

The Lackawanna Historical Society BULLETIN

Volume 13, No. 1 February 1980

FEBRUARY PROGRAM Thursday, February 21, 1980 Catlin House 8 P.M.

Our February Program meeting will be a slide presentation entitled "A History of Scranton and It's People" narrated by Dr. John L. Earl and Dr. Michael DeMichele, members of the History Department of the University of Scranton, who researched and developed the program with the help of the Scranton Area Foundation. They will trace the history of the founding and development of our City with special emphasis on the major ethnic groups who settled here from the middle of the 19th century to the present. A discussion period will follow this interesting presentation with a social hour afterwards. You are urged to be with us for the program.

1980 PROGRAMS

Wednesday, March 19 - Slides and Talk entitled "The Architecture and Buildings of Scranton 1920 to 1970" given by George M.D. Lewis, Waverly, veteran architect.

Wednesday, April 16 - Slides and talk on "The History of the Scranton Family in Succeeding Generations" given by William P. Lewis, our Executive Director with remarks by the Lt. Governor of Pennsylvania, William W. Scranton, III.

Wednesday, May 14 - The Annual Dinner Meeting and Installation of Officers. A lecture and slides on "Asa Packer, the Man and His Mansion" will be given by John Gunsser, Curator of the Asa Packer Mansion, Jim Thorpe, Pa.

CATLIN HOUSE NEWS

December was a busy month at the Catlin House. Our annual Christmas program was held on December 5 with Choral Music by the Baptist Bible College Ensemble and vintage trolley and train films narrated by Edward Miller of Pittston. We had 115 present for the festive occasion. The next week the Lackawanna County Medical Society Auxillary held their

Christmas program here with 60 members present. A total of 317 visitors came to the House in December and 95 in January. A number of youth groups have come for tours including a Girl Scout Troop, two Cub Scout groups and students from Abington Heights and St. Patrick's High School. The local D.A.R. Chapter meets here monthly.

The Board of Trustees met on January 18 at which time the Building Committee reported that the roof had been carefully repaired by the Phoenix Roofing Co.; the gutters had been cleaned, repaired and replaced and the pigeons roosting on the eaves had been eliminated. The House Committee reported that a new American flag and a new table pad had been purchased. Best news of all was that the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania had finally awarded the Lackawanna Historical Society the funds of the former Surface Protection Association, amounting to over \$20,000. A Bequest of \$10,000 has been given to the Society from the Estate of the late Mrs. Robert Y. Moffat and over \$1100 has been received in donations in memory of the late Atty. Phillip V. Mattes, both former Trustees.

MATTES FAMILY TRIBUTE

The passing of Atty. Philip V. Mattes on December 23 last year, brought to an end a long period of involvement and service to the Lackawanna Historical Society by three members of the Mattes family. Attorney Mattes had served as a Trustee of the Society for over 40 years; Miss Dorothea Mattes, his first cousin had served as our gracious Secretary for 14 years and her brother the late Robert C. Mattes had served as Curator of the Catlin House for 11 years. This total of over 65 years of service is a significant contribution and deserves more than passing notice; hence this issue of the Bulletin will be dedicated as a Mattes Family Tribute with a biographical sketch of each member included.



ATTY. PHILIP V. MATTES
1887-1979

The Mattes Family is of German origin, having been founded in America by John Casper Mattes who emmigrated from the town of Bolenden in the Palatinate to the new nation of America in 1794 where he located at Easton, Pa. and became the town's schoolmaster and church organist. He married Wilhelmina Eberle and they were the parents of two sons: Frederick E. and Philip H. Mattes.

Philip H. Mattes was born in Germany in 1785 and came to America with his parents in 1794. He grew up and was educated at Easton where he lived a long and useful life and became a prominent citizen. He served as Postmaster of Easton 16 years from 1813 to 1828 and several years as Register of Wills for Northampton County. Then he had a long career as a banker; cashier of the Bank of Penna. 1827 to 1837 and cashier of the Dime Savings Bank 1850 to 1868. Among his banking clients were George W. and Selden T. Scranton of Oxford Furnace, New Jersey. They persuaded him to take a one-quarter interest in their enterprise to establish an iron and coal industry in the Lackawanna Valley of Pennsylvania in 1840. This led to the formation of the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Co. from which grew the City of Scranton. Philip H. Mattes married Catherine Herster and raised a family of five daughters and two sons. He died in 1870.

Charles Frederick Mattes, Philip's son, was raised in Easton and came to work at the Lackawanna Iron Works as a young man in 1841. He began as a clerk in the Iron Company's store, then became Superintendent of the Iron Furnaces and eventually rose to the position of General Manager and Vice President of the Iron and Coal Co. in Scranton. He was one of the founders of the First Presbyterian Church here (now Westminster) and was president of the Select Council of the City of Scranton. Always an industrious man, he became a prominent and well loved citizen. He married in 1846 to Lydia Platt, sister of Joseph C. Platt, another one of the founders of Scranton, and they had a family of six children: William, Mary, Anna, Edward, Charles and Louis. After his first wife's death, he married again to Martha Crosby and they had one daughter Cornelia. Mattes and his family lived in a large stone house which he built in 1857 at 119 Jefferson Avenue. He resided here until his death in 1895. The site is now occupied by the Martz Bus Terminal.

His oldest son William F. Mattes was born in 1849 and followed engineering as a profession. He served as manager of the iron and steel mills in Scranton, then managed steel mills in New Jersey, Virginia and Wisconsin, followed by

a brief gold mining venture in Colorado. He then returned to Scranton where as Chief Engineer, he laid out the inter-urban electric "Laurel Line" Railway from Scranton to Wilkes Barre and worked on the plans for laying out the city's streets. His first wife Mary Crittenden died a year after their marriage; his second wife was Mary L. Van Cleef, daughter of Dr. Augustus Van Cleef, a Green Ridge physician. They were the parents of one son:

Philip Van Cleef Mattes, our subject, was born in Scranton in 1887 and was educated at Central High School and Princeton University, graduating from Cornell University in 1910. He came home to read law and was admitted to the Lackawanna Bar in 1912. He followed a successful career in the legal profession which was to extend over 67 years and began a remarkable life of civic involvement and community service. As a lawyer he early became involved in the mine cave struggle and served as counsel for the Scranton Surface Protective Association which fought the long and finally successful battle to force the local coal companies to cease mining under the residential sections of the city. This involvement led him to serve as City Solicitor during the administration of Major John Durkin 1922-26 and later a much longer period of service as County Solicitor under Commissioner Michael Lawler from 1935 to 1963, a period of 27 years. It was during this period that he served ably as Chairman of the Scranton Municipal Airport Commission which built the Wilkes Barre-Scranton Airport at Avoca in 1945-47. During these years he somehow also found time to serve as Secretary of the Lackawanna Bar Association for 43 years, a Director of the Chamber of Commerce, a founder of the Lackawanna Industrial Fund Enterprises L.I.F.E., president of the Kiwanis Club, a Director of Alleghany Airlines and Trustee of the Lackawanna Historical Society for over 40 years. Always keenly interested in local history, he authored a book of his own recollections in 1974 entitled "Tales of Scranton."

This remarkable record which "Phil Mattes" made during his long and full life of 92 years was a great contribution and rich legacy to give to the City of Scranton and County of Lackawanna. During his entire life, he was a man of great ability and respect with wise and kindly ways. People could always go to him for calm, good judgement and they could discuss things with him that would eventually lead to the right move. He was always a great inspiration to young lawyers, for though he had lived through a great deal of the past, he was always involved with the present. As Judge Richard Conaboy

said recently at his memorial service "Anyone who ever met Phil Mattes was always glad to know him, anyone who had an association with him was always better for it, he was always the same calm, gentle person in every phase of his life."

His family life was an especially happy one; he married Miss Gertrude Russ of Scranton in 1914 and they shared 65 years of enjoyable home and family life together. They raised two sons and two daughters, living many years at 1105 Woodlawn Street in Scranton and then since 1953 at 115 Pequest Drive in Waverly. His wife Gertrude, two children: Atty. Rogers Mattes of Scranton and Glenburn and Mrs. Charles (Marion) Corddry of Kensington, Maryland and ten grandchildren, five of whom are also lawyers survive him. Phil was always very proud of his family and they will miss him most. At the time of his recent death on December 23, 1979 at the age of 92, he was the oldest lawyer in the Lackawanna County Bar Association. Memorial services were held on December 27 with interment in Hickory Grove Cemetery.

Phil Mattes gave something of his philosophy of life in his book when he said "Despite all of the stumbles and falls and bruises taken along the way, this has been on the whole a pleasant journey and I am glad to have had the privilege of taking it."



MISS DOROTHEA E. MATTES

Miss Dorothea Mattes, a first cousin of Philip V. Mattes, served as the gracious secretary and hostess at the Catlin House for 14 years, from 1958 until her retirement in 1972. She is the daughter of Charles C. Mattes (1858-1909) who was employed for 30 years as a civil engineer and later as manager for the real estate department for the Lackawanna Iron and Steel Co. He became a Lt. Colonel in the National Guards

LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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