

## ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

Wednesday, May 11, 1983 — Catlin House - 6:30 P.M.

You are cordially invited to attend the annual Dinner meeting of the Lackawanna Historical Society to be held at the Catlin House on Wednesday, May 11 at 6:30 P.M. A delicious roast beef dinner will be catered by the Dippre and members and friends are welcome. Cost of the dinner will be \$7.50 per person and reservations may be made by calling the Catlin House 344-3841. The annual election and installation of the Society's officers and trustees will begin the program followed by our guest speaker, Dr. Eugene C. Cook, associate professor of anthropology at the Community College of Philadelphia who will give a slide illustrated lecture on "The Indians of Pennsylvania". He will tell about the history and culture of all of the tribes who inhabited Pennsylvania from the earliest times until the coming of the white man. Dr. Cook has written and lectured widely on Indian subjects and this promises to be a most interesting lecture. The program will be held in connection with National Historic Preservation Week. Call now for reservations and we will see you on Wednesday, May 11.

## CATLIN HOUSE NEWS

The winter months have not been dull ones here at the Catlin House; we have had an ever growing number of researchers, tourists and community groups as visitors. In January we had 149 visitors and 6 groups; in February we had 217 and 8 groups and in March we had 240 and 7 groups. Among the groups coming for tours were Girl, Boy and Cub Scouts, Intermediate School classes and student groups from Marywood College and Keystone Junior College. Members of the D.A.R. and the Century Club have also been here. The staff members Mrs. June Wech, Mrs. Marie McLane and William P. Lewis have all assisted to make these groups welcome.

Good interest and attendance has been shown for our program meetings. Executive Director William Lewis gave a fine slide lecture on Col. L.A. Watres in February; Ms. Nancy McDonald, local high school teacher, gave an enjoyable lecture on the history of theatre in Scranton in March and Rev. Nestor Koval, a local pastor, gave an informative talk on "The Ukrainians of Lackawanna County" in April. A number of our antique gowns were modeled at a recent fashion show at the Century Club, thanks to our Fashions Committee.

The Singers Guild of Scranton will hold an after-concert reception here on Sunday, May 1 and Trustees of the Society will be meeting here on Wednesday, May 4 with President John L. Earl in charge.

## THE LIFE AND WORK OF COL. L. A. WATRES



One of the finest and most distinguished public servants ever to come from Lackawanna County was Colonel Louis Arthur Watres. A remarkable individual, he was born in this county and served successively as an attorney, county solicitor, state senator, Lt. Governor of Pennsylvania; then as a banker, publisher, soldier, and leader in business, civic and fraternal enterprises. A man of commanding personality and a virtual dynamo of energy and foresight, he was a natural leader in many areas of public life. He was at the same

time a man of high character and dedication, a great worker and activist and was blest with a genial personality of great warmth and friendliness. His colorful career lasted for more than 50 years and he made a number of lasting contributions to this region. His remarkable life is well worth recalling.

Born of sturdy parentage, his father was Lewis S. Watres 1808-1882. He came to the Lackawanna Valley in 1835 from Phoenixville, Pa. and became a pioneer developer in Blakely Township. He located at Mt. Vernon Mills, now Jessup, where he purchased 400 acres of timberland. Here he opened the first coal mine below Carbondale, worked as a lumberman and served as Justice of Peace for Blakely Township. A patriotic individual, he helped to raise two companies of men to serve in the Civil War. In 1865 he moved to Scranton where he became an alderman and lived at 105 Adams Avenue. He married a talented woman from an old Wayne County family. She was Harriet G. Hollister, sister of Dr. Horace Hollister, one of the early physicians and historians of the Valley. She was a poetess of unusual ability; her poems being published in many of the leading journals of the day under the pen-name of "Stella of Lackawanna". Her poetry was later published in a book entitled "Cobwebs". Lewis and Harriet Watres were the parents of four children: Mrs. John L. Hull and Charles Watres of Scranton; Mrs. Judge Edward Lovell of Elgin, Illinois and the subject of this sketch.

Louis Arthur Watres was born on his father's farm at Mt. Vernon in 1851, obtained a limited education in the local schools and moved to Scranton with his family the day Lincoln was shot. His first job was as a teller in the Merchants and Mechanics Bank, then he served as assistant Postmaster of Scranton and began to study law under the illustrious Judge John Handley. He was admitted to the Bar as an attorney in 1878, the year Lackawanna County was created and soon became involved in Republican politics. In 1881 he was elected Solicitor of Lackawanna County, a position he held for nine years during which time the Court House and other public buildings were erected. In 1882 he was elected to the Pennsylvania Legislature, serving two terms in the State Senate where his forceful personality led to the enactment of several important measures. Steadily advancing in statesmanship, he was elected Lt. Governor of Pennsylvania in 1890 and served in that important position until 1895. During that time he was President of the State Senate and chairman of the pardons board. He was Vice-President of the Pennsylvania Commission for the World Columbian Exposition in 1893. Although this was his last political office, he remained actively involved in Republican politics for over 30 years.

During the turbulent days of labor unrest in 1877, L.A. Watres had joined the Scranton City Guard as a private. He continued his participation in the State Guard rising in the ranks from Lt. to Captain. During the Spanish-American War he was appointed a Colonel of the 13th Regiment. He also took an active part in the organization of the State National Guard and became its first president. Largely through his efforts, the huge 109th Regiment Armory was erected on Adams Avenue in Scranton in 1900-01 and was named by the Regt. in his honor. Ever since it has been called the Watres Armory and for the rest of his life L.A. Watres was familiarly known as "Colonel Watres".

Following his years of public service in Harrisburg, Watres returned to Scranton where he became actively involved in the financial and business life in the city. His keen judgement and shrewd business ability made him a very successful financier and developer. He was one of the organizers and first president of the Scranton Passenger Railway Co. which built electric trolley lines to South Side, Old Forge and Pittston during the 1890's. Next he became president of the old County Savings Bank and Title Guarantee and Trust Co. which built a fine banking facility at 506-516 Spruce Street in 1901. This later became the Scranton Lackawanna Trust Co. with Col. Watres continuing to serve as its president for many years. He has his offices in this building for the rest of his life. He and a few others organized the Springbrook Water Co. in 1888. This public utility was further developed until it served the whole lower Lackawanna Valley and Wilkes Barre as well. He also owned the Mansfield Water Co. and then in later years was one of the promoters of the idea to harness the swift waters of the Wallenpaupack Creek which resulted in the building of the Wilsonville Dam 1924-26 and the creation of the vast watershed we know as Lake Wallenpaupack.

Col. Watres next entered the publishing business purchasing the "Scranton Truth" an afternoon daily which he acquired in 1908 and managed until 1915 when he purchased the morning newspaper "The Scranton-Tribune Republican". He merged these two papers and continued as publisher of "The Scranton Republican" until 1934 when he sold it to Frank Schroth. Always interested in promoting the business and commercial interests in Scranton, Col. Watres was a long time member of the old Scranton Board of Trade. When it was reorganized as the Chamber of Commerce, he served as its president for eight years and was instrumental in the construction of the Chamber of Commerce Building in 1924 and later donated a pipe organ for its auditorium. He also served as a Director of the First National Bank and of the American Surety Company of New York City.

Always interested in the cause of education, he helped to establish the Johnson Manual Training School which opened in 1918 under the provisions of the will of O.S. Johnson. It is now the Johnson School of Technology. Col. Watres served on the Board of Keystone Junior College for a number of years and quietly helped scores of local young men and

women to secure an education. The Honorary Degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by Lafayette College in 1925.

As a dedicated member of the Masonic fraternity, he was an active member of the Peter Williamson Lodge of Masons No. 323 for over 65 years. He served as Grand Master of Pennsylvania 1916-17 and was President of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Asso. from 1918 until his death. He was Chairman of the Building Committee which erected the Washington Masonic Memorial at Alexandria, Va., completed in 1932. His great interest in young people involved him as well in the Demolay and Boy Scouting organizations.

Added to all of these many involvements, Col. Watres also served as a Director of the Pennsylvania Association of the Blind, Pennsylvania State Oral School, the Home of the Friendless, Geisinger Hospital at Danville, the Y.W.C.A. and the Scranton Community Chest. Deeply interested in local and natural history, he served as President of the Lackawanna Historical Society 1924-1937 and was a benefactor of the Everhart Museum.

A deeply devout man, he and his family were faithful members of the First Church of Christ Scientist and he contributed largely to the building of the Christian Science Church on Vine Street in 1913, donating a fine pipe organ to it as well.

Notwithstanding his many business, civic and community involvements, Col. Watres was also a loving husband and a devoted father; his home life being a great source of enjoyment and strength to him. He married in 1874 to Miss Effie J. Hawly daughter of Nathan and Julia Thatcher Hawley of Harford, Pa. She was a descendent of an old New England family and though quiet and retiring in nature, she has unusual talents for painting, sculpture, photography and gardening. They became the parents of four sons: Harold A.; Laurence H.; Lovell W. (who died young) and Reyburn Watres. They also helped to raise the three daughter of his sister Carrie who had died; Gertrude, Lucy and Margaret Lovell. The happy Watres family lived for a number of years in a large Victorian residence at 333 Quincy Avenue. Then as growing prosperity permitted, Col. Watres built a massive stone mansion on the East Mountain along the Elmhurst Boulevard with a wonderful view overlooking the City of Scranton. The house was completed in 1902 and was named "Pen-Y-Bryn" meaning in Welsh - top of the hill. The three story 23 room house in which a fine pipe organ was later installed, was surrounded by sweeping lawns and landscaped gardens, much of it the design of Mrs. Watres. The family not only enjoyed this beautiful mansion as their home for over 35 years but were also very generous in sharing the showplace with the community at large, often inviting community groups there for meetings, socials and concerts. The family also had summer homes at Lac-a-wac in Wayne County and on Nantucket Island.

The three sons of Col. and Mrs. Watres all had eminent careers as well. Harold 1879-1905 the oldest was an honor graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School with a promising law practice in Scranton before his early death at the age of 26. Laurence H. 1882-1964, also a Princeton and Harvard Law School graduate, followed his father's footsteps in many areas. He served with honor as an Army Colonel during World War I in France, then was elected as a U.S. Congressman from Lackawanna County, serving four terms from 1922-1930. Later he continued his father's publishing and banking interests. He never married and later resided in the office on the family estate. Reyburn 1887-1946 was an M.I.T. graduate and became a mechanical engineer and an aviation and sailing enthusiast in Florida. He married Isabel Elliott and they have two children Harriet and Arthur.

After a long, full and rewarding life, tragedy came near the end of Col. Watres life, when on Palm Sunday morning March 21, 1937 the family estate "Pen-Y-Bryn" was entirely destroyed by a tragic fire. The fire could be seen for miles and drew great crowds but all help was to no avail, as only the blackened walls were left standing after flames completely destroyed the once beautiful home. This blow shortened the life of Col. Watres as he died quietly three months later on June 28, 1937 at the advanced age of 86 in the former Crellin home at 1005 Vine Street. His wife Effie died a few years later in 1944 at the age of 91. Together they are entombed in the Glenwood Mausoleum.

Thus we have recounted the remarkable life and dynamic achievements of the full and busy life of Col. L.A. Watres. Always active in every endeavor, this tall stately man was a shining example of the American work-success story and of a life dedicated to community service.

William P. Lewis

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## LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Pen-Y-Bryn