

ERIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The period since the Spring issue of this **Journal** came off the press has been a busy one in connection with the Bicentennial and our own regular activities.

On May 13th the annual joint dinner meeting of the History Department of Mercyhurst College, the Erie County Historical Society and the Sons of the American Revolution was held in the dining room of the College.

After a very tasty dinner, the program was presented by three history seniors of the College.

Patti Bonito summarized her "Study of the Pennsylvania 83rd Regiment of the Civil War." Among other aspects of the war, she detailed some of the problems of organizing its military units; various reactions of the public to the war including a note that little Waterford, with a population of only 800, contributed 80 volunteers; and specified geographical areas in which various units served.

The second speaker, Jack Daly, gave an "Analysis of the Centennial and Bicentennial." He referred particularly to the Revolutionary Period itself in which he discussed the ideological background of the time with various viewpoints and interpretations of the Declaration of Independence.

Gary Bukowski reviewed the "First Decade of Mercyhurst." He recounted the problems of money to be raised; land to be purchased; problems with labor in the building process with a strike and the finishing of the work by the Sisters themselves to the point when, in 1926, an opening deadline was met with 21 freshmen and four sophomores enrolled the first year.

Mrs. C. B. Andrews, in her review of activities "From the Cashier's House" which was distributed to the members of the Society, referred to many of the activities in such detail that only brief mention of some of them will be made here.

Of special interest was the A. A. U. W. Heritage Trail for some 8000 fourth, fifth and sixth grade pupils and teachers who visited the Cashier's House between March 16th and May 30th, having come from not only Erie but from numerous nearby communities.

On June 3rd the A. A. U. W. sponsored a lunch in honor of the French Consul and his wife from New York in celebration of Lafayette Commemorative Days.

The Society cooperated with the Metropolitan Transit Authority in a series of daily historical tours around Erie during a period of several weeks.

We have had so many gifts and loans of books, pictures, letters, documents and other items, that space in this **Journal** does not permit us to list all of them with the donors. We appreciate such generous cooperation

in making the Society a significant historical center for the use of all interested persons. However there are two items which we do wish to mention. They are both beautiful specimens of the old type square piano and they look almost identical.

One of the pianos is on loan from Mrs. Paul S. Daum, formerly Elizabeth Rilling Wright. This was received about a year ago but has not been mentioned in any previous news column. It is a Chickering with rosewood finish, shipped from the famous Boston piano manufacturer in 1856.

The other piano, a gift from Mrs. T. J. Danner of Franklin, Pa., is also finished in rosewood. It was built about the same time, apparently the product of an Erie manufacturer. It bears the name Wm. Willing, Erie, Pa. In the 1860-61 City Directory we find the reference: "Willing, William, Prof. of music, music store and manf'r of pianos and melodeons..."

A project of last Spring and early Summer was the repair of a beautiful black walnut secretary on loan from Mr. Graham T. Marsh. It is a cabinet with two doors on the lower section, two glass doors above, one having the original wavy glass in it, and between the upper and lower sections, a desk section which can be drawn forward, having a front cover that folds down to form the desk itself. It was built by David Sterrett and Elias Brecht some time before 1865, in Cumberland County, Pa. Mr. David Sterrett's brother, Robert T. Sterrett, had a daughter, Eliza, who married Hon. Samuel E. Woodruff, who, for many years, owned and lived in the "Cashier's House." So the Sterrett secretary has come to rest in a house once occupied by a Sterrett descendant.

Another project has been the repair of a showcase having an upper shelf for the display of beautiful small objects like jewelry, and space below for larger objects. One such beautiful small object for possible display is a silver coin 1½ inch in diameter, struck by the Franklin Mint, commemorating, on March 22, 1972, the 250th anniversary of the founding of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. It was a gift of the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

A third project has been the making of a series of about 100 slides, black and white, photographed from old newspapers, magazines, books, advertisements, from anything having a picture which represented some interesting phase of early Erie life. Historical notes accompany each slide so that anyone could give an illustrated lecture on early Erie history. Such talks can be arranged through the Historical Society.

George S. Brewer

NOTICE TO READERS

At the request of the Director of the General von Steuben Papers project, located at the University of Pennsylvania, the Editorial Board calls its readers' attention to the following notice:

The General von Steuben Papers project, located at the University of Pennsylvania, is preparing a definitive microfilm edition of the Steuben papers to be published under the auspices of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. We are interested in all correspondence to and from the general and all other materials concerning him. Information and inquiries should be directed to:

General von Steuben Papers
Van Pelt Library
University of Pennsylvania
3420 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19174