

THE LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

at THE GEORGE H. CATLIN HOUSE
232 MONROE AVENUE
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18510

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The LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

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SPRING 1993

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

APRIL 

28th WEDNESDAY at 7:30PM: *"TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME: A HISTORY OF PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL IN NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA"* - Join the Society at the Catlin House for this entertaining lecture by long time sports editor and sports caster John McCormick.

MAY

9th - 15th: HISTORIC PRESERVATION WEEK

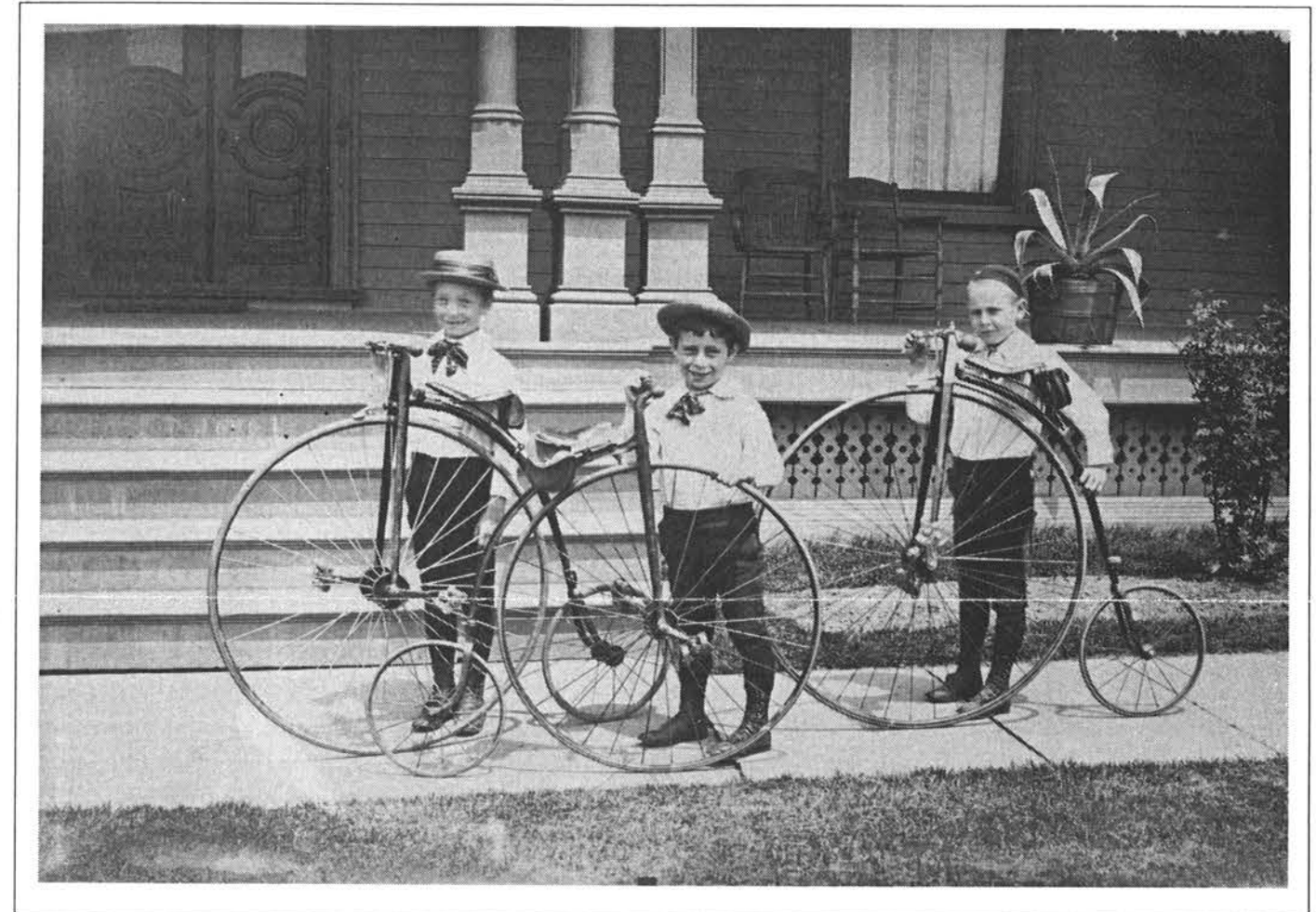
15th SATURDAY 9AM-3PM: *"PLACES of WORSHIP: UP the LINE"* - Join the Lackawanna Historical Society, the Architectural Heritage Association, and the Carbondale Historical Society as we explore the diverse religious and architectural history of churches along Main Avenue from Providence to Carbondale. (Fee)

22nd-29th: ARCHIVES WEEK

22nd SATURDAY: *GENEALOGY WORKSHOP* - With assistance from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Genealogical Society and local genealogists. Details to follow. (Fee)

27th THURSDAY: Research Library of the Lackawanna Historical Society will be OPEN until 7PM.

ANNUAL MEETING & PROGRAM - Date and time To Be Announced.



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Richmond Hill & the Morss Mansion:
A look at two architectural treasures

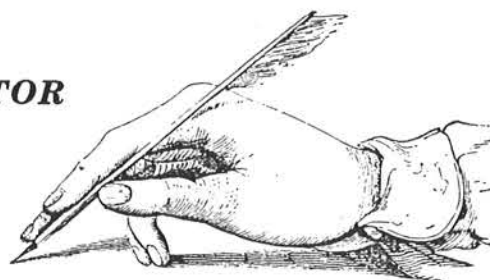
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Collection Highlights:
An Immigrant's Story
New to the Library
Recent Donations

9

Grant Award
and New Members

**A MESSAGE
FROM THE DIRECTOR**



Cultural institutions across the Country have faced cut-backs over the last several years. Most recently we have witnessed the down-sizing of larger institutions and even the closing of others like the New York Historical Society, due to their poor financial health. The economic situation has resulted in reduced government support, lower income, and diminished earnings from endowments. The Lackawanna Historical Society is not immune to these conditions.

The Lackawanna Historical Society relies greatly on membership fees as a substantial means of funding. At this time I want to offer my personal thanks for your continued support. I am pleased by the increased membership in the Society since last year, especially those individuals who have advanced to a higher level of support. New members live not only in Lackawanna County but across the U.S.- from Yucca Valley, California, to Titusville, Florida. Membership growth is critical to our development as a cultural and educational institution. We also count on our volunteers to undertake the activities of the Society. You can help us preserve our past and move into the future by encouraging the support of others and becoming actively involved in the work of our Society.

We are currently involved in a number of new and exciting projects. Programs this year will appeal to a wide range of interests and I'm sure you will find at least one to suit your taste. As we continue to develop programs, we need to hear your ideas and suggestions. The Lackawanna Historical Society belongs to you. Our future is yours.

Maryellen Calemmo
Executive Director

NOMINATIONS TO BE PRESENTED

Persuant to Article VI of the By-Laws of the Lackawanna Historical Society, the election of Officers and Trustees in the Class of 1996, shall be conducted at the April 28th program meeting.

Cover photo: Scranton - Circa 1884 - From album donated by Jack Cooper. Individuals and exact location is unknown. If you have additional information about this photo please contact the Society.

The Lackawanna Historical Society Journal, is published for the benefit of the Members of the Lackawanna Historical Society. Any inquiries should be addressed to the Director of the Society.
(717) 344-3841
Tuesday through Friday,
10 a.m. - 5p.m.

**1992-1993
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GRANT AWARDED

The National Endowment For The Humanities has recently awarded the Pennsylvania Humanities Council a three year grant to continue work on "Raising our Sites: Women's History in Pennsylvania."

The Lackawanna Historical Society is one of 15 sites throughout the state to benefit from this award. The three-year, statewide pilot project consists of conferences, workshops, and consultations to integrate women's history into our permanent exhibits and programs and essentially to raise awareness in women's history. The NEH believes that this statewide project could well be a model for the nation.

The particular project begun by the LHS, with grant assistance from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, focused on a general survey of women's oral histories. Approximately 65 recordings were made in 1992. This award from the NEH will assist us in transcribing the existing tapes before making additional tape recordings. The transcriptions will also dictate how our project will proceed; perhaps a publication, program, or exhibition. For further information please call the Society.



HISTORIC GARDEN PROJECT UPDATE: The Society is still working to restore and develop the grounds of the Catlin House. Recently we have consulted with the American Society of Landscape Architects and the National Park Service Preservation Assistance Division, Washington, D.C. A site plan has been designed and we are seeking funding for implementation. Photos such as the one above assisted in our historic research of the surrounding properties. This photo shows the expansive grounds which surrounded the James and Sarah Archbald home on Ridge Row in Scranton. This view is from the Monroe Avenue side. To the right of the home and in the distance was the southeast side of Scranton. The present day Catlin House was carved out of the Archbald property along with at least ten other city lots.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

February 1993

STUDENT		FAMILY	
Darlene Miller Lanning	Mountaintop	Erwin J. Austin	Dunmore
Martin W. Wilson	Delaware Water Gap	Mr. & Mrs. William Graziano	Dunmore
INDIVIDUAL		Howard E. Lane	Moosic
Stephen T. Emick	Roanoke, VA	Jack Mennig	Colchester
Warren Dixon	Salem, OR	Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Moore	Indianapolis, IN
Shirley Davis	Scranton	Mr. & Mrs. Carmello Trovato	Clarks Summit
Marge Gray	Jacksonville, FL	Richard H. Wagner	Mayfield
Rabbi David Geffon, Ph.D.	Scranton	CONTRIBUTING	
Ann e R. Gershey	Clarks Summit	Lieut. Col. Gary Sowinski	Scranton
David R Gould	Schenectady, NY	Mr. & Mrs. Isaac Tripp, IV	Chagrin Falls, OH
Barbara Haley	Troy, NY	SUSTAINING	
Mary Ann Hazzouri	Scranton	Timothy Lenahan, Esq.	Scranton
Richard Healey	Edinburgh, Scotland	ORGANIZATION/CORPORATE	
V. Jean Johnson	Boonton, NJ	Cultural Heritage Research Services	N. Wales, PA
Cornelius R. Mulherin	Titusville, PA	Dr. Albert A. Hazzouri, Jr.	Scranton
Joseph F. Myers	Scranton		
Hilary Pope	Scranton		
Karen B. White	Dalton		

AT THE CATLIN HOUSE

Visitors:

Students from Penn State University recently toured The Catlin House as part of their art history course taught by Donald Powell. The students are learning how to view art both objectively and subjectively by describing objects in the LHS collection.

Scranton University Literature students also visited the Catlin House in February with Dr. Ellen Casey who focused on the setting of the house to illustrate the customs and traditions of the Victorian period.

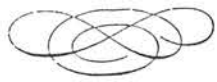
Research: Through the Winter months, the staff of the Lackawanna Historical Society has been able to assist many individuals who have become addicted to the genealogy bug.

Historical Society member and local genealogist Cecile Champagne, has been compiling research on the Rodham family of Scranton. Recently she has received a letter of thanks from the First Lady, Hilary Rodham Clinton for supplying her with this family history.

Volunteers: Welcome back University of Scranton students Jennifer Baumen, a junior in the History department who has given a great deal of her time to the Society and is currently working on cataloging photographs. Douglas Forrer, a freshman Business student has also donated many hours inventorying collections and is currently indexing scrapbooks. We appreciate their enthusiasm!

In House/Behind the Scenes: The third floor, which was temporarily closed for renovations, is now open thanks to the work of Jack & Nancy Hiddlestone. Plans are currently being made to introduce some educational activities in this room.

Long range plans are being developed for collections in storage. New shelving is presently being constructed to accommodate artifacts. If you are interested in assisting with this project please contact the Society.



COMMITTEES

The following Committees of the Lackawanna Historical Society have been opened to the membership. If you are interested in serving please call the Society and speak to the Director. We need enthusiastic individuals who are committed to our organization and will bring new ideas and interests. 344-3841

- MEMBERSHIP
- PROGRAMMING
- RECEPTION
- COMMUNITY RELATIONS/VOLUNTEERS

Scholars Abroad

Last November, The Lackawanna Historical Society welcomed back to the Catlin House Richard Healey, Ph.D. of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Dr. Healy had originally been to the Catlin House in the 1970's while completing his doctoral dissertation on the Delaware Lackawanna & Western Railroad. Since that time he has continued his research and come back to the Catlin House to use employment records of the Coal Department of the D. L. & W. RR, which are part of the Historical Society's collection.

Dr. Healy is largely responsible for organizing this vast collection when last here.



The LHS has also been assisting from afar the Welsh National Museum in Wales on a book project to be completed this year. A number of historic photographs from the Society's collection will appear in this document and the author William Jones will visit the Society in the Fall of 1993.

PROGRAM NOTE:

A special thanks to local historian and archeologist Dave Kohler for his excellent program in February which focused on life on the home front during the Civil War period.

Mr. Kohler presented many interesting observations regarding the underground railroad, positive and negative sentiments

to the war, business and industry at the time and following the war.

It was also noted that oral histories or traditions may be the only source for many aspects of this time period and are invaluable. If you have any information about this particular subject please share that with us. There is much to know.

Memorial Donations Received

In Memory of:

Mrs. Josephine Cornell
Mr. Dominick Calabro
Mr. David Etter
Mrs. George Peck

Dr. Melton Pentecost

By:

Mrs. Betty Hughes
Mr. & Mrs. Everett Kitchen
Mr. & Mrs. John Haggerty
Mrs. H. R. VanDeusen
Miss Marie Smith
William Pentecost

Memorial Donations go to our Memorial Fund unless otherwise restricted by the donor.



EASTER'S TRADITIONS

"The giving of an egg as a mark of friendship or love is almost as old as the ark, of which it is a symbol; for the ancients used it as a sign of resurrection, and brought eggs to the altars for their gods as gifts..."

Harper's Young People, April 12, 1881

Easter, seen by many as a Christian Holiday, has a history that pre-dates the Christian festival. It is a blend of the ancient pagan celebration of the vernal equinox and the reaffirmation of eternal life as proclaimed by Scripture. It is also an observance that has been associated with several diverse folk beliefs. Of these, two folk beliefs have won wide acceptance by most Americans: the decoration of Easter Eggs and the appearance of the *Easter Rabbit*.

As Christmas has its sleigh driven gift-giver that travels to bring joy to children, Easter has the Bunny. The origin of the Bunny is vague, but one tale tells how a medieval princess, who wished to thank her people anonymously, placed colored eggs in nests throughout the countryside. When children discovered the eggs, they saw a rabbit run out from under the bush and mistakenly thought that he had left the decorated gifts. This legend was well known in Germany for many years but it took generations for other countries including the United States to accept the Bunny as tradition. Pennsylvania however, accepted the legend

of the Easter Bunny earlier due to its many German communities.

Customs associated with the Easter egg did not developed only in the Germanic region of Europe, for examples of decorated eggs can also be found in Hindu and Jewish traditions.

Locally, especially in the Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Polish communities, one of the most popular forms of decorating eggs is known as *pysanka*. Eggs colored in this wax-resist method were not intended for consumption, but rather for presentation. Often a girl would give these to her boyfriend as a token of affection. A basket of these *pysanky* could also be kept as protection against fire and lightning. Some Ukrainians believed that as long as people made *pysanky*, the world would exist in harmony.

The process of decorating these eggs may take as much as five hours per egg and requires a steady hand. The procedure begins by dipping raw eggs into a series of cold dyes, progressing from lightest to darkest. Blues and greens must be applied by hand for they tend to bleed. After each dipping, beeswax is applied to the parts of the egg that will

keep that color. This can be accomplished with a pin or needle, or a special tool called a *kitska*. When the egg is completed, it is warmed so that the wax can be removed.

The decorations of the *pysanky* show several colors and shapes that are symbolic. Red is said to denote love; blue, health; green, money; and orange, attraction. A dot or a small circle represents stars; the belt or ribbon, eternity; the triangle or diamond shaded with cross lines is the Trinity, the three stages of man, or fire, air, and water.

Plants and animal figures also represent specific meanings. The rose is thought to be the sun while the pine tree symbolizes eternal youth and health. A variety of animal images including a ram's horns, bird's feet, and spiders symbolize fertility or achievement of wishes. The reindeer represents wealth and prosperity. Also, the *pysanky* may represent a specific family or geographic location.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, egg decorating has taken on many different forms. In addition to *pysanky*, there is another wax resistant method known as *krashanky* and the scratched egg method known by some Ukrainians as *dria-*

panky. There has also been a variety of popular decorating techniques applied to the egg such as fabric and paper cutouts which transformed the egg into anything but an egg. Eventually the traditionally decorated chicken egg was replaced with eggs of glass, wood, chocolate, spun sugar, and plastic.

In recent years, however, we have witnessed a great interest in ethnic traditions and as a result, customs like the decorated egg have been kept alive.

(Sources: *Venetia Newall: An Egg at Easter* 1971; *Nada Gray: HOLIDAYS Victorian Women Celebrate in Pennsylvania* 1983.)



This 1897 illustration from *Demorest's Illustrated Family Magazine* was used to suggest new decorating ideas for your eggs.

RICHMOND HILL & THE MORSS MANSION

Taking a look at two architectural treasures and where they are today

Over 100 years ago, Lackawanna County was home to some of the most successful industrialists in the country. These men found their fortunes by utilizing the natural resources that were available in the area at that time. As a result of their wealth and accom-

plishments, they erected large mansions in which to live. Throughout the County, many of these homes still stand. Some, in better condition than others, but all serve as reminders of their first owners and the great prosperity which they achieved.



Above right: The Morss Mansion in Simpson, much as it appears today.
Above: Prior to 1900 when the family was still in residence.

In 1842, George L. Morss of Green County, New York joined his two brothers in a tanning and lumbering business near Carbon-

place offered the advantages that he had found in Northeastern Pennsylvania. So George L. Morss returned to Fell Township, bought out his brothers and continued to run the tanning and lumber business until his death in 1882.

As one of the earliest industrialists in the Fell Township community, Morss was able to use the timber from his vast land-

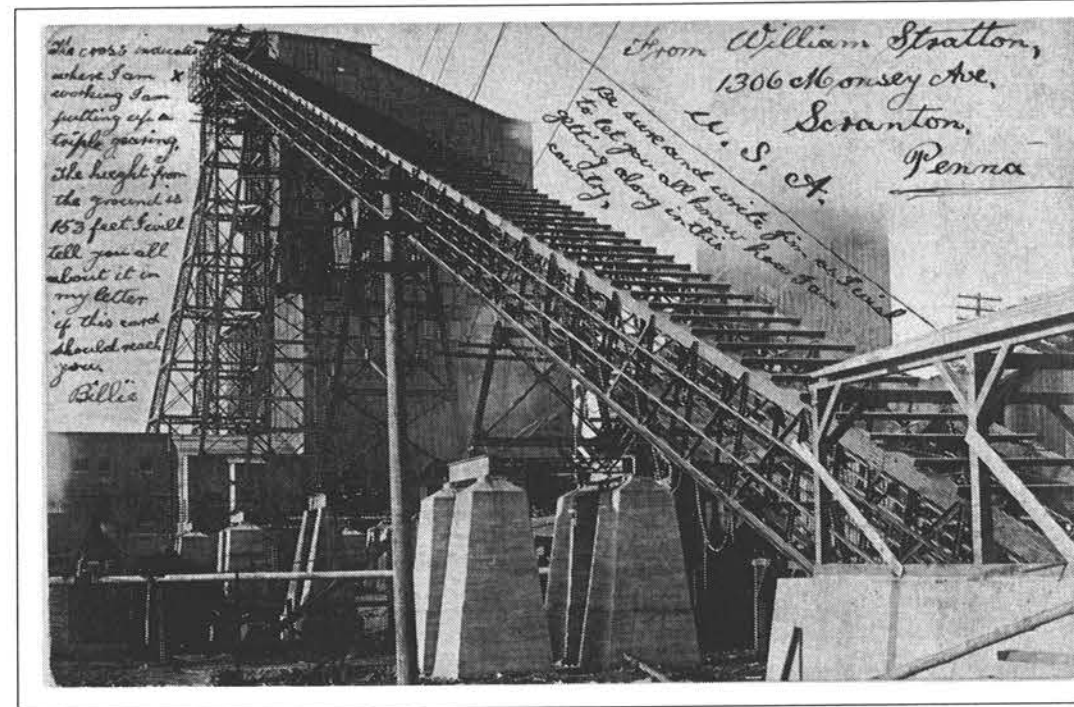


holdings to erect his mansion in Simpson in the year 1853. Built in Greek Revival style architecture, this once grand home continues to captivate motorists traveling through Simpson. It is a two story frame structure surrounded with a two story portico on three sides and topped with a cupulo. Also featured in the mansion's elaborate design are the huge colonnades, over 20 feet high. Besides the main house the estate included a barn, a

carriage house, and servants quarters in the rear of the house.

The mansion endured for many years as the Morss family homestead. Then, in 1923, after the death of the last surviving child of George L. Morss, the heirs sold the mansion and furniture with five and one half acres of land to a Fell Township tax collector, for the sum of \$12,600. He lived there until his death in 1942. His family remained at the homestead until 1968 when it was bought by the Grattan Singer Fire Company and plans were made to convert it into a community center.

The fire company did use the mansion, mainly as a cooking facility and meeting hall for the next several years. The Grattan Fire Company also used the Morss Mansion grounds for its annual picnic. These activities lasted into the mid-seventies. During this time there was minimum maintenance to the interior and exterior of the house, but nothing had really been done



POSTCARD MEMORIES

Research compiled by Jack Hiddlestone

To many collectors this postcard may seem unattractive and undesirable because of the extensive writing on front as well as the back. However, this *real-photo card is unique and the message it carries from the sender captures more than just a moment in time. Perhaps it warrants a closer look.

In 1908, the sender of this postcard, William Stratton, of 1306 Monsey Avenue, Scranton, was quite proud of his work and place of employment, the Diamond Breaker in West Scranton. This view of the Diamond is quite unusual and suggests that perhaps William Stratton himself or a friend may have been the photographer. The card was sent to Mr. James Ramsay a friend in Downfield By Dundee, Scotland where William had worked before coming to America.

The message reads as follows: *Dear Friend, Well, Jim I hope you will excuse me for not writing, but often I have thought of you and the rest of my old pals I used to work with while serving my apprenticeship in Gourley Bros. It is now almost four years since I bid you good bye. I think the last ship we laid sounding pipe together was on the the ship called the Den of Kelly. Now if this card should reach you I earnestly beg you to write me a letter telling me of how you are getting along also the rest of the boys- how is Will Bowman, Jack Gardiner, Jimmie Ferguson, John Lewis my old foreman, not forgetting young Jim Ramsay. Give me all their addresses. Good Bye - Wm Stratton*

On the front of the card: *The cross indicates where I am working. I am putting*

up a triple gearing. The height from the ground is 153 feet. I will tell you all about it in my letter if this card should reach you.

- Billie

- Be sure and write Jim, as I wish to let you all know how I am getting along in this

Diamond Breaker

Located on the west side of the city of Scranton between Providence Road and Main Avenue. From the Superintendent's Annual Report in 1907: "This is the oldest colliery operated by this Company, operations having commenced in 1852." Prior to 1859 no mining record exists. By 1908 a new modern Diamond Breaker was in place located along the Main line of the railroad and allowing the company to expand operations. In 1910 the colliery's daily production was approximately 1,598 tons and number of employees was 983.

country. Added to this card by someone other than Stratton: *He was employed as an engineer in Gourley Bros. Ship Builders four years ago.*

Note: William Stratton and his family lived at Monsey Avenue and later at 815 Capouse Avenue along with Peter Stratton, a molder, Peter Jr., millworker, Catherine and Inez. William's occupation is listed as a machinist. There is no record of him or his family in city directories by 1930.

This card was found in southeastern Pennsylvania. It is quite possible that its owner (James Ramsay), also immigrated to America.

*Real -photo postcard: Each postcard was fabricated individually. Sometimes marked AZO or CYKO, on the back of the card. This was a trade name for silver chloride. (AZO was made by Kodak) -MC

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

AN EARLY IMMIGRANT'S STORY

The LHS has recently received a wonderful transcription from the journals of John Hawks, a laborer at the Scranton Iron Furnace who was born in Ireland in 1832. John Hawks came to America in 1833 with his parents who made their way to Slocum Hollow via Brooklyn Heights, New York and White Haven, Pennsylvania in 1837. John Hawks was the son of William Hawks, a mason and bricklayer who worked on the Gorton Water Works which supplied water to Central Park, New York. His work took him to White Haven, PA to work then on the North Branch Canal before he eventually made his way to the Lackawanna Valley where he worked for William Henry in building the first iron furnace in Scranton.

John Hawks' journals are filled with memories of the area's early history. As a young boy he

worked at the iron furnace before attending Gardeners Business College in 1868.

Some notable experiences recall "Panic Days" in 1857 when apparently the blast furnace closed and people were in a state of panic. Associated with this time was *clothes line thievery*, where in the dark of night if you'd left your laundry out it was subject to being stolen. He also recalls *counterfeiters* and circumstances surrounding them.

Additional writings recount Scranton's first architect *Joel Amsden* and his plans for the city, the first post office, early churches, a playground & schoolroom where *rough hemlock benches and hewn boards were used for desks*; and the making of an American flag in 1855 for their first real schoolhouse at Nativity Place. At home he made soap, candles, and carpets from rags and straw

mats.

These memories paint a vivid picture of another era as he describes Slocum Hollow, "like a beautiful garden along the Lackawanna River" and "wild ducks and geese swimming (in the Lackawanna River)."

Throughout these somewhat romantic reminiscences, he includes original poetry. John Hawks' writings give us a personal perspective of a life in early industrial America. It was a simple yet difficult life - one which he sums up in this way:

"All in all we lived good."

Additional journals written by John Hawks are currently being transcribed in Virginia where they are owned by a great-great grandson.



New to the Library

American Heritage Haggadah The Passover Experience by LHS member Rabbi David Geffen, Ph.D, was recently presented to the Historical Society by Mrs. Morris Gelb, Atty. & Mrs. Morey Myers, and Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Klein in memory of *Morris Gelb, Esq.*

This American Passover Haggadah fuses Jewish traditions with American history to show how the Jewish American community celebrates Passover by incorporating their own personal thoughts and stories. It includes illustrations of the baking of matzah, early advertisements from food manufacturers for Passover products, and some personal accounts of American Passover celebrations.

Also new to the Library is A Century of Caring, a commemorative history of Moses Taylor Hospital, by long time member and past Trustee of the LHS, Rev. Charles P. Connor, Ph.D. Included throughout the book are a number of photographs from the LHS collection.

*RECENT DONATIONS -Photographs:

DONOR - DESCRIPTION

Joseph Cimini: 12 photographs showing views of a 1938 Erie Railroad Fan Trip on the Wilkes Barre and Eastern Railroad, photographs and articles about Columbus Day celebrations in Scranton.

Jack Cooper: Photo album of Scranton Scenes ca. 1880

David Etter: Photograph of Heiser and Warnke's store on North Main Ave.

Mrs. Rose Fiorani: 13 photographs relating to the radio industry.

Ellen Gilboy: photograph, possibly Luna Park.

Mr. Charles Henwood: six photographs of the Bauers Band, a photograph of Elm Park and a photo of the Scranton Post Office.

Mr. Jack Hiddlestone: 40 photographs of Scranton and Lackawanna County; Copies of four post cards.

Mrs. Harold Kimble: photograph of the Gravity Railroad tunnel.

John J. Papp: four photographs of Scranton Electric Streetcars.

Mr. F. Charles Petrillo: Scranton Area Automobile Dealers Stanley photos.

John J. Revak: photo negative of Bishop Hannan and a photo album showing various sites of Scranton.

James R. Sidbury: Six photos relating to the Conrad Motor Car Company and a women's basketball team.

Richard Stanislaus: Family photos of the Harvey family of Scranton.

Mrs. Jessie Whitman: two dequereotypes and two tin types.

* A complete listing of donations in 1992 is available from the Society upon request.

to assure its restoration. According to several Simpson locals, the mansion is extremely deteriorated and requires immediate attention.

•••••

William H. Richmond, the brother-in-law of George L. Morss, was another successful industrialist in Lackawanna County. He came to Honesdale from Hartford County, Connecticut in 1842 where he worked as a clerk in a general store. Three years later, he opened his own general store in Carbondale, where he met and married Lois Roxanna Morss in 1849.

By 1860 Richmond had developed an interest in coal mining and purchased a tract of land in the lower part of Blakely Township. Here, with his partner Charles Wurtz, he opened a mine and built one of the first breakers on the D&H railroad line. The company was chartered in 1863 as the Elk Hill Coal and Iron Co. with Richmond as the general manager. He became its sole owner and one of the wealthiest independent coal operators in the Lackawanna Valley.

As George L. Morss built the Mansion in Simpson, William H. Richmond also decided to live in the area where he had

achieved his greatest success. In 1873, he built "Richmond Hill" along North Main Avenue, not far from the Dickson City mine. This three story Victorian Mansion was brick covered with stucco and surrounded by sloping lawns and an elaborate garden. The estate also included a 65 acre farm used to raise horses and purebred Jersey cows.

The Richmond family lived in this mansion for over forty years. Lois Morss Richmond died in 1909 and

William lived at home with his daughter Clara until 1918 when he was persuaded to deed his land and home to the trustees of the O. S. Johnson Trust to establish the Johnson Manual Training School. He gave the estate to the trustees for a nominal annual payment of \$3000 to be made to his daughter Clara. He then moved to 1718 Capouse Avenue where he died at the age of one hundred.

The property today is still owned by the Johnson

School of Technology and the original Richmond mansion as well as the Morss, reminds us of Lackawanna County's early industrial history and the people who helped create it.

(Sources: The Scrantonian 3/10/1968; Portrait and Biographical Record, New York: Chapman Publishing Co., 1897; The City of Scranton, PA. and Vicinity: The Scranton Tribune Publishing Co., 1894; 1910 Diary of Clara Richmond)



Originally the residence of William H. Richmond - Richmond Hill North Main Avenue, Scranton Built in 1873

FRIDAY JULY 29, 1910

This morning I telephoned Lois Morss asking her if she would like to see us to-day. She replied she would. So Mrs. Hatch, father and I took the 11:30 C. car for that place. We pointed out the different points along the way to Mrs. Hatch. Saw Will Morss on car coming down to Mayfield. He saw us and gave us welcome. We were met at 8th Street by the auto Cousin Minnie and Lois were in. Hattie Hurd is visiting Lois. We had a very nice visit. We came down town to take the 5:15 train for Providence but in time for father to take Mrs. H. & myself in the old Richmond store built in 1855 by father. I met Mrs. Mellon also Miss Lucy Joslyn there. Had a very nice time.

- From the Diary of Clara Richmond 1910