EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BY J. PAUL SELSAM
Pennsylvania State College

THE eighth annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association was unusually successful. The record-breaking attendance, the splendid papers, the excellent arrangements, the many new members, and the notable plans for the future—all made for an enthusiastic gathering at Bethlehem on October 27 and 28, 1939.

The meeting had an auspicious beginning with luncheon in the log-cabin headquarters of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution assisted by the local members of the Valley Forge Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. The chairman of meeting, Mr. J. Bennett Nolan, of Reading, introduced the first speaker, Mr. C. R. Roberts, secretary of the Lehigh County Historical Society, who discussed "The American Revolution in the Lehigh Valley." Mr. Roberts said that the Lehigh Valley took part in the very first revolutionary movement and continued its support of the colonial cause to the very end. Bethlehem and Allentown became important hospital centers and the industrial activity of the inhabitants of this area also produced many supplies for the army. The next speaker was Dr. Frederick Tilberg, historian of the Gettysburg
National Military Park, who spoke on "The National Park Historical Service." Dr. Tilberg stated that the purpose of the National Park Service was to select representative areas in which important historical dramas took place. By restoring, preserving or maintaining these areas the continuous story of our national growth would be presented. Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown have been combined into one Colonial Park to represent the Colonial period. Morristown National Park represents the training period of the Revolutionary army while Gettysburg epitomizes the turning point of the Civil War. Dr. Tilberg said that the aim of the Gettysburg project was to restore, as nearly as possible, every phase of the locality just as it existed in 1863.

The afternoon session was held in the Packard Building of Lehigh University with Dr. Alfred P. James of the University of Pittsburgh presiding. The first paper was read by Mr. R. L. Brunhouse of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School on the "Lascars in Pennsylvania: A Side-Light on the China Trade." From documents found in Washington, Baltimore and Harrisburg, the speaker reconstructed the hitherto unknown story of thirty-five Bengalese and Chinese deckhands stranded in Philadelphia. The Asiatics entered Baltimore in 1785 and attempted to find a return passage to the East Indies by going to Philadelphia where they became the objects of state charity. Unsuccessful in shifting the problem to the Maryland government or Congress, the Executive Council of Pennsylvania provided for the unwanted strangers for almost a year. "Josiah White and the Building of the Lehigh Canal," was the subject of the next paper presented by Mr. Earl Hartman of Slatington. The speaker told of the early life of Josiah White who, after making a small fortune in the hardware business in Philadelphia, became interested in developing the navigation of the Schuylkill River. After several attempts he gave up the project and turned his attention to the Lehigh River. It was about this time that Lehigh coal was found to be valuable, so the improved navigation of the river was most important. In 1818, two companies, the Lehigh Navigation Company and the Lehigh Coal Company, were formed. Mr. White now developed the sluice gates and twelve were built in 1819. On April 20, 1820, the above companies were
merged and regular shipments of anthracite coal were made to Philadelphia. At first the boats went only one way, being broken up in Philadelphia. Later the canal was built and return trips could be made. The Lehigh Canal became one of Pennsylvania's prized transportation projects. The last paper was given by Mr. G. Edwin Brumbaugh of Philadelphia on "German Architecture in Pennsylvania." Illustrated with many slides made by the speaker and explained by this well-known authority on the subject, it proved to be a most interesting and valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Germans in Pennsylvania.

At 5:00 p.m. Dr. T. Edgar Shields entertained the members with an organ recital in the University Chapel. Dr. Shields very kindly commented on the works he played and his critical remarks helped in appreciating the excellent program he had prepared.

The formal dinner was held in the Ball Room of Hotel Bethlehem. President C. C. Williams of Lehigh University, one of our new members, in his welcome address congratulated our Association on the remarkable progress since our first meeting in Bethlehem six years ago and extended to us the hospitality and facilities of Lehigh University and the other institutions of Bethlehem. Our esteemed president, Dr. Roy F. Nichols, introduced the speaker of the evening Dr. R. D. W. Connor, Archivist of the United States, who spoke on "The National Archives and Pennsylvania History." Dr. Connor told how negligent the United States had been in preserving its records of the past. This negligence forced the American student to search in foreign archives, even to study the history of his own country. Today, Dr. Connor stated, we have archives of which no student need feel ashamed. Congress has given to the Archivist extensive powers for preserving the non-current records of all government agencies and of making them available to students and scholars. He then gave a detailed account of the collections now adequately housed in Archives Building, particularly those pertaining to Pennsylvania or its contributions to our national history. President Nichols then introduced the officers of the Association, the Council members and several others who had made contributions to Pennsylvania history. Dr. Luther Evans, of Washington, director of the Federal Historical Records Survey, was
present again this year and spoke briefly of the excellent results achieved to date. He praised the work done in Pennsylvania by the staff headed by Mr. Karl Goedecke, one of our members, and announced that the first publication of the Survey—*Guide to Depositories of Manuscript Collections in Pennsylvania*—was printed by the Pennsylvania Historical Commission. Miss Elsie Yellis spoke about the work of the World Center for Women's Archives with headquarters in Rockefeller Center. She urged our cooperation in preserving and making known the letters, diaries and writings of women who have contributed to our social and cultural development.

The Saturday morning session opened at 10:30 with Professor Asa E. Martin of Pennsylvania State College presiding. The general topic was "Phases of the American Revolution in Pennsylvania." The first paper was given by Mr. Benjamin Keen of the Yale University Graduate School on "Social and Economic Factors in the Revolution in Pennsylvania." Mr. Keen told of the conflicting interests in Pennsylvania in 1776 and said that the "attitude of the various social groups toward the question of independence was determined by their social status and economic position. The great Quaker merchants and proprietary officials gravitated to the Loyalist position; the yeomanry, the tradesmen and artisans of Philadelphia, and, to a lesser degree, the progressive section of the merchant class, supported the movement for independence." The speaker showed that "the movement for independence in Pennsylvania was simultaneously a movement for greater internal democracy and social equality." Through "the dexterous operation of the committee system these 'furious Whigs' extended their influence to all parts of the state and were able to organize the strong popular movement which brought to an end the proprietary regime, and established the radical Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776." The next paper was given by Professor William T. Johnson, Bucknell University. His topic was "A Scottish Loyalist in the American Revolution." The paper set forth the experiences of Alan Cameron, a member of the great clan Cameron, from his first experiences in the colony of South Carolina in the service of the Honorable John Stuart in charge of Indian supervision to the end of his great military career in the British service.
the American Revolution he had allied himself with Lord Dunmore of Virginia and other Loyalists in an effort to separate the northern colonies from the southern ones. After being taken prisoner in Maryland on suspicion of being a Loyalist, he was imprisoned in Philadelphia for most of the duration of the war, suffered great physical hardships, twice attempted an escape, and suffered great bodily injury in one of these attempts. This circumstance threatened to end his military career, but a remarkable recovery after his release in 1778 and his return to Scotland permitted him to renew a military career that became illustrious and for which he was designated Sir Alan Cameron, a Knight Commander of the Bath, by the British government. In the next paper on “Thomas FitzSimmons, Revolutionary Merchant Prince,” Miss Catharine McCandless of College Misericordia told of the personal benefactions of this Philadelphia merchant and signer of the Declaration of Independence and mentioned the large sums of money he advanced to equip the Revolutionary army.

The Saturday luncheon meeting was presided over by W. N. Schwarze, president of Moravian College and Theological Seminary, and was sponsored by the Northampton County Historical Society, The Lehigh County Historical Society and The Moravian Historical Society. The paper was presented by Mr. A. D. Chidsey, Jr., of Easton, and dealt with “William Parsons, Easton’s First Citizen.” Born in England, William Parsons came to Philadelphia when he was twenty-one and set himself up as a shoemaker. He was ambitious and read widely, becoming a member of Benjamin Franklin’s Friday evening Philosophical Club. He was a charter member of the American Philosophical Society. In 1741 he became Surveyor-General of the Province with the establishment of the Pennsylvania-Delaware boundary line as his most notable achievement. When Northampton county was established Parsons was selected as surveyor for the new county and thus became the first citizen of Easton. Here he had a distinguished record and held many offices. Through his efforts, guns were sent to Easton to defend the town against the Indians in 1754. The severe strain resulting from the Indian danger affected his health and he died on December 17, 1757.
At 2:30 in the afternoon, the historical pilgrimages started to places of interest in Bethlehem and vicinity, including a tour of the Moravian Buildings with their splendid archives, Trout Hall, Muhlenberg and Cedar Crest Colleges in Allentown, and Whitefield House, Nazareth. The writer took the latter tour and was overjoyed to find the rich historic treasures exhibited there. The members returned to Bethlehem for an old Moravian supper served in the Central Moravian Church at 6:30. After supper many of the customs and traditions of the Moravians were explained by the pastor. The program concluded with a delightful program of early Moravian music in the church auditorium.

The reports of the officers at the business meeting held on Saturday morning revealed the steady growth of the Association. The membership has now reached the 500 mark and our publication, Pennsylvania History, is winning new laurels for its scholarly and interesting articles. The editor, Dr. Arthur C. Bining, was commended for the excellent work he and his staff are doing. Dr. Leonidas Dodson of the University of Pennsylvania was named associate editor and Dr. H. H. Shenk of Lebanon Valley College was named to the editorial board. The amendment to the constitution reducing the life membership fee to fifty dollars was approved and four new life memberships were announced. It was decided to set this money aside as a Publications Fund—thus fulfilling one of the objectives of our organization—for the printing and publishing of important monographic studies on Pennsylvania history. There was a general feeling that the Association had built a firm foundation and that with the continued cooperation of the members and their own personal endeavor to get new members, we could look forward to a bright future. We are fortunate in having Dr. Lawrence H. Gipson of the history department of Lehigh University as our new president. He was one of the founders of the Association and has been chairman of the important Committee on Future Plans and Policies. The new president will appoint a standing Committee on Publication Policy, which was approved at the meeting. The other officers elected were Mr. J. Bennett Nolan, first vice-president, Dr. J. Paul Selsam, secretary, and Mr. Ross Pier Wright, treasurer. Elections to the Council
were as follows: Dr. Wayland F. Dunaway, State College; Dr. Franklin Holbrook, Pittsburgh; Dr. Paul H. Giddens, Meadville; and Dr. Robert Fortenbaugh, Gettysburg, all for three-year terms. Dr. William A. Russ, Selinsgrove, was elected to fill the unexpired term of two years of Dr. Lawrence H. Gipson. The report of Dr. J. Orin Oliphant for the Committee on a Documentary History of Pennsylvania was read and approved. The important work of this committee will be coordinated with the work of the Committee on Publication Policy. Dr. Amos Ettinger reported for the Bibliography Committee and distributed to the members the Proposed Bibliographical Outline of Pennsylvania History. This is a splendid work and plans were made for its completion. At the conclusion of the meeting a fitting tribute was paid to our able retiring president, Dr. Roy F. Nichols, whose ability, inspiration and experience will not be lost to us, however, for he automatically becomes a member of the Council.

Mr. J. Bennett Nolan introduced a series of resolutions expressing thanks to the following for the excellent arrangements for the meeting: Dr. Gipson, chairman of the Program Committee, Bishop Paul deSchweinitz, chairman of the local Arrangements Committee, President C. C. Williams of Lehigh University, Dr. T. Edgar Shields, organist, Central Moravian Church, the Hotel Bethlehem, and to Mr. Harold Farquhar of the Bethlehem Globe-Times, the Easton Mass, and the Allentown Morning Call for giving excellent publicity. At the conclusion of this most successful convention it was decided to meet in the fall of 1940 at State College. Immediately, many at the meeting made plans to attend and Dr. Asa E. Martin of State College announced that efforts would be made to hold the meeting when the foliage of Central Pennsylvania would be at its best.