

Setting an example

State magazine features Tamaqua rejuvenation

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A four-page, full-color spread in the newly released issue of the state's official history publication showcases Tamaqua's renaissance by examining the restoration of an 1875 industrial complex.

The story, 'Giving a New Shine to an Old Boot and Shoe Factory,' is featured in the winter issue of *Pennsylvania Heritage* magazine, the 37th volume of the quarterly publication.

The article appears in the magazine's 'Investing in our past' section.

The story details the restoration of the sprawling Tamaqua Boot and Shoe Factory, now the Hazle Street Apartments, a project that won the 2010 PNC Bank Leading the Way Award. The rehabilitation was a project of the not-for-profit Alliance for Building Communities, Allentown.

The account is written and illustrated by Bonnie Wilkinson Mark, former historical architect for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Her essay traces the devel-

opment of the community from its start to the turning point decade of the 1980s, and then outlines initiatives that have spearheaded rejuvenation.

"The next 20 years brought dramatic change," writes Mark, describing the community's rally, including creation of the Tamaqua Area 2004 Partnership "which received state funding because of the support of Representative David G. Argall (who is now serving in the state Senate)."

Mark's story also describes key elements in the town's resurgence, the Main Street and Elm Street programs, the streetscape overhaul, the John E. Morgan Foundation and Roberta and Ernest Scheller, Jr., Family Foundation, and others.

"The foundations essentially enable local high school graduates to obtain a college education at no cost," writes Mark. She also cites the strength of a multipronged effort to improve the area.

"Tamaqua is an optimistic, forward-looking community that is embracing and nurturing renewal



DONALD R. SERFASS/TIMES NEWS

A feature story in *Pennsylvania Heritage* magazine's winter edition, just released, showcases the rejuvenation of Tamaqua by telling the story of the adaptive reuse of the historic, circa 1875 Tamaqua Boot and Shoe Factory. The four-page account was written by Bonnie Wilkinson Mark, former historical architect for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

and revitalization, but this renaissance is not due to only one individual or organization."

She goes on to say individuals and organizations made the difference, including such groups as: Borough of Tamaqua, Tamaqua Area Chamber

of Commerce, Downtown Tamaqua, Tamaqua Historical Society, Tamaqua Save Our Station, Tamaqua Industrial Development Enterprises and the Eastern Schuylkill Recreation Commission.

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out that, in 2009, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, dedicated to non-profit community development, designated Tamaqua one of only two rural Sustainable Communities in the nation.

The article puts the community and its progress in front of the eyes of the Commonwealth, and is receiving rave reviews.

"I think it provides a good overview of the projects and initiatives that have been going on for some time," said Linda J. Yulanavage, chamber executive director.

Micah Gursky, borough council president, said the bottom line is quality of life.

"The many people in Tamaqua who are working to improve our town don't do it to get fancy articles in magazines — we do it because we live here and we want it to be better," he said. "But it sure is terrific to be recognized by one of the most respected heritage magazines in the nation. I hope other com-

munities are inspired and benefit from the lessons Tamaqua has learned as they try to revitalize wherever they call home."

To assemble the story, Marks spent time in the community and interviewed Yulanavage, Gursky, Dale Freudenberg and others.

Pennsylvania Heritage is co-published by the Pennsylvania Heritage Society and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The stories in Pennsylvania Heritage focus on the commonwealth's rich history and culture, with articles written by historians, curators, and archivists. The magazine also includes news about museum and preservation programs, and the Pennsylvania Heritage Society.

For the past 27 years, a Tamaqua native has served in the capacity of editor of Pennsylvania Heritage. Michael J. O'Malley, III, who grew up on West Broad Street, joined the PHMC in 1978, later assuming the magazine's editor post.