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Assessments mean more district \$\$\$ Group fights to keep kindergarten open

BY CHARLOT M. DENMON
Staff Writer

An increase in the number of assessed properties in five Back Mountain communities means an increase in the amount of tax income to the two school districts in the Back Mountain as well as to the communities in varying degrees.

Since the completion of the Cross Valley Expressway which has made the Back Mountain easily accessible to the Wyoming Valley business and industrial centers, there has been more families buying or building homes in the local areas.

While Dallas Borough, Dallas Township, Jackson Township, Lehman Township and Kingston Township tax collectors confirm that there has been an increase in the assessed value of property, indications are that most of the new building has been in Dallas, Jackson and Kingston Townships.

The tax collectors in these townships, however, as well as in Dallas Borough and Lehman Township, point out that not all of the increase is due to a big 'building boom' but some of the additional assessed value is because of the county's recent re-assessment on all purchases sales.

Janice Castellani, Kingston Township tax collector, and Thomas Reese, Dallas Borough tax collector, explained that each time a property is sold, old homes or new, or land, the county reassesses the property at today's market value, thus increasing the tax income.

In Dallas Borough, Reese stated that in 1987, at the most, there were only five new homes. The rest of the increase in taxes were due to the sales of property.

In 1987, Dallas Borough had 1294 taxables and in 1988, 1299

taxables. The dollar income value in 1987 was \$6,368,990 and in 1988, \$6,696,380. Based on the Dallas School District's 116 mills in 1987, the school's anticipated tax income could be \$776,736 from the borough in 1988 as opposed to \$751,282.84 in 1987.

Tax income for Dallas Borough at 14 mills was \$89,165.86 in 1987 and in 1988, an anticipated income of \$93,749.32.

Mrs. Greg Moyer, tax collector of Lehman Township, said that in 1987 and 1988, there were approximately 10 to 12 new homes but she did not have the exact figures available at the time she was contacted.

Real estate value in Lehman Township increased from \$5,749,030 in 1987 to \$5,963,840 in 1988, according to Mrs. Moyer. Much of this increase, she said, was due to resale and a lot of sub-divisions of property on which the assessment value was increased.

Based on the Lake-Lehman School District's 123 mills in 1987, tax income to the district for that year should be in the neighborhood of \$707,130 and in 1988, if the millage remains at 123, increased assessment evaluation should mean a tax income for the district of approximately \$733,550. Mrs. Moyer emphasized that these were approximate figures since she did not have her books readily available when she was contacted.

The assessed value in Kingston Township in 1987 was \$11,596,770 and in 1988, it is \$12,302,730, according to Tax Collector Janice Castellani. This indicates an increase in tax income of \$705,960 which based on the township's tax of five mills would mean an increase in their tax income of \$3,530 and based on the Dallas School District's rate of 116 mills, an increase to

BY DEBBY HIGGINS
Post Editor

On Thursday, March 3, at 7:30 p.m., a group of concerned parents will meet with the Sisters of Mercy, Dallas, to discuss the closing of the Mercy Center Kindergarten. The parents of the center's students are upset and angry because the non-denominational school they have chosen to send their children to is now considered to have served its community purpose.

Sharon Mayernick, mother of a student enrolled in the kindergarten program, is spearheading the fight to keep Mercy open.

"The Mercy Center Kindergarten has been open since 1974 but it has been the best kept secret in town. Now the Sisters say the school must be closed because of declining enrollment," Mayernick said. "We parents feel we are losing a valuable educational resource in the Back Mountain. We want to keep Mercy open."

The school, scheduled to close operations in June, 1988, will still continue the pre-kindergarten phase, but parents of kindergarten-age children like the choices available to them through Mercy Center.

"Mercy gives parents the option of sending our children to full day or half day sessions of school. Some children need varying scheduling. The flexible schedule allows us to determine how long and when our children will go to school," Mayernick said.

The decision to close the school came after the Sisters conducted a survey asking parents for feedback about the program. The findings, according to a newsletter mailed to parents, concluded that other kindergarten programs are providing the necessary services thereby eliminating the need for Mercy Center's school. The

letter also stated that over a period of time, enrollments have substantially declined.

"Our group feels that the survey did not examine the entire issue of enrollment. Many residents are not aware of the Mercy Center Kindergarten program so they could not seek enrollment for their children. The school has relied upon word-of-mouth to generate new student enrollment. There has been no concerted effort to advertise the program to the public. Enrollment has decreased because not many people are aware of what the school has to offer," Mayernick said.

According to Mayernick, the school has excellent teachers who give the needed attention to each student and the added effort pays off for the child. There are facilities to accommodate 20 students in each of the two kindergarten classes. She said older children who have

attended the kindergarten do much better as they progress in the upper grades. This, she said, is a plus that benefits the students throughout their lives. If Mercy Center closes, the children will lose that firm educational foundation.

The parents group contends that enrollment problems can be overcome with the help of a campaign to bring the school's existence to the public's attention. Mayernick also says the group will unite to help generate fundraisers so that the necessary monies are readily available to keep the school open.

"We (the parents group) are ready, willing, and able to help the Sisters keep the school open in any way we can. We firmly believe that the school is a necessary and extremely beneficial part of our communities. We urge all parents to tour the school and to meet Sr. Amalia who teaches the kindergarten classes. We ask that anyone

interested in the program to take a look at what Mercy Center has to offer," Mayernick told The Post.

The group hopes the meeting scheduled for Thursday will be attended by parents and other interested residents who feel the school should remain open. Mayernick said she feels confident that parents of children who have attended the school and the parents of currently enrolled students will let the Sisters know how important to the community the school really is.

Mayernick and the group have also initiated a letter-writing campaign to help get the point across. The group feels the community will support their efforts and the outcome will see the Mercy Center Kindergarten remaining open for a long time.

The meeting will be held in the Kindergarten room on the campus of College Misericordia, Dallas, at 7:30 p.m.



Dallas Post/Linda Shurmelite

PARENTS GROUP FORMS — Sharon Mayernick, pictured above, is heading a group of parents who have united to try to save Mercy Center Kindergarten, located on the campus of College Misericordia. The group says the school is a valuable community asset.

Tall ships sailed the Susquehanna

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Harveys Lake artist, author and amateur historian, Dan Swire, submitted the following article and line art drawing, based on his research and study of the Back Mountain. Dan thanks his wife, Jane, and the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society for their assistance.)

BY DAN SWIRE
Special to The Post

Though most of the Wyoming Valley had timber, the fast and steady growth of the area used up most of the hardwoods before early 1800. For the growth of the valley to continue lumber had to be fetched from outside the river valley.

During that time, the Back Mountain was covered with miles of woodlands. These forests contained hardwoods - maple, oak, ash, cherry and birch. The area, in fact, had so much timber that people like Matthis Hollenback, Jesse Fell and others purchased large tracts of land for lumbering purposes. Much of the lumber was used to build homes, barns and businesses in the Wilkes-Barre Area, still more was used as heating fuel and a handful of wood was used in the building of boats and ships.

The abundant hardwoods were considered to be good trade materials during these early years. The mountains on the west side of the Susquehanna as far north as Connecticut Territories - that area north to New York - and beyond was the primary source of these woods.

Due to hardships encountered when moving timber across land the Susquehanna River looked to be an easy access-way

to haul lumber from the area to trade ports of the coastal United States as well as overseas.

Two Wilkes-Barre men John P. and Phillip Arndt tried to make this dream of lumber trade a reality.

This is the story of the vessels; a history of how the dream was to be realized, and why it failed.

The Susquehanna River has, at least in the early days of the Wyoming Valley, been a main stream trade route. From collection of goods from ocean going vessels durham boats and barges would travel, poling their way northward, bringing such goods as tea, coffee and cotton.

John P. and Phillip Arndt two brothers who had come to Wilkes-Barre from Easton, Pa. were engaged in many businesses but one business in which they became involved cost John P. the surviving brother to lose all he had in the Wyoming Valley.

The Arndt family had a boat building and docking yard set upon the river commons between Market and Northampton Streets. At this yard in 1803 the Arndts built a schooner of 12 tons which successfully made its trip down the Susquehanna River through Baltimore and out to the Atlantic Ocean. This success led John P. Arndt into an obsession to turn the Wyoming Valley, especially Wilkes-Barre, into an inland shipping district.

By October 1809, John P. Arndt organized the Luzerne Shipbuilding Company. On October 20, this published notice to subscribers of the company appeared in the Federalist.

"The Subscribers"

"To the shipbuilding company will take notice, that a meeting will be held at the House of George Taylor in Wilkes-Barre, on Saturday, the 21 at 2 o'clock p.m., to elect a Manager in the room of Arnold Colt (who has removed out of the country) and to do such other business as may be deemed best for the company."

John P. Arndt, President of the Board

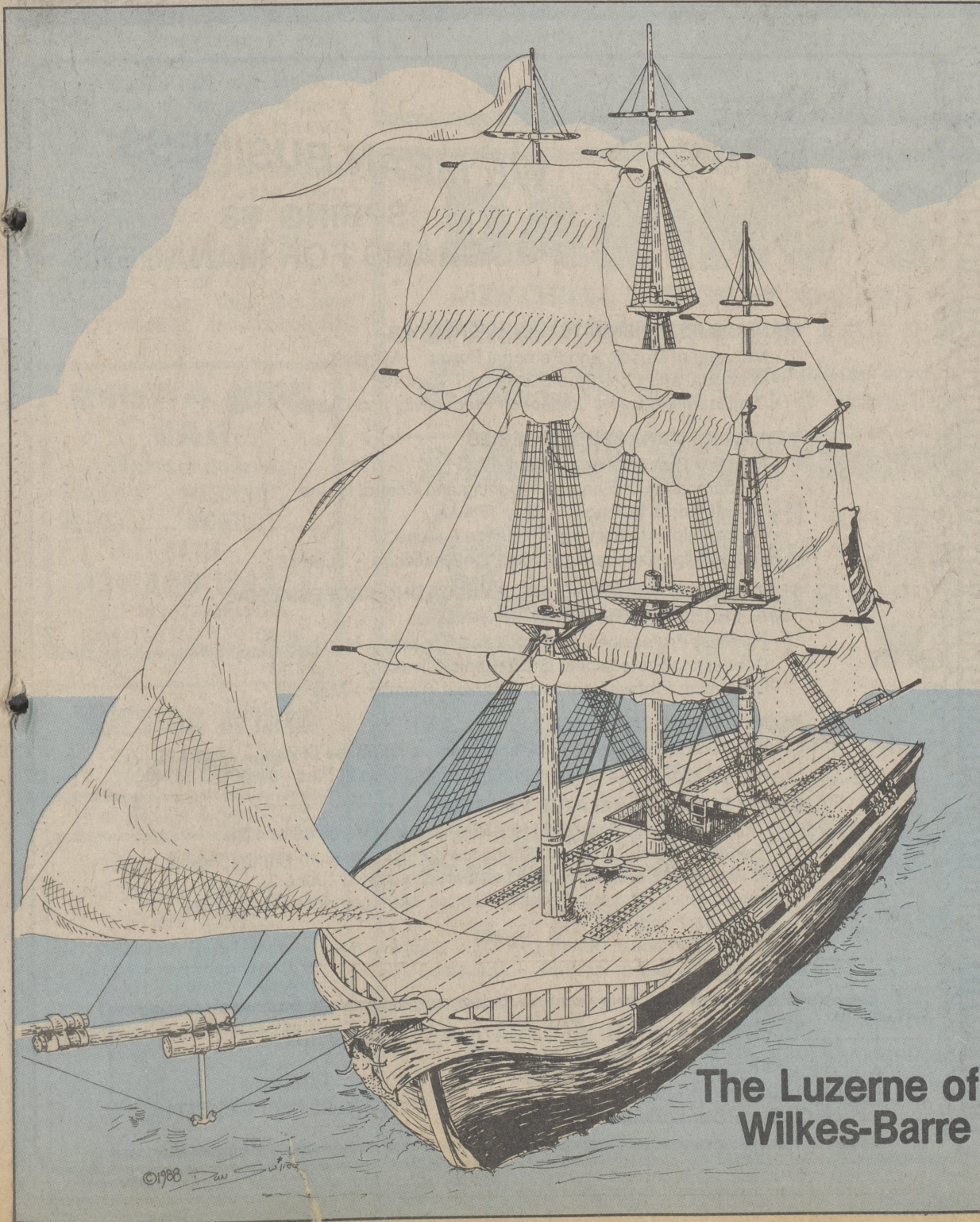
In early 1810 workmen were already selecting timber to be used in the construction of a great ship. On January 19 of that year stockholders were informed that \$2 on each share they owned was due. By September 14 the ship was on the stocks and the building was progressing forward.

Elisha Mack a former neighbor of many Wilkes-Barre settlers and a ship carpenter was brought on as master foreman of construction. Captain Joseph Chapman Sr. who had commanded a ship in the West India Trade was called upon for final inspection of the vessel. Chapman also was given the honor of christening her.

After two years and a considerable sum of money, the bulk of which was put up by Mr. Arndt, himself, the completed vessel was ready to launch. It was not the early spring of 1812.

What sight it must of been this large square rigged full masted ship sitting in its stocks on the river common! Her figure head almost reaching the street line the stern posts to the river bank; an ocean going vessel 200 miles from the nearest seas. What great hopes and aspirations could the men and women

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The Luzerne of Wilkes-Barre