

The Lackawanna Historical Society BULLETIN

Vol. 7, No. 1

January — February 1973

NOTES

A meeting of the trustees was held at the Catlin House on January 16, at which it was decided to devote some of the Society's money to a modest pension for Miss Dorothea Mattes, for many years director and secretary of the Society. Her replacement was discussed and Rev. William Lewis, president, was authorized to seek and interview suitable people who might be interested in the post. In the meanwhile, Robert Mattes, custodian, will carry on the work with a temporary helper.

Treasurer Everett Thomas announced the Society's financial position, which is good. His report showed that disbursements for the fiscal year to date are well within the amounts budgeted.

New members of the Society reported by Custodian Robert Mattes are:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Mrs. Jennie Connor | Scranton |
| Charles S. Holman, Jr. | Scranton (life) |
| Dr. Walter A. Redel | Waverly (contrib.) |
| Alan Jones | Scranton |

There was no meeting in January as there was concern about attendance due to probable bad weather. Actually, the weather was generally very good.

Next meeting is to be at 8:15 on the evening of Wednesday, February 28. Atty. Robert Munley, of Archbald, will present a paper on the Revolutionary War and its Impact Locally.

March meeting on Tuesday, 27th, will have as speaker Dr. Ben Powell, whose subject is Origins of the Anthracite Industry.

COLONEL FREDERICK LYMAN HITCHCOCK

Short biographies of local historians, including that of Rev. Peck and Dr. Hollister, have been given in previous issues of the Bulletin and now comes a third, Col. Frederick L. Hitchcock, whose History of Scranton and its People was published in 1908.

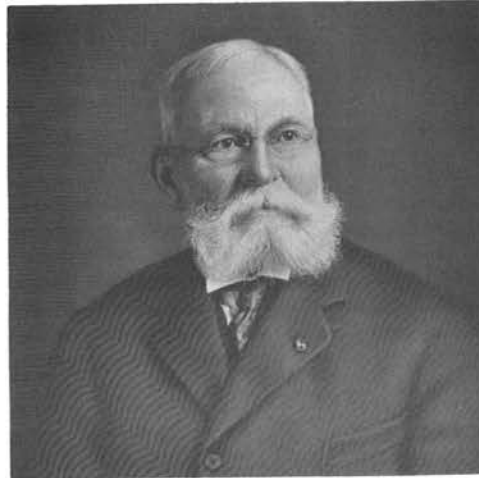
It is noteworthy that all three of these men did not have much formal education, but were all great readers, who educated themselves and cultivated grammatical styles of clarity and readability. Our generation is fortunate that these three men came along to get things set down and printed into books, whose memory is longer and less open to dispute than that of human beings.

It may also be noted that all three of these men were born at a distance from the Lackawanna Valley, but they all died in Scranton after long and successful careers.

Also, these three local historians all came of New England Revolutionary stock, which in the early

days for some reason or other sought education to an unusual degree.

Hitchcock's ancestors were in Wallingford, Conn. in 1675 and were founders of the New Haven colony before that. His father, Daniel Hitchcock, was born in Wallingford, Conn. and was married to Mary Peck, a daughter of Ward Peck, a Revolutionary soldier, who enlisted at age 14 and served throughout the war, including service at the Battle of Brandywine, Valley Forge and at the Battle of Trenton.



Frederick L. Hitchcock

Their son, our historian, was born in Waterbury, Conn. on April 18, 1837, was educated in the public schools there and located in Scranton as a young man.

He studied law under Samuel Sherrerd of Scranton and E.L. Dana, of Wilkes Barre and was admitted to the Luzerne County Bar on May 16, 1860. His practice as a young lawyer was soon interrupted by the Civil War.

He enlisted as adjutant in the 132nd Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers in August, 1862. His regiment participated in the Battles of South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. He was twice wounded at Fredericksburg, was commended for his coolness and bravery on the field and promoted to major in 1863. In December of that year, he was again promoted, this time to lieutenant-colonel of colored troops and was sent to Philadelphia where he helped organize the 25th Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops. Early in 1864, he was made a full colonel and commanded his regiment at the defense of Fort Pickens and Pensacola. He refused a commission in the regular army and was mustered out after the war.

His only brother, Edwin, who had enlisted from Connecticut at the start of the war and who had risen to the rank of captain, was killed at the battle of James Island, on June 16, 1862.

On January 24, 1865, Col. Hitchcock married Caroline Neal Kingsbury, a daughter of Ebenezer Kingsbury, of Honesdale and his wife, the former Hannah West, a native of Norwalk, Conn. Mrs. Hitchcock also was a descendant of pioneer New England families and had ancestors who came to this country in the Mayflower.

Col. Hitchcock then turned to the matter of a career, in which he was eminently successful. His first position after army service and marriage was election to the office of clerk of the first mayor of Scranton in 1866.

In the same year, he entered the crockery, china and glassware business in a store on Lackawanna Ave., under the firm name of Dickinson and Hitchcock. He bought out his partner the following year and continued alone until 1868 when Ezra H. Ripple and William Connell, entered the firm which then did business as F.L. Hitchcock and Co.. In 1872 Ripple and Connell retired and their place was taken by Henry A. Coursen, when the name became Hitchcock and Coursen.

In 1877, at the request of Major H.M. Boies, Colonel Hitchcock accepted the office of adjutant and helped Major Boies organize the Scranton City Guard, "four companies of the city's finest young men."

In August of that year, he was second in command of a group of 38 veterans which met and dispersed a mob at the August 1 riot of that year.

In 1878, he spent much of the year in Harrisburg working for the formation of Lackawanna County from its parent, Luzerne, and when his efforts were crowned with success, was made a member of the commission appointed to survey, lay out and erect the new county. He also was appointed the first prothonotary of Lackawanna County.

In 1879, he entered a partnership with J. Atkins Robertson and entered the real estate business under the firm name of Robertson and Hitchcock. This firm became agents for the Barber Asphalt Co. in 1882 and was instrumental in paving more than five miles of Scranton's city streets, the first paved with this material.

When James Moir was elected to the office of mayor, Col. Hitchcock was made director of public safety.

He only served in this office for six weeks, because of energetic measures taken to compel the liquor dealers to operate according to the laws. He compelled them to close at midnight during the week nights and to stay closed on Sundays until 6 a.m. on Monday mornings. This did not please the liquor interests, who brought about his removal from office. When J. Benjamin Dimmick was elected mayor in 1906, Col. Hitchcock was appointed city treasurer and served throughout Mayor Dimmick's administration. As director of public safety, he had established Scranton's fire department on a paid basis and as city treasurer, initiated a system of depositing the city's money in local banks at interest.

From then on, until his death on October 9, 1924 at the age of 87 years, Col. Hitchcock was

prominent in business as president of the Security Building and Loan Association and treasurer of the Barium Produce Company, with interest in many other enterprises. He was prominent in the Chamber of Commerce and served in various official posts.

Colonel Hitchcock also was active in affairs of the National Guard and served as colonel of the Thirteenth Regiment, which was formed from the Scranton City Guard. During his term as colonel, he was successful in having every man in the regiment qualify as marksman in rifle practice.

He was also prominent in the affairs of his church, originally the 2nd Presbyterian, but later the Green Ridge Presbyterian, after moving to 1103 Richmond Street, where he made his home at the time of his death.

As an elder of the church, he was twice selected as its representative at national assemblies and in 1898 was a member of a judicial committee which tried Prof. McGiffert for heresy. Colonel Hitchcock solved an impasse by persuading Prof. McGiffert to resign from the church because of incompatible views. He was for many years, superintendent of the Sunday School at the Green Ridge Presbyterian Church and was teaching an adult bible class up until his death. He was president of the Scranton Y.M.C.A. for three years, 1875-76-77.

He died at Moses Taylor Hospital after falling on a rug at his home and breaking his hip.

How this very accomplished and busy man found time to research and write history books can only be accepted with wonder; nevertheless, he was the author of three books; the first, "War from the Inside," an account of a soldier's life during the Civil War; the second was his "History of Scranton and its People," a voluminous and interesting story of his city, and finally "A History of the 13th and 109th Regiments."

He had six children, named Edwin Sherman; Frederick Kingsbury; Henry Payson; Lizzie Fuller, married to George B. Dimmick; John Partridge; Mary Peck, married to Robert S. Douglas of Jersey City and Carrie Guilford.

Col. Hitchcock was buried in Dunmore Cemetery after a public service on Oct. 9. The Grand Army of the Republic and the Masons had charge of the ritual. Honorary Pallbearers were T.F. Wells, Col. L.A. Watres, Judge R.W. Archbald and John McCrindle.

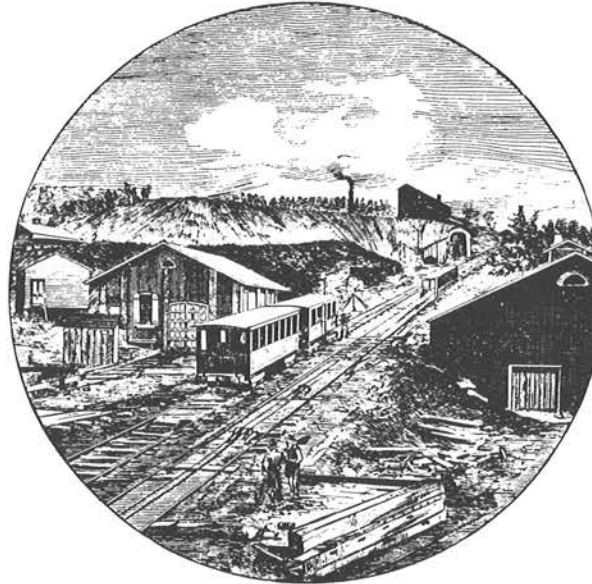
Colonel Hitchcock's history of Scranton is the most useful and complete history of the city that was published up until his time and such histories as follow it can add little to knowledge of our early history. It is really hard to see how the writer of it had time to produce so complete and useful a work along with his other recorded activities as a soldier, a churchman and a successful business man. He commands admiration. The local history is published in two volumes; the first covers local history from the beginning, while the second volume deals with the families that were important in making the history of Volume One.

ELISHA HITCHCOCK

There was another and earlier Hitchcock in Scranton history, who, according to legend, heard of Frederick Hitchcock on his coming to Scranton in his youth, looked him up on the strength of his name and, although there was no known relationship, gave the young man a hand in his early endeavors.

Elisha Hitchcock was born in Clermont, Cheshire County, New Hampshire in 1778 and, according to the early histories, came to Slocum Hollow, the village which became the city of Scranton in 1809. He followed the trade he had learned in New England and as a millwright, helped build grist mills for the Slocums and others around Northeastern Penna.

1879 VIEW FROM THE HITCHCOCK HISTORY



In 1811, he married Ruth, daughter of Ebenezer Slocum and set up housekeeping in Slocum Hollow. He followed his trade and accumulated enough money to buy a tract of wild land which was comprised in the Hill Section and extended down to the Lackawanna River.

He was a justice of the peace and for more than fifty years, a prominent mason. He contributed to the building of the first church in Scranton. He died on October 16, 1858.

His son Ebenezer, was also a prominent early citizen of the community. He married (1) Marion, daughter of Helon Budd, of Troy, Bradford Co., who died a year later and (2) Amanda Swackhammer, daughter of William Swackhammer of Waymart, Wayne Co. There were three children by his second wife, Marion, Hattie and William.

Ebenezer's sister, Sarah, married Abel Gardner, of Abington, now Waverly; his sister, Mary married Dr. William H. Heath of Hyde Park. — H.H.N. III

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