

Proclamation

A Proclamation On the Occasion of the 122nd Anniversary of the Founding of the City of Monessen.

WHEREAS The land that would become the City of Monessen was surveyed in 1897 by H. Dallas McCabe, of Pittsburgh, through the East Side Land Company. The original plot of land consisted of eight farms and a winding country road lined with blackberry bushes; and was part of Rostraver Township. McCabe, along with Colonel James M. Schoonmaker and others, wanted to expand the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie (P&LE) Railroad south to reach coalfields in southern counties, and;

WHEREAS, Schoonmaker formed a business deal with Indiana-based industrialist William H. Donner, who brought his American Tin Plate Company to Monessen. With that first mill, many people, businesses and industries began to move to Monessen, and;

WHEREAS, on **September 3, 1898**, the community became a Borough, and was officially founded and given a name. The name “Monessen” was coined because the business leaders claimed that the new community would be a “New World Essen on the Monongahela”; combining “Mon” for the Monongahela River, and “Essen” for an industrial city in Germany, and;

WHEREAS, the names of the founders are immortalized in many of the city’s streets – William Donner, James Schoonmaker, H. Sellers McKee, James H. Reed, Philander Knox, Alexander McMahan, George B. Motheral, George Nash, and William Manown. Two do not have streets named after them – McCabe, who laid out many of the original streets, and George O. Morgan, whose street has since been demolished during Urban Renewal, and;

WHEREAS, throughout the early 20th century, Monessen grew in population, landmass, influence, and cultural importance. The city became a geographical center for the region, and a center for major events in in the early 20th century, such as the Women’s Suffrage Movement, the Labor Movement, Prohibition, and WWI and WWII era efforts. After growing exponentially in such a short time, and seeing the rise of many industries, the development of numerous neighborhoods, and the annexation of more land, Monessen was incorporated as a city, and;

WHEREAS, On September 16, 1921, Monessen became a Third Class City, under the leadership of Mayor Woodward, and;

WHEREAS, The city had a multitude of nationalities and mirrored the ethnicities of the Pittsburgh region, and served as a microcosm of America as a whole. At its peak, the city had over 20,000 residents, and;

WHEREAS, throughout the 20th Century, Monessen grew into an industrial, cultural, and political powerhouse. The city became home to hundreds of veterans, boasted thousands of middle class jobs, hosted Presidents, Civic Leaders, and Celebrities. It also went down in infamy for its speakeasies, illegal gambling halls, racketeering, and nightlife. It was also home to dozens of churches and even more bars and ethnic clubs, and;

WHEREAS, in the late 20th Century, stability disappeared as the city’s buildings and infrastructure aged, and as jobs went away. As in many other Rust Belt towns, people moved away and the city struggled to find new industries, and;

WHEREAS, Today, the city has about 7,600 residents, and the city has suffered from decades of disinvestment, but residents remain resilient. While we have many problems, our city is poised for growth in the coming years, based on the success of the rest of the region. We are continually striving to rebuild our city even better than it was before. Our best times are not behind us, but are yet to come.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Matthew T. Shorraw, Mayor of the City of Monessen, commemorate the auspicious occasion of the 122nd Anniversary of the Founding of the City of Monessen. I applaud the progress our city has made in that time, and commemorate and honor the legacy of those who came before us. May our city's future be blessed with Grace, Prosperity, and Peace. As Mayor Parente once, said, "*This is only the beginning of the City of Monessen, where there are many things yet to be accomplished. With God's help and the continued cooperation of all the people, we will finish the job, and Monessen will be a better place in which to live, work, and prosper.*"



Matthew Shorraw
Mayor, City of Monessen