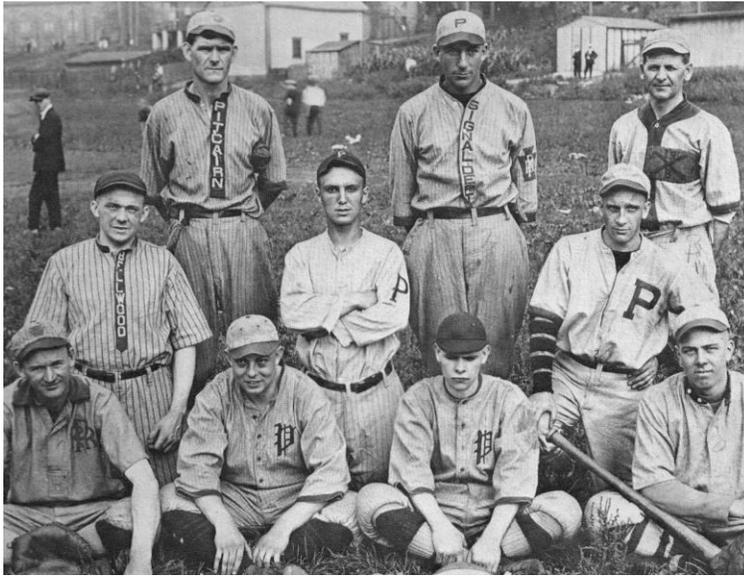


## Chapter 6: Life in Pitcairn

The life of any community is so much more than work and schools. A look through the pictures in Pitcairn's Family Album will show how important sports teams were to the town.

The earliest organized sports teams in town were those sponsored by the Pennsylvania Railroad which organized a Railroad YMCA baseball team in 1895. Shop league teams followed like the Machine Shop team which won the league championship on 1915.



**28. Pitcairn Baseball began in 1895 with the Railroad's YMCA team**

It was also in those early years that football made its appearance when the newly-formed Pitcairn Athletic Club fielded a team in 1904; followed by the Quakers and the Mohawks, amateur teams who competed and gained wide-spread fame in Western Pennsylvania. And in 1915 a Pitcairn Basketball club was formed to compete with local teams which it did successfully for many years.

The Great Depression wrote an end to these and other sports teams in 1930s. But Mohawk football returned after World War II, when a group of young ex-servicemen, decided to play a pick-up football game in a Broadway parking lot. The post-war Mohawks played together until 1951 rolling up an impressive record of victories against teams like the *McKees Rocks All Stars*, and the *Sto-Rox Cadets*. Mohawk basketball also had a brief resurgence during the post-war years.



**29. The Mohawks Basketball Team in 1949**

The Mohawk tradition continued with the Pitcairn Junior Mohawks organized for boys in 1945 by Pitcairn Cub Pack no. 50. In 1952 they became the Pitcairn Midget Football Association. In the 1960s the Junior Mohawks joined the Steel Valley League, and at the end of each season the boys were presented with a team jacket at a Father and Son banquet prepared by the Football Mother's Club.

In time Pitcairn's rich sports history would merge with that of the Gateway School District, as Pitcairn's athletes contributed to Gateway's many winning WPIAL teams.

In addition to the three major sports, minor sports such as tennis, golf, track, trapshooting, and dart ball all became part of the robust Pitcairn sports scene.

Those growing up in the 1950s will always remember the Pitcairn-Trafford football rivalry. **Paul Holzshu** is one who would never forget those games.

*"There was a tradition between old Pitcairn High School and Trafford High School. They played for a bell. Whatever high school won the bell, the bell would be painted that school's colors and would stay at that school for a year. There were never any hostilities, just a great admiration and respect between the two communities. It was a tremendous rivalry, and everyone got involved. Everyone walked to those Saturday afternoon games, too. I remember people walking together into the town of the opposing school and going to the game. We called it 'The Snake Dance.'*

In 1958, the bell, the Snake Dance and the rivalry between these two towns became history as Pitcairn was absorbed into the Gateway Union District, and slice of football tradition was gone.

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One measure of a town's character is the number of religious, civic, social and fraternal organizations it has fielded over the years. And here, Pitcairn's record has been outstanding! Names like the Camp "B", the Penny-Cot club, the Boy and Girl Scouts, the Lion's Club, the Pitcairn Women's Club, the Pitcairn Food Pantry, Meals on Wheels, and the Pitcairn Ambulance Association, as well as the many church groups -- all have made their contributions to the vibrant social life of the town.

In 1906, a few young women met to form a group devoted to the study of literature, music, and art. Meetings would be held semi-monthly in the homes of members. .And for those meetings the "Ladies Reading Circle of Pitcairn" planned a journal to guide their activities. They carefully penned their hopes for their group.

*"It is not with an apology that we present our Journal to the night, but with the utmost confidence in our audience as well as the utmost confidence in ourselves. We have become shy of intruding our choice bit of intellect, mirth, and wisdom, upon our friends. Are we afraid of speaking out to the world our noblest thoughts, for fear of ridicule? For we feel that we can entertain really helpful thoughts. Why not speak out all the uplifting sentiments, that are adrift in this world of ours. ...*

*Certain it is that we are living too strenuous a life and neglect the many opportunities offered to place ourselves upon a high thought plane... Much valuable information has already been gleaned from the short studies we have had of music literature, and art...May the light of the Ladies Reading Circle of Pitcairn shine like a beacon star..."*



**30. Volunteers Perform in Community Pride Parades**

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Residents of any town must feel safe and secure in their homes -- those who serve in Pitcairn's Police, Fire, and Ambulance Services are dedicated to that sacred duty.

One of the first acts of the new Borough of Pitcairn in 1894 was to establish a police department. At the meeting of the Borough Council in September 1894, Ordinance No. 2 was passed to regulate undesirable, e.g., "Peddlers and Fakes." J. E. McGuire was hired as regular policeman and J. H. Newlin as extra officer. Their wages were determined at the end of each month based on the number of arrests made. They also were to collect fines when returning stray cattle to their owners.

At the October Council meeting they requested badges to prove their authority. Also at that meeting Ordinance No.3 was passed, prohibiting disorderly conduct. Among other things, loitering on boardwalks and church entrances was prohibited during the evening, and nude bathing in any stream was banned during daylight hours.

With the approach of summer, Broadway became such a busy thoroughfare, and it was necessary to have a patrolman on duty from 7 to 12, seven days a week. On pay day weekends shoppers were so numerous that William Cunningham had to be hired as another extra officer to assist with traffic. By 1909 the Pitcairn Police Department was staffed by 3 regular uniformed patrolmen armed with billy clubs to keep the peace.

The earliest fire company was Hose Co. No.1 (later Pitcairn Fire Company No. 1) founded in 1894 at the old freight station on Broadway in Pitcairn. Its equipment included a hose reel from the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

In 1912 the company purchased musical instruments and organized a Drum Corp, the first of many bands it would field over the years, winning prizes and awards at state and county conventions. They would be joined in 1896 by the Pitcairn Relief Fire Company (later Pitcairn Fire Company No. 2) whose first piece of equipment was a single horse-drawn hose reel. It was not till the 1920s that motorized apparatus began to replace horse drawn equipment.

The company's Drum and Bugle Corp was formed in 1929 and made its appearance in parades all around the county. Water battle teams were formed...and exhibits staged like the popular "Hose Water Battles" between companies 1 and 2 on Broadway.

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31. "Water Battle" Between Pitcairn's Fire Companies on Broadway

Those who also served their country in its many wars were given a place of honor in the heart of the community. American Legion Post 256 keeps the memories alive of those who served in our armed forces by seeing to it that a monument was erected in Pitcairn Park dedicated to Pitcairn's servicemen and women.

The words of **Pfc. William R. Bayliss**, of the 32<sup>nd</sup> infantry might well represent all those veterans who saw combat overseas. In February 1944, Private Bayliss found himself in the middle of the attack on the Marshall Islands. His terse, matter-of-fact diary reminds us of what life was like for those brave soldiers, sailors and marines in facing a determined enemy.

*"Feb. 1. Arrived at the Marshall's this AM. The 17<sup>th</sup> took their island & the artillery set up. Battle wagons and bombers are raising hell. things look good. Battleship (Pa.) sank four Jap. transports this PM. Arrived at island & attack is on. We land at 9:30 AM tomorrow.*

*Feb 2. Attacked Kwajalein this AM. Everything went pretty good. Joe Zabroski got killed and Sgt. Brant got hit. Hauled troops into beach all PM. Saw one plane shot down in flames. Two light tanks and a couple of buffalo were shot out of the water. Returned to our L.S.T. around dark, we had a hell'va time finding it and I got wet to the ass. Navy is bombing our next island now. Just heard the Marines have Kwajalein well in hand, boy some shit, not a marine on the island. Everyone is talking about the battle except me. I was in a A.G.L. boat and landed in the third wave. Got a break once.*

*Feb. 3. L.S.T. pulled into the lagoon last night. This AM all alligators went ashore*

*for maintenance work on the island taken by the 7tyh Recon outfit. Worked on tanks till 2:30 PM. Then went for a walk with Dean over the island sight seeing. Saw the Jap houses and a shot up Zero. At 4:00 PM we started back to the L.S.T. Retired early as we expect a busy day tomorrow hauling 17<sup>th</sup> Inf. troops into Burton Island. We hit another island of our own again day after tomorrow. Hope things work out OK for us again.”*

William Bayliss survived the war and returned to his Pitcairn home to take his honored place among the veterans of America’s wars.



**32. To the many from Pitcairn who served their county**

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In time the Railroad days would become a thing of the past, and memories would fade. After World War Two operations at the Pitcairn yards would be downsized and eventually phased out completely. In 1959 the PRR gave the town its final gift – The YMCA Pitcairn Community Building. Other railroad facilities would eventually be restored to the Borough such as the Pitcairn Park land on Broadway. The Pitcairn Park Building was opened in 1975 to serve as a meeting place; a home to the community, and its many organizations and civic groups.

Ending that unforgettable era, Conrail (the successor to the Pennsy) shut down the last of its operations in the Pitcairn Yards in 1979.



**33. In the 1980s Conrail used the Pitcairn tracks**

### **And in Conclusion...**

How do you tell the story of a town? Well, you might choose a single thread from the tapestry of life that makes up a community. And so we've charted the glory days of Pitcairn the Railroad town, and met some of the folks who have been along for the ride.

But towns change, and so it is with Pitcairn. Beginning in the years after World War II the Pennsylvania Railroad began its gradual withdrawal. By the 1980s, only a ghost of the sprawling yards remained, -- tracks now occupied by the CSX inter-modal terminal which kept the pulse of the railroads alive, transferring freight from trucks to trains. And so we've come back to the old yards -- the place where it all began so many years ago.

The End

