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Vol. 5, No. 1

The LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bulletin

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1970



DR. MACLEAN TO SPEAK

Thursday evening, October 22, has been announced as the date for the Society's first meeting of the 1970-1971 season.

The meeting will be held at the Catlin Memorial Home at 8:30.

Speaker will be Dr. John O. MacLean, using as his subject "A Half Century in the Practice of Medicine in Scranton."

Dr. MacLean, who was recently honored with a testimonial dinner at the Jermyn Motor Inn, and who is a past president of the Society, will recount his rich experiences in the medical field during the past fifty years with reminiscences and observations on the improvements in medical and surgical procedures.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Kirk E. Bennie	Mr. Eugene Garvey
Mrs. Donald Birkett	Mrs. Warren Graham
Mr. Ronald Borgna	Mr. Paul R. Hart
Frank C. Bourbon, S.J.	Mr. Henry J. Leeson
Mr. and Mrs. Fern Brown	Miss Virginia M. Leo
Mr. William T. Cullen, Jr.	Miss Grace A. Lydon
Mr. Harvey J. Davis	Mr. James C. McGinnis
Mr. E. B. Dean	Mr. Robert C. Reed
Dr. Joseph C. Dougherty	Mr. William Reis
Mrs. John S. Erhard	Mr. and Mrs. James B. Rowe
Dr. John Quentin Feller	Mrs. Grace M. Unis
Mr. Alfred J. Fletcher	Mr. Edward J. Wachs
Mrs. Samuel Friedmann	Miss Lillian Yanoshat

FURNACE RESTORATION TO BE COMPLETED BY MAY, 1971

L. R. Costanzo, Scranton contractor, is on schedule with the work of restoring the four blast furnaces which began Scranton's industrial history in 1841. Barring accidents, completion is expected by April 29, 1971, the date set for the site to be accepted by the State Department of Forest and Waters.

Restoration of the furnaces was suggested by then Governor William W. Scranton in the spring of 1964, but was delayed for several years by



construction of the Scranton Expressway and the Spruce St. Bridge, which involved work near the site of the furnaces and would have interfered with starting the work at once.

On June 19, 1964, a preliminary on-site inspection was made by representatives of the SRA, the Bureau of Forests and Waters, District Forester Manny Gordon, the late William Schmidt, then mayor of Scranton, representatives of the State Historical Commission, Clifton Rogers, of Clifton Rogers and Associates, Planning Consultants and others. At a luncheon which followed, Mr. Rogers was authorized to make the preliminary plans at a cost of \$10,000.

In 1965, \$299,208 was budgeted by the state and the original plans of the Rogers firm were accepted.

Ground breaking was not observed until May 26, 1970, since which work has proceeded rapidly.

Following the ceremony, it was announced that a general construction contract had been awarded to L. R. Costanzo for \$379,650 and to Riggi Electric Co. for the electrical work for \$14,500. The work is being supervised by Valverde and Franco, architects.

James D. Logan, executive director of the General State Authority, recently stated that the total cost would be \$484,269, according to a Scranton newspaper.

The furnaces are included in a 3.84 acre area deeded by the Scranton Redevelopment Authority,

which lies beside Roaring Brook just south of the Erie Station and is easily seen from the Cedar Ave. extension of the Scranton Expressway.

* * * * *

Although Scranton's rapid growth was associated with the anthracite industry and for many years it was proud to name itself the Anthracite Capitol, Scranton became Scranton because of some meager deposits of sub standard iron ore and its name was changed to "Scranton" because members of that family came to what was then Slocum Hollow to commence the manufacture and sale of pig iron.

Slocum Hollow was named for Ebenezer and Benjamin Slocum, who came to Roaring Brook, south of the present site of the Erie-Lackawanna Station in 1798. They came from Wyoming in order to take advantage of Roaring Brook's water power.

In 1830 the village consisted of the Slocum House, a saw mill, two small dwellings and a blacksmith shop.

In 1836, J. J. Albright, who came from the center of the New Jersey iron deposits was sent to Slocum Hollow to look over the chances for establishing an iron manufactory and reported back favorably; however, nothing came of it, and in 1840, according to an old picture, the village on Roaring Brook was much as it had been reported in 1830.

William Henry, a civil engineer in Stroudsburg, had been experimenting with the use of anthracite coal instead of charcoal in a blast furnace and was impressed with the combination of iron ore, coal, limestone and water power at Slocum Hollow, which he must have visited about the same time as Albright. Henry interested a wealthy New Yorker named William Armstrong, but Armstrong died from falling off of his horse on the way to Slocum Hollow and the deal was off.

Henry then went to Oxford Furnace, N. J., and laid the proposition before his son-in-law, Selden T. Scranton and Scranton's brother, George W. This time his efforts bore fruit and in 1840, the three men bought 503 acres of land from William Merrifield, William Ricketson and Zeno Albro for \$8,000.

The Scrantons and Grant corporation was formed, capitalized at \$20,000 and George Scranton came to Slocum Hollow with Philip Mattes, Simon Ward, William Manness and Sanford Grant to get operations under way. Manness was a contractor and most of the construction of the blast furnace and later, a rolling mill was done under his direction.

In order to have plenty of iron ore, the corporation bought 3750 additional acres from the Bank of America for \$11,250 or \$3 an acre. Work was started on the first blast furnace on September 8, 1840, and the first blast was tried on January 3, 1842. It failed because the local limestone was of poor quality and after calling in John F. Davis of Danville as a consultant, the troubles were corrected and the blast furnace was continuously operated from May 23 to September 25.

At first there were many troubles. The blowing apparatus, which was actuated by water power from Roaring Brook, broke down; the liquid iron cooled rapidly and had to be gotten out with sledge hammers and there were three other failures, by which time the pioneers were menaced with financial ruin.

It was necessary to haul limestone from Lime Ridge, south of Shickshinney, and the local iron, being of poor quality, had to be supplanted with iron ore hauled from Oxford Furnace, N. J., Bloomsburg, Danville, and Lebanon, Pennsylvania.

At one time, short of money with which to meet the payroll, George Scranton had to go to Carbondale and Honesdale to borrow enough money to meet a payroll. At another time the company had to issue "shinplasters," or orders on the company store, in order to keep operating.

To get the pig iron to market in New York City, it had to be moved to Carbondale by wagon, thence by the Gravity Railroad to Honesdale; from there to Rondout, N. Y., by the D & H Canal and from Rondout, down the Hudson by boat. Just consider this in terms of today's labor costs.

In spite of these difficulties, George Scranton was always able to get the additional capital which was needed as the business grew. In 1843, Joseph H. and Erastus C. Scranton came in as special partners and the capital was increased from the original \$20,000 to \$86,000.

By May, 1844, Manness had completed construction of a rolling mill and a small nail factory. The first nails were made in July, 1845.

Things were looking up for the firm, although there was trouble with the first nails because the iron was too brittle and the nails broke off when being driven. Sanford Grant retired in 1846 and Joseph C. Platt took his place. Platt came from the original Scranton hometown of Madison,

Connecticut. The company changed its name to Scrantons and Platt.

Later, William E. Dodge, Anson G. Phelps, Benjamin Loder, Samuel March, Henry Sheldon, John L. Blair, James Blair, W. B. Skidmore, James Stokes, Philip Dater, Daniel S. Miller, James A. Robinson, William H. Sheldon, and Frederick Griffing invested money and the capital was raised to \$115,000.

In 1847 Moses Taylor and Percy R. Pyne entered the business, this time raising the capitalization to \$250,000.

With this amount of capital, the company took on a contract to supply the Erie Railroad with 12,000 tons of 60 pound rail (rail weighing 60 pounds to the yard) for the sum of \$960,000, quite an undertaking when the company had never made rails before, but the contract was completed and the railroad, which had been getting its rails from England, was enabled to continue its line as far as Elmira, N. Y.

This gave the company a big boost and when Joseph Scranton moved his family to town in 1847, capitalization had been increased to \$400,000.

On January 27, 1851, the Post Office Department recognized the recently laid out town as Scranton. After "Slocum Hollow" it had been named "Harrison" and for about a year, "Scrantonia."

Still prospering, the company became the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Company in 1853. Capital was increased to \$800,000; in 1860 increased to \$1,200,000 and in 1873 to \$3,000,000.

Selden Scranton was made president of the company in 1858. He was succeeded by Joseph H. Scranton.

In 1876, W. W. Scranton, who had studied the Bessemer process abroad, was made assistant to the president. He didn't stay long, but resigned after a few years and founded the Scranton Steel Company with a factory where the Murray plant now stands. Henry Wehrum, who had been chief engineer of the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Co., went with him.

In 1891 the two companies were consolidated and W. W. Scranton left the steel business to found the Scranton Gas and Water Co. The new company, which was named the Lackawanna Iron and Steel Company, was moved to Lackawanna, N. Y., because of its better location in 1900. It was later sold to the Bethlehem Steel Corporation.

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Most of the above history was taken from a talk given by the late Frederick J. Platt at a meeting of the Lackawanna Historical Society on October 29, 1948.

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LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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