

The Lackawanna Historical Society BULLETIN

Vol. 8, No. 2

Spring — 1974

GEORGE CATLIN: A SPECIAL EXHIBIT

Plate
1



An exhibit of ten original, hand-colored lithographs by the renowned Indian painter, George Catlin, were placed on permanent display in the main hall of the Catlin House to coincide with the annual dinner meeting held May 23rd. They are part of a complete set of twenty-five lithographs published at Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, London, in 1844.

The title of the series is "Catlin's North American Indian Portfolio. Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of America. From Drawings and Notes of the Author, made During Eight Years' Travel Amongst Forty-Eight of the Wildest and Most Remote Tribes of Savages in North America." Accompanying the unbound lithographs is a large, folio catalogue written by Catlin, in which he described in detail each of the drawings.

Two of the ten lithographs, which were recently framed at the Windsor Studio in Scranton, are illustrated here. Plate No. 1 is entitled "Group of North American Indians from Life." The group is composed of three portraits, representing three different tribes of various latitudes and illustrating a number of the leading characteristics of this interesting part of the human family: an Osage warrior, entirely primitive in his habits and dress; an Iroquois, his dress mostly of civilized manufacture; and a Pawnee woman, in primitive dress made entirely of skins.

The last plate in the series, No. 25, is entitled "Wi-Jun-Jon. The Pigeon's Egg Head." In this illustration, Catlin presented a faithful delineation of an

Assinneboin Warrior, in the flowing and classic costume of his country, as he appeared on his way to the city of Washington, faithfully contrasted with the uncouth plight in which he returned to his tribe the next season, after one year's teaching in the school of civilization. Wi-Jun-Jon visited Washington, D.C., in 1832, as an agent for his tribe and met President Jackson. After returning to his tribe, he became highly suspect because of his newly acquired knowledge and was eventually murdered by a tribesman for his "lying medicine."

George Catlin (1796-1872) was born in Wilkes-Barre. Like his father, he studied law and practiced in the Wyoming Valley between 1819 and 1823. Tiring of the legal profession, Catlin developed his latent artistic talents, studying for a year at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

During the 1830's, Catlin lived extensively among the prairie Indians, assembling more than six-hundred paintings and water colors. Subsequently, he lived in both Europe and South America. The artist died in 1872, an obscure, disappointed man, who probably considered his life and work a failure.

Plate
25



George H. Catlin (1845-1935), benefactor of the historical society, was a distant cousin of the Indian painter. One of his most prized possessions was a copy of the London portfolio, which he bequeathed to the society. For many years, the whereabouts of the portfolio remained a mystery. In fact, the collection was considered "permanently lost." A chance examination of the back attic at the Catlin House last summer by the Executive Director led to the discovery of the lost portfolio. The volume was intact.

VISITING HOURS AT THE CATLIN HOUSE

At a recent meeting of the Executive Committee, it was announced that the office and library of the society will be open Tuesday through Friday between 10 A.M. and 5 P.M. Unscheduled tours will be given on Wednesday and Thursday

afternoons only, between 12:30 P.M. and 4:30 P.M. Exceptions will be made for out-of-town visitors. Special tours can be arranged with the director or staff secretary for other times.

MURVINGTON ORT (1907-1974)

On Saturday evening, May 25th, Murvinton E. Ort, Sr. died unexpectedly in his apartment at the Catlin House. At his side was his wife, the former Marie Ashby.

Mr. and Mrs. Ort came to the Catlin House more than six years ago to assume the positions of custodians. Faithfully, they cared for the house and grounds at 232 Monroe Avenue, which was headquarters for the society and home to them. Their faces were a familiar feature to the membership at the regular monthly meetings. They also assisted at the meetings of the Scranton Chapter, DAR.

Although they had worked at the Catlin House for six years, it was on April 3, 1974 that Mr. and Mrs. Ort asked to join the historical society.

In addition to his widow, Marie, Mr. Ort is survived by two sons, Murvinton, Jr. and Harold, both of Scranton; three daughters, Mrs. James (Corrine) Blake, Schenectady, N.Y.; Mrs. Harry (Janice) Granville, Washington, D.C.; and Mrs. Ezra (Joanne) Swartz, Carbondale; two stepsons, Donald Dawes, Columbus, Ohio, and William Dawes, Warren.

The officers, Board, and staff join with the members of the society in extending their sincere condolences to Mrs. Marie Ort.

FINAL NOTICE FOR DUES PAYMENT

Approximately one-third of the society's membership have forgotten to pay their dues for the 1974 calendar year. Notices of the increase in dues were sent to all members at the beginning of February, with an explanation of how the dues were prorated.

To date, some 250 members have responded, including eleven resignations from the society. The Board sincerely hopes that those who may have forgotten to pay their dues for 1974 will respond to the final notice.

The historical society could not exist without the generous support of the membership. In this period of growth and change, the society once again turns to its friends — old and new — and asks them to continue their association and thereby help to make the LHS the best society in North-eastern Pennsylvania.

**ATTORNEY MATTES
PUBLISHES LOCAL HISTORY**

Recently, Attorney Philip Mattes published a slender but highly informative book entitled "Tales of Scranton." Through Mr. Mattes' generosity, a limited number of copies have been presented to the society for distribution to interested members. A copy may be obtained by telephoning Mrs. Marie Vellela, staff secretary, at 344-3841, during regular office hours.

WEDDING DRESSES ON DISPLAY

June is the month for brides according to tradition. Accordingly, a special display has been set up by the Fashions Committee, under the supervision of Mrs. James K. Peck. A total of fourteen bridal outfits, together with a heavily beaded and bejeweled gown of black net and white lace worn by Mrs. William Connell to a White House reception when her husband was a member of Congress, vie for attention with one another.

Five of the wedding gowns have been on indefinite display in the second floor Fashions Room, including the gowns of Jane Hiles, who married George W. Scranton on January 21, 1835; Elizabeth Scranton, who married George A. Fuller on October 5, 1859; Jean Scranton Fuller, who married Arthur H. Storrs in October, 1886; Elizabeth Scranton Storrs, who wed Charles A. Belin on April 25, 1916; and Elizabeth Littell, who married McLeod Lightbourn on July 23, 1949. These gowns will remain on display through the remainder of the spring and summer months, when they will be removed for a planned Oriental exhibit.

Also on display in the Fashions Room are wedding gowns worn by Grace Storrs at the time of her marriage to Charles S. Weston on September 2, 1891, and by Katherine M. Smith who wed William W. Scranton on October 15, 1874.

The second floor hall contains six wedding outfits and includes the gown worn by Ella Dodendorf who wed Peter Neuls on August 22, 1899, as well as the gown of Anna MacNulty, wife of Walter Stevens.

Completing the display is a gray taffeta outfit worn by Marie Urban who wed Joseph Koch on April 29, 1871, in Germany. This particular gown can be seen in the living room of the Catlin House, where it is part of an ethnic costumes exhibit installed two months ago by Mrs. Peck.

NEW MEMBERS

Miss Carol R. Conaboy	Mr. Jerome M. Mellody
Mrs. W.H. Davies	Mrs. Ruth M. Murray
Mr. Andrew T. DeCardis	Mr. & Mrs. Murvington Ort
Bro. Edward J. Hall	Miss Karen L. Pennington
Mr. Dominic Keating	Dr. A.J. Perry & Family
Mrs. Geneviere T. Linen	Rev. Godfrey Reilly, C.S.S.R.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The annual dinner meeting of May 23, 1974, was very successful with sixty-six members in attendance. Featured speakers for the evening were Mr. Ralph Hazletine, former director of the Wyoming Valley Historical Society, who spoke on the life of George Catlin, and Dr. Feller, LHS executive director, who commented on the recently recovered Catlin lithographs.

Among those installed at the annual dinner meeting were the two newly elected members of the Board of Trustees, Miss Marie Smith and Mr. Charles Weber. Sincere congratulations to them both, as well as to the officers who were also reinstalled.

The Fashions Committee will have a new active member in the person of Mrs. Gloria Caputo, who will soon be working with Mrs. Peck, committee chairwoman.

There will be a meeting of the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, June 11th, at 4 o'clock in the Catlin House. The agenda will include a discussion of the annual report of the executive director, a copy of which was mailed to each of the Board members.

A special word of thanks once again to Mrs. Caroline Feldman and Mr. Jack Carr for their continuing efforts to beautify the grounds surrounding the Catlin House. With the assistance of Mrs. T. Archer Morgan and Mr. Everett Thomas, several additional shrubs have been planted in recent weeks.

DRS. EARL AND DEMICHELE RECEIVE GRANT

The Scranton Area Foundation has awarded a \$2,630 grant to the University of Scranton to support a one year research project that will seek to locate audio-visual materials depicting the early period of the city's history and the impact which various ethnic groups have had on the development of the region. The research project will be headed by Dr. John Earl, III and Dr. Michael DeMichele, co-directors of the University's Ethnic Studies program and society members.

Dr. Earl received a similar grant last summer for the historical society from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to collect audio-visual materials relating to the coal miner in Scranton. Research of this kind can be highly important for the society in particular as it seeks to preserve the industrial, social, and cultural history of the valley.

LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CATLIN HOUSE

232 MONROE AVENUE

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18510

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 56
Scranton, Pa.