

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Wednesday, February 22, 1984 - Catlin House - 8 P.M.

Our February program will feature a slide-illustrated lecture on "The Abingtons", the most popular and fastest growing residential section of the County. William P. Lewis, Executive Director of the Society, a native and long time resident of the Abingtons, will trace the history and development of this scenic area from the days of the first New England settlers, through the years when it was a rural, agricultural area and into the present era when it has become a modern suburbia. You will not want to miss this interesting presentation with color slides from the past and present. Refreshments will follow the program on Wednesday, February 22 at 8 P.M.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMS

Wednesday, March 21 - Slide illustrated lecture given by David Salay, Director of the Anthracite Museums, on "The Taylor Breaker and Coal Collieries of the Anthracite Region".

Wednesday, April 11 - Slide lecture given by Francis C.M. Bosak, retired area publisher on "Michael J. Bosak, my father, a Man of Destiny, philanthropist, patriot, merchant and banker."

Wednesday, May 9 - Annual Dinner meeting with slides and a lecture on Dr. Isaiah Everhart, founder and benefactor of the Everhart Museum, given by Robert Schweitzer, museum curator.

CATLIN HOUSE NEWS

Since our last Bulletin we have welcomed a never-ending flow of visitors and researchers to the Catlin House. During September we had 317 visitors and 8 groups; in October 294 visitors and 9 groups, November 246 visitors and 6 groups, December 200 visitors and 3 groups and in January 84 visitors and 2 groups. This was a total of 1141 visitors and 28 groups during the past five months. Among the groups have been six White Beauty Inn tour groups; the Junior League Provisional class, West Scranton High School history classes, the Royals Historical Society, the Northeastern Heritage group, Daughters of the American Revolution, Girl Scouts, West Pittston Womens Club, St. Pauls Methodist Church group and television crews from Stations WDAU and WVIA.

Program meetings during the Fall were well attended; October on the "Italians" with 50 present, November on Railroad history with 70 present and the December Christmas program with choral music and trolley films with over 100 present.

The Society is cooperating with the Balch Institute of Philadelphia which is conducting on Ethnic Heritage survey of the Anthracite Regions; Susan McKinney and Greer Warren are the surveyors. The House Committee meets monthly to work on interior improvements, the fashions collection and decorated the House for the holiday season. New shelving has been constructed in the basement to organize our large collection of framed photographs. The Society recently received the donation of a handsome Grandfather Clock (Boston c. 1810) given by Mrs. Audrey Miller Klein, now a guest at the Adams Manor Nursing Home. The Executive Director has given seven talks to area organizations on local history and attended a joint meeting of area museum directors to share mutual concerns.

Mrs. June Wech, our Secretary, reports that membership in the Society is at an all-time high. We now have a total of 495 members. Dues for 1984 are now payable; please respond with yours if you have not already sent them in. Trustees of the Society will meet on Wednesday, February 29 at 4 P.M. with Dr. John L. Earl, in charge.



The first great mass immigration to America in the 19th century came from Ireland, the "Emerald Isle" whose people are descended from the ancient Celts. Coming from a land largely rural and agricultural, the Irish had been dominated religiously and politically by the British for centuries. They came to America to escape this oppression, most of them unskilled laborers and have provided much of the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, city politics and the labor unions. During the century from 1820 to 1920 a total of 4.7 million Irish crossed the Atlantic to settle in the U.S.A., a number which was exceeded only by the Germans. They left Ireland to escape the oppressions as well as the poverty and famines of their homeland. Locating principally in the urban and industrial areas of the northeastern U.S. they found work on the railroads, and canals, in factories and as miners, policemen and soldiers. The women usually found work as domestics, factory workers and teachers. In spite of an early reputation for poverty, drunkenness and violence, the Irish have made tremendous contributions to the development of America in the fields of religion, politics, labor and education as well as in the world of the theatre and sports.

Therefore in the history of the industrial development of Lackawanna County, it was natural that the Irish would come early, work hard and make a lasting impression on this area. The first Irish to come here located at Carbondale which was founded as a coal mining center in 1822 by William and Maurice Wurtz who founded the Delaware and Hudson Company and built the D. & H. Gravity Railroad from Carbondale to Honesdale and the D. & H. Canal from there to Kingston, N.Y. The canal was constructed from 1825 to 1828 largely by Irish immigrant laborers. Many more settled in Carbondale to work in the mines and on the gravity R.R. Masses were said by traveling priests as early as 1828 and by 1832 the Irish in Carbondale were numerous enough to found the first and oldest Roman Catholic Church in the county, St. Rose's. In 1833 the "Sons of Eire" held the first St. Patrick's Day parade in Carbondale. When the Gravity Railroad was extended to Archbald in 1845, many Irish laborers located there and founded St. Thomas Church in 1848. Ten years later when Olyphant, another mining town, was founded, the Irish flocked there and organized St. Patrick's Church in 1861. Ever since the Irish have been strong in numbers and influence in Carbondale, Archbald and Olyphant.

When the City of Scranton was founded by the Scranton Brothers and Company in 1840, records show that Irish laborers helped to build the first iron blast furnaces. And when the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad was built from Scranton to Great Bend in 1850-51, the construction work was done largely by Irish laborers. In fact what was known as the "Irish War" took place on May 28, 1850 on the line near Clarks Summit when a fight erupted between two Irish factions, the "Corkonians" and the "Far-Downers". Two men were killed and a number wounded before Col. Geo. W. Scranton restored order and the work was resumed. Many of these early Irish laborers and their families settled on the hillside in South Scranton in small frame houses. The section became known as "Shanty Hill" and here the first masses were said in 1846. The first Roman Catholic Church in Scranton, a small frame structure, was built in 1848 on Hemlock Street where the Church of the Nativity now stands. Fr. John Loughran was the first pastor. By 1854 when the first Census of Scranton was taken it showed a total of 1795 Irish here in 353 families as well as lesser numbers of Welsh and German immigrants. As the coal mines were opened here, other early Irish settled in Hyde Park, Providence, Dunmore and Minooka. Before long Irish parish churches were founded in these localities; Bloom's Patch in 1858, now Holy Rosary Church in Providence; St. Mary's Church in Dunmore in 1856, St. Patrick's Church in West Scranton in 1871 and St. Joseph's in Minooka in 1872. Other early Irish settlements began along the railroad at Nicholson, Clarks Summit and Moscow. Emigrating chiefly from the Irish counties of Mayo, Sligo, Galway, Kerry, Cork and Limerick, the Irish were always deeply devoted to the Roman Catholic Church and became Democrats in politics. They were generally hard-working, hard drinking and very clanish, colorful and witty as a class of people. They worked principally in the iron furnaces, on the railroads and in the coal mines but in time many of them opened small businesses and saloons and entered the political field. When the Civil War began, many of them responded patriotically, enlisting in the Union Army. One company of them was known as the "Railroads Guards".

The new and young city of Scranton expanded so rapidly that before long the little Catholic chapel on Hemlock Street was much too small for the growing congregation. Accordingly a new and larger Church was built on Franklin Avenue in the center of the city in 1853. Rev. Moses Whitty became the pastor the next year and led in the building of the Catholic churches at Providence and Dunmore as well as the construction of a large and handsome brick church on Wyoming Avenue in 1865-67 which is now St. Peter's Cathedral. By this

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time the Catholic population of this area had grown so in numbers that a demand was made for the creation of a new diocese. The Scranton Roman Catholic Diocese was thus created in 1868 and the Rt. Rev. William O'Hara of Philadelphia was appointed the first Bishop. He was a native of Ireland and all of his successors in the bishopric: Michael J. Hoban, Thomas C. O'Reilly, William J. Hafey, Jerome D. Hannan, J. Carroll McCormick and John O'Connor have been of Irish descent, though none was a native of Lackawanna County. However, a great host of priests and nuns who have entered the service of their Church were natives and many of them were instrumental in helping to found the large number of Roman Catholic educational and social institutions in this county. In many parishes parochial school were established staffed by dedicated Sisters; other educational institutions founded were St. Cecelias Academy in 1872; St. Thomas College in 1888, now the University of Scranton and Mt. St. Marys Seminary 1902, now a part of Marywood College. Orphanages, children's homes and hospitals have been established here as well, many of them by dedicated Irish sons and daughters of the Church.

Not only were the Irish deeply religious, they were and are intensely interested in politics. Many of them early on became policemen, firemen and ward leaders in their communities; many more rose in upward mobility to become lawyers, doctors, judges and political servants in the city and county. When Lackawanna County was created in 1878, John Handley, a native of Ireland and a well known attorney here, was appointed as the first President Judge of the County Courts. He has been succeeded by a number of prominent jurists of Irish descent who have served the Courts with distinction: John P. Connolly, John P. Kelly, James J. O'Neill, T. Linus Hoban, Michael J. Eagen, Michael F. Sando, Edward Murphy, James F. Brady, William J. Nealon, Richard Conaboy, James Walsh and James M. Munley. Hoban served for a period of 35 years and Eagen went on to serve as State Supreme Court Justice. A number of Irish lawyers here have served as District Attorney and been elected to the Pennsylvania Legislature as well as the U.S. Congress, among whom are Patrick J. Boland and Joseph M. McDade, our present Congressman. Several County Commissioners have been of Irish descent, the best known of whom was Michael Lawler who served in the County Court House for 30 years. Nine of the Mayors of the City of Scranton have been Irish; they were Michael Loftus, Robert McKune, Terrance V. Powderly, Francis A. Beamish, John F. Durkin, James T. Hanlon - three terms, James J. Walsh, Eugene Hickey and our present colorful incumbent James B. McNulty.

Added to this impressive list are a number of other citizens who came from Irish parentage and made significant contributions here: among them to mention some were: Terrance V. Powderly who served as Grand Master of the Knights of Labor and Mayor of Scranton before going to Washington, D.C. to become U.S. Commissioner of Immigration; Archbishop Martin J. O'Connor who served in Rome and Bishop Andrew J. Brennan who was Bishop of Richmond; Capt. Patrick DeLacey who served in the Civil War and Penna. Legislature; Martin J. Maloney wealthy Philadelphian who founded the Maloney Home here in honor of his parents; Mike Norton, Scranton bookseller, Edward J. Lynett, longtime publisher of the "Scranton Times"; Andrew J. and Patrick J. Casey who built the Hotel Casey; James Sweeney prominent contractor; Michael B. Comerford who founded a chain of theatres; Clarks Brothers; Jim Reap who served as Sheriff and was "Everbodys Friend"; Thomas F. Murphy author of the "History of Lackawanna County" and Msgr. John P. Gallagher author of "The History of Scranton Diocese" and a host of others. Among well known women were Mary B. McAndrew, Carbondale educator and Mrs. Marion Munley who served in the Penna. Legislature.

The Irish have always remembered that they were Irish and that their ancestors came from the "Auld Sod." They founded numerous organizations here to help each other and keep alive their national consciousness. The oldest of these was the Ancient Order of Hibernians and later the Knights of Columbus, the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and the Young Men's Institute. The cause of temperance among the Irish was strongly promoted by the Father Matthew Society and the Catholic Total Abstinence Society for many years. Very few of the Irish laborers here took part in the violence of the "Mollie Magurys", their activities were more centered in Schuylkill County.

The first St. Patricks Day parade in Scranton was held in 1857 and to this day Irishmen here and everywhere celebrate the birthday of their Patron Saint and their ethnic heritage with parades, speeches and banquets. A number of national figures have come to Scranton to address the annual banquet of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick. This is only a brief review of the colorful history and contributions of the Irish to the life of Lackawanna County during the past century and a half.

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