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# Dunmore Corners

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## Life



## Sweet Success

**Williams Pies Returns to its Roots in Dunmore**



# Tradition of Excellence

*Williams Pies returned to Dunmore this year to get back to its roots.*

by Jim Zeleniak  
Community contributor

**D**unmore is fortunate to have several small family businesses with long histories. Adding to that tradition is the newly re-opened Williams Pies, a business that began 67 years ago in West Scranton, then spent 47 years as a Dunmore institution serving the community and Greater Scranton its handmade delicious pies.

## **Williams Pies through the years**

In 1946, Roy and Ann Williams opened The Blue Bake Shop on North Main Avenue in West Scranton. Everything was made from scratch from the finest ingredients — the cakes, the cookies, the crème puffs and éclairs, the

“Royanna” donuts, and, of course, the pies. Unlike other area bake shops, the pie crust was made, not from lard and powdered milk, but from whole milk, flour, butter and eggs. The fillings came from real fruit. The custards and crèmes were homemade from old family recipes.

In this era, a piece of pie and a cup of coffee were dietary staples for traveling salesmen and blue-collar workers. Many area restaurants, such as The Castle, Chick’s and Summit Diners added Williams Pies to their menus.

By 1951, the Williams were baking more than 500 pies a week, necessitating a move to a larger facility on West Market Street. As demand for Williams Pies continued to increase, the couple again relocated their business after a few years, this time to the corner of Blakely and Grove Streets in Dunmore. It was





here they found a permanent home and set deep roots.

***[When Williams Pies was getting its start in the 1950s], a piece of pie and a cup of coffee were dietary staples for traveling salesmen and blue-collar workers.***

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As their growth and success continued, a group of local business men, including officials from the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, approached the Williams in 1966 about mass producing their pies. To do this would require using commercial ovens and factory manufactured dough. Inves-

tors lined up to offer a stake in the enterprise, but it was not to be because the couple quickly discovered that industrial ovens, factory made dough, and assembly line workers could not replicate the quality of their product.

So, they continued to bake the pies the old way — crusts rolled, formed and pinched by hand. It remained this way until Roy and Ann retired in 1989 to spend time with their family, which, by this time, numbered 11 children and more than 100 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The family recipes for the pies became treasured secrets that were passed on to the children. Though no one continued with the baking business, some of the family members continued to bake pies using the original recipes for friends and family.

From 1989 to 2011, these recipes and the Original Williams Pies business laid dormant. As for the 11 children, they had

gone their separate ways and gone on to become teachers, builders, housewives, insurance managers, and professionals in many other occupations.

At family get-togethers, they fondly reminisced about the old days when long lines of people, young and old, stood waiting patiently to buy holiday pies at the William's Pie shop.

### **A legendary business returns**

In 2011, as fate would have it, Richard, the eighth-born of the Williams' 11 children, was busy running a successful carpentry and fine cabinet-making business in the Lehigh Valley, when he was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident.

At the age of 53, while recuperating from a painful back injury, he decided to return to pie baking — partly because he recalled the days working with his dad in the bakery and wanted to honor that

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**This freshly baked cherry pie is just one of the more than 75 varieties of pies that comes out of Williams Pies and Bakery.**  
Photo courtesy of Jim Zeleniak

# 67

The first Williams Pies was started by Roy and Ann Williams in 1946 -- more than 67 years ago.

## WILLIAMS PIES

- **Store located at:**  
227 E. Drinker St., Dunmore
- **To place an order:**  
Call 570-207-9700
- **Weekly Store Hours:**  
**Tuesday** - Thursday: 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Friday and Saturday: 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Sunday: 7 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Monday: Closed
- **About Williams Pies:**  
**All** pies are handmade, this includes crusts, creams, custards, crumbs, fillings, meringues and more. A partial list of pies can be found on [williamspies.com](http://williamspies.com). As their website states: "If you don't see it, ask us. We have many more and regularly make new pies."



The "Patriot Pie" was made special at Williams for the Fourth of July. It featured fresh blueberry and strawberry fillings.

Photo courtesy of Jim Zeleniak



Fresh baked raisin bread cools on a rack.

Photo courtesy of Jim Zeleniak

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memory, partly because it was something he loved. His wife Laurel, who had heard so many of the pie stories over the years, enthusiastically agreed to help Richard pursue his dream.

They started by relocating back to Northeastern Pennsylvania where the Williams Pie name was still legendary with many of the shop's old customers. They found a charming 1880s-era country store in Ransom Township between Taylor and Clarks Summit and began to renovate it.

This entailed acquiring the needed equipment, as well as renewing and refining old baking skills. They operated there for a year as Williams Country Store and it taught them much about running a successful pie and bakery business. But they also learned that it took a lot of pies to pay the bills.

They gained newfound respect for Richard's parents for managing to raise 11 kids selling only pies. They also learned the importance of the old real estate adage of "location, location, location."

After a year in Ransom Township, culminating in a very successful holiday pie season, the opportunity to move the business to Dunmore arose. Struggling with mixed feelings about leaving the picturesque rural location and village, they decided it was time to return to Dunmore where so many of the old customers still lived.

So, in the cold of January, Rich and Laurel, helped out by many friends, disconnected, packed up and moved back to the town that made the Williams Pies brand famous.

### Back to its roots

Their first place once they returned to Dunmore was on Wheeler Avenue. As they settled into the new digs, business improved rapidly and they realized that they could quickly outgrow this smaller place with its limited parking.

While considering this, they learned of a larger building perfectly located on Drinker Street in the busy heart of Dunmore. After a successful Easter holiday and another bout of soul searching, they decided it would be best to take this opportunity with an eye to establish deep roots that could serve the business well for many years. So after only a few months, they shut down the business on Wheeler Avenue and moved yet again.

This move necessitated that they refurbish another space to their needs, but it paid off. Perhaps symbolically, work progressed enough to reopen for business on May 23 of this year, which would have been Roy's 95th birthday.

In this new location, the business now really began to hit its stride. Old and new customers found them more easily and frequently. Once these customers tried the pies, pizza, and other goodies they returned again and again. Word



of mouth, combined with the reviews online and on Facebook to help spread the word.

***[Richard returned to pie baking] partly because he recalled the days working with his dad in the bakery and wanted to honor that memory, and partly because it was something he loved.***

With its renewed energy, Williams continued to expand its pie offerings menu, growing it to over 88 variations. They evolved into what they are today — a boutique, custom pie maker. Rich's natural creativity, now directed to baking, gradually led to this.

Besides the plethora of pies, Williams' baked goods now include smaller carryout and lunchbox items like "pie pockets," muffins, rolls, personal stromboli, and individual 5-inch sized pies. In another break from tradition, necessitated by changing customer tastes, custom cakes of all sizes and flavors are also now available for order. This is the domain of Richard and Laurel's daughter Sarah, a culinary school graduate who has recently joined the family business.

On the cafe menu, Williams has added seasonal lunch and dinner items such as soups, pierogies, English pasties, and even fresh dough pizza and Italian baked delicacies. In the cozy sit-down cafe and for take-out, local coffee purveyor Electric City Roasters Coffee is available.

Today, every Williams' pie is made with the finest ingredients and hand-crafted care in the tradition of Roy and Ann. You can call ahead and pick up an oven warm pie in a few hours, which is a pretty unique feature in today's often frozen, automated and microwaved food world.

Williams Pies and treats have already been featured in, and can also be increasingly found in, local restaurants, diners, and convenience stores, such as Aurants in Duryea, The Colonnade Catering in Scranton, and now the Honky Tonk in



**The move to Drinker Street gives the Williams the room they need to grow while putting them in the busy heart of Dunmore.**

Photo courtesy of Jim Zeleniak



**Williams Pies and Bakery has a variety of daily specials, including pasties, pierogies, pizza, stromboli, calzones and other Italian specialties.**

Photo courtesy of Jim Zeleniak

Dunmore.

The motto that appeared above the door of The Blue Bake Shop: "Out of the Blue, a Treat for You" still applies, but today's motto could easily be "We're Back!"

### **For more information**

Williams Pies and Bakery has a

seasonally-changing menu. Pictures and partial list of the available pie varieties can be found at [williamspies.com](http://williamspies.com) or their Williams Pies and Bakery Facebook page.

The phone number to place orders is 570-207-9700. Give Rich a call. He loves to hear stories of the old days and talk about his dream.

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what you

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[hibumagazine.com/survey](http://hibumagazine.com/survey)