

Sayre Historical Society

103 S. Lehigh Avenue

P.O. Box 311

Sayre, PA 18840

CAPTION: Sayre High School Homecoming Queen Alexa James is congratulated by football co-captains Dan Gonzalez (left) and Richard Brown in this 1996 photograph from the Carl Shay Collection at the Sayre Historical Society.



Sayre Historical Society opening with new exhibit on press photographs

SAYRE – The “Press Photographs of Carl Shay” is the featured exhibit at the Sayre Historical Society which opens for the 2014 season on Saturday, April 5. Mr. Shay was chief photographer for the *Evening Times* newspaper for almost 20 years. A variety of his photographs are on display in the museum’s rotating exhibit room until September 1.

The museum, located in the historic former Lehigh Valley Railroad passenger station in downtown Sayre, features permanent exhibits on the people of Sayre in two large display rooms. Hours are Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Wednesdays from 5 to 7 p.m. Displays focus on the Robert Packer Hospital, Dr. Donald Guthrie, Blue Swan Mills, Lehigh Valley Railroad, and churches, schools and businesses of Sayre. Two HO-scale model train layouts delight all ages. The museum, which is handicap-accessible, also includes the Burkhart gift shop and a 1941 Sayre-built Lehigh Valley Railroad caboose. Admission is free.

The exhibit on press photographs focuses on some of the hundreds of photographs donated to the Sayre Historical Society. The photographs in the Carl Shay Collection cover subjects ranging from high school sports to local dignitaries, children, pets, fires and more.

As the chief photographer for the *Evening Times* for almost 20 years until he left in 1998, Carl Shay seemed to be everywhere.

“I took photographs of pretty much everything that came about,” he said. “The boss wanted art on the front cover of the newspaper and it didn’t have to be someone important.”

He took photographs of local sports, nature, pets and parades.

“Everything got my interest,” he said. “There was no one favorite. I enjoyed all of them.”

Shay had his interest in photography kindled when his youngest son, Mike, was a student at Sayre High School and took a course in photography. As a child himself, Carl had a Brownie camera that he used to take pictures of his old neighborhood on Chestnut Street in West Sayre.

One of the pictures he wishes he still had was actually a series of photographs he took for the newspaper when the old Milltown Bridge was demolished.

“I talked with the boss in charge of the demolition and told him why I was there,” Shay recalled. “He said get yourself as protected as you can. I actually stood next to the guy that touched the load off. I knew when it was going.”

Using an auto-advance camera, he was able to shoot 6 or 8 shots a second as the aging metal bridge was reduced to rubble.

One of the series of picture in the museum exhibit shows the old Chemung River Bridge in Athens meeting a similar fate.

Among the people Shay worked with during his tenure at the *Times* were George Sample, Steve Piatt, Glenn Rolfe, Nellie Brewster, Lon Glover and production manager Nick Witmer.

“I knew what Nick wanted in a photo,” he said. “I tried to satisfy him as much as the boss. He had years of experience and he wanted as good a quality photo as I could give him. The better the quality, the better the final product which is what you see in the paper. You had to keep that in mind all the time.”

Another of his favorite photographs happened in an unplanned way when he was relaxing at a softball game.

“I went to Quinlan Park to cover a softball game,” he said. “I got what I needed and I went up in the bleachers to watch the game. I was looking around from the bleachers and right next to the fence was this little tyke, couldn’t have been more than 3 feet tall.”

Shay said the boy’s father and uncle both played softball and the boy’s mother had made a uniform for the youngster that matched his father’s.

“He had a hat, glove, he was all decked out,” Shay recalled. “And he was practicing pitching. He had it down to a science. Just as he’d seen it done by the big boys. I took a series of pictures of him and I named the project ‘The Pitcher.’”

The newspaper could only run one of the pictures and it was difficult deciding which one to run, he said.

It’s still gratifying when someone remembers one of the pictures he took and tells him how much they enjoyed his work, he said.

Over the years, he managed to save many of his photographs as he realized their historic nature.

“I thought I might very well have a copy someday, thinking they would be of interest to a museum group,” he said. “I felt that these were photographs that would someday cover the history of the Valley and its people.”

The exhibit, free to the public, is on display until September 1.

The Sayre Historical Society is a recipient of the Bradford County United Way.