

# The Lackawanna Historical Society BULLETIN

Vol. 8, No. 4

Fall 1974

## CHRISTMAS AT THE CATLIN'S

Christmas came early to the Catlin House this year because of the scheduled December 3rd meeting. The hall and main rooms on the first floor have been elaborately decorated for the season. The House and Fashions committees, under the chairmanships of Miss Margaret Briggs and Mrs. James K. Peck, respectively, were responsible for the planning and executing of the decorative scheme.

The main display area is located at the west end of the living room. A tableau entitled "Little Women" is featured, containing six manikins which have been arranged around a Christmas tree (furnished by Reverend Lewis). The figures, which were clothed by Mrs. Gloria Caputo and Miss Marie Smith with apparel from the society's collection, are viewed decorating the tree with ornaments. A number of marvelous antique children's toys - including china dolls, illustrated books, a miniature tea set, and a very small typewriter - were selected and arranged by Mrs. T. Archer Morgan. Mr. George Broadbent and Dr. Feller were on hand to give the ladies their nodding approval.

The Christmas displays will remain on exhibit through January 6, 1975.

## REGIONAL CONFERENCE AT CATLIN HOUSE

The Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies has requested the LHS to host a regional meeting for the societies of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The request was made in a letter this past month from Mr. Ernest Miller, Federation president, to Dr. Feller.

At its November 20th meeting, the society's Board of Trustees approved the request. Dr. Feller so informed Mr. Miller, suggesting that the regional historical conference take place in late March or early April. The Board's Executive Committee will select a date.

The conference itself, which hopefully will attract between seventy-five and one hundred persons, will take place on a Saturday and will be a one-day affair. Following a registration period during which coffee will be served, there will be a morning session, then lunch, and an afternoon session which will include a tour of the Catlin House. It is expected that within the next several days, Reverend Lewis will name a committee to work with Dr. Feller in making preparations.

Any interested members of the society who may wish to work with this committee or who, for example, may want to help the House Committee with setting up some attractive displays, should contact either Reverend Lewis or the Executive Director.

The conference will be open to all active members of the LHS, and additional information will be given to you as it is available.

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT CITED

At the 67th annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies this past summer, the awards committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Homer T. Rosenberger presented the Lackawanna Historical Society with the Award of Merit for "participation in the major oral history-ethnic studies project, 'The Immigrant Miner in Scranton'." Members may recall that during the summer of 1973, Dr. John L. Earl, III, society vice-president, working in cooperation with Dr. Feller and the staff, supervised the oral history project that was made possible by a grant from the State.

In an article published in the October 1974 issue of *Pennsylvania History* (quarterly journal of the Pa. Historical Association), Mr. Harry E. Whipkey noted the educational value of the oral history project to area students when he wrote: "Close association with the Lackawanna Historical Society has permitted the results of that organization's oral history-ethnic studies project . . . to be available to students. Students have also gained an appreciation of the tools of the coal mining industry by studying artifacts belonging to the Lackawanna Historical Society."

In a related development, Dr. Feller has just learned that the American Association for State and Local History has issued a Certificate of Commendation to the society in recognition of the oral history project. The Certificate is one of ninety-nine awards being presented by the AASLH this year.

## DRESSING UP THE COMMUNITY

One of the most important functions of any area organization is community service. This is particularly true of a county historical society. The LHS is increasingly becoming more community conscious and has long since rejected its traditional image as a "closed club."

The programs of the society have been broadened to attract greater interest and are open to the public free of charge. A good, respectable research library has been opened during the past year to supplement other area holdings that are weak in local history. Rearrangement of the house

furnishings and the installation of temporary and permanent exhibits are part of an overall plan to give a fresh look to the Catlin premises. The society is beginning to receive both State and national recognition.

Within the society, one of the most active committees during the past few years has been the Fashions Committee under the direction of Mrs. James K. Peck. Several references to the work of this committee have been made elsewhere in the *Bulletin*. Probably most of the society's members do not realize exactly how active this particular committee has been. In addition to creating a series of temporary exhibits on both the first and second floors at the Catlin House, this group conducts a highly successful loan program, whereby it helps to "dress up" the city and county. Mrs. Peck's committee, apart from maintaining a very large permanent collection of apparel, cares for a sizable loan collection, items from which are available for loan to community organizations for fashion shows, special exhibits, plays and the like.

During the past six months, for example, the Fashions Committee has arranged the loan of some thirty-nine articles of clothing to groups such as the area Girl Scouts, the Abington Women's Club, the North Scranton Junior High School P.T.A., and the Junior Century Club. No charges are made for this time-consuming service, although several clubs have made voluntary contributions to help defray the expenses of the committee.

Although she has several capable assistants, Mrs. Peck is always looking for individuals interested in working with her committee. Similarly, the committee itself is happy to receive donations of articles of apparel (including those all important accessories that are needed for displays and loans), whether they are of historical significance or whether they can be used to augment the loan collection.

## NEW MEMBERS

Dennis J. Buckley, Jr.    Edward L. Price  
Edward J. Casey        Edward T. Reilly  
Jean Coyne              The William L. Shade Family  
                                 Sharon M. Standinger

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

A small but remarkable collection of antique Christmas tree ornaments was recently donated to the society by Mr. Adolph W. Oschmann. Fragile ornaments in the forms of a bird, a Santa Claus, and an owl were included. Together with several similar ornaments belonging to the Catlins, the society now has about one and a half dozen old ornaments. Hopefully, some of the *Bulletin* readers may have

antique ornaments which they wish to donate to this small collection.

With its Scranton Dry label still intact, a plain white nurse's uniform has been added to the Fashions collection. The dress was donated by the Rev. William P. Lewis, society president, at the end of November.

Representatives of area colleges met at the Catlin House on Thursday, December 12th, to discuss tentative plans for the Bicentennial. The meeting was chaired by Mr. David Wenzel, who was recently appointed by Mayor Eugene Peters, to coordinate Bicentennial planning for the Scranton area.

The regularly scheduled meeting of the society on December 3rd turned into a celebration of sorts when it was learned that Mrs. Caroline Feldman was celebrating her birthday. Following the singing of "Happy Birthday," Mr. Everett Thomas, treasurer, presented our indefatigable volunteer gardener with a serviceable Ames-brand trimmer and fork, for which he was suitably rewarded with a kiss on the cheek.

Mrs. James K. Peck, chairperson of the Fashions Committee, has announced the addition of a very important item to the costume collection, which has been made possible through the generosity of Mrs. Jeanne Madden Martin. The costume is a cream-colored dress decorated with floral embroidery and brilliants and trimmed with fine lace and velvet ribbons in the 18th century style. According to the donor, this costume belonged to Geraldine Ferrar and was subsequently purchased by Queena Mario of the Metropolitan Opera. Miss Mario gave the lovely dress to Jeanne Madden when she appeared in the opera, "Martha."

A temporary exhibit of twelve fans from the society's extensive collection has been mounted over the mantle in the second floor Fashions Room. Two months ago, Windsor Studio removed the large plate glass mirror installed over the mantle, replacing it in its frame with a cork board covered with crushed green velvet. The new arrangement will permit the periodic display of small articles of apparel that have not been shown to advantage in the past.

A word of thanks to Mrs. Frederick Bareihs for her donation in late November of four small arrangements of dried flowers and foliage, done in the Williamsburg tradition, which were completed in time for our December program dealing with

Virginia's pre-Revolutionary capital. The arrangements were done in four antique glass and porcelain containers from the Catlin House and are on display in the living and dining rooms.

#### ANNUAL BILLING FOR 1975

Within the next several weeks, Mrs. Marie Vellela, staff secretary, will mail out to each member his notice of dues payable for the 1975 calendar year. This is in accord with the decision of the Board of Trustees in January 1974 to adopt an annual billing procedure.

Each member will receive with his notice of dues payable a completed membership card for the forthcoming year. Your canceled check will be your receipt.

The new procedure will eliminate the necessity of two separate mailings, one for actual billing and a second for receipts and membership cards.

If for any reason you feel that you are unable to continue your membership, you are kindly requested to return your notice of dues payable and membership card. Additional information can always be obtained by calling the staff secretary's office at 344-3841, Tuesdays through Fridays between 10 A.M. and 5 P.M.

#### PRESERVING CATLIN'S LITHOGRAPHS

At the annual dinner meeting in May 1974, Dr. Feller noted that, while ten of the hand-colored lithographs from George Catlin's London Portfolio have been framed, the society would like eventually to frame each of the remaining fourteen lithographs in order to better preserve them for future generations of visitors to the Catlin House.

The Windsor Studio under the direction of Messrs. Frank Curcio and Frank Regni have handled the framing already done. Each of the ten lithographs selected for framing last spring has been mounted with acid-free cardboard and under non-glare glass. The cost of framing each lithograph was thirty dollars.

At the May meeting, Dr. Feller suggested that some members might be willing to donate the cost of framing one or more of the remaining lithographs, perhaps as a memorial. Several persons indicated at the time that they might be willing to make such a donation. Dr. Feller requests that these individuals, as well as any of the *Bulletin* readers who might also like to make a contribution, to contact him at their earliest convenience. In view of the fact that the Catlin lithographs have been so popular since being placed on display, it would be nice to frame several more pictures in anticipation of the spring months when the number of visitors always increases.

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