour the historic  
farmhouse &  
buildings!



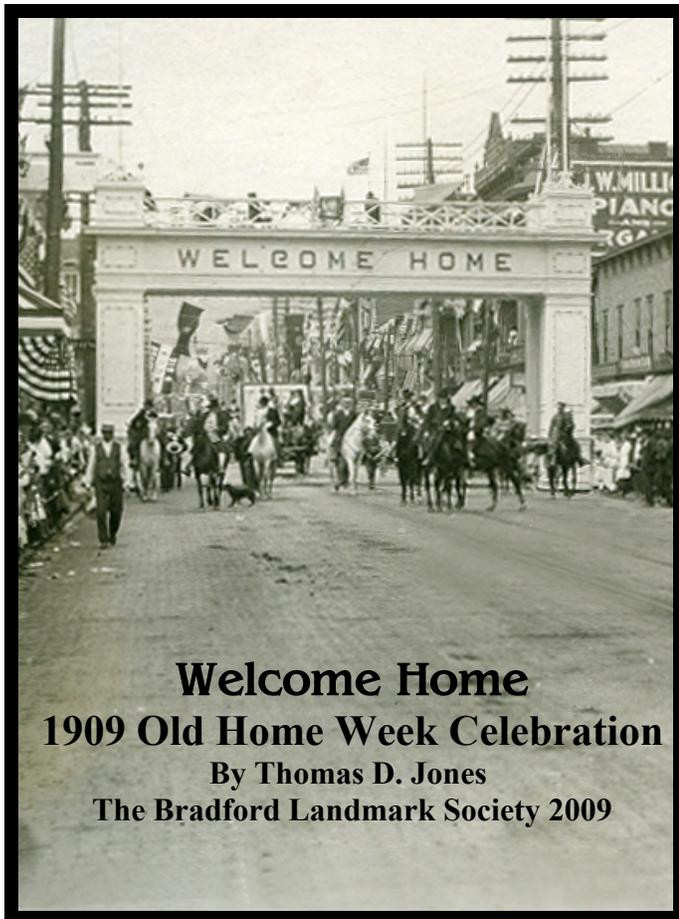
**LIVE**  
BROADCAST BY:  
**WESB**  
NewsRadio 1490

Back to School Students in the centerfold. Did you guess our names?

1. Greg Ulyan, 2. Molly Lindahl, 3. Larry Richmond, 4) Bob Esch, 5) Harrijane Hannon Moore,
- 6) Pat Schessler, 7) Tom Jones, 8) Sally Costik, 9) Mike Fuoco, 10) Bill Knight,
- 11) Mary Ryan, 12) Pete Gardner

## Advance Book Sale Notice to Bradford Landmark Society Members only

The Bradford Landmark Society is proud to announce our newest book, "Welcome Home, 1909 Old Home Week Celebration." To be published this October.



It was the first, and the grandest, Old Home Week Celebration in the history of Bradford. Over 15,000 visitors doubled the size of the city for one gloriously wild and entertaining week in August 1909.

And did they have fun.

With themed parades every day such as Children's Day, Military and Civic Day, Historical Day, Labor and Industry Day, and Firemen's Day, and three more at night including a Mardi Gras and Oilmen's parade, the whole town of Bradford joined in one huge celebration of the founding of the city, welcoming back family, friends, and former residents.

Not only were carnival sideshows set up on Kennedy, Chestnut, Chambers, and Corydon streets; but concession stands filled the public square, and lectures, dances, band concerts, and fireworks were held throughout the week.

At times, the celebration got a little out of hand: a mule was arrested and put in jail; a monkey escaped from the carnival and terrorized a family on Congress Street, and one young man pleaded with the police to arrest his young bride since she was having too much fun on Main Street and wouldn't come home.

Author Thomas D. Jones, a local historian, has compiled over 200 photographs of this wonderful Old Home Week into a very enjoyable book, filled with descriptions of the parades, the people, and the events that made it one of Bradford's most memorable times.

The book is approximately 240 pages long, 8.5 x 11 inches in size, and would make a wonderful addition to your library of local Bradford history or as a gift for someone who loves history.

A massive arch, designed by Edward Unruh, a Bradford architect, was the focal point of the celebration. Located near Webster Street, the arch could be seen from any point on Main Street. Wide enough for bands to play on top, the Old Home Week committee tried – unsuccessfully - to find a couple willing to be married in public on top the Arch during Old Home Week.

Yes, please reserve me a copy of the Bradford Landmark Society's newest book, "**Welcome Home; 1909 Old Home Week Celebration**" by Thomas D. Jones.

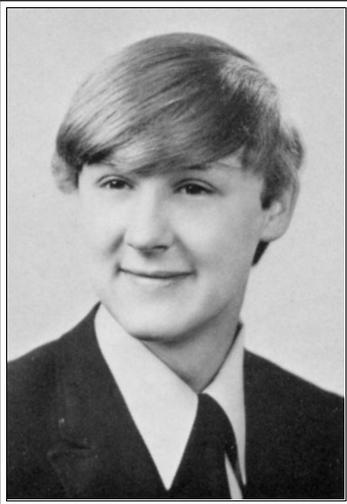
Reserve copies are only \$28.00 when paid in advance. We accept check, money orders, cash, or PayPal.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

# Welcome Back to School!

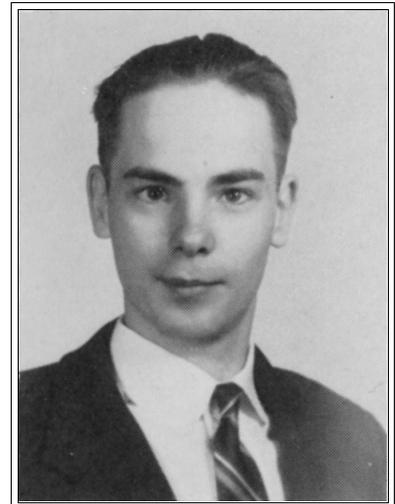
School is just around the corner. As a special treat, we present an honorary Bradford Landmark Class of 2009. How many do you know? True, they have changed a little since these high school pictures were taken; but we think you will recognize them all. Hint – they are all connected in some way with the Bradford Landmark, either as a board member, staff, or volunteer. We will give you the names later on in this newsletter.



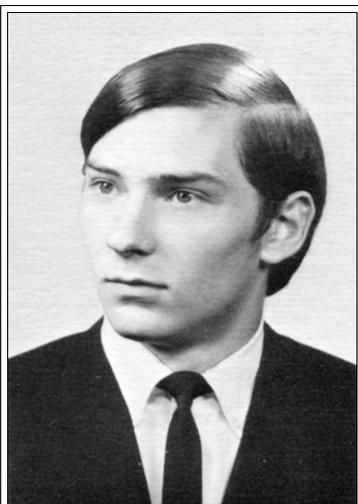
1. History Buff and Board Member



2. She'll help you climb your family tree.



3. He's been called "Mr. History"



4. You can always find him at the Crook Farm County Fair or ARG.



5. She can be found every day at the Courthouse in Smethport.

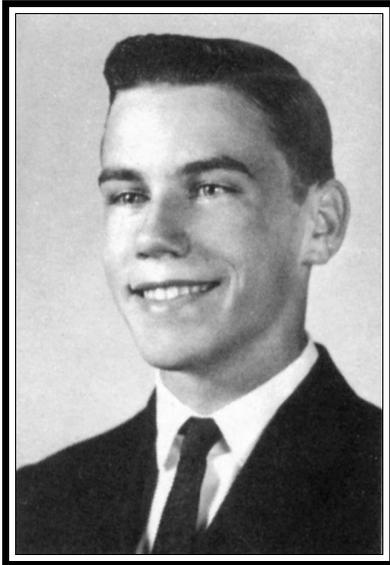


6. She's been a volunteer at the bakery for over ten years.

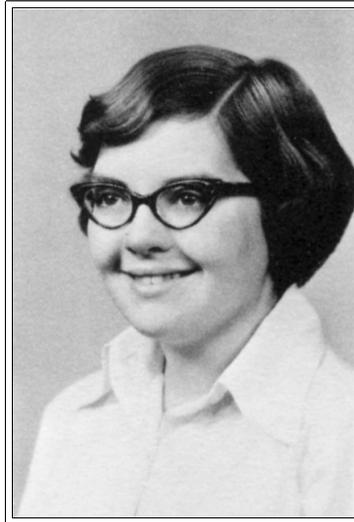
*"Mid the Hills of Pennsylvania, Stands a School we love.*

*Our Devotion is as steadfast, as the stars above."*

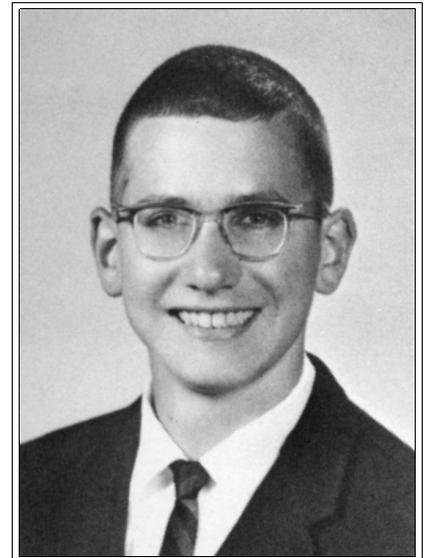
**Remember the Alma Mater? Here's another hint – everyone (but one!) in our "Class of 2009" graduated from Bradford High School. Different years, different classes, but alumni just the same.**



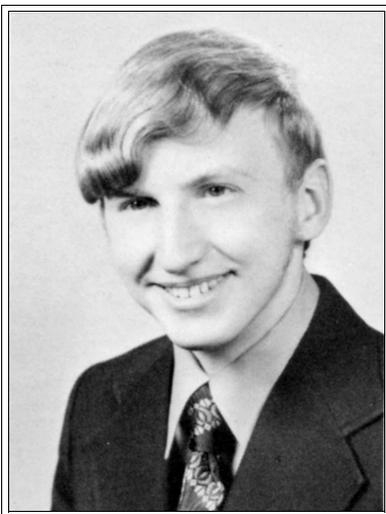
7. Currently writing a book on the 1909 Old Home Week celebration.



8. She's given over 100 speeches in the last 15 years.



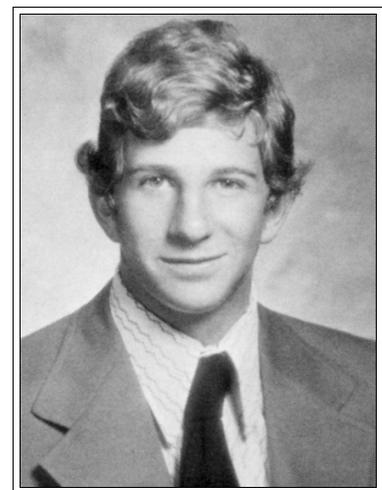
9. He's an expert on aerial photographs of Bradford.



10. Loves historic preservation and writes grants for the Landmark.



11. Our expert typist, she is a regular volunteer at the Herbig Bakery.



12. A Derrick City boy, he is a right hand man at the Crook Farm Country Fair in August.

# Bradford's own Magicians

*A recent donation to the Bradford Landmark Society brought us new information about several Bradfordians, whose hobby, and passion, was magic. We think that you will enjoy reading about our own "prestidigitators".*

*The first part of this story is a news article from an out of state newspaper, dated August 1939.*

## **Bradford Magic Artists Coming for Convention**

**Are expected to be among first arrivals at Piff Paff Poofers affair here in September.**

The prosperous little town of Bradford, Pennsylvania, where the art of magic finds some of its best exponents, will be well represented in Fort Erie (Ontario, Canada) on September 1, 2 and 3 when visiting magicians from Canada and the United States attend the second Piff Paff Poofers convention, according to a statement made this week by Bob Weill, of Cosy Dell.

"The Bradford crowd is all good fellows, liked by everyone, and they will be one of the first arrivals. Being 100 percent magic bugs they will cause a lot of fun and amusement at the Saturday night Chamber of Commerce banquet at the Mather Arms (formerly the Pickick Arms) where the people of Fort Erie will have an opportunity to meet them.

Perhaps two of the best know magical Bradfordites are Mr. & Mrs. John Nelson, who attended the April convention and will be back again in September. The former is a professional magician but splits time between magic and his radio store. He is the inventor of the "Floating Ball" a world famous stage illusion, which he will perform for his Fort Erie audience.

He has practiced magic for a great many years, and so has Dr. Jacob G. Heckel, "The Man of 1000 Gimmicks" who also hails from Bradford. Dr. Heckel, Mr. Weill stated, has traveled over most of the world in search of new, mystifying "gimmicks" and, as may be seen, has made magic his hobby. He makes everyone his friend, and is most popular with his fellow magicians. He enjoys traveling hundreds of miles to attend magic get-togethers, and was one of the first secured for the C of C banquet program.

Bradford's escape king, Arthur Follette, will be remembered for his self-release from a locked mail bag here last April. Follette, who is an expert at performing many not-often-attempted self-liberations, is slated for another outdoor act. This time, it will be an escape from a locked and securely belted 100-gallon oil drum. Incidentally, Follette is the only performer in the country doing this difficult feat.

Another is Tom Kennedy, whose hobby is magic and attending magic conventions near and far with Dr. Heckel. He was not present at the April convention here because of illness, Mr. Weill told the Times Review, but promised to be on hand in September and to make a speech at the banquet Saturday night. Kennedy, who has an intimate knowledge of magic and magicians, may be seen doing his favorite trick which he called "Drink Your Own Poison".

And last, but not least, as the saying goes, is "Red" Herbert Robbins, a former circus performer, now retired in Bradford, where he owns a large garage. Although he does not actively perform his love for magic takes him to most of the conventions in the country, accompanied by Mrs. Robbins, who is as interested in magic as her husband. His story of colorful circus days which will be told at the C. of C. banquet will be well worth hearing.

# 'The Mysterious Nelson'

## Bradford's Best Magician

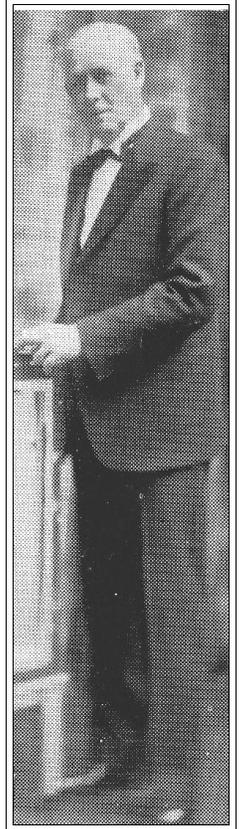
Credited with inventing the famous "floating ball" magic trick, a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, and a personal friend of The Great Blackstone, John W. Nelson, Sr. was born in Bradford in the late 1870s. During his youth, he played baseball with the local Bradford teams, catching for Rube Waddell back in the old "Iron and Oil" League days of the 1890s, later playing for Buffalo, NY in the International league, and still later started a small business on Mechanic Street, next to the bridge. His real passion, however, was magic, and by the turn of the century, Nelson was well on his way to becoming a talented magician.

Attending magic conventions to learn the craft of magic whenever he could, Nelson became a close friend of Harry Blackstone, considered to be one of the most popular magicians in the country in the 1930s. Born in 1885 in Chicago, Blackstone first appeared in Bradford as early as 1912. Blackstone, who later visited Bradford in 1947 and performed at Sheas' Theater, credited Nelson with teaching him one of his first card tricks and card manipulation.

Although it began as a hobby, Nelson became so good at magic that theater managers were soon begging him to perform. Some of his outstanding acts were "Cremation of She", which was a ghost effect with a burning box; the "Lady Without a Body", and dozens of tricks with Chinese doves, rabbits, card tricks, and hypnotism.

His wife, Eva, often assisted him with the magic tricks, using her stage name "Montrose". One of the illusions required a large empty cabinet, from which a large number of balloons were taken, and a smiling Montrose appeared from nowhere.

Another trick produced a beautiful bouquet of red roses from thin air – as proof of the genuine quality and freshness of the flowers; the roses were always presented to the ladies of the audience. During World War II, Nelson would often transform two pieces of paper, one with a Nazi swastika, and the other the Japanese Rising Sun symbol, into a poster that urged the purchase of United States Defense bonds.



Tragically, in 1943, his wife Eva died during one of Nelson's performances, shortly after playing the introduction music for her husband's magic show. Suffering a heart attack, she collapsed on the keyboard of the piano and was carried off to a room at the rear of the auditorium. In keeping with the tradition of stage performers, John Nelson completed his magic act, and it was not until the conclusion of the show that he learned that his wife had died.

John W. Nelson, Sr. continued his magic shows until the end of his life, often performing for clubs, company picnics, birthday parties, fire departments, and other events. He died in 1965, and is buried in Oak Hill mausoleum.

His son, John Nelson, Jr. was just as famous as his father, at least in Bradford. Known locally as "Johnny Nelson", he was the sports editor of the Bradford Era for years, and later wrote a column for the newspaper. An only child, it is unknown if he inherited any of his father's talent at magic.

## **Bradford Landmark Society**

45 East Corydon Street  
Bradford PA 16701



Welcome Home 1909. The huge arch was a focal point of the celebration. It remained standing until December 1910.