

**Fleetwood Area Historical Society
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Vice President - Bill Strause
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Recording Secretary - Position Open
Treasurer - David Dreibelbis

Directors

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Dale Adams John Koller

Contributors:

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Fleetwood Area Historical Society Newsletter

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The Fleetwood Area Historical Society
will meet on Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 7:00 PM
in our Meeting Room
at Fleetwood Community Center

*We will reminisce about previous Holiday Meetings, show
slides of Roadside America, discuss recent Museum
discoveries, and elect officers for 2025.*

*We need a President, Vice-President and Recording Secretary.
The meeting is open to the public. Thank you for your support*

*Bill Strause
Acting President*

DAVID 'BILL' WILSON NOMINATED TO BERKS COUNTY MILITARY HALL OF FAME

It is with great pride, we can report that as of November 9, 2024, David William "Bill" Wilson has been inducted into the Berks County Military Hall of Fame. During World War II, Bill was awarded the Distinguished Unit Badge for Action with Company C, 69th Tank Battalion. This was just one of many awards for Bill Wilson. The October 2021 issue of Fleetwood Area Historical Society newsletter has a very interesting time line of the efforts of the 6th Armored Division of Patton's Third Army. Many thanks to Bob Knoll for this inspiring story of Bill Wilson.



General George C. Patton
pins the Silver Star Medal on
Sgt. David "Bill" Wilson

The Historical Society will be Open
Mondays from 9:00 - 12:00

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Fleetwood Area Historical Society
Suite One, 110 Arch Street
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CLARENCE E. HARTZ



Another Hometown hero fighting in WWII was Private First Class Clarence E. Hartz of Blandon. Clarence served in the 50th Infantry Battalion, 6th Armored Division. He was killed in action on September 25, 1944 and awarded the Purple Heart. His burial was in the Lorraine American Military Cemetery at Saint Avold, France. His grave is located at Plot C, Row 30 Grave 46.

FLEETWOOD METAL BODY COMPANY

The name Fleetwood, in the early automobile industry, was the epitome of high quality custom-crafted coach builders. It was the most desired auto-body for manufacturers both here in the U.S. and abroad. These names read like a who's who in the car world, from Rolls Royce and Duesenberg to Packard and Pierce Arrow just to name a few. Automobile chassis were shipped to Fleetwood where a customer's wish list of features was hand built to the exacting standards of European cabinet makers and coach builders - think horse drawn coaches made of fine woods, leathers and trim.

Fleetwood Metal Body Company was originally started in 1905 as Reading Metal Body Company, in the town of Fleetwood. The business changed owners and the name changed to Fleetwood Metal Body Co. By 1909 the business was occupying 10,000 sq.ft. The company doubled that by 1910. Then after a devastating fire in 1917, rebuilt to create a 4-story 60,000 sq.ft. brick structure in the heart of Fleetwood. The employee count went from 125 hands to a staff of 375 working to meet the demand. In 1919 Fleetwood Metal Body was so flush with orders for it's quality workmanship, it had enough backlog to carry it through to 1921. New orders took on a bidding war concept, with a bonus paid to FMB to encourage them to accept the order.

A sales office was leased in New York City near Broadway & Central Park South, the part of the city known as "automobile row" in 1918. A salon (or showroom) gave Fleetwood Metal Body year round exposure at East 57th St & 5th Avenue. The large customer base offered by New York City, prompted many manufacturers to display their automobiles using a Fleetwood body to enhance their image.

In the February 1, 1920 issue of The Reading Eagle, much praise was given to Fleetwood Metal Body. Likewise, auto industry executives commented "It has been our privilege to inspect many establishments and from the standpoint of production, this plant is NOT exceeded by any other that we have visited". Customers were able to be a part of the making of their coach from consulting with the designers about the style and features, to visiting the factory as Mary Pickford did when she took delivery of her cars.

In 1925 Fleetwood Metal Body was sold to Fisher Body. Five years later the Fleetwood plant was closed and production was moved to Detroit. Fisher Body became part of General Motors and the Fleetwood name got rolled into the Cadillac Fleetwood model. Some say the Fleetwood name gave credence to General Motors. One General Motors executive was quoted as saying that the Fleetwood name on a car body justified them charging an additional \$1000 for that vehicle.

Fleetwood Metal Body Company didn't need General Motors or Cadillac to achieve world-wide fame. It came from the work ethic of the craftsmen and everyone employed at what was deemed "the birthplace of car body building". A name to be proud of...and I am!

She would walk thru the plant, ask questions and converse with the workers who found her to be beautiful and "not a bit stuck-up". The employees themselves expressed it this way - "We had the best mechanics, the best mill men, carpenters, sheet metal workers, painters and other artisans. Everything had to fit perfectly. Just had to be so."

GH

FLEETWOOD'S CIGAR FACTORY BUILDING REMOVED



A building that had historical significance in Fleetwood, was recently demolished. Originally a harness factory, it later was at a cigar factory and store.

E.C. Weston was the original manufacturer of cigars in this building and was the first to employ women, according to the 1973 Centennial Anthology of Fleetwood. Due to Weston's ill health, Howard Rothermel took over the business and moved it to a location above the print shop of Wesley Kern. The original location is pictured in the Centennial Book of 1973.

The remainder of the building is shown as seen on November 25, before it was leveled. The address of this building was 18 S. Richmond St., Fleetwood.

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