NEWS AND COMMENT

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ASSOCIATION NEWS

It has been the custom of the Association to hold the midyear meeting of the Council in connection with the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies. This means that the Council meeting for 1940 will be held on the evening of April 10, preceding the Federation assembly on the following day.

President Gipson has announced the appointment of a standing Committee on Publications to lay down policies regarding all publications, present and prospective, of the Association. Membership is staggered to provide a continuity of ideas and policy. Dr. Gipson feels that the work of this committee will be of very great importance in determining the publications program. The committee will consider the formulation of policies and make recommendations concerning the development of the magazine. It will also consider the possibility and form of such other publications as may be within the means of the Association. Dr. Richard H. Shryock of the University of Pennsylvania will act as chairman. Dr. A. E. Martin will serve with Dr. Shryock for five years. Other appointments include Dr. J. Orin Oliphant and Dr. Amos E. Ettinger, four years; Mr. S. K. Stevens and Dr. James A. Barnes, three years; Dr. Thomas E. Drake and Dr. Paul H. Giddens, two years; Mr. John C. Miller and Mr. J. Bennett Nolan, one year. Dr. Arthur C. Bining will serve ex officio.

It is our understanding that the Association has not abandoned consideration of the projected documentary history of Pennsylvania. We are informed that a resolution endorsing the project and proposing a cooperative consideration of the problem with the Pennsylvania Historical Commission has been adopted by the committee which had the matter under consideration. Many feel that such a project would be extremely worth while. There can be little doubt but that one of the principal hindrances to a wider use of state history in Pennsylvania schools is the absence of
suitable material. A series of the type proposed could go a long way toward remedying this situation. It would be a splendid supplement to other publications projects of advantage to Pennsylvania history which are also under consideration in other quarters.

The third annual history conference sponsored by the Department of History of Pennsylvania State College and the Association will be held late in April. Plans for the meeting are being worked out and those interested in further information should contact Dr. Selsam at Pennsylvania State College. This is a very commendable project and an interesting addition to the experiment which has been already so successful at the University of Pittsburgh in cooperation with the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. It would indeed be very fine if other strategically located colleges and universities would sponsor similar projects.

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

The Mifflin County Historical Society, under the leadership of Mr. J. Martin Stroup, continues to be a very positive force in promoting interest and activity in the field of local history in that section of the State. Plans for the second annual county-wide historical essay contest have just been announced. Last year more than seventy-five entrants from seven of the eight high schools of the county participated. The 1940 contest will be conducted along somewhat the same lines as previously and in cooperation with local patriotic and civic agencies. The society has been successful in negotiating a $6,000 WPA project for the restoration and beautification of the old arch bridge across Jacks Creek just below Lewistown. This ancient stone bridge is one of the most interesting landmarks in Pennsylvania and is of particular interest because of the fact that it was built without the use of a keystone. The society and interested local agencies have been endeavoring for some years to promote its preservation. Leaders in civic and historical undertakings deserve great credit for pushing the project to a successful conclusion. The Lewistown society has given further indication of its community-wide interests by assuming leadership in the development of community support for the preservation of Pennsylvania canal history and folklore, and the proper marking of its historic sites. The society expects in the near future to sponsor a project with the WPA for the construction
of a model of historic Fort Granville, located on the Juniata just west of Lewistown.

The latest addition to the growing number of reorganized historical societies has appeared in Tioga county. At a meeting held in the Court House at Wellsboro on January 16, 1940, attended by representative and interested citizens of the county, it was unanimously agreed that the old Tioga County Historical Society, organized in 1904 and since abandoned, should be re-established. The Honorable George W. Williams, former member of the General Assembly, presided over the meeting and was most actively assisted by Dr. Lester K. Ade, president of Mansfield State Teachers' College. Mr. Harry E. Bodine of Wellsboro was named president of the new organization with Mr. Walter G. Clark, county superintendent of schools, serving as secretary. Plans are under way for the development of an active society and there is every prospect that the northern tier will be represented by an aggressive and capable organization in Tioga county. Letters of appreciation and commendation to the leaders of such enterprises from outside societies or individuals are not amiss. Often they provide kindly stimulation and it is a practice which should be more utilized.

Judge Ray P. Sherwood was re-elected president of the York County Historical Society at the annual meeting on January 10, 1940, in the Court House. Dr. Elizabeth S. Kite presented an interesting historical address on French aid in the American Revolution with particular reference to York. Mr. Henry J. Young, director of the society, presented a summary of the year's activities and made available for distribution the annual report. As usual, this indicates a widespread and increasing field of activity. Visitors to the society during 1939 numbered 8,681 of whom 1,028 were actively interested in using society facilities for research purposes. The library has grown greatly during the past year and both the book and manuscript collections have been enriched. The activities of the society are varied and important. Every person interested in historical society work in the state should have a copy of this report, as well as the new Year Book of the York County Historical Society. Director Young will be happy to provide them for interested persons.
Montgomery county historians held their annual meeting on February 22, 1940, in Historical Hall, 18 East Penn Street, Norristown. In addition to the reports of officers and committees and election of officers for the coming year, the afternoon was given over to two papers on historical subjects. Miss Ella Slingluff reports that the society has been successful during the year in materially increasing its manuscript collections. The Hall of the society is rapidly becoming one of the important depositories for local historical material in this section of the state. An active campaign is under way with the objective of further expanding the local history collections of the society.

Perry county historians are taking an active interest in the movement to preserve the folklore and history of the Pennsylvania Canal. On the evening of February 26, 1940, the society sponsored a meeting at Newport which featured two addresses concerned with this subject. Mrs. Herman Snyder spoke on "Early Canal Days about Newport" and Mrs. J. Martin Stroup of Lewistown discussed the work of the Federation committee concerned with this subject. Major Edward L. Holman of New Bloomfield has been building a very sound foundation of society activity and the meetings have been attended by increasing numbers of interested persons. Major Holman has been very successful with cooperating with neighboring societies and it is encouraging to note that the last Perry county meeting was attended by representatives of two of these groups.

The revived Clinton County Historical Society has completed a year of very successful activity centering about the recognition of the county centennial. Mr. George F. Hess of Beech Creek, president of the society, states that the coming year will not see any let-down in the enthusiasm of the organization. Tentative plans for 1940 include addresses by prominent persons, public exhibits, and a drive for increased membership. Miss Elizabeth H. Peale, chairman of the society centennial committee, reports that the total expenditures for this activity were small. This should encourage other societies to take the lead in recognizing significant historical anniversaries throughout the state. The returns in terms of public interest and increased support for the historical society more than outweigh the expenditures, and a
considerable portion of these can usually be raised through co-operation with civic organizations.

We are informed that the Sullivan County Historical Society has definite prospects of completing its drive for funds to erect a society building at Laporte. When one considers the resources and the small population of the county, this is a truly remarkable achievement and should be a source of inspiration to everyone interested in local historical society endeavor. Much of the credit for what has been accomplished in this tiny northern tier county must be given to Mr. F. W. Meylert, president, and his associates. It is interesting to note that this enterprise has been promoted chiefly through the county chamber of commerce, demonstrating the advantage of selling local history to such civic and business organizations.

Northumberland county historians began their activities for 1940 with the annual meeting held at the Neff Hotel in Sunbury on the evening of January 16. The usual turkey dinner for which Mr. George Neff, vice-president of the society and manager of the hotel, is famous was served to a large assemblage. Election of officers for the society has become a very simple procedure. Captain Frederic A. Godcharles was re-elected to the presidency, establishing what begins to appear as an all time record for this type of service. The well-known local historian, Mr. Heber G. Gearhart, was re-appointed as secretary. Mr. Gearhart continues in charge of the historical research project in coöperation with the WPA which is operating at Fort Augusta Mansion with continued success. The address for the evening was delivered by Mr. Bruce A. Hunt of Williamsport who spoke on "Lumbering Days in the West Branch Valley." At the February 20 meeting of this society, Captain Godcharles delivered an address on "Margaret Junkin Preston, Poetess-Laureate of the South."

The thirty-fifth annual meeting of the Northampton County Historical Society was held at the society building in Easton on January 19, 1940. Principal feature of the program was an illustrated address by Mr. Donald A. Cadzow of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission staff on "Historic Pennsylvania Restored." The society has attracted very favorable attention in recent months
by the fine quality of its printing as embodied in the program announcements. The society has recently made available an *Index* to the well-known volume by Dr. Preston A. Laury, *The Scotch-Irish of Northampton County*. Originally published in 1926, the volume has attracted widespread and favorable attention and its value will be greatly enhanced by the preparation of the *Index* which lists approximately two thousand family names and twenty-five thousand page references. Those interested in either the original publication or the *Index* should contact the society at Easton.

The Lycoming County Historical Society reports progress in securing funds for the utilization of its recently acquired home in Williamsport. Mr. Oliver J. Decker, president, declares he anticipates no difficulty in securing the necessary financial support to provide Williamsport with one of the outstanding depositories in the state. The society already has in its possession valuable museum, documentary, and other local historical collections which for the first time now can be brought together in one central place. There is every prospect that additional quantities of material will be secured in the future. In the meantime, the society continues to be distinctive for its unusual programs which are attended by such large numbers as to create a problem of properly taking care of all of those who desire to be present. The January 18, 1940, meeting featured an address by Russell H. Rhodes of the Williamsport schools on "William Hepburn, 1753-1821, Soldier of the Revolution and Lycoming County Judge and Senator." Following the program a dramatization of circumstances connected with the selection of the county seat was presented.

The Berks County Historical Society completed recently a successful drive to secure the necessary finances to make possible an adequate development of the future program of the society. It is a most interesting experiment and its success should be of great interest to society leaders throughout the state. The drive originally set a goal of $25,000 and Dr. Louis J. Heizman, president of the society, informs us that $22,000 was secured. The drive was combined with a membership expansion program by granting every non-society member who contributed $3.00 or more a courtesy membership in the society for one year. Doctor Heizman
reports that 900 people contributed and have received this membership. If even half of them continue their interest in the society for another year as active members, the Berks county group will have a standing membership of over 1,200. The society plans to utilize the funds in carrying out a development program over a three year period. Immediate plans call for engaging a curator familiar with modern museum methods and able to assist in promoting greater use of the society’s facilities. A definite program for creating wider popular and public school interest in Berks county history is under consideration. It is expected that these will create a sustained interest in the activities of the society which will make possible for the future a self-sustaining organization through membership fees. Over 250 volunteer campaigners were used in the drive which closed January 16, 1940, and were under the direction of Mr. Hanns Gramm. Dr. Heizman calls attention to the fact that the campaign was successful not only in securing funds, but also in arousing widespread popular interest and drawing the attention of thousands of Berks countians to the existence of the society. Dr. Heizman and his associates deserve commendation for undertaking this ambitious program. Its unusual success should be a source of inspiration and encouragement to other societies.

Snyder county historians have been increasingly active during the past year. At a meeting held February 3 in the library of Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Dr. George F. Dunkelberger of the University faculty read a paper on “Union Seminary, New Berlin.” A genealogical paper was presented by the Rev. d’A. Engle on David Walter, a Berks county native who later settled in Snyder county. Miss Agnes Selin Schoch and Dr. William A. Russ, Jr., presented papers at the April 5 meeting. Dr. Dunkelberger has been placed in charge of a projected history of Snyder county which will be designed especially for educational use. A careful general outline has already been prepared and plans for completion of the work are well underway. Indications are an interesting and scholarly volume will be the product of the project and those interested in central Pennsylvania history will look forward to its early completion. Members of the faculty at Susquehanna University are to be congratulated upon the success with which they have promoted coöperation with the county society.
very happy union of those with professional interest and laymen active in local historical circles has been achieved at Selinsgrove.

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania has launched an ambitious program for the current season. Meetings of the society have attracted increasing attention and have met with fine popular response. The February 27, 1940 gathering was designed in part to recognize the patriotic spirit of the February season occasioned by the Lincoln and Washington birthday observances. The meeting opened with a presentation of an American flag by the Pittsburgh chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Selections of early American martial music were presented by members of the Pioneers Fife and Drum Corps. The featured address of the occasion was delivered by Mr. George Seibel, well-known Pittsburgh journalist, commentator, and librarian, on "Pittsburgh's Place in the Fourth Estate," a very interesting review of the history of journalism in Pittsburgh. The indisposition of former Governor John S. Fisher has thrown the responsibility of society management largely upon the shoulders of Mr. Gregg L. Neel, vice-president. Mr. Neel has demonstrated great enthusiasm for the work and is proving a vigorous leader in society activities, which promises well for the future of historical work in the western area.

The thirty-sixth annual meeting of the Lehigh County Historical Society was held January 22, 1940, at the Elks Club in Allentown. Judge Frank M. Trexler was re-elected as president and the well-known historian Mr. Charles R. Roberts, was continued in the secretaryship. The principal address was delivered by Dr. Richard H. Shryock on "The Pennsylvania German in History." Dr. Shryock emphasized the differences of opinion which have existed among historians as to the influence of the Pennsylvania German element in the history of the state. He expressed the opinion that its influence has been much greater than generally supposed. By way of emphasizing this point, Dr. Shryock called attention to the fact that the covered wagon, the log cabin, and so-called Kentucky rifle all originated in the Pennsylvania German country. He also mentioned the agricultural accomplishments of this racial element and the importance of this in the economic history of the state.
Juniata county historians, together with guests from three neighboring counties, banqued on the evening of January 25 at the William Banks Hotel in Mifflintown. Dr. Robert P. Banks was re-elected as president at the business meeting and Miss Rebecca Doty of Mifflintown will continue as secretary. The principal address of the evening was delivered by the Rev. Dr. C. E. McCartney of Pittsburgh and consisted of a review of the lives of men who have aspiring to the Presidency without achieving that ambition.

Members of the Kittochtinny Historical Society met in Chambersburg on the evening of November 30 and celebrated forty-two years of society history. Mr. Arthur W. Gillan of Chambersburg is acting as secretary and announced at the meeting that the County Superintendent of Schools R. G. Mowrey had assumed the place on the executive committee of the society. The February meeting of the organization featured a paper by Mr. J. H. Stoner on circumstances connected with the disappearance of slavery in Franklin county. Because of its location on the southern border, this county, according to Mr. Stoner, was one of the last to witness the disappearance of institutions connected with slavery. He called attention to the fact that on the old “Young Farm,” two miles southwest of Chambersburg, it was probable that the last slave auction was held in Pennsylvania in April, 1829. It was pointed out that two Negroes were sold in this slave auction by Colonel Young at this time.

Mr. Eugene P. Bertin, formerly with the Department of Public Instruction and now a member of the faculty of Mansfield State Teachers’ College, has been elected as president of the Muncy Historical Society for 1940. Dr. T. Kenneth Wood will continue his long-time position as corresponding secretary and editor of the interesting journal, Now and Then. Mr. Clark Kahler has continued to act as recording secretary and curator of the museum. The general business meeting at which these elections took place was preceded by a very interesting lecture by Mr. Julian P. Boyd entitled "An Estimation of the Historical Importance of the Samuel Wallis Collection of Papers (1760 to 1798).” Mr. Howard E. Wallis of Muncy formally presented to the society six 100 foot microfilm reels carrying the negatives filmed by the Historical
Society of Pennsylvania from the Wallis Collection. Dr. Wood spoke briefly on the life of Samuel Wallis. Historians of the state will be glad to know that this valuable collection has been so suitably preserved for the future. A copy of this film is, of course, available at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and also at the Muncy Historical Society.

Schuylkill county historians held their annual meeting on January 26 at Pottsville. Mr. C. W. Unger and Miss Marion Clifford of Pottsville were re-elected as president and recording secretary respectively. Plans were discussed for a genealogical project in cooperation with the WPA for the purpose of translating old German church records. Several new gifts of material for the museum and library were reported. The society is sponsoring a new revival of activity and has just resumed its *Publications of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County*.

The annual Christmas meeting of the Dauphin County Historical Society was held in the headquarters at Nine South Front Street on the evening of December 18, 1939. The program was opened with a concert of Christmas Carols by a chorus of society members. Mr. Evan J. Miller, prominent Harrisburg businessman, was re-elected president. Mr. A. Boyd Hamilton will continue to have charge of the programs and the administration of historical and library matters. The program theme centered about a history of the Y. M. C. A. in Harrisburg, 1939 marking the eighty-fifth anniversary of this institution. Mr. Chester E. Shirk, general secretary, spoke on the origin and development of this work in Harrisburg, tracing it back to a meeting of December 12, 1854. Mr. Arthur D. Bacon assisted Mr. Shirk with the period from 1870 to 1880. This was another link in the program chain originated by Mr. Hamilton with the purpose of bringing to the society over a period of time historical surveys of various phases of the development of Harrisburg and the surrounding areas. The January meeting devoted considerable attention to a historical review of the Dauphin county courts and court house sites presented by Mr. Hamilton. The theme was especially appropriate in view of the current controversy over the location of a new Dauphin County Court House. On February 12, 1940, the society held open-house at its headquarters in commemoration of the
Lincoln birthday. Visitors were received in the reception hall and tea was served in connection with the function. A fine exhibition of the Lincolniiana was on display. The regular monthly meeting on February 19, 1940, featured a review of the settlement and traditions of the Swatara Valley presented by Dr. Albert H. Gerberich of Dickinson College. Continuous additions to the collection of maps, books, and pamphlets dealing with state and local history are reported by the curator, Miss Grace Curriden.

**PENNSYLVANIA FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES**

Plans for the April 11, 1940, meeting are completed and programs have been distributed throughout the state. Dr. Harlow Lindley, secretary of the Ohio State Historical and Archaeological Society, will be the featured speaker at the meeting. The opening sessions are scheduled for the Penn-Harris Hotel beginning at 10:00 o'clock. In view of the general distribution of the program, it is not necessary to provide further details.

Probably, the most active committee of the Federation continues to be that organized to promote interest in the preservation of the history and folklore of the Pennsylvania Canal. Members of the committee have accepted their responsibilities with enthusiasm and have taken the lead in promoting several local meetings which have been successful in arousing the interest and securing the cooperation of many influential individuals and civic groups. On January 15, 1940, a public meeting sponsored by Mr. J. Martin Stroup was held at Lewistown, while on February 28, 1940, a similar meeting at Johnstown was organized by Mr. P. J. Little, president of the Cambria County Historical Society. Considerable newspaper publicity has resulted and organized efforts are in prospect in various sections which should result not only in the uncovering of much canal history and lore, but should aid also in the preservation and marking of some of the most significant canal sites.

Groundwork has been laid by Miss Frances Dorrance and her committee for an organized program to assist the historical societies in the exchange of duplicate and museum material. A compilation of historical society publications which are available for exchange and sale has been nearly completed.
Mr. Henry K. Siebeneck and Mr. Gregg L. Neal of Pittsburgh have been added to the Cornplanter Indian Committee. The chairman, Mr. M. H. Deardorff, of Warren, is laying definite plans for future committee activity and active contact has been established between all members of the group.

The newly re-organized Pennsylvania Historical Commission has approved continuation of Commission sponsorship of Federation activities. It is expected, therefore, that the Commission office will continue to function as an official state headquarters of the Federation with a consequent utilization of Commission staff and facilities to sponsor a program of cooperative activity with the Federation and its affiliates. This centralization of historical society affairs continues to attract attention in other states. The most recent request for information concerning the arrangement comes from the Minnesota Historical Society.

It is evident that throughout the country there is developing an increased concern over the problem of stimulating and coordinating the development of local historical agencies. Those in the East who tend to look upon the state-subsidized state historical societies of the West as a model are somewhat surprised to learn that weaknesses appear in this type of organization. One of the most serious, which is becoming a matter of some concern to leaders in historical work, is a tendency of large and powerful state bodies to overshadow and limit development of county and local societies. The happy combination of individual society organization and effort combined with some degree of central supervision as exemplified in the work of the Federation during the last two years appears to offer some solution to the problem of coordinating local society effort with state agencies.

**OF MEN AND MANY THINGS**

Reorganization of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission has been completed. Miss M. Atherton Leach and Mr. Ross Pier Wright were re-appointed by Governor James. Both are officers of the Association and that body may feel that it is adequately represented. Miss Frances Dorrance of Wilkes-Barre, long associated with Pennsylvania historical work, a member of the Sixth Commission and member of the Council of the Association, resumes a place on the Commission. New appointees include Mr. Gregg
L. Neel, vice-president of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and long active in its affairs, and Mr. Edward R. Barnsley of Newtown, well-known in southeastern Pennsylvania and active in the affairs of the Bucks County Historical Society. The reorganization meeting of the Commission was held February 5, 1940, and Mr. Wright was appointed to the chairmanship. Mr. Donald A. Cadzow will act as executive secretary and continue his supervision of the historic properties under Commission administration.

Copies of the new county history entitled A Picture of Lycoming County prepared by the Pennsylvania Writers Division of the WPA and sponsored locally are available at the office of County Superintendent of Schools Frank H. Painter. The book has been very carefully prepared; Miss Katharine Bennet and Mr. Bruce A. Hunt were responsible for a very close checking for historical accuracy. It has met with a fine popular response and has been sold widely throughout the county. It is expected that it will do much toward increasing popular interest in county history and facilitating its use in the public schools.

Captain Frederic A. Godcharles, well-known member of the Association has been especially active in speaking on Pennsylvania historical matters throughout the state in recent months. More than a dozen talks on state and local history were presented by Captain Godcharles in a single month.

Mr. Oliver J. Decker, president of the Lycoming County Historical Society, addressed the Williamsport Rotary Club at their Monday luncheon on February 26, 1940. His subject was “The Beginnings of Williamsport,” and highlights in the history of the county and city were sketched briefly.

Those interested in Pennsylvania German history and literature have been saddened to learn of the death of Mr. Charles C. More, noted Pennsylvania German writer, who occupied an enviable position as one of the distinguished German linguists in the United States.
The Federal Writers Project for Pennsylvania has been re-organized on a state-wide basis under sponsorship by the Department of Public Instruction. Mr. C. C. Leslie is acting as Project Head. Those desiring to contact the unit may do so at its headquarters in the Board of Education Building, Twenty-first and Parkway, Philadelphia. The Writers Project expects that the long awaited Pennsylvania Guide may be made available in the near future and plans are underway for an ambitious program of publications which will be forthcoming within the next several months. The reorganization has placed the project upon a very sound foundation and the possibility of its cooperation with historical agencies throughout the state, under competent supervision and producing worthwhile contributions to the popular knowledge of Pennsylvania, is encouraging.