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Sarah "Sadie" Farley Allan (1878-1923)

An Exceptional Designer and Commercial Artist

By Thomas W. Costello

Working from a studio in the heart of downtown Scranton in the early 1900s, Sarah Farley Allan quickly established a reputation for innovative designs and top quality commercial illustrations. A master with pen and brush, she created theatrical and newspaper advertisements, program covers for fraternal organizations and detailed drawings for books and magazines. She taught art classes and wrote essays about civic art, a subject of long-term personal interest.

Farley Allan attended the prestigious Art Students League in New York City where she learned figure and portrait drawing, sculpture, cartooning, drawing from life and landscape painting. Kenyon Cox (1856-1919), renowned figure illustrator and mural painter, was one of her instructors, as well as a primary influence.

Her repertoire of skills extended well beyond commercial art. She was a poet, essayist, teacher, sculptor, singer, violinist, orator, gardener and environmentalist.



Sarah Leona (Farley) Allan, 1905



Sarah Farley Allan studied at the prestigious Art Students League, 215 W. 57th St., New York City.

TITUSVILLE, NEW JERSEY, WARWICK, NEW YORK - *A Particular Favorite*

The Farleys were of Anglo-Norman ancestry. In 1639, during the Puritan Great Migration, they left the village of Bosbury, Herefordshire County, in the West Midlands Region of England, sailed to America on the ship *Lion* and settled in Charlestown or Roxbury sections of Boston, Massachusetts. In 1653, they moved to Woburn, then to Billerica, Massachusetts. Facing religious persecution and Native American uprisings in the mid-1700s, several Farley families left Massachusetts for Central and Southeastern New Jersey.

Sarah Leona Farley was born on April 18, 1878 in the historic village of Titusville, Mercer County, New Jersey, near the eastern border of Pennsylvania and the site of Washington's crossing of the Delaware River. The oldest of five children of Howard N. Farley and Jennie A. Trimmer, she was called *Sadie* by her family and friends.

She went to grammar school in Titusville. The Farley family moved to Easton, Pennsylvania, in 1891 so Sarah could attend middle school at the Moravian Academy for Girls in Bethlehem. There she developed a strong foundation in liberal arts and music.

Howard Farley, the son of Isaiah Farley, a farmer, and Rebecca Moore, had an older brother and only sibling named Nelson, who died when he was two years old. Throughout his career, Howard worked for three affiliated railroad companies as a train dispatcher, a position essential to ensuring the safe and efficient passage of commuters, freight and coal. As he neared retirement, he worked as a flagman.

Jennie Farley was the daughter of George Trimmer, a Civil War veteran, tailor and postmaster, and Mary Wrick. Both were from Hopewell, New Jersey. The Trimmer homestead, built in 1851 at 66-68 River Road in Titusville, is part of a walking tour of historic Hopewell Township in Mercer

County, New Jersey. In 1893, the Farley family moved to Warwick, Orange County, New York, where Howard managed the dispatch office in a newly-built station of the Lehigh & Hudson River Railroad.

As a student at the highly regarded Warwick Institute, Sarah Farley's courses included Advanced Drawing and Writing. In her senior year, she wrote a poem, *Class of 1896*, put it to music and sang it at her commencement. *The Warwick Advertiser* described Sarah as "a particular favorite" at the Institute, where "she made many friends by her bright and winsome ways [and] versatile talents."

In her 100-page hiking journal, she wrote eloquently about her love for nature, in all forms. Dogs and horses were her favorite drawing subjects.

During the Fall of 1900, Farley ran this ad in the *Warwick Valley Dispatch*:

To Horsemen and Lovers of Horses: DRAWINGS FROM LIFE.

I wish to announce that I am prepared to draw portraits in black and white of horses and respectfully solicit your patronage. Prices range from \$1.50 (6 ½" in diameter) to \$5.00 (12 x 16"). Enlargements made from photographs at reasonable figures.

- SADIE L. FARLEY



Sarah L. Farley, ca. late 1890s. Given her strong interest in the performing arts, this photo was probably taken during a theatrical performance.



Sarah, her father and her Irish wolfhound, Ned, often went on long "tramps," as Sarah called them, in the mountains around Warwick. Her father carried her sketch block so she could make small pencil drawings that she later attached to her journal pages. Her younger brother, Harry, and sisters, Adah and Leah, went with her on shorter hikes. Sarah collected *Lady Slipper Orchids*, *Forget-Me-Nots* and other wild flowers along mountain paths and replanted them at the Farley home on South Street.

Sarah drew this self-portrait (left) in her journal in January 1900, with the caption: "I finished my new waist and skirt and in consequence just had to go out and give them a trial."

Farley's poem, *The Spirit of the Trees*, penciled into her journal in November 1900, demonstrates her superb language skills in describing her sensory and spiritual harmony with nature.

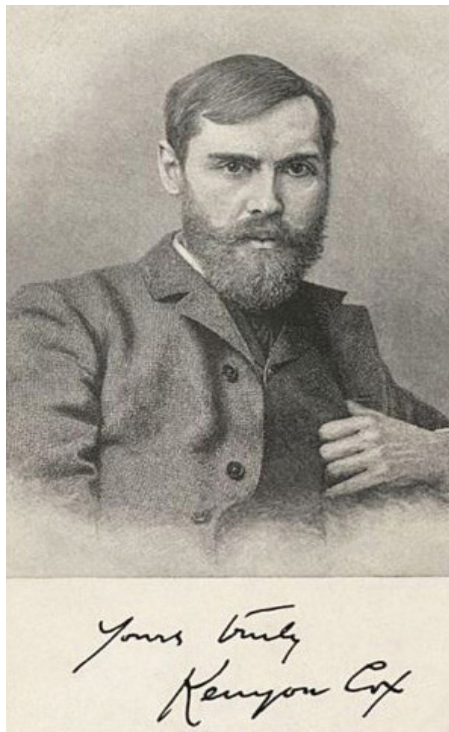
*I shut my eyes and see
Long woodland vistas – faint and tenderly
Lit with a cool, translucent green, that shines
Down 'twixt the brawny oaks, the twisted vines.*

*Amid the dim cathedral aisles of silent pines
Perfumed by incense that the sense divines
Ein as the solemn whispering of the breeze
Seems something faint, intangible –
The spirit of the trees.*

- Sadie L. Farley, Warwick NY

JERMYN, PENNSYLVANIA - *Influence of a Master Illustrator & Painter*

The Farleys relocated to Jermyn, Pennsylvania in late 1900, and moved into a home that was once the borough's oldest schoolhouse and site of its first election in 1870.



Kenyon Cox, signed, undated portrait.

During her third year in art school, Sarah came home for winter break. A January snowstorm gave her an opportunity to practice what she learned in her sculpting classes, described in the Jermyn section of *The Scranton Tribune* the following morning:

"On the lawn in front of Mr. and Mrs. Farley's home on Main St. yesterday was a snow woman, which was admired by people passing along the street. The form was perfect and quite an artistic piece of workmanship. It was so perfect in every detail as to call forth many compliments from people who stopped to admire it. It was constructed by Miss Farley."

It was reported that Farley's mentor, Kenyon Cox, traveled to Jermyn to work with her, affirming his high regard for her potential as a young artist. Farms and woods around Jermyn offered ideal settings for Cox to instruct Farley in advanced styles of landscape painting, including, Tonalism.

Mr. Cox had another interesting connection to Northeastern Pennsylvania. In 1909, he painted a 9' x 15' mural, entitled, *The Judicial Virtues*, behind the judge's bench in Courtroom Four of the Luzerne County Courthouse in Wilkes-Barre.

Farley set up her art studio in December 1902 in two third-floor rooms in the Odd Fellows Building at 209 Wyoming Avenue. The Griffin Art Supply Company was on the ground floor.

For the next five years she continued to live with her family in Jermyn, commuting to and from Scranton via the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad. Her father was the dispatcher at the station at the corner of Franklin and Laurel Streets. Taking a morning train from Jermyn, Sarah would have arrived at the Central Railroad of New Jersey station (NYO&W was a CNJ tenant) on West Lackawanna Avenue in about half an hour. Her studio was a short walk or electric trolley ride away.

Farley offered services in advertising, illustrating, cartooning and cover designing, and soon secured commissions from *The Scranton Times* for her cartoons and essays. She also illustrated book covers for the interurban Laurel Line and the New York, Ontario & Western Railway.



Postcard, New York, Ontario & Western Railway Station, Jermyn, PA, undated.

NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY of Northeastern Pennsylvania



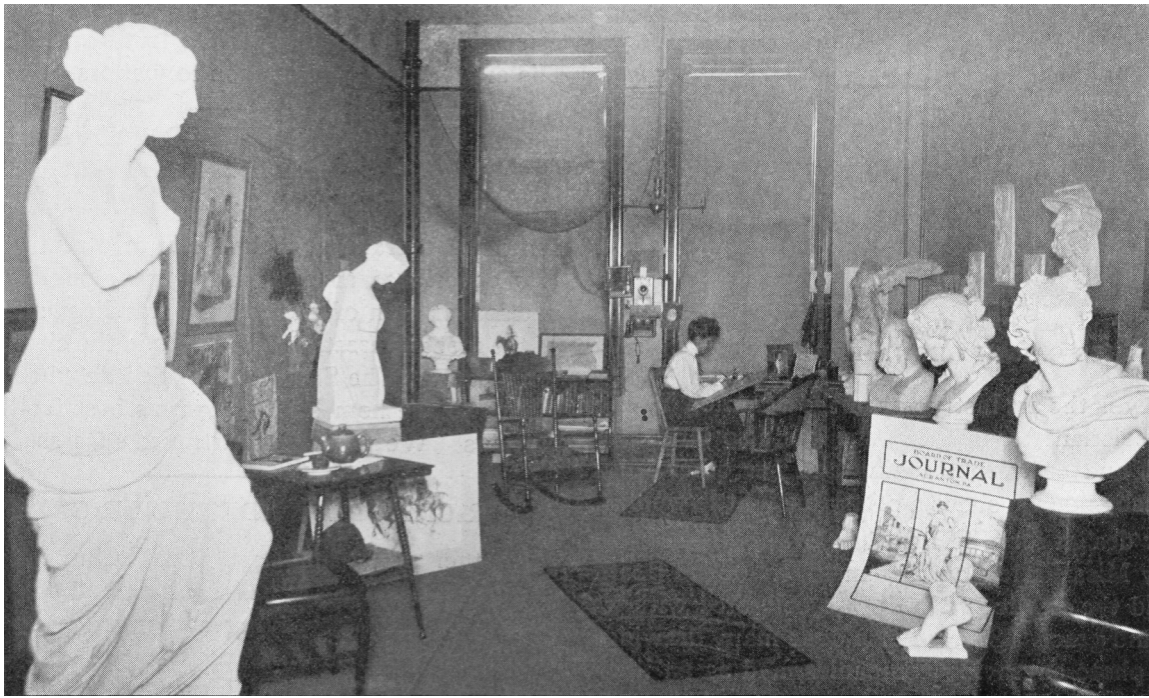
One of many annual dinner covers that Sarah Farley Allan rendered for the New England Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania. December, 1912.

Soon after arriving in Scranton, Farley found the perfect way to introduce herself and her art. At Prendergast's Stationery Store at 207 North Washington Avenue, she displayed a sampling of her drawings and paintings, done in a variety of art media, including pencil, pen & ink, charcoal and watercolor.

A charcoal portrait of Farley's younger sister, Adah, caught the eye of a reporter from *The Scranton Truth*: "In the countenance there is something affable and urbane which impresses you like an agreeable perfume or a pleasant dream. The pose is easy; the face becomingly vivacious...the broad, strong handling of the masses of light and shade in this picture are particularly good."

Farley sang in German at the Albih Korn Studio recital in 1904, demonstrating her foreign language and vocal skills. A reporter for *The Scranton Republican* described her voice as "a round, rich contralto of wide range that she unites with rare dramatic ability."

A photo of her studio (next page), published in the *Scranton Board of Trade Journal* in 1905, shows a long room lined with poster-sized illustrations and seven white plaster sculptures of classical figures, some created during her years at the Art Students League.



Sarah Leona Farley in her art studio, Odd Fellows Building, Scranton, 1905.

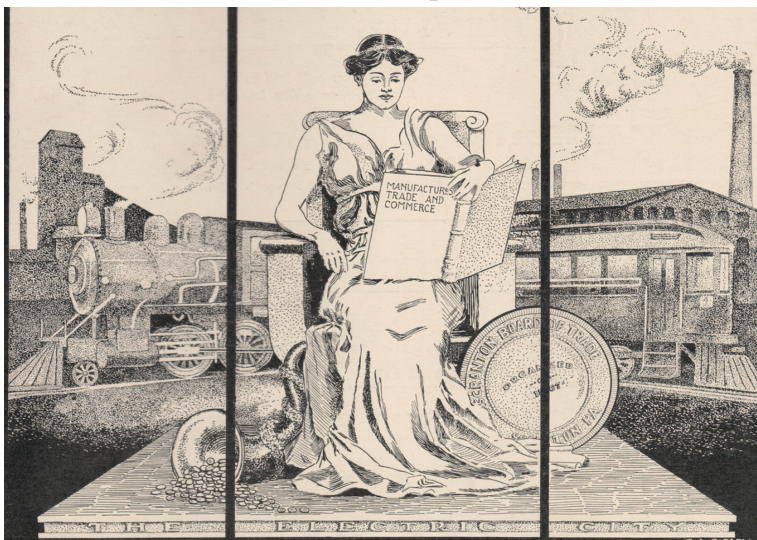
The influence of Kenyon Cox, a proponent of Realism, can be seen in Farley's historical drawings. Using pen & ink, she illustrated many annual dinner program covers for the New England Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania, a local fraternal organization. This 1912 cover (previous page) depicts John Bradford and others from the Plymouth Plantation.

Author Thomas Owen Charles commissioned Farley to create five full-page pen & ink illustrations and page dividers for his book, *Dear Old Wales: A Patriotic Love Story* (1912).

During her teenage years in Warwick, Farley cultivated an interest in civic art, which later inspired her essay,



Griffin page divider, 1912, for Dear Old Wales: A Patriotic Love Story.



The City Beautiful, published in April 1905 in the *Scranton Board of Trade Journal*. She persuasively advocated for the aesthetic and economic benefits of planting and preserving trees along Scranton's streets, in squares and parks.

Farley wisely connected with the business community soon after she arrived in Scranton. (Formed in 1867, the Board of Trade was precursor to the Chamber of Commerce).

Farley's impressive 1905 pen drawing (page 6) of *Abundantia*, the Roman goddess of abundance and prosperity, graced the covers of all twelve *Journal* issues that year. Seated on a throne, she holds a large, open volume on Trade and Commerce. At her feet is a cornucopia overflowing with gold coins, and a platform with "THE ELECTRIC CITY" in block letters across the front. In the background, Farley drew an Anthracite coal breaker, a steel mill, a steam locomotive and passenger car – all representing the city's industrial and commercial progress.

A second article, entitled, "*Art and Literature in Scranton*," published in the June issue, was based on an interview in which Farley named other Art Students League instructors of illustration and painting who were influential in her training: Louis Loeb, Julia A. Reed, Albert Edward Sterner and John Henry Twachtman.

She told the writer that she wanted to illustrate western scenes. "*I inherit my love for horses and... the animal kingdom from my ancestors, who were all fond of the chase, and...were...surrounded with*



Arrival in New York

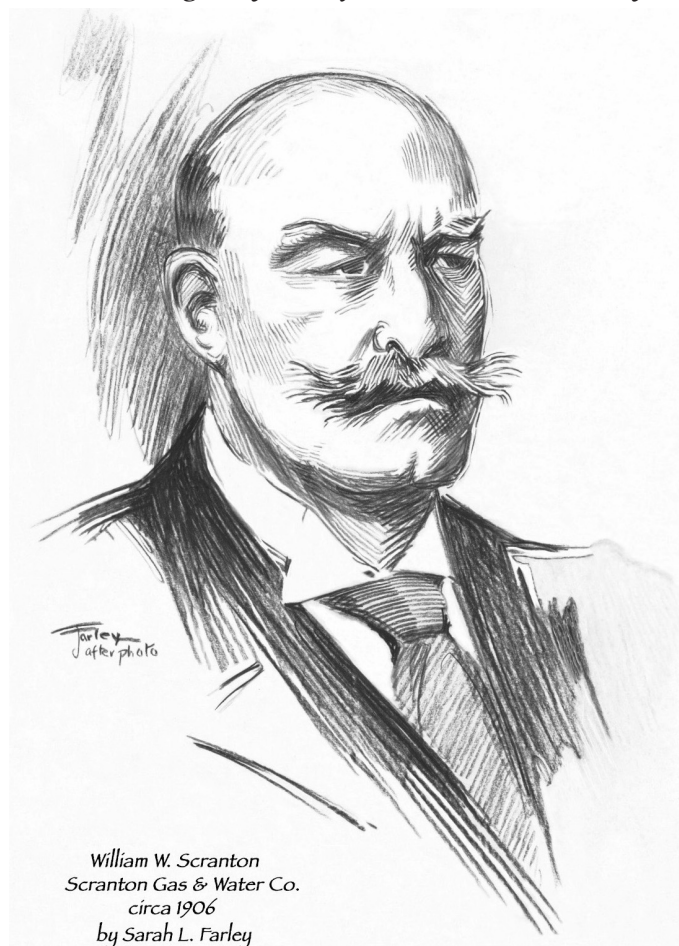
Farley Allan drawing, *Arrival in New York*, from *Dear Old Wales*, 1912.

many kinds of domestic pets. Animal drawing is really my strongest point...I love Landseer, Bonheur, Remington, and such renowned artists."

Farley exhibited her original pen drawings, book covers and oil paintings on multiple occasions at the YMCA and Century Club, together with landscape painter, John Willard Raught and illustrator, P. W. Costello.

In 1906, Farley sketched this pencil portrait of William W. Scranton (1844-1916), cousin of the city founders, owner of the Scranton Gas and Water Company, and grandfather of PA Governor William Warren Scranton.

She taught art classes at the YWCA and presented papers to the art department at the Century Club, located in the parish house of Saint Luke's Church. One of her talks explored Colonial Architecture; another, the ancient legends connected



William W. Scranton
Scranton Gas & Water Co.
circa 1906
by Sarah L. Farley

with great buildings in Rome - Saint John Lateran, Saint Paul's Without the Walls and Santa Maria Maggiore.

On September 1, 1907, Sarah Leona Farley married James Angus Allan in the Farley home on Main Street in Jermyrn, witnessed by her parents and a few family and friends. Rev. J. S. Compton officiated. James Allan was department manager and designer for the Goldsmith Bazaar Dept. Store, and also a skilled writer and poet. Following a wedding dinner, the couple toured Maine and other parts of New England.

The Allans purchased a home on Ridge Row, in a picturesque section of East Scranton, where Phillip and John were born, the first two of their four sons.



ABOVE LEFT: *Poli News* Cover c. 1907. ABOVE RIGHT: *Poli News* Cover 1912.

Early in her pregnancy with Philip, Farley Allan decided to close her downtown art studio and work at home. From 1908 to 1912, she created over one hundred illustrations, most of them for Sylvester Z. Poli, owner of the ornate, 2000-seat Poli Theater on Wyoming Avenue.

She skillfully illustrated and lettered program covers and newspaper ads for the Poli's summer stock company productions, staged from May to September. She did the same for vaudeville, minstrel and comedy acts that filled the rest of the Poli calendar.

The Poli Players' show themes covered the spectrum - comedy, romance, drama, mystery and western. Farley Allan was tasked with creating a large ad for every show. Each ad appeared once in the paper, a few days before the show's opening, so her artwork had to engage the reader and help generate ticket sales.

All of her Poli ads were drawn, lettered and brushed in black on heavy white board. She showcased her outstanding illustration skills in a wide range of portraits, costumes and settings, and in her efficient use of space. Comedies gave her the opportunity to use her well-developed cartooning and caricature skills.

In March 1912, the Poli Theater staged *In 1999*, a one-act comedy about future gender roles. Sarah later told one of her sisters that she modeled the married couple in the show's newspaper ad after herself



June 1912

and her husband, James. That's Sarah in the foreground, lighting a cigarette, stylishly dressed in a wide-brimmed hat, riding clothes and high buckled shoes, with a crop under her arm. Behind her, looking bewildered, is her husband, in a bathrobe and slippers, taking care of their infant son, John, and the family cat.



September 1, 1913



"IN 1999"



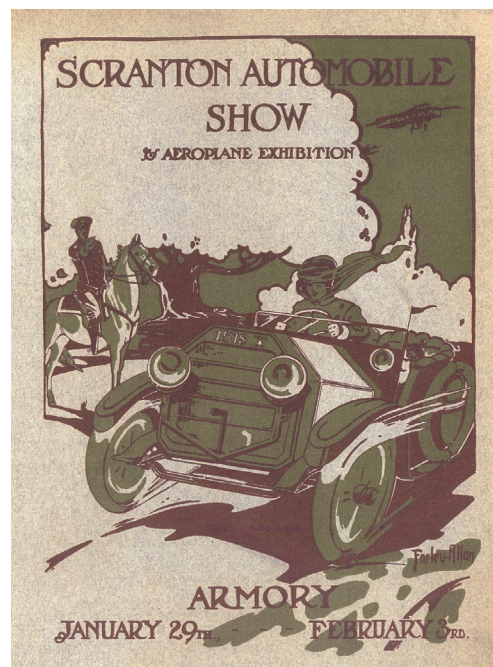
March 25, 1912

Most of Farley Allan's *Poli News* covers were Art Nouveau in style - two-colored, portraying sophisticated, theatre-going couples in various settings. One unusual, beautifully detailed cover from September 1913, was drawn with a fine pen instead of a brush. She blended curved lines, graceful human forms and decorative elements of nature to infuse energy and a sense of motion.

In her second year at the Art Students League, Sarah Farley went to a New York City exhibition of illustrations by Charles Dana Gibson, famous for his "Gibson Girl" drawings of beautiful, independent women. She attached the exhibition's art catalog, dated Nov. 1898, to a page in her journal. Gibson's influence can be seen in many of Sarah's drawings of women in retail clothing ads and *Poli News* covers. Gibson also trained at the Art Students League.



When the popular, six-day *Automobile Show & Aeroplane Exhibition* came to Scranton for the first time in 1912, Farley Allan created a large promotional poster (below) and a pen illustration depicting the evolution of transportation in the United States.



LEFT: The influence of Charles Dana Gibson may be seen in Farley Allan's ad for taffeta skirts from the Goldsmith Bazaar Department Store, ca. 1907.

WEST LEBANON, NEW HAMPSHIRE – *An Extraordinary Life Cut Short*

A significant change came in November 1913 when the Allan family moved from Scranton to White River Junction, Vermont. James Allan's father, near retirement, needed help managing one of his clothing stores. Two years later, the Allans moved across the river to West Lebanon, New Hampshire, where two more sons were born - James, in 1915, and David, in 1920.

In West Lebanon, Sarah stayed active. In addition to helping her husband manage the store, she wrote personal and community announcements for *The Landmark*, a paper published in White River Junction. At her Congregational Church, she played the violin at concerts. After directing a local high school play, the students surprised her with the gift of an electric percolator. Sarah was also president of the Audubon Club, and a member of the Fortnightly Club, a group that held fundraisers for local causes. Her grandchildren often heard about Sarah's enduring love for gardening.

Throughout her life, Farley Allan remained closely connected to the village and people of Warwick, New York, where she grew up and came to cherish its beauty, culture and history. When she wrote about *The City Beautiful*, both Warwick and Scranton were her primary reference points. During

her years in Jermy, Scranton and West Lebanon, she made frequent trips back to Warwick to visit Sarah Benedict and Florence Ketchum, two life-long friends. And they often came to visit her. She valued those friendships and worked hard to nurture them.

Sarah, James and their sons enjoyed camping, sometimes for the entire summer. Favorite places were True Farm in Bellows Falls, Vermont, along the Connecticut River; Ocean Park, Maine; and Burbank Park, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Farley Allan traveled back to Scranton in January 1916 to visit family in Jermy. *The Scranton Republican* reported that “*she has been missed among artistic circles of this city, among those who valued her extraordinary talents in so many directions.*”

The Landmark reported on May 4, 1922 that “*Mrs. James Allan is critically ill. Her many friends hope for her early recovery.*” About seven weeks later, the same paper gave an update. “*The condition of Mrs. James Allan is much improved, although she is still confined to the house.*”

In late June 1923, the Allan family left for a summer of camping in Ocean Park, Maine.

On the afternoon of September 2, 1923, Sarah received a call informing her that her son, Phillip, had injured his knee while playing at a friend’s home in West Lebanon. She drove to pick him up. Soon after arriving, she was stricken with a heart attack and died. She was 45. Her youngest son, David, was only three years old.

Farley Allan’s funeral was held from her home with Rev. Leland G. Chase, pastor of West Lebanon Congregational Church, officiating. She was laid to rest in the Allan family lot in the village cemetery. During the service, shades in the stores on Main Street were drawn as a mark of respect.

The writer of her obituary for *The Granite State Free Press*, in West Lebanon, reflected on Farley Allan’s death in the context of the season:

“A beautiful time to die is in the autumn, when all nature is going to sleep, to be resurrected in Heaven, when all things awaken in the springtime. So in the autumn, this wife, mother and daughter fell asleep, when all nature is preparing to lie down to sleep.”

In December 1926, about three years after his mother’s death, 11-year old James Allan, Jr., wrote this poem...

*One still bright day, in early May,
Beside a lonely brook I lay,
Watching the sparkling ripples play,
Like fairies, dancing down the way.*

*Of someone else, so far away,
I dreamed about on the bright day.
But where she went, I cannot say,
For, like the brook she’d slipped away.*

Sarah Farley Allan was a gifted illustrator who, in a relatively short time in Scranton, created an impressive body of art and won the affection and admiration of many, including, her artist colleagues. She once told a reporter: *“Whatever success I may have achieved is...due to the cordiality and kindness of the Scranton people. I have them to thank for a great deal of friendly interest and encouragement.”*

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Acknowledgements

In researching the life and art of Sarah Farley Allan, I contacted several of her descendants, including, her grandson, Jon Allan, who provided family photographs and copies of her original art.

Sue Gardner, Local History Librarian at the Albert Wisner Public Library in Warwick, NY, provided a copy of Farley Allan's Nature & Hiking Journal.

Virginia Goodrich, from the Scranton Chamber of Commerce, gave me access to their *Scranton Board of Trade Journal* archives.

Rick Sedlisky, History Bytes editor, provided valuable information about local railroads.

Jeff Otto, President and Archivist of the Ontario & Western Railway Historical Society, Middletown, NY, gave me photos of the railway station in Jermyn.

Bob Hurford, Wrightstown, PA, penman and pen art historian, editor of the *Penman's Journal*, published by IAMPETH (*International Association of Master Penmen, Engrossers and Teachers of Handwriting*). Thank you for managing the layout.

I'm grateful for their help, and that of the Billerica, Massachusetts; Warwick, New York; Jermyn, and Lackawanna Historical Societies, in reintroducing this extraordinary woman to the city where most of her art was created.

Source for Farley Family History

Fisher, Joseph. Genealogy of the Farley, Farlee, Fetterman, Pitmann, Reeder and Shipman Families. Troy, New York: E. H. Lisk, 1974.

Use this link to see more images of Sarah Farley Allan's family and art...

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/103686893/sarah-allan>

About the Author

Thomas W. Costello grew up in the Hill Section of Scranton. He has a BA from the University of Scranton and MA from Seton Hall University. He taught English and Speech Communication for four years in a prep school in Milton, MA, then worked for thirty years in pharmaceutical sales and sales management for Schering Corp. and Johnson & Johnson. Tom has researched and promoted the life and art of his great-grandfather, P. W. Costello (1866-1935), renowned pen & ink artist, engrosser and illustrator from Scranton. Tom lives in East Brunswick, NJ.

ADDENDUM

Description of Sarah Farley Allan's "Progress" Illustration Published in The Tribune Republican, June 20, 1911.

The year 1911 marked the 44th Anniversary of the Scranton Republican and the 20th Anniversary of the Scranton Tribune. The two papers merged in 1910 and became the Tribune Republican. To commemorate both milestones, the publishers of the newspaper commissioned artist Sarah Farley Allan to illustrate the cover of a special anniversary supplement.

At the top of the drawing, Farley-Allan depicted the evolution of the newspaper business, from early manual typesetting, at left - when movable type was placed in a press by hand, inked and an impression made on paper - to a modern machine offset printing press, at right.

Two signs, Slocum Hollow, 1840, at lower left, and Scranton, 1911, at lower right, represent the city's origins, followed by seventy-one years of industrial, technological and cultural progress, including, a thriving free press.

Farley-Allan's skillfully detailed, multi-faceted drawing, one of her best, is a portrait of Scranton's history. The centerpiece is the Goddess of Progress, who has laurel in her hair and is holding a torch. She resembles a statue mounted atop a dome on San Francisco's City Hall, sculpted in 1896 by F. Marion Wells.

At right, the Roman Goddess, Abundantia, source of abundance and prosperity, holds a cornucopia filled with fruit in one arm, and distributes gold coins and flowers with the other. Behind her is a view of downtown Scranton, including, City Hall and the Scranton Board of Trade Building, a trolley car and a statue of George Washington on Courthouse Square, the 10-story Mears Building, and a Voisin biplane overhead, first flown in 1909.

At far left, an old man, leaning on a pick, represents one of the original Slocum Hollow settlers who mined iron ore in the nearby mountains. Visible in the background are several structures in the village that borders Roaring Brook - the home of brothers, Ebenezer and Benjamin Slocum; a gristmill with a water wheel that ground grain into cereal; a school; a cooper shop and a sawmill. In Slocum Hollow, Selden and George Scranton built four stone blast furnaces and developed a process that combined Anthracite coal and iron ore to produce pig iron, used to make rails for the Erie Railroad.

Two young boys are depicted in the bottom corners of the drawing. The one at left has a lute by his side (representing music) and is holding up a small structure with three pillars. Near his feet are a paint palette with two brushes (art), a box with a row of books (literature), and a triangle (geometry) propped against the box. Under everything are large sheets, or perhaps an open book. The three pillars likely represent Music, Art and Literature, core elements of education and the young city's culture. The boy at right is talking on a telephone, a symbol of technological progress. A large gear wheel, a hammer and other machine components represent industrial progress.

Throughout the drawing, Farley-Allan added flower petals and foliage to further support her themes of growth and development.

The original newspaper image (17 x 23") was generously provided by Kim Harbester.

