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The LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bulletin



May - June 1970

RAILROADING – LOOKING BACKWARD

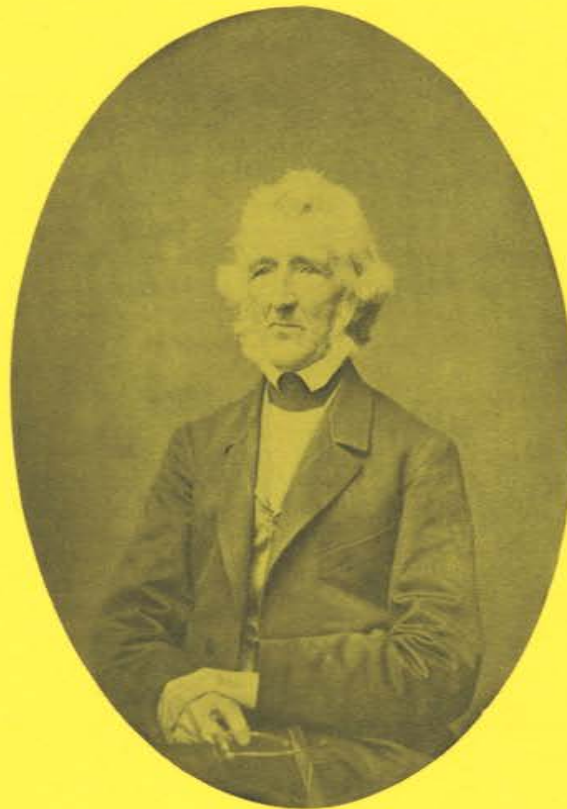
Area residents who used to enjoy the passenger services of local railroads have nothing left today but memories. As passenger train after passenger train has been withdrawn from the national scene, newspapers across the country have featured myriad, nostalgic articles on the very last run. Taking a slightly different approach, the *Bulletin* herewith presents eyewitness accounts of both the *first* passenger trip of the Lackawanna & Western Railroad and the *last* passenger trip by the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad.

Mr. Philip Mattes, the great-grandfather of Miss Dorothea Mattes, Secretary of the Lackawanna Historical Society, and of Mr. Robert Mattes, Curator of the Society, wrote to his daughter, Sabrina, on the occasion of the opening of the Lackawanna & Western Railroad. Mr. Mattes lived in Easton, but frequently visited his son, Charles F. Mattes, in Scranton.

Scranton, October 20, 1851

I have thus far had a very pleasant time since I am here. On Monday Charles and I walked over a good part of the city to look at the lions (this probably refers to the new locomotives). Some of them I found big enough in all conscience and some roaring most lustily.

On Tuesday we harnessed Quaker and drove to Hyde Park and thence we went to view the new coal mines near the Lackawanna – passed through the celebrated town of Razorville (Providence) – there we crossed the little stream which is here dignified with the name of river – looked at some of the company's work along our route and went home to supper and a good night's rest. Next morning at half past nine I started, in company with George Scranton and a goodly number of others, upon the great trip that was to proclaim to the world the opening of the Lackawanna and Western railroad. The Iron horse was fresh and strong and pushed a tender – two elegant new passenger cars that could accommodate from three to four hundred travellers quite conveniently – and a baggage car ahead, in fine style, along the



PHILIP MATTES

iron path, over pleasant cultivated fields and through wild, desolate mountain gorges – now through a deep cut and next on top of a high embankment or a still higher bridge – without once balking or stumbling on the whole fifty mile route – landing us safely in the little town of Great Bend on the other side of the Susquehanna. Here we met a large company of the “associates” from New York and other places, just arrived by the Erie Road – many of them with their wives and daughters – and soon started on our way back, reaching Scranton in good, broad daylight – having been greeted at one point with the display

of flags on the mountaintop and the cannon's roar in the valley below, and at another with the music of a military band stationed by the side of the road – and at many places by the loud hurrahs of the assembled crowds.

Thursday was devoted to business; and the meeting of the stockholders in the evening was extended, by the reading of the reports and the discussion of various matters, into the next day, it being past one o'clock before we adjourned. Early on Friday morning nearly all of the company left for home returning on the same route by which they had come. George Scranton saw them safely to the Erie Road and came back next day. The trains are now regularly making their daily trips over the new road, both with coal and passengers. Yesterday they carried some twenty-five passengers up – how many they had down I did not learn. They started again at eight this morning. There is a large stock of coal on hand ready for transportation, with a prospect of now being able to do a remunerating business. I hope, disappointment may not again, as so often heretofore, bring up the rear.

I should have mentioned that upon our return from the grand opening trip on Wednesday, we were greeted by the band and the whole population of Scranton, and that in obedience to the call of the assembled multitude, a number of spouters addressed the crowd from the steps of the hotel – Mr. Porter leading off and Dr. Throop bringing up the rear. The future prospects of Scranton were painted in glowing colors by some of the speakers, whose imagination was covering the plain and the hillsides with a great thriving prosperous City.

The president of the Lackawanna Historical Society, Reverend William Lewis, was on hand for the last scheduled ride of the Erie-Lackawanna passenger train through Scranton. Following are some of his recollections.

When the first passenger train left Scranton, it was on a sunny, October day. By contrast, the last scheduled passenger train on the Erie-

Lackawanna to pass through Scranton left on a near-zero wintery morning. The 5:25 a.m. for Hoboken arrived late – and left late – last January 15, 1970. Only sixteen railroad buffs were waiting, some just to watch and an even smaller number to board. There was a bit of sadness in the early morning darkness that so few were on the platform waiting.

The train, which had originated in Chicago, carried five coaches and only a sprinkling of passengers. Several windows in the cars had “Funeral” stickers. But, in spite of the sadness of the occasion, the ride was – as always – scenic and delightful. Snow and ice glistened on trees as the train passed through the Poconos. Brief stops were made at the Great Curve in Cresco, in Stroudsburg and at Dover.

We had breakfast in the dining car and, as expected, it was a very good breakfast. However, to the amusement of the diners, all the usual silverware had been removed from the tables and replaced by plastic ware for fear that the silver might disappear in the hands of souvenir hunters on this, the last run of the passenger service. Actually, the dining car which was half observation-car and half dining-car, was quite full with passengers already awake.

There were no bands or cheering crowds along the way. After the train left Scranton, the marvelous Erie-Lackawanna station was left in darkness. The doors were locked and the lights turned off. The marble-pillared lobby which had rung with laughter and tears, had seen so many train arrivals and had witnessed so many farewells, now stood silent and empty, waiting for better days.

WHAT WE WORE WHEN

This year the program for the Annual Dinner of the Historical Society, to be held at the Catlin House on the evening of May 21st at six o'clock, will be something different. The committee in charge of caring for so many beautiful and interesting garments that have been given to the society over the years plans to show a selection of these treasures, ranging from elegant ball gowns of the last century to a creation of the jazz age. All have been owned and worn by area people. The theme of the evening will be “What We Wore When.”

The music is under the direction of Mrs. John L. Heyer, organist and music director at the Jackson Street Baptist Church. Mrs. Heyer has

selected music representative of the period of the costumes and she has secured thirty young people to model the clothes. The models who will appear are: Mrs. Charles Gibbs, Mrs. Albert Pehanick, Mrs. Martin Salamida, and Miss Linda Jones. Miss Cathy Costanzo, Miss Cindy Collins, Miss Annette Lewis, Miss Gail Howey, and Mrs. Elsie Kearn. Mrs. Thomas Johns and Miss Joyce Cuthbertson. Miss Linda Biehl, Ronald Edwards and Robert Batson. Miss Helene Lewis and Miss Sally Miller. Miss Diane Morgan, Miss Betsey Lewis, Miss Dianne Condor, Miss Lucy Peck, and Miss Susie Mauer. Miss Sandy Leuthe, Miss Virginia Scaccia. Miss Linda Lowe, Miss Sally Masters, Robbie Pierce, Mike Cherundelo, and Miss Rebecca Naylor. Mrs. William Evans, Mrs. John Jones, Mrs. Thomas Genova, Miss Julie Brunamonti, Miss Vicki Rhodes, Tony Rhodes, and John L. Heyer.

Space in the Catlin House is limited so regretfully reservations for dinner will be closed after the first hundred. However, friends and others interested in the program may come at 8 p.m. for the fashion show.

The script was written by Mrs. James K. Peck, Sr., chairman of the costume committee, who will also be narrator. Mrs. Peck's committee members are: Mesdames C. Welles Belin, William L. Connell, Jr., William Horger, T. Archer Morgan, Joseph Moylan, Searle VonStorch, J. Donald Reifsnyder, and Mr. Carl Ellis.

CATLIN HOUSE NEWS

Recently several improvements have been made to the furnishings of the Catlin House.

1. A very fine oriental rug, a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Myer Alperin, has been laid in the central entrance hall.

2. Reupholstered were two very fine Abbottsford chairs, in the drawing room, and two Victorian arm chairs, in the front sitting room. The Victorian chairs are a gift from the estate of Miss Anna Russ, a sister of Mrs. Philip Mattes.

We are delighted that Mr. Robert Mattes, Curator, has recovered and is back at his post at the Catlin House.

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LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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