

LOCAL NEWS

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COATESVILLE



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In honor of Rebecca Pennock Lukens, Kyle Gibson, left, chair of Women in American History Committee for the Daughters of the American Revolution, presents the Outstanding Woman in American History award to Lukens descendent Scott Huston, president of the National Iron and Steel Heritage Museum, at the Lukens Main Office Building in Coatesville on Saturday.

DAR celebrates nation's 'first industrialist woman'

Under the leadership of Rebecca Pennock Lukens, Lukens Iron and Steel Company thrived during the 19th century

By Jen Samuel

jsamuel@dailylocal.com

COATESVILLE » Chester County members of the Daughters of the Revolution celebrated Rebecca Pennock Lukens — America's first woman industrialist business owner — at the historic Lukens Georgian Revival style headquarters on First Street over the weekend.



Lukens

Scott Huston, a direct descendant of Rebecca Pennock Lukens, accepted the National Daughters of the Revolution Recognition for an Outstanding Woman in American History in her honor. His father, Charles Lukens III, was also present.

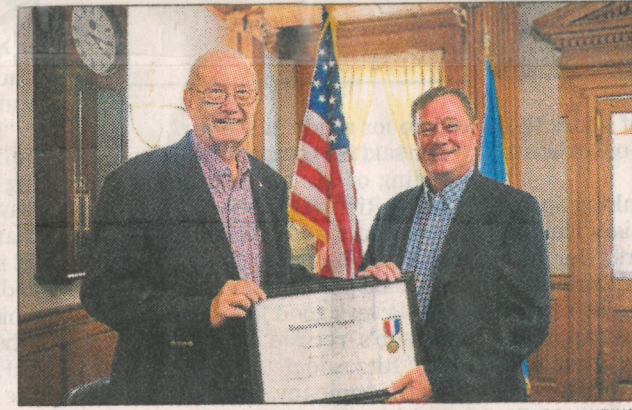
Huston said his great-great-great grandmother was the first female chief executive officer industrialist, adding that she was an "inspiration to many. He lauded her determination to strengthen the company while treating the workers well and successfully vying against other steel companies, all owned by men, in the 1800s.

At the time of her death in 1854, Lukens was the wealthiest woman in Chester County. Lukens Iron and Steel Company was founded in 1810 in the City of Coatesville. Nearly 200 years later, the family sold the business, which has since been bought and sold a few times during the last 20 years, beginning with Bethlehem Steel in 1998.

Two years ago, Cleveland-Cliffs purchased the steel company, and the business is thriving. There are an estimated 1,000 employees today working on steel industrial projects for the U.S. Navy among others. There are high expectations that Cleveland-Cliffs will invest strongly in this enterprise

in Coatesville in the near future, which would bring an explosion of new high-paying jobs to the city and the Western Chester County region.

Yet the future growth of the steel business, and its longstanding endurance, all became first possible with the strength of one woman: Rebecca Pennock Lukens Fortune Magazine crowned Lukens "America's First Female CEO of an Industrial Company" and inducted her into the American Business Hall of Fame in 1994, said Kyle Gibson, chair of Women in American History Committee for the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Gibson delivered remarks on Lukens' legacy on Saturday morning during the ceremony in Coatesville.



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The Pennsylvania Legislature and City of Coatesville have declared her "America's First Woman Industrialist," Gibson said. Further, a World War II Liberty Ship was named in her honor.

Gibson said Lukens was selected for the award based on her many accomplishments and contributions to not only her Chester County community but also on a national and international level. A Quaker, she learned mill operations

from her father, Isaac Pennock. She married Charles Lukens in 1813, who eventually ran the family-owned business. After her husband's death, she took over as manager. In 1890, the mill was incorporated as Lukens Iron and Steel Company.

Rebecca Lukens' name will be placed in the DAR national database as one of the outstanding women in American History, Gibson said. She joins fellow award recipients including author Pearl Buck, Sacagawea from the Lewis and Clark expedition, and opera singer Marian Anderson.

The DAR Outstanding Woman in American History award included a certificate and medal.

The National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution is a non-profit, non-political service organization that honors the women and men whose sacrifices made this country free. The organization is headquartered in Washington on 17th Street across from the Ellipse on the northwest grounds of the White House.

The Chester County chapter of DAR has 200 members who are direct descendants of a Patriot who furthered the cause of American independence.