

MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

Dillmans an old, respected family

By BILL O'BRIEN
Herald writer

THE DILLMANS were a well-known clan from early times in Schuylkill County, and Mahanoy City was privileged to have a branch of the family settle in the borough.

One of the clan who distinguished herself in Mahanoy City was Augusta A. Dillman Thomas, who became the most important historian on the local scene. Her fascinating history of Mahanoy City covering seven decades from its beginnings to the 1930s will be part of the 125th anniversary history book to be published for this year's quasicentennial observance.

(Incidentally, the printing of the quasicentennial book has been sold out. All 2,400 copies have been reserved and the quasicentennial committee has voted not to print any more for the official quasicentennial edition. However, because of continuing requests for copies, it's possible that a separate printing may be arranged, apart from the official printing, and sold at cost which would be higher than the official printing whose subsidized price is five dollars.)

BORN IN Pottsville, Augusta Dillman she was three months old when her widowed mother brought the children to Mahanoy City in 1874. Her late father, Daniel, was an attorney.

She was graduated from Mahanoy City High School in 1891 and from West Chester State Normal School in 1893.

After teaching local grammar school classes for several years she began traveling extensively, touring 27 of the United States and parts of Canada.

Returning home to settle down, she became involved in the campaign for women's voting rights and served as first treasurer of the Equal Franchise Party in Mahanoy City. She was also an advocate of the local Visiting Nurse Association, having served on its board of directors.



80 YEARS AGO — This 1907 view of mid-town Mahanoy City comes from the scrapbook of Bill Kates, a high-rise resident. The Cooperative Building, with sidewalk awning, stood at the northwest corner of Main and Centre. It was removed in 1921 to be replaced by the Union Bank building, now occupied by the Dollar General Stores. The sign on the store front next to it (left) indicates it was occupied by a 5&10 cent store, probably J.J. Newberry which did business there for years. Across the street at the

northeast corner is the First National Bank, original site of town's first general store owned by Dr. Louis Thompson. On the upper floor was the McCann School of Business. This structure was torn down to make room for a new First National Bank building opened in 1930, now the home of Pennsylvania National Bank. Up the street in the distance (far right) may be seen the Hersker Theater, later known as the Family and State, last occupied by the Morton Furniture Company until fire struck around the early 1970s.

On Feb. 21, 1901, she became the wife of Thomas Lewis Thomas, a well-known local wholesale grocer, and turned her attention to researching and writing history. In addition to her wealth of information on the borough, she also compiled the

genealogy of the Dillman family.

HER HUSBAND was a junior partner in the local firm of Van Horn and Thomas. He came to Mahanoy City in 1864 and after graduation from high school in 1880, went to the Eastman

Business College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Returning to Mahanoy in 1882, he became a bookkeeper for the David E. Focht wholesale grocery firm. Focht sold the business in 1890 to a partnership composed of Daniel Stull and D.

L. Van Horn, with Thomas continuing as their bookkeeper. Upon the death of Daniel Stull in 1900, Mr. Thomas became partner with Van Horn.

Thomas and Augusta had three daughters and a son, two of whom survived: Muriel and Vivian.

AUGUSTA HAD an older brother, D. Walter Dillman, who came to Mahanoy with their mother. He was born at Pottsville on Dec. 9, 1869, and grew up in Mahanoy.

After graduation from Mahanoy City High School in 1887 he joined the Lehigh Valley Railroad/Coal Company engineering corps at Lost Creek and eventually was transferred to the railroad's centers in Mauch Chunk, Sayre, Buffalo and Rochester.

Finally he went to Western Pennsylvania and settled in Altoona, where he became a noted civil engineer. At various times he served as the engineer for Cresson, Lilly, Mount Union and Gallitzin boroughs. He was also the engineer who did the surveying for construction of the Cresson state tubercular sanatorium.

Though his fame and fortune were found in places far removed from Mahanoy City, D. Walter Dillman kept in touch with the old home town. This is evident from his continuing membership in the local masonic lodge, F&AM 357, and in POSofA Camp 124.

THE DILLMAN clan in Schuylkill County were descendants of grandfather Daniel K. Dillman, an early resident of Berks County.

A well-researched family tree was compiled by the painstaking efforts of Mahanoy City's Augusta Dillman Thomas. Her work fills eight pages of the J. H. Beers Schuylkill County historical publication of 1916.

Branches of the tree include the Hublers of Branch Township, Gordon, Ashland, Cressona; the Evans of Gilberton Shenandoah, Llewellyn, Phoenix Park, Glen Carbon, New Philadelphia; the Starrs of Wadesville, Llewellyn; the Bodens of Shamokin; and of course the Dillmans of Mahanoy City, Port Carbon, Wadesville, Phoenix Park, Fountain Springs, Shenandoah, Ashland and Ringtown.

An respected old family with a respected old name.

Doctor sees advent of 'co-gen syndrome'

By BILL O'BRIEN
Herald writer

MAHANOY CITY — Cogeneration plants are bringing a new jobs to the coal region, but along with the jobs will come new health problems to challenge the family physician, says Dr. John Karlavage.

The local physician says most people are not aware that their jobs can be the source of many illnesses. Every job has its own peculiar impact on the health of employees, he said, and he expects to see "cogen syndrome" cropping up when the industry gets into full swing.

As a family practitioner with specialized training in occupational health diseases, he has discovered there's much more employment-related illness out there than he imagined a few years ago. He feels it's important for a doctor to be trained to spot the problem in order to prescribe proper treatment.

MANY PEOPLE seek a doctor's help for physical conditions which stem from stress or environmental conditions at the work place, he said, and a physician who is able to trace the difficulty to the source is better able to deal with the symptoms. His philosophy is that "patient care always begins with finding out what they do for a living, for sooner or later the family physician will see some sort of job-impact on the patient's health."

Having spent practically all his life in this area and having had a father and two grandfathers who labored in the mines, Dr. Karlavage said he has always had special concern about occupational illnesses as they affect mine workers.

In the early days of his practice he saw many victims of black lung gasping for breath, but having had no specialized knowledge of the disease, he sent these patients to specialists.

HE BEGAN to see that referring patients elsewhere was causing inconvenience for them, especially the old miners whose lungs were so clogged with coal dust that they had to stop every few steps to catch breath.

“Patient care always begins with finding out what they do for a living, for sooner or later the family physician will see some sort of job-impact on the patient's health.”

Dr. John Karlavage

He decided he would begin treating black lung victims in his own office, so he began studying pneumoconiosis (disease of the lungs caused by the habitual inhalation of irritant mineral or metallic particles).

He attended continuing education sessions on occupational medicine. He went to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health at Morgantown, W. Va., to tap the knowledge of the staff experts. He even journeyed behind the Iron Curtain where industrial safety and health regulations are less rigid than in the United States. At Sesnowicz, Poland, he visited the Mining and Metallurgical Industry Institute. In Moscow he studied special cases alongside physicians at the Institute of Occupational Health.

The European trip demonstrated the importance of preventive practices to safeguard health. For instance, he said he observed patients with ear disorders caused by the harsh vibrations of jackhammers. He's never seen this type of problem in the United States, he said.

He said one of the most important skills he learned was how to interpret lung X-rays. He also completed a mini-residency in occupational medicine at the University of Cincinnati which included training in epidemiology, biostatistics, health services administration and environmental health.

HOW DOES this help the old miner who enters the office laboring for breath? "I don't do

anything completely different from any other family physician but I do believe that patients leave the office feeling better than they did before," he explains.

Because he does carry the credentials of family physician with occupational disease specialty, Dr. Karlavage finds himself treating patients referred from distant areas. He said his patient list includes people who worked around asbestos at railroad yards in Altoona and Reading, and shipyards in Baltimore.

Asbestos can cause severe lung problems, he noted, and it becomes doubly troubling when the victim also worked around coal, as was the case with miners who left here to take jobs in railroad shops or shipyards. In the early 1950s, the Sun shipbuilding company came to Shenandoah to recruit mineworkers for higher paying jobs, and many of the men who left here with black lung also developed asbestos problems.

Chemical workers also experience serious health problems, he said. Farm workers are frequently exposed to inhalation of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides. Women who work in garment factories may suffer "white lung" ailments. Even a clearcut worker in a clean air-conditioned office can suffer from the stress that goes with the occupation.

WHAT IT ALL boils down to, Dr. Karlavage said, is that jobs have many ways of affecting

health. That's why you hear more and more discussion about stress management, OSHA (Office of Safety and Health Administration) regulations, chemical exposure, etc.

For this reason, he believes specialized training in occupational disease is a valuable skill for the family physician. Unfortunately, most doctors trained in occupation-related diseases don't go into family practice, but are absorbed by industry to become company doctors, he pointed out.

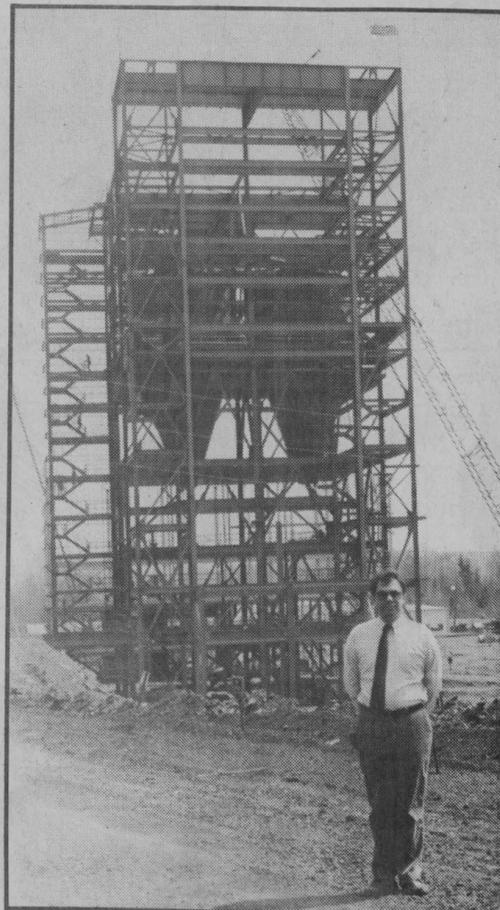
Equipping an office can be a costly necessity for a physician. Just two items in Dr. Karlavage's office carry a total price tag of \$135,000. One is a fitness performance test center costing \$100,000, the other a pulmonary function test mechanism costing \$35,000. However, the expenditures helped convert his office a 107 W. Centre St. into a "miniature human factors laboratory."

ASIDE FROM health care, Dr. Karlavage said his concept of family practice includes helping patients cope with related stress-causing situations, such as the legal ordeal of obtaining workmen's compensation, insurance or black lung benefits to which they have a right. If necessary, he said, he will present his findings in a medical case, even if his opinion conflicts with that of company doctors.

He has also been a pro-union activist in behalf of miners, even to the point of joining picket activities, just as his father, the late John "Corky" Karlavage, did when he served as an organizer and field representative for the United Mine Workers.

All this, yet the doctor still finds time to make regular house calls throughout the northern Schuylkill area.

Dr. Karlavage is a coal cracker to the core. He's fascinated by anything that has to do with the history of coal or the coal region. Pride in his ancestry is evident when he talks about his dad and both grandfathers, John Glauzel and Stanley Kujalowicz (Karlavage), having worked in the mines around Shenandoah. You sense that he wishes he, too, could have been a mine worker



EYE ON COGENS Dr. John Karlavage is pictured during a visit to the Yatesville cogeneration plant construction site. The Mahanoy City physician said he expects to see "cogen syndrome" health problems appear after the new industry gets into full swing.

(Evening Herald/Emil Yenchick)

and probably would have been, were it not for his dad insisting that he choose an occupation away from the mines.

So he did the next best thing — he chose to become a doctor and stay in the coal region to serve its people. During his years of study at Jefferson Medical College in

Philadelphia and his internship at Wilson Memorial Hospital in New York, there was never a doubt in his mind where his future would be.

The doctor's mother, Mrs. Pauline (Glauzel), resides in Shenandoah. Her husband, John, died on April 1, 1977.