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Vol. 3 No. 3

# The LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Bulletin

FEBRUARY - MARCH 1969



IN MEMORIAM  
1912 - 1969

**BERNARD J. MCGURL**

The sudden and untimely death of Bernard J. McGurl will long be felt by the community and the university and no less so by the Historical Society, for we have lost a devoted friend and ardent supporter who gave generously of his time and energy. He was as much beloved and respected by his students as by all who knew him, and his remarkable rapport with his students reached out also to adults.

For the past eight years Mr. McGurl has been an active member of the Historical Society and in 1966 was elected a trustee. As program chairman for four years, he introduced variety as well as musical interest into the programs which drew increasing numbers to the Society. With his gracious manner Bernard McGurl was a quiet doer, achieving without ostentation, a superb organizer whose affable personality, gentle wit, and articulate speech endeared him to those acquainted with him. Whether on the stage or in community activities, he could be depended upon to perform with excellence in anything he undertook. When the Society ventured into publishing a bi-monthly bulletin in 1966, Mr. McGurl graciously agreed to edit it.

On three different occasions he, himself, provided the program for the Society. Twice, through gleaning interesting and unusual news items from the reference books and old volumes of newspapers stored at the Historical Society, he briefly dramatized vivid scenes from Scranton's past heritage and culture. On the third occasion he spoke authoritatively on the Molly Maguires and their terrorist activities in the coal regions of Pennsylvania, accompanying the talk with several appropriate songs rendered in his rich tenor voice.

Known to the community as a brilliant dramatic



director, a talented tenor soloist, honored professor of speech and drama, and a knowledgeable historian, he will not be forgotten by the community and especially by the Historical Society. To us he was a very special man whose influence was substantial in the Society. He truly fit the role of Casper, the king, which he had often sung in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

### THE OLD LINDEN STREET BRIDGE

Three heavy metal plaques, rescued intact from the recently demolished Linden Street Bridge, are now resting against the northern side of the Historical Society building. They were

presented to Mr. Robert Mattes, Historical Society Curator, by John Pocius, Chief of the Scranton Police Force, who had personally sought their preservation.

One plaque reads:

1895  
BUILT BY  
EDGE MOOR  
BRIDGE WORKS  
WILMINGTON,  
DEL.

The other two plaques, which are identical, were located at each end of the bridge atop the arch-work, and carried the information:

1895  
W. L. CONNELL  
MAYOR  
JOSEPH P. PHILLIPS  
CITY ENGINEER

Work on the substructure of the bridge had begun on November 28, 1894. The dedication ceremony took place less than a year later on September 3, 1895 at 4 o'clock with Mayor Connell and Engineer Phillips driving in the last rivet on the bridge at the Swetland Street end (the westerly part of Linden Street).

The Linden Street Bridge has always been overshadowed by the larger and busier spans at Mulberry Street and at Spruce Street. Even *The Scranton Republican* gave a rather brief accounting of the afore-mentioned dedication the following morning, Wednesday, September 4, 1895, on page 5.

Of course the bridge had been built for the carriage trade, bicyclists, and pedestrians of the day. Prophetically, on page 4, of the same issue, *The Republican* carried a much longer article on the first appearance in New York City of the "horseless carriage"—the very villain which would eventually bring about the demise and

replacement of the brand new Linden Street Bridge!

"The horseless carriage has made its appearance in New York at Washington Square, on Saturday, and the new vehicle was seen in motion for the first time by dwellers in Gotham. This particular machine came from Paris and is to be used as a delivery wagon by a large dry goods store of the metropolis. It is described as noiseless in motion as is the bicycle, and capable of nearly or about the same speed.

"No special knowledge is required in operating the vehicle, and on good roads the speed can be increased to fifteen and twenty miles an hour....

"The cost of operating is less than one cent per mile and the reservoir tank has a capacity of fifty quarts of oil, which would be sufficient for operating purposes for five days of ten hours each...."

The old Linden Street Bridge came into existence at the dawn of the Age of the Automobile and passed into history at the dawn of the Age of Space travel. All this in only seventy-five years!

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## RIGHTS OF BICYCLE

From the annals of the Scranton Republican of Saturday, December 1, 1894 comes this amusing story of the rights of bicyclists.

It seems that an architect by name of D. Taylor Lindsey had had his bicycle run over and crushed while parked at a curb in front of a house on Washington Avenue by a wagon and team owned by Mr. Patrick Winn. The owner of the bicycle felt that Mr. Winn, the owner of the wagon, should make restitution for the bicycle and brought suit against Mr. Winn. A Judge Gunster heard the case.

"In his charge to the jury Judge Gunster laid particular stress upon a fact with which so many drivers do not seem to be familiar, that bicycles have the same rights in the streets as other conveyances." And the Judge said,

"Each citizen has the absolute right to choose for himself his mode of conveyance, whether carriage, saddle, electric car, and bicycle, subject only to the condition that he serve the law of the road.

"A traveler has the right to leave his vehicle for a reasonable length of time on the side of the highway or street, placed in a proper manner .....

"A bicycle is a vehicle and has the same right upon the highway as any other vehicle.

"The bicycle being a vehicle its proper place is upon the street or highway, not upon the sidewalk...."

Needless to say Mr. Lindsey won his suit from Mr. Winn and probably gained a new bicycle.

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It is hard to believe that seventy-five years ago Indians were still a threat to western ranchers. From the December 3, 1894 issue of the Scranton Republican one finds an account of ranchmen in Albuquerque, New Mexico fearing "roving bands of Navajo Indians allegedly stealing stock and committing all kinds of depredations." "Navajos are bolder than ever," one rancher was quoted as saying, after being threatened by one who almost scalped him.

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Despite the years it does seem funny how timely some headlines seem. Witness this one called "The Long Haired Students" —

"After two months of hard conscientious training twenty-two long haired students from Yale and Princeton Universities will lock horns at Manhattan field tomorrow afternoon in the annual football match." — Scranton Republican of December 1, 1894.

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## NEW MEMBERS

Mr. and Mrs. John Burnett  
Mr. Jack A. Lubin  
Mr. and Mrs. William H. Horger

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## PROGRAM NOTES

**Wednesday, February 19.** "R.O.T.C. historical background and present status." Colonel Zim E. Lawhon, professor of Military Science, University of Scranton. 8:15 p.m.

**Thursday, March 13.** "Political Vituperation: local and national." Professor Timothy Scully. 8:15 p.m.



**LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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