

# The Lackawanna Historical Society BULLETIN

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April 1978



## ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 1978 6:30 P.M.

The Annual Dinner Meeting will be held at the Catlin House with a Roast Beef Dinner catered by the Dippre followed by the Installation of New Officers and a Slide lecture given by Miss Jean Winnie, Curator of the Wyoming Historical Society, entitled "The Lost Architecture of Wilkes Barre". She will discuss the various styles of American architecture from Colonial and Federal to Greek Revival and Victorian and Beaux Arts and Contemporary. Reservations for the Dinner are \$6.00 each and must be called in or sent to the Catlin House on or before May 8. The program is a part of the National Preservation Week emphasis.

## SCRANTON IN 1878

One hundred years ago the City of Scranton became the county seat of the newly created County of Lackawanna. What was it like a century ago?

A new and growing city, this young and aggressive center of the anthracite coal mining region had grown up literally out of the woods from a hamlet called "Slocum Hollow" only 38 years before. From its beginnings with the Iron Furnaces of the Scranton Brothers in 1840,

the city had experienced a growth and development as rapid as any western boom mining town. From a total population of less than 1000 in Providence Township in 1840, it had experienced a phenomenal growth to a Borough in 1856 and a city in 1866 and now had become the county seat in 1878 with a population close to 45,000! Scranton was an optimistic American city, a natural center for trade, commerce and travel, with a growing prosperity and making rapid strides in population. It was situated in a valley underlaid with a seeming inexhaustible supply of coal. The place presented a busy appearance with its fiery iron blast furnaces, its noisy coal breakers and an endless stream of railroad cars carrying coal to fire American industry. New brick buildings were being erected constantly, new business ventures were opening and new homes were being built on the surrounding hills. The Lackawanna Iron and Steel Co. was manufacturing miles and miles of railway track to lay rails across the American continent. Four railroads: the D. L. & W. the D. & H. the Penna. Coal Co. Gravity and the Central of New Jersey were shipping from 25 to 35,000 tons of coal daily. Twenty big black wooden breakers or collieries with their growing culm dumps dotted the landscape on every hand. In West Scranton there were the Diamond, Mt. Pleasant, Oxford, Bellevue, Hyde Park, Central (Hampton) and Capoose (Briggs) breakers while in North Scranton the Brisbin, Cayuga, Churches, Leggitts Creek and Marvin were found; in Green Ridge and Central City were the Von Storch, Jermyn's Centennial, Green Ridge and Pine Brook breakers and in South Scranton were located the Pawnee, Meadow Brook and National breakers. In the mines below 20,000 men and boys toiled with pick and shovels and mule cars to dig out the coal.

New emigrants from Germany, Ireland and Wales were arriving continually to work in these growing industries. Their lot was hard and life was a constant struggle with long hours of toil under difficult conditions but America was the land of opportunity. Most of the bosses and coal barons were of Yankee, English or Scottish stock. The Germans settled in South Side, the Welsh in Hyde Park and Providence and the Irish located on Shanty Hill, in Pine Brook or Providence. The wealthier residents were building large homes on the Hill or in the new suburb called Green Ridge.

To service this expanding populous there were innumerable business establishments. Six first class hotels in central city catered to the traveling

public: The Wyoming House, the St. Charles, the Forest House, the Lackawanna House, the Lackawanna Valley House and the Scranton House; The Heermans House was in Hyde Park and the Bristol in Providence. In addition to these there were 73 other hotels or saloons, as they were better known, where many a miner slaked his thirst or lost his pay. One could travel about the city on foot, by the horse cars or hire a horse and rig from one of nine livery stables.

The public was kept well informed for there were a total of nine newspapers-daily and weekly-including the German "Wochenblatt" and the Welsh "Banner American." The Scranton City Directory for 1878 records that there were 104 general stores and groceries, 26 meat markets, several bakeries, 17 druggists, 18 blacksmiths, 14 carriage makers, 12 furniture stores, 20 boot and shoe dealers, 28 restaurants, 11 banks and even 3 breweries. While there were 36 physicians to care for the sick, there was only one hospital - the Lackawanna with room for 50 patients. The new county had 54 eager young lawyers but as yet, no court house.

Religion and education both important and emphasized. There were 26 Protestant churches in the city including six Welsh churches and four German churches. There were also three large Irish Catholic Churches and one German Catholic parish and one Jewish synagogue. Education was provided for the children in 29 grade schools but there was only one high school - the Central, plus one private institution - Merrill's Select School. There was as yet no college in the county and no parochial schools, though the Roman Church had established St. Cecelias Academy for girls in 1872. Nearby however in the Abingtons were found Keystone and Madison Academies.

For entertainment the Academy of Music had opened in 1877 and featured traveling concerts and theatricals. It was an era when orders were popular for there were over 40 lodges and posts of all kinds in the city. An active and aggressive Board of Trade helped to promote more and better business. The first telephones were installed in 1878 but electric lights did not come until after 1880.

In spite of all of this progress and prosperity, there was as yet no court house or city hall, no library or museum. Most of the streets were still dirt-dusty in summer and muddy in winter, lighted only with an occasional gas lamp. None

of the Eastern European emigrants had as yet arrived. The Mayor was R.H. McCune and the city was governed by a Select Council of 21 members. There were only 15 policemen to keep order.

There had been riots and strikes by the miners and railroad men in 1877 but order had been restored and work resumed.

Among the prominent citizens of the city were: Joseph Slocum, Ebenezer Hitchcock, Joseph C. Platt, Charles F. Mattes, Hon. Joseph A. Scranton, William W. Scranton, Col. William N. Monies, and Judge John Handley, Sheriff A. B. Stevens, Atty. F. W. Gunster, Doctors B.H. Throop, Horace Hollister, David B. Hand, Wm. H. Pier, J. W. Gibbs, Horace Ladd and Charles Stevens; Ezra Ripple, Col. F. L. Hitchcock, Henry M. Boies, William Connell, William Richmond, Col. Ira Tripp, George Sanderson, Lewis Pughe, Thomas Dickson, Henry Belin, Atty. A. H. Winton, Wm. F. Hallstead, John Jerymn, James Archbald, Atty. Edward Merrifield, E. W. Weston and many others.

With all Scranton in 1878 was a young and growing city, determined to make its own way, freed from Wilkes Barre and the parent county of Luzerne. It was surrounded by a prosperous farming region and was optimistic about its future growth. Such was our city when it became the new county seat in 1878.

W.P.L.

### ROBERT C. MATTES

We were all saddened by the recent death of Robert C. Mattes who served as the general Curator of the Lackawanna Historical Society for 12 years from 1961 until his retirement in 1973. Bob was a grandson of one of the founding fathers of Scranton and was also a retired employee of the former Hudson Coal Co. He and his sister Dorothea gave many years of devoted service to our Society for which we are deeply grateful and indebted.

Wilkes Barre - county seat  
looked down - young upstart  
eager break Mother county -  
felt lacked culture & breeding  
already outdistanced W.B. in  
No & Buses.

perhaps more - optimism -  
challenge of future - hope  
new emigrants had for  
tomorrow

alot of history - development  
growth - decay - successes  
& failures since then -  
still hope Lacka Co -  
Hub of Highways - Edge of  
Pocono Recn. Region -  
don't ship coal - make mult  
products needed by fell am.  
Best of all - <sup>Nat. Resources - Energy</sup> people - all  
friendly - neighborly - <sup>kind</sup> concerned  
People - like you <sup>all Scranton - see mcBade</sup>  
very proud son Lacka - 100  
years  
Hope you are too  
most noteworthy - <sup>Natural Energy - Resources</sup> contributions  
contrib citizens - priceless  
asset - Spirit of People Here

LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CATLIN HOUSE

232 MONROE AVENUE

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18510

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