

# The Lackawanna Historical Society BULLETIN

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Sept. - Oct. 1971

## SOCIETY TO MEET AT OLD SCRANTON HOME ON SEPTEMBER 22

Wednesday, September 22, has been selected as the date for the Society's first meeting after the summer suspension. The time will be 8 p.m. The place is to be the former Scranton residence at Monroe Ave. and Ridge Row. Mrs. Albert G. Isaacs, Jr., a great granddaughter of Joseph H. Scranton, who commissioned building of the city landmark, will recount her memories of the old building in which she grew up.

As is generally known, the place of our meeting lies directly across from the Catlin House and its grounds will be available for members to park their cars with an easy walk across the street, in case closer parking is not possible.

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The programs committee under President William Lewis, has also made arrangements for the October Meeting which is to be held at the Catlin Home on Wednesday, October 27th at eight. John Tyler, Curator of Science and Industry of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission will speak on "Early Iron and Steel Industry in Pennsylvania" with special reference to the early Scranton furnaces. These historical furnaces have been restored and are to be dedicated on Monday, September 20, in the morning by Dr. S. K. Stevens, head of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission.

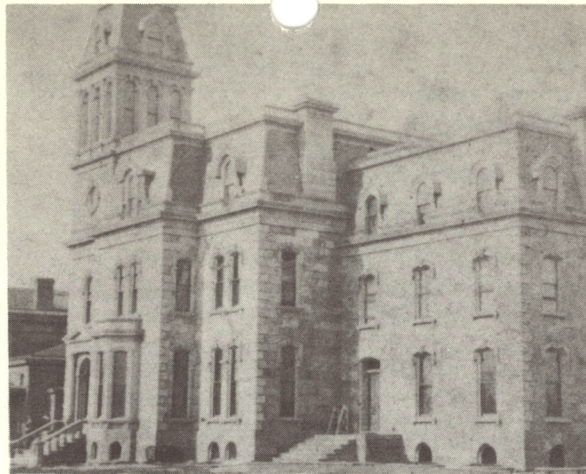
The November meeting, again at the Catlin House, has been set for the 18th at 8 p.m., when Dr. John Quentin Feller, of the University of Scranton faculty and a member of the Society, will discuss beautiful and unusual china, particularly as exemplified by the collection of the late Polly Davidson, which has been on display in the small drawing room through the kindness of C. P. Davidson.

The December meeting, traditionally a musical program, has not yet been set and there will be no meeting in January; however, for our February meeting, the Third National Bank will detail a staff member to speak on the "Centennial Year of the Third National Bank."

The March meeting, with date still undetermined, will bring as speaker Dr. J. U. Rudechko, of Wilkes College with "Irish Immigration into our Area" as his subject.

Attorney Robert Munley, with the date likewise to be settled, will bring as subject "The Indians of Our Region" to our April meeting.

The May meeting will present Ralph Hazeltine,



Curator of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society as speaker. His topic will be "George Catlin, Artist and Indian Painter of the XIX Century." George Catlin, the artist, was a distant cousin of our own George Catlin, who belonged to a later generation.

All in all, an interesting outlook for meetings in the 1971-1972 season has been readied by the committee. The unsettled dates will be announced in the Bulletin or by postcards.

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**TOP PICTURE:** Obviously taken when construction was well along about 1871 shows building with tower.

**MIDDLE PICTURE:** Taken in the early 1900s before high stone wall had been extended to front of building, shows original cast iron fence.

**BOTTOM PICTURE:** By the late 1930s, the tower had been removed and an elevator added to left of entrance. The elevator has since been removed.

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### HOUSE BUILT UPON A ROCK

Prior to April 27, 1867, a rock knoll was the most prominent feature of the landscape at the present location of the old Scranton residence, firmly standing at the corner of Ridge Row and Monroe Avenue in the city which bears the name of the pioneer family.

On that date, local contractors under the supervision of W. W. Mannes, set to work by blasting away rock to form the cellar of a new home for Joseph Hand Scranton and his family. The first entry in an account book devoted to costs of the dwelling was an item of nine kegs of blasting powder to be used by the workmen. A John Reid captained the gang.

The building had come from the drawing boards of Russell Sturgis, 57 Broadway, perhaps America's most prominent architect of the post Civil War period. Sturgis designed the University Chapel and three dormitories at Yale University, the Flower Hospital in New York and many other public and private buildings, but is best known for his four volume "History of Architecture." He oversaw much of the work on the Scranton home personally.

It is possible to follow the progress of construction in the pages of the old account book, with the next important entry showing purchase of large quantities of building stone, presumably from local quarries. A stone cutter and mason, William Sykes, presumably no relation to Dicken's villain of "Oliver Twist," was employed, cutting the stone to size on the job. Beginning in 1867, payments of several thousands of dollars were made to Sykes, indicating that work went on through the winter and spring of 1868. There were also continuing payments to blacksmiths sharpening "drills, points and hammers."

By June 1868, 40,000 common brick and 5000 of pressed brick appear on the ledger and bricklayers

time began to be shown. Three railroad cars of lumber show up on the books in the spring of 1868 and employment of the carpenter contracting firm of Kreilich and Shiel is evidenced.

The walls and roof must have been up by spring of 1870 because roofing materials, tin copper, slate and ornamental stone for window frames, lintels, thresholds and door frames were marked down with purchases of lead pipe showing that plumbing work was keeping apace. Paint, putty, glass and pulleys in 1870, show that the building was about ready for closing in for the winter to allow interior work to progress. This is confirmed by large purchases of pine, hemlock, soft maple, curled maple, chestnut, cherry, butternut, Jersey walnut, western walnut and oak, together with marble and tiles. With mason work continuing, payrolls boomed for the carpenters.

During 1871, completion appeared to be in sight with paint, lead, turpentine and paint products showing up in abundance and the wages of painters predominating. In November, a bill paid W. & J. Sloan, New York, indicates that furniture had been installed and there is every reason to believe that the Scranton family ate their Thanksgiving dinner in the new house.

If my readers will refer to the earliest picture of the house, they can observe on the left, part of another and earlier house, which was the Joseph H. Scranton home before and while the stone house was under construction.

This earlier house was moved to the southeast corner of Monroe and Linden streets and became the residence of William W. Scranton, son of Joseph H. Scranton and was his honeymoon home after his marriage. Joseph H. Scranton died in June, 1872, not long after completion of the stone house, so he did not live long to enjoy it; however it was occupied by his family and became the home of William W. Scranton, who moved there from the Linden Street house.

Later, Worthington Scranton, son of William W., lived in the Linden Street house while "Marworth" in North Abington Twp. was being built. His son, William W. Scranton, later governor of Pennsylvania, on his marriage to Mary Chamberlin, purchased a property in Glenburn Twp., near Epiphany Church and lived there until moving to "Marworth" after the death of his parents.

Going back to the house at No. 4, Ridge Row, on December 17, 1941, Worthington Scranton deeded it to then Bishop Hafey, in trust for the University of Scranton, being conducted by the Christian Brothers. Actual possession of the property was taken by the Bishop and the University on December 29, 1941. Later, operation of the university was taken over by the Jesuits, who now use the Scranton residence as a home for faculty members.

Mr. Scranton reserved from his gift, his offices in a stone building facing Linden Street and used it for political meetings and other purposes, also the

right to use the driveway and from it. This building was later sold to the Catholic Church and is part of the approximately nine acres composing it. The property is bounded by Madison Avenue, Ridge Row and Monroe Avenue.

In connection with his gift of the property to the university, Mr. Scranton wrote that "For several years I have given thought to the best use, connected with the development of our city, to which these properties could be devoted. I have come to the conclusion that they can most advantageously be used for the development of an institution of higher learning."

The account book, which was purchased for 25 cents, the first entry on April 7, 1867, and which continues to the final entry on May 30, 1875, of \$16 for 3000 bricks, is all in the same handwriting and for the most part is easy to read. As mentioned before, the early entries are for powder and fuse to blast the rock base for the structure (powder, by the way, cost \$4.40 a keg) and continue with rather large sums for stone cutting, mason work, hauling, tool sharpening and so on, but by 1869 there are entries such as "to A. B. Stevens & Co. \$205 for 102½ feet of finished Italian marble." So it is possible to visualize armies of men and animals at work had made the building begin to take shape.

On June 18, 1870, there was a purchase of 2000 feet of sash cord for \$80, showing that windows were being put in and on March 30, 1871, 5 doz. bronzed coat and hat hangers, costing \$13, showed that the building was under a roof and interior work being done. On March 20, 1871, J. Herbold was paid \$2445.95 for frescoing and seven packs of gold leaf were bought for \$59.85. Henry Stone of Philadelphia for "hanging bells and putting in whistles" got \$191.90, so communication within was receiving attention. On September 30, L. W. Heermans was paid \$10 for photographs and grass seed for \$16.50 was acquired. In 1874 taxes coming to \$53.75 were paid, showing that work was completed.

During the seven years of entries, prices kept pretty steady with blacksmiths getting \$2.25 a day; laborers about \$1.50; carpenters, \$2.35; painters, \$2.50 and woodcarvers about \$3.50 a day. A team of two horses and drivers came to \$3.75 while a single horse and driver cost \$2.75 per day.

The whole building must have cost about \$140,000 as the architect was paid \$14,000, presumably ten per cent; however, work on the "old house," its moving to Linden Street and renovation accompanied work on the new house, so the architect may have helped on that. All the entries in the book total about \$155,000.

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I owe much of the above to the research of Curator Robert Mattes and wish to acknowledge it here.

H.H.N.

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