

**ANNUAL DINNER MEETING**

**Wednesday, May 14, 1980 — Catlin House 6:30 P.M.**

The Annual Dinner Meeting of the Historical Society will be held at the Catlin House on Wednesday, May 14, 1980 at 6:30 P.M. with a delicious roast beef dinner catered by the Dippre. Price of the dinner is \$7.00 which will include full course dinner, tip and the program. Reservations are necessary and may be made by calling the Catlin House 244-3841 by May 12.

Installation of the recently elected officers of the Society will take place at 8 p.m. followed by a slide illustrated lecture entitled "Asa Packer, The Man and His Mansion" given by John Gunsser, Curator of the Asa Packer Mansion, Jim Thorpe, Pa.

Packer, a noted Pennsylvania capitalist, was born in Connecticut in 1806. He began his career as a canal boat operator, then built the Lehigh Valley Railroad to haul coal from Schylkill and Carbon Counties; served as Carbon County Judge and also two terms in the U.S. Congress. He then founded and endowed Lehigh University at Bethlehem in 1866 and built an imposing mansion for himself and family at Mauch Chunk where he resided until his death in 1879.

Co-sponsors for the program will be the Architectural Heritage Association as an event in National Heritage Week. The lecture promises to be an interesting one and we hope you will plan to be with us for the evening.

**CATLIN HOUSE NEWS**

Your Historical Society has had a busy schedule thus far this year. During the month of February we had 228 visitors including six groups; in March we had 240 visitors with five groups and during April we registered 271 visitors and 8 groups. Among these groups have been the D.A.R., the Lackawanna County Dental Society Auxillary, Boy and Girl Scout Troops, five Cub Scouts Dens, East Scranton Middle School Class as well as visitors from California and Colorado and students doing research papers from Princeton and Yale Universities and the University of Scranton. We constantly have people here seeking family genealogy and local history. On Saturday, April 26 we cooperated with the University's "History Day '80" program and had a number of high school students in for tours.

Our monthly program meeting have been unusually well attended, at times taxing the capacity of the House, with close to 100 attending. Drs. John Earl and Michael DeMichele presented a very interesting slide program on the History of Scranton with emphasis on the major Ethnic groups on February 21; George M.D. Lewis, veteran local architect gave a delightful slide talk on buildings erected in Scranton from 1920 to 1970 on March 19 and the Executive Director gave an informative slide lecture on the History of the Scranton Family on April 16.

Officers for the coming year were elected on April 16 and will be installed at the May dinner meeting. Total membership of the Society now numbers about 385. And we have finally been awarded the balance in the former Scranton Surface Protective Association Fund amounting to \$20,578.00 which will be invested for future income. Our thanks and appreciation to all of the officers and members of the Society who have worked to make this a very successful season.

**COLONEL HENRY W. DRINKER**  
**"Forgotten Lackawanna County Developer"**



**The Home of Henry W. Drinker, Clifton, Pa.**

Col. Henry W. Drinker (1787-1866) was the man who opened for settlement and development the whole eastern portion of Lackawanna County and was a visionary far ahead of his time. Today he is all but forgotten except for Drinker Street in Dunmore, the Drinker Elementary School at Madisonville and Clifton Township where he lived. Who was he and what did he do?

The Drinkers were an old and prominent Philadelphia Family, descended from one John Drinker who emigrated from Exeter, England and settled on the banks of the Delaware River at Philadelphia in 1679 before the arrival of William Penn. Succeeding generations of this Quaker family became wealthy merchants, shippers and importers. "Henry Drinker, the Elder" was such a strict Quaker that he refused to bear arms and was imprisoned for seven months by the Colonial officials during the Revolutionary War. Afterwards he became a wealthy merchant and shipper and real estate dealer, buying and selling farms in Delaware and Bucks Counties as well as vast tracts of wild lands in northern Pennsylvania including

lands in Luzerne, Wayne, Wyoming, Susquehanna, Tioga, Bradford, Center and Clearfield counties. He purchased these tracts for speculation and at one time owned over 500,000 acres, being one of the largest landholders in the State. He sold a tract four miles long by one mile wide to the Nine Partners who founded Harford, Pa. in 1790 as well as the land on which the town of Bethany in Wayne Co. was built. In 1792 he employed John DeLong of Stroudsburg to open a road thru the "Beech Woods" to a large tract he owned between Lake Wallenpaupack and the Lehigh River. However he was never able to develop this area; the road was allowed to grow over and years later a tree was found near Sterling, Pa. with the rude carving "H. Drinker 1792" on it. He lived on Front Street in Philadelphia, was a man of great business ability and always signed himself "Thy Friend, Henry Drinker." He died in 1809 leaving a vast estate, mostly in land.

The story of "Drinker's Beech" continues with our **Col. Henry W. Drinker** who was a great nephew of Henry Drinker, the Elder, above. He was born in Philadelphia in 1787 the son of Henry Drinker, Jr. who was a cashier in the Bank of North America and Mary Howell Drinker. Henry W. had a brother John who became a Philadelphia Lawyer, a brother William who became a New York City lawyer and another brother Richard who assisted him in developing this area. A cousin, another Henry Drinker, was sent to Susquehanna County to sell the family lands there and became the ancestor of the Cope Family of Montrose. Still another Henry Drinker of a later generation, served as President of Lehigh University from 1905 to 1920; his family is still prominent in the Philadelphia area.

Our Henry W. Drinker was trained in the family business but during the War of 1812 he became a "Fighting Quaker" and served as a Colonel in the U.S. Army during that conflict. After the war, he was commissioned by his family to open up and develop the Drinker Tract in Luzerne County. Accordingly in company with his father and brother, he came to this region first in the Spring of 1815, coming up the Easton and Wilkes Barre Turnpike as far as Stoddardsville and thence into the dense forests of the "Beechwoods" by a boat poled up the Lehigh River. Their first camp was near the site of his later home in Clifton. Having surveyed the vast region of some 25,000 acres, he became a man with a dream, realizing that in order to open up the area for settlement, a major road must be constructed over the Poconos and through the tract.

His first task, pursued with determination, was to secure a charter from the Penna. Legislature for the "**Philadelphia and Great Bend Turnpike**" which was accomplished in 1819. He then went to work to build the road, serving as the general contractor for much of the route, contributing much of his own personal funds and energy, so that the road was long afterwards called the "Drinker Turnpike". It was begun in 1821 and completed in 1826, commencing at Mt. Pocono and continuing on thru Tobyhanna, Daleville, Moscow, Dunmore, Providence, Chinchilla, Clarks Green, Waverly, Fleetville, Glenwood, Lenox Corners, Harford, New Mildford, concluding at Great Bend, Pa. where it connected with the Newburgh Turnpike. It was a toll road and was the first major highway thru this region, opening it up for trade and commerce with New York state and southern Pennsylvania.

Next Henry W. Drinker led in the establishment of **Covington Township** which was created out of old Wilkes Barre Township in 1818 and covered most of his landholdings, by now known as "Drinker's Beech" so called for the predominant timber on the tract. He suggested the name "Covington" after Brig. General Leonard Covington, a hero of the War of 1812, who fell gallantly fighting at the Battle of Williamsburg in Upper Canada and under whom Henry had served. Covington Township originally covered the whole eastern half of Lackawanna County and today is divided into nine municipalities, viz. Roaring Brook, Springbrook, Madison, Covington, Clifton and Buck Townships and Elmhurst and Moscow Boroughs.

As soon as he had a roadway into the area, Henry went to Philadelphia to meet incoming sailing vessels and encourage emigrants to come and settle on his lands, offering them land at \$5 per acre, payable in labor, lumber or stock. The first two settlers in the region were Edward Wardell and David Dale, who had come from Yorkshire, England and located at what is now Daleville in 1819. In 1823 he sold lands to the first settlers at Madisonville and in 1826 he deeded lands to the Holgates and others who located at what came to be called Turnersville. Other pioneer residents soon came in to clear up farms in the wilderness, among them Rev. Peter Rupert, a German Lutheran clergyman, who built the pioneer log tavern in 1830 and after a bitter cold winter, named his settlement "**Moscow**" in remembrance it is said of an earlier winter when he had marched with Napoleon's Army into the Russian Capitol. Drinker also sold lands to a group of Welsh emigrant farmers who located at Springbrook about 1830. In every settlement Drinker donated land for churches, schools and cemeteries.

The name "**Dunmore**" was given to that Borough by Henry W. Drinker and an interesting story lies behind the name: A wealthy English nobleman, Sir Charles Murray, son of Earl of Dunmore, was traveling thru this area and was introduced to Drinker, who promised to name the growing village at that place after him, if he would invest in Drinker's railroad project. After Murray's return to England, his cousin Queen Victoria persuaded him not to make any American investments, so the story goes, but the name has stuck.

Aware of the immense coal and iron deposits in the Lackawanna Valley, Drinker next dreamed of **Railroad** to extend from the Delaware River to the Susquehanna River, running thru his domain, to transport these minerals to eastern markets. And this was before any other railroad had yet been built in America but Drinker was a far-seeing visionary. In 1826 he secured a Charter for the "Delaware and Susquehanna Canal and Railroad Company" after he had surveyed the entire route himself thru trackless forests. It was a wild idea of canals, inclined planes and gravity tracks beginning at Pittston and extending over the Pocono range to the Delaware Water Gap. Drinker tried to sell the idea to various investors, among them Lord Dunmore and William Henry, but no one was willing and all Drinker could do was to keep the Charter renewed from year to year. Finally when the Scranton Brothers came to the Lackawanna Valley in 1840 and needed a railroad to ship the iron from their Blast Furnaces, the idea became a viable one. Drinker sold his charter to the Scrantons and helped them to promote the railroad from the beginning. He was one of the first Commissioners and chairman of the organizational meeting of the Leggitts Gap Railroad and the Delaware and Cobbs Gap Railroad in 1849 and 1850. The two roads were consolidated in 1853 as the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western R.R. and though Henry was never a major stockholder, he was always vitally interested in the road.

After this Drinker sold large tracts of his land to two developers who came into the area to build a tannery. Jay Gould and Zadoc Pratt built the **Gouldsboro** Tannery along the Lehigh River in 1856 at what is now Thornhurst and although it only lasted for ten years, this enterprise made the money with which Jay Gould went to New York and made a tremendous fortune in railroading and other securities, becoming eventually one of the wealthiest men in America. Drinker knew him and sold him his first land.

Henry now turned his efforts to timbering off his own remaining acres. Much of his land was not good for farming but was heavily timbered with hemlock oak and chestnut. He built a saw mill on the Lehigh River in 1850 and three years later erected a steam saw mill nearby. For several years thereafter he shipped thousands of feet of sawed lumber on the railroad. He established the first Post Office at **Clifton** in 1852 and served as the first postmaster while his brother Richard, who had always assisted him, served as the first Justice of Peace.

In spite of his many far-flung projects, Drinker always favored the site where he made his first clearing in the wilderness and here he erected a **homestead** for himself and his **large family** in Clifton Township near the Lehigh River. He built the substantial house pictured above about 1840 and resided there until his death. In later years the house was owned by the Kaufman family, then by Tom Taylor of Scranton and now is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Terry Franklin. Drinker had married in 1819 to Maria Wragg of Philadelphia and they became the parents of eleven children: Rebecca, Henry, Mary, Emily, Lydia, Charles, Robert, Elizabeth, Eleanor, Caroline and Albert. After the death of his first wife in 1844, Drinker married again to Esther Holgate and they had eight more children; making 19 in all! The second family consisted of Clifton (after whom Clifton Twp. was named), George, Annie, Edward, John, William, Chester and Harriet. Some of these children died young, others married and moved away, some went West and the rest returned to Philadelphia, probably because they did not have the same fondness for the woods that their father had. By 1880 none of them remained and today there are no Drinker descendants in this area. Even his brother Richard eventually moved to Scranton and none of his family remains.

Drinker lived long enough to see his domain cleared, developed and traversed by highways and railroads, but in spite of his vast landholdings, he seems to have always been "land poor" and never became a wealthy man. He lived thru a time of great changes, dying in 1866 at the age of 79. He lies buried in a small family cemetery in Clifton near his home, under a simple stone which states only his name and dates. The citizens of Clifton dedicated a Memorial Tablet to him there in 1976.

In recent years the North Pocono region has seen considerable development as a residential and recreational area and this trend will continue in times to come. Perhaps Henry W. Drinker's dream is nearer reality today than in his day but we still owe a great debt of credit and honor to this early pioneer and forgotten developer of Lackawanna County.

The foregoing story was researched and written by William P. Lewis, executive director of the Lackawanna Historical Society, with especial credit due to the 1880 History of Luzerne, Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties and to Ellis Miller, the author of the series entitled "Drinker's Beech".

**LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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