

Book, lessons keep D&L corridor's history alive

By JIM BINO
Staff Writer

The story of how anthracite made it from northeastern Pennsylvania to Philadelphia to drive the Industrial Revolution is a significant part of American history.

And now, grade-school children in two school districts in Luzerne and Carbon counties will be taught that lesson in their social studies class.

Dennis Scholl, the outreach coordinator for the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor — the agency that has undertaken projects to keep the history alive for tourists — has written a book and a curriculum he hopes to see in more classrooms in the two counties.

Scholl said the book and curriculum were part of the corridor's plan all along.

"When the corridor's management plan was completed in 1993, part of the plan covers educational endeavors the corridor wants to do over time," Scholl said. "One endeavor was formal education projects."

A committee of volunteers from the community made up of teachers and local historians was formed to work on those projects.

"They developed a curriculum geared toward fourth- and fifth-grade students," Scholl said. "It tells



fourth grade. We felt it would be wonderful for the children to learn the local parts of Pennsylvania history."

Scholl volunteered to write the book, which took six months. Then the committee reviewed it. The first edition went to press in 2007, and the second edition last year.

The traveler's trunk that comes with the book contains 1850s-vintage artifacts to give the students a feel for the time period, Scholl said.

It includes a boy's and girl's costume, an 1850 text-book, coal-mining lamps, a big chunk of coal, a feed-bag for a mule, a miniature iron pig, which is a bar of pure iron, and an arrow-head, because there were Lenape Indians in the region.

"Everything in the trunk relates to the book," Scholl said. "You take the items out, chapter by chapter. It gives the student a hands-on experience."

Scholl said the curriculum is different than any other history curriculum the student may experience.

"The usual Pennsylvania history tells the story of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh

and Erie," Scholl said. "This curriculum tells the backyard history story not normally taken into account. It's the history of the towns, industries and people who settled here."

Scholl said the curriculum has been noted by the state Department of Education. "It is a multi-disciplined program that includes language arts, social studies, science and environmental science," he said. "We got a letter from the president of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, saying he liked it."

Scholl said 10 school districts in the five-county reach of the corridor — Luzerne, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton and Bucks — have adopted the curriculum, which is offered free of charge to all school districts in those counties

thanks to grants the D&L found.

The participating districts include Jim Thorpe Area in Carbon County and Hanover Area in Luzerne County.

"A total of 32 elementary schools have the curriculum," Scholl noted. "We are very interested in expanding into Carbon and Luzerne counties. We were able to raise close to \$100,000 from a state grant and donations from private foundations and banks to offer it free of charge. We still have 25 trunks."

The book is also available at Barnes and Noble bookstores. Scholl will be present in the downtown Wilkes-Barre Barnes and Noble store at 11 a.m. Saturday to sign copies.

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Dennis Scholl, outreach coordinator for the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, holds a copy of "Tales of the Towpath," a book that will help students learn about how anthracite fueled the Industrial Revolution.

the D&L story of how coal was mined, marketed and transported to fuel the Industrial Revolution."

Scholl said the committee met for two years, and decided the curriculum should have two components — a book and a traveler's trunk.

"The focal piece of the curriculum is the children's storybook," Scholl said. "It engages the student by getting him or her more interested in local history. Pennsylvania history is introduced in the

er's trunk.