

## James W. Thomas (1813-1891)

When we were gathering information and stories about the Founders of A.I.M.E., lots of them are kind of famous and easy to say, “that’s the guy!” But some not so much. Right there in the middle of the list of the “original 22” was “James Thomas, Wilkes-Barre,” who we profiled as a Welshman.

Nearly half of the 69 founding members of A.I.M.E. were immigrants. Many of them from Wales.

In the mid-1800s, as America’s mines and factories were growing, large numbers of skilled workers came from Wales to America. Most of these workers who knew something about making iron and mining coal, came here from southern Wales, Britain’s main source of coal and iron.





**The 1870 US Census has 120 James Thomases for Pennsylvania.**

**Our searches for Luzerne County and an occupation of “Works in Mines” or something similar in Luzerne County produced a “mine foreman” and a “works in mines” in Plymouth; a “miner” in each of Newport Township, Lackawanna Township, and Plains Township; two “miners,” a “mine laborer,” and two “mule driver in mines” on one page in Scranton, which still was in Luzerne County at that time; several other choices; and a “J.W. Thomas, boss in mines” in Wilkes Barre 1st Ward.**

**A few more clues – two pages more in our notes including that the E&MJ reports of the early meetings referred to “James Thomas” as both “J. A. Thomas” and “J. W. Thomas,” and...**





It is our opinion that "James Thomas, Wilkes-Barre." was born April 10, 1813, in Monmouthshire, Wales; came to the U.S. in 1846 and settled in Norwegian Township, Schuylkill County with his wife Mary and two children, Elizabeth, and James William. James worked there as a miner; moved to Pottsville and described himself as a "coal operator" in 1860. They moved to Wilkes Barre in June of 1868, and he described himself as a "boss in mines" at the 1870 census, and as a "Coal Operator" in the Wilkes Barre City Directories of 1871-1882. He was appointed as a Wilkes Barre Alderman by Governor Hoyt in 1879 but was defeated for reelection. We believe he is the same James Thomas that was an agent in Wilkes Barre for Swoyer's Coal in 1877. James Thomas, "a Good Old Man" died September 11, 1891, at the home of his son James W. Thomas.

There was no mention of "A.I.M.E." in any news articles including obituaries, but he IS "James Thomas." (????)

