

FIRST FALL PROGRAM

Wednesday, September 24, 1980 — Catlin House 8 P.M.

The first Fall program meeting of the Historical Society will be held at the Catlin House on Wednesday, September 24 at 8 P.M. and will highlight the centennary of telephone service and electric lights in Scranton, since they were both installed in the city during the year 1880 - just a century ago.

Speaker for the occasion will be Miss Anna Cervenak, Harrisburg, a public relations employee of the Bell Telephone Co. who will give a talk-demonstration entitled "Yesterday, Today and 2001" tracing the development of the telephone from 1876 up to the present as well as a preview of what telecommunications might be like in the 21st century.

Also speaking will be Alan Kosydar, Allentown, a consultant with the Pennsylvania Power and Light Co. who will give a slide presentation on the history of electricity in Northeastern Pennsylvania. A discussion period and social hour will follow. We hope to see you for this interesting program.

1980-81 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Wednesday, October 15 - Slide Show "Pennsylvania Canals" given by Lance Metz, Program Director-Historian of Hugh Moore Park, Easton, Pa. the official Canal Museum of Pennsylvania.

Wednesday, November 12 - Slide Presentation on "Historic Preservation in Scranton" given by members of the Architectural Heritage Association.

Wednesday, December 10 - Antique Lantern Slide Show given by William P. Lewis from a collection of 1900 vintage slide of N.E. Penna., New York and Philadelphia along with Christmas music rendered by the Baptist Bible College Ensemble.

Wednesday, February 25 - Slide illustrated lecture on the History of the Jermyn Family of Scranton given by William P. Lewis.

Monday, March 23 - Lecture "The Heritage of William Penn" given by Dr. Gary Nash, professor of History, University of California, Los Angeles. Co-sponsored by the Community Affairs Committee in connection with the Tercentennary of Pennsylvania 1682-1982.

Wednesday, April 22 - Lecture "The Jewish Community of Scranton" given by George Joel, former Executive Secretary of the Jewish Community Center and the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council.

Wednesday, May 13 - Annual Dinner Meeting and speaker from the Victorian Society of America, Philadelphia.

CATLIN HOUSE NEWS

The Catlin House was a busy place during the summer months. A very thorough restoration job on the exterior of the House has just been completed. This included steamcleaning of the brickwork by Hydraclean, Moscow; repair

to all of the stonework and pointing of the brickwork by J. Palumbo, Scranton and repainting of all of the woodwork by J. & J. Painting, Moscow. The refurbished House now looks much as it must have when it was built in 1912. The work cost about \$15,500.00 and was done under the direction of John Cognetti, Building and Grounds Chairman and Tom Horlacher, job supervisor. Our thanks to all who were involved in this necessary work.

In the House we had a significant increase in visitors over last year's totals; during June 197 visitors came with five groups; July totaled 242 with seven groups and during August 113 persons came in. Visitors and researchers came from many states including Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, California and Germany. Among the groups who came on tour were classes from Lackawanna Trail High School, Scranton Prep School and the University of Scranton; neighborhood groups from Daleville, Green Ridge, and Peckville, a Chamber of Commerce industrial group and other organizations. Perry Blatz, a graduate student from Princeton University spent considerable time doing research work; the Philharmonic Womens League and Scranton Singers Guild have held meetings here and we have received a number of donations of interesting historical items. Our membership now totals 378.

A special word of thanks is due to Mr. Joseph Levy of Clean-Rite who many times has cleaned antique clothing for us gratis. We are deeply indebted to him for this valuable service.

Our Board of Trustees will meet on Wednesday, October 1 at 4 P.M. with Dr. John L. Earl, III, President of the Society in charge.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF TELEPHONE SERVICE AND
ELECTRICITY IN SCRANTON**



Sign formerly on top of the Scranton Electric Building

The Telephone and Electric light and power are conveniences which we now take very much for granted and they have become a necessary part of our life-style today. However, we have enjoyed these services only for the past century; before that all communication for centuries was by word of mouth or letters and all illumination was from candles and oil or gas burning lamps.

The first electric lights in Scranton were installed in the Dickson Locomotive Works and turned on December 6, 1880. The next year they were installed in the Scranton Steel Mills and 1883 saw the first installation of lights in a private home. The first public demonstration of the incandescent light was at a Charity Festival in the old Armory on Adams Avenue in April, 1886. These lights were all powered by individual plants. In May, 1886 the Scranton Illuminating, Heat and Power Company was organized and built a generating plant at the foot of Spruce and Linden Streets along the Lackawanna River where culm was used as fuel and six dynamos were installed. This plant made electric power available for general use and soon it was being used to light the streets, business houses and private homes.

Scranton very early had a system of public transportation by the use of horse drawn street cars. With the advent of electrical power, Scranton became one of the first cities in the United States to change to a system of electrically operated street cars. The Scranton Suburban Electric Railway Company was incorporated in 1886 with E.B. Sturges as president. They secured the services of Charles Vanderpoele of Chicago, inventor of the electrical street car system, to come here to install the equipment and operate the first car on its initial trip on November 30, 1886. The run was made from central city to Green Ridge and return. Regular schedules were inaugurated the following day and the first fares were five cents. Though other cities tried systems before, Scranton can claim the distinction of having organized, built and successfully operated the first electric street railway in the United States. Soon afterwards, it was the Rev. Dr. David Spencer, then pastor of the Penn Avenue Baptist Church, who coined the popular slogan "Scranton, the Electric City". By 1900 there were a number of different electrical companies and power plants. That year they were consolidated under the name of the Scranton Electric Company. Originally power was made only for use at night, but with the continued demands and growth of the system greater power plants were erected.

Development of the electric street railway system was a strong factor in the growth of suburban areas. Within a few years of the electrification of the Scranton street car lines, branches were built to every section and adjoining towns as well. The Lackawanna and Wyoming Valley Railroad was incorporated in 1901 and by 1903 regular passenger service was provided between Scranton and Wilkes Barre on what came to be popularly known as "The Laurel Line." Another interurban electric line was the Northern Electric Street Railway Company which operated regular transportation service between Scranton and Montrose with a branch to Lake Winola from 1907 until 1932.

In 1956 the Scranton Electric Company became the last large firm to merge into the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company's system which has since served the energy needs of thousands of customers in Eastern Pennsylvania. Today P.P. & L. is not only seeking to meet those needs but also trying to conserve the use of power as the national energy situation changes.

William P. Lewis
Executive Director

The Telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell 1847-1922, a native of Scotland who came to America in 1870. Bell worked as a teacher in a school for deaf-mutes and began to experiment to find some electrical apparatus to convey sound vibrations and human speech. The results was the telephone which he patented in 1876 and first publically demonstrated at the U.S. Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. There he convinced the public that his invention was not a toy but a useful means of long distance communication.

Electrical lighting was invented by Thomas A. Edison 1847-1931, the Ohio born genius who also invented the phonograph, motion pictures and the electrical battery. Edison first successfully tested his electrical incandescent lamp in Menlo Park, N.J., October 21, 1879.

These new inventions and the services they offered were not long in coming to Scranton, in fact both were first installed in our city during the year 1880, just a century ago.

Scranton at that time was a young and growing city, which had been founded only forty years before with the coming of the Scranton brothers to the Lackawanna Valley in 1840. By 1880 Scranton had become a city with a population of 45,000 and was the seat of the new County of Lackawanna. Coal mining was the dominant industry with railroading, machine shops and foundries as related industries. The D.L. & W. Railroad was the principal coal carrying road and the Dickson Manufacturing Co. made locomotives and railroad and mining equipment.

Mr. Richard O'Brien, for many years the manager of the Western Union Telegraph office in Scranton, was the first to introduce the telephone in Scranton. An expert telegrapher and interested in communicating devices, he visited the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and there saw the first demonstration of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell. On his return to Scranton, Mr. O'Brien saw the commercial possibilities of the new device and interested William Hallstead, then General Manager of the D.L. & W. Railroad, in the practical use of the telephone. In 1878 an experimental line was put through between Scranton and Nicholson and soon afterwards a line was connected between the railroad shops and the Lackawanna Station. By 1879 a number of sets were in use in the city; however their use was limited because there was no central exchange. Through the efforts of Mr. O'Brien the first telephone exchange was installed in a building at 303 Lackawanna Avenue and began operating January 1, 1880. The first switchboard operators were young men rather than women. It was known as the Central Pennsylvania Telephone Company and for several years no effort was made to extend the lines outside of the city. Eventually the convenience of the telephone dawned upon the public so that after 1900 its use throughout the area led to increasing growth. For a number of years there were two telephone companies in Scranton, the Bell and the Consolidated. The Bell Telephone Company moved its offices to 121 Adams Avenue in 1894 and eventually secured exclusive control of communications in the area through purchase of the Consolidated Company. Today we can have direct-dial calling anywhere in the world within moments through the intricate system of the Bell Telephone Company.