

The Lackawanna Historical Society BULLETIN

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THE GEORGE H. CATLIN MEMORIAL HOUSE

The George H. Catlin Memorial House, 232 Monroe Avenue, Scranton, Pa. adjacent to the University of Scranton campus, is the headquarters of the Lackawanna Historical Society. It was built in 1912 and for 23 years was the home of Mr. Catlin, a prominent Scranton banker.

George Catlin was born in Shoreham, Vermont in 1845, and was educated at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass. and Union College, Schenectady, N. Y. He did graduate at Lafayette College and was admitted to the Bar in 1867, after which he served as a member of a New York City law firm for three years. He married in 1867 to Miss Mary W. Archbald, daughter of James and Augusta Frothingham Archbald of Scranton. Her father was the chief engineer for the D.L. & W. Railroad for 45 years and in his honor the town of Archbald, Pa. was named. Because of his wife's desire to return to her home, Mr. Catlin gave up his legal practice and located in Scranton in the year 1870. He became one of the founders of the Third National Bank when it was organized in 1872.

In this institution he served as Vice President and a member of the Board of Directors for the following 63 years. He became a prominent financial and civic figure in Scranton and assembled a comfortable fortune. He was a cousin to the famous painter of the American Indians, another George Catlin. George and Mary Catlin resided in the Archbald home, a Victorian brick residence which stood at 5 Ridge Row, adjacent to the present Catlin House. Mrs. Catlin died in 1902 and two years later Mr. Catlin remarried to Miss Helen Walsh of Carbondale. (He had no children by either marriage.)

In 1911 the Catlins decided to build a new residence and secured the services of Edward Langley, a well known local architect. He designed the present three story 15 room brick and stucco house in English Tudor style, which was built and occupied in the year 1912 at a cost of about \$50,000. The Catlins enjoyed their home for many years until the death of Mr. Catlin on June 8, 1935 at the advanced age of 89. In his will, he directed that on the death of his second wife, his home and furnishings were to be given to the Lackawanna Historical Society in trust "for the benefit of the people of Scranton to be known as the George H. Catlin Memorial". He also left a trust fund of \$50,000. with the Third National Bank for the upkeep and maintenance of the house and Society. Upon the death of Mrs. Helen Catlin in April 1942, the house came into the possession of the Society and has been its headquarters ever since that time.

A TOUR OF THE HOUSE

Upon entering the house from the front porch and vestibule, the visitor finds spacious first floor rooms, all of which contain fine hand-carved walnut woodwork, inlaid parquet floors, decorated plaster ceilings and imported marble mantelpieces. The rooms are furnished with Archbald and Catlin family antiques, portraits, and lovely oriental carpets and appear much as they did during the lifetime of Mr. Catlin. The wide central hall features an open staircase with a stained glass window at the landing, a pier glass Victorian mirror, a Grandfather clock with chimes and a number of framed Catlin Indian prints on the walls. The large Drawing room contains Victorian parlor furniture, a rosewood square piano, a beautiful hand-carved mantelpiece and on the walls,

portraits of the Scranton family. The adjoining Dining Room with its impressive bow window contains two very fine Chippendale chairs, the Catlin family silver in a corner cupboard, and over the fireplace, a portrait of Mr. Catlin, the donor of the house. The Sitting room, to the left of the entrance, also contains antique furniture, portraits, a melodian and a Regina music box and display cases containing silver, china and a Bi-Centennial exhibit. In the Secretary's office, formerly a ladies sitting room, there are three John Willard Rought paintings as well as framed signatures of five Signers of the Declaration of Independence. Beyond this room is the Society's research Library containing a fine collection of local and area histories, genealogies, city directories and extensive research records and data. Also on the first floor, there is a butler's pantry and a large kitchen, used for work areas and Society social functions.

On the Second floor are four large former bedrooms, where may be seen excellent displays assembled from the collections of the Society; the Early Scranton Room, the Civil War Room, the Turn-of-the-Century room and the Fashions room. The Society has on display and in storage a very fine collection of period costumes and wedding dresses dating from 1830 to 1950. In the hall there is unique display of Anthracite mining photographs, tools and other memorabilia related to the coal mining industry.

The Third floor has two exhibit rooms featuring antique bicycles, spinning wheels, farm and home tools, a restored coal operator's office and photographs of the D. & H. and Pennsylvania Gravity railroads.

The grounds surrounding the house have been carefully planted with shrubbery and seasonal flowers.

The Catlin House is open from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. Tuesday thru Friday. Conducted tours can be arranged for groups upon request. Mrs. Marie Vellela is the Society's secretary and hostess.

The City of Scranton is indeed fortunate to have this very fine period house with its excellent collection of antiques and area historical research materials open to the public.

SCHEDULE OF PROGRAMS

BI-CENTENNIAL YEAR 1975-1976

Wednesday, October 22 – 8 P.M.

First Fall Program - Film "The Making of the American Revolution" Alastair Cook's color TV film.

Wednesday, November 19 – 6:00 P.M.

Joint Dinner Meeting Lackawanna and Wyoming Historical Societies Treadway Inn, Wilkes-Barre – Cost \$6.00. Illustrated slide lecture "The First Centennial - 1876" presented by Larry Zimmerman, New York City.

Saturday, December 27 – 10 A.M.

Colonial Crafts Demonstrations. A program of interest to the whole family.

Tuesday, February 26 – 8 P.M.

Slide Lecture by Miss Jean Winnie, New Curator of the Wyoming Historical Society "American Folk Art".

Wednesday, March 24 – 8 P.M.

CBS Special Film Presentation, "American Revolution – A Conversation with Lord North" – chief minister to King George III, By Eric Severide and Peter Ustinoff.

Tuesday, April 20 – 8 P.M.

Fashion Program directed by Mrs. James K. Peck, Sr. "Two Hundred Years of American Fashions" 1770-1970.

Wednesday, May 12 – 6:30 P.M.

Annual Dinner Meeting. Guest Speaker – James Mooney, Philadelphia. New President of Pennsylvania Historical Society.

BUS TRIP INTO HISTORY

Saturday, October 25 – Members and friends of the Society are invited to go on a Bus Trip to see historic "Pennsbury" country seat of William Penn and Washington's Crossing State Park, both in beautiful Bucks County, Pa. Lunch may be purchased at the nearby "Fife and Drum" restaurant. The bus will leave from the Catlin House promptly at 8 A.M. and return about 6 P.M. Cost for the day including admission tickets will be \$9.00 for adults and \$8.00 for

children under 12. Reservations may be made to Mrs. Marie Vellela at 232 Monroe Avenue and must be accompanied by check to L.H.S. or cash. The bus is limited to 39 passengers so please get your reservation check in as soon as possible.

NEWS NOTES

Mr. and Mrs. James McLane began their duties as our new Custodians, on June 1, succeeding Mrs. Marie Ort who moved to Warren, Pa. Already they are doing a capable job of keeping our house and grounds in good order.

The Society cooperated with Oppenheims in presenting a series of Bi-Centennial exhibits in their department store from June 14 to July 3.

During the summer our Secretary Mrs. Marie Vellela and Staff assistant Sean Creegan worked like beavers in arranging many new and exciting exhibits throughout the House. Among them are the Colonial displays in the sitting room, the framing of the signatures of five Signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Anthracite display, the Civil War Room, the Turn-of-the Century room, The Gravity railroad display and the numerous other exhibits. We are also indebted to Ronald Brenne for the displays in the Early Scranton Room.

You may have noticed two new signs at the Catlin House – the one on the lawn advertising the hours our House is open and the other one over the entrance – gold letters on a black face – "Lackawanna Historical Society". Mr. Everett Thomas was responsible for securing these. We also have two new flags to fly from our flagpole, courtesy of Atty. H. R. Van Deusen, Jr. One is an American flag which was flown over the U. S. Capitol, donated by Hon. Joseph McDade; the other is a Bi-Centennial flag. And thanks to Mrs. Caroline Feldman, we had lovely flowers blooming on our grounds all summer.

Rev. William P. Lewis
President L.H.S.

LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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