NEWS AND COMMENT

By S. K. Stevens
Historian, Pennsylvania Historical Commission

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Since the complete program for the annual meeting at Gettysburg will undoubtedly be in the hands of members by the time of the publication of this issue, it is hardly necessary to review it in this column. Each year the meetings of the Association have been attended by more and more persons interested in Pennsylvania's history. During the past few years an increasing number of local historians associated with the local societies of the region in which the meeting is held have taken part in the gathering. Since the central Pennsylvania section surrounding Gettysburg has a number of very active historical societies there is the prospect that there will be even larger numbers present at the 1941 meeting. There was a time perhaps when the lay historians were inclined to look upon the Association as a revolt against the historical societies and as dominated by college professors. Happily, this point of view has passed. The tasks confronting Pennsylvania history are so formidable that the cooperation of all groups is needed in their solution. May more historical society members come to appreciate the importance of the Association and attend its meetings. The Association in turn can value these contacts and provide inspiration and guidance for the local historians.

At long last the projected Pennsylvania Bibliography seems near realization as a result of the cooperation of three different agencies. The Association has been able to secure a grant of $1,500 from the American Philosophical Society to employ Dr. Robert Brunhouse to supervise and edit the proposed volume. The Pennsylvania Historical Commission has agreed to publish the finished work. Dr. Brunhouse is an excellent selection as editor and will find time to undertake the task aside from the duties of his new teaching position at Elizabethtown College. The preliminary work already undertaken by Dr. Bining and his committee will be available to him and should facilitate the prog
ress of the publication. The project provides a fine example of the possibilities for further cooperative ventures along the same line. With subsidies for worthwhile projects forthcoming in the form of funds from sources such as the Philosophical Society, and the Historical Commission providing encouragement through publication arrangements there are many possibilities for further utilization of the same plan. The Publications Committee is to be congratulated upon this achievement and may we hope that its efforts will not cease so far as surveying the field for similar ventures is concerned.

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

The Lackawanna County Historical Society distinguished itself in connection with the recently completed celebration of the Scranton Centennial late in July. Leaders of the society had much to do with arranging for the observance and carrying it to a successful conclusion. By means of its special exhibits at 138 Wyoming Avenue in Scranton, the society estimates that no less than 5,000 persons were given glimpses of the history of the city and county. An equal number visited the collections at the Everhart Museum during the centennial and the preceding weeks as a result of increased interest in matters historical. Mr. J. Curtis Platt, recently elected president, points out that an object lesson in the usefulness of the historical society has been afforded by the event and a drive for larger quarters soon may be launched.

The Historical Society of Perry County held its annual picnic at Crow's Ferry on the afternoon of August 21. A special invitation was issued to the teachers of the county and a goodly number were in attendance. Several historical addresses and a variety of entertainment were provided for the gathering. The society's energetic president, Major Holman of Carson Long Institute, expects during the coming year to place added emphasis upon the educational phases of its program.

Mr. George F. Hess of Beech Creek has been returned as president of the Clinton County Historical Society. His knowledge of county history as a dean among the newspaper correspondents of this section has made his leadership of great importance. Dur-
ing the past two years Mr. Hess has succeeded in arousing new historical interest in the county and the past year in particular was featured by a series of highly interesting programs which attracted the attention of hundreds of people. After several years in a dormant state, the society today has reached a point where it will challenge any of the small county societies of the state in terms of the value of its present activities.

Mr. Harry S. Barton and a large group of his fellow Columbia county historians spent July 19 visiting a neighboring historical society and points of historical interest along the way. The city of Towanda and the Bradford County Historical Society with its building and exhibits were the points of destination. Quite naturally, French Azilum was the principal stop en route. At Towanda a fine and inspirational talk on historical society activity was presented by Mr. Leo Wilt, head of the Bradford group who has done so much to stimulate historical work in this region. The Columbia county group is continuing the project to develop a photographic record of local historical sites. During the spring commencement season Mr. Barton was called upon to show his lantern slides at a number of local schools. As an educational feature, the development of a photographic record of local history seems especially valuable. Interested persons will do well to contact Mr. Barton at Bloomsburg if further information concerning his project is desired.

Old friends of Mr. Bruce Hunt will be interested to know that with the help of Miss Katherine Bennet and other Williamsporters, the recently opened museum and headquarters of the Lycoming County Historical Society are becoming more and more popular with the public. Through his connection with the Williamsport Sun, Mr. Hunt has been providing publicity through photographs and articles bearing upon special features of the society collection. The museum is well organized and avoids the most common criticism leveled at a local museum—the collection of miscellaneous materials without regard to value or arrangement.

Dr. Elsie Murray and the Tioga Point Museum were responsible for the dedication on June 14 of a suitable tablet locating the site of the famous old Athens Academy attended by Stephen Foster.
It was while here that Foster wrote the "Tioga Waltz," his first composition. The Historical Commission was represented by Mr. Donald H. Kent, assistant state historian. Mr. Fletcher Hodges, Jr., curator of the Foster Memorial in Pittsburgh, was the principal speaker. The project was the result of some months of planning and effort upon the part of Dr. Murray to provide a suitable Foster memorial at Athens. It calls to mind that there is a strange neglect in Pennsylvania of the suitable recognition of its great men. Numerous persons figuring prominently in the national scene were born in the state, spent some significant portion of their lives here or are buried here without suitable recognition of the facts connected with their Pennsylvania associations. We need more attention to the marking of such points. David Wilmot and Galusha Grow, sometimes called the "father of the Homestead Act," are other notables associated with northeastern Pennsylvania who are often forgotten. The Commission office would be glad to receive information concerning the birthplace, burial ground or significant buildings and locations connected with important but forgotten individuals.

On the same day a patriotic and historical observance in Lebanon county centered about the marking of Fort Zeller near Newmanstown. Constructed in 1732, the fort is probably the oldest outpost of defense against the Indians on the Pennsylvania frontier still standing intact. Members of the Zeller Family Association took the lead in arranging for the marker honoring Heinrich Zeller, builder of the fortification, which served for decades as the principal point of refuge and protection for the white settlers of the Tulpehocken area. Representatives of the historical societies of Berks and Lebanon counties were present.

Members and friends of the Mifflin County Historical Society on August 21 devoted the afternoon to a tour of old homes in the county distinctive architecturally and historically. The Rev. Lef- ferd M. A. Haughwout of Staten Island, and a society member well-known for his interest in early American architecture, was the guide for the group. This calls attention to a variation of the usual historical tour which is worth attention upon the part of others. There are few communities in the state which do not possess fine old homes often too little recognized. Americans are becoming more and more conscious of what might be termed his-
toric architecture and the importance of the preservation of fine old buildings simply because of their age and the fact that they typify the finest traditions of building a century or more ago. These buildings do not necessarily need to have been associated with stirring historic events or personages to possess interest. Their significance stems from the very fact that they typify the life and traditions of an earlier age. Local historical societies might, with profit to themselves and the preservation of the historical heritage of the state, pay more attention to this problem. There are many fine old Pennsylvania buildings certified by the Historic Buildings Survey of the Department of Interior. The possibility of some simple plaque or marker for such buildings might be considered as part of a marker program. Even since the completion of the Survey several buildings have been destroyed. More attention should be directed to their preservation. Historical societies are the natural agencies to lead in calling attention to their existence and assuring their protection.

The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania held a meeting the evening of July 14 in Synod Hall, 125 North Craig Street, Pittsburgh. Mr. F. W. Fries, Jr., presented a significant discussion of "The Layman's Part in Compiling Diocesan History." The society is planning a vigorous campaign designed to interest the layman in contributing to the preservation of Catholic history in this area. Other religious historical organizations might well copy this procedure.

Members of the Wayne County Historical Society met for their annual meeting at Honesdale on June 11 with Mr. A. H. Howell presiding. The society is working on a project in coöperation with the Honesdale Borough Council to provide a suitable building to house the model of the famous "Stourbridge Lion" and the Delaware and Hudson railway coach "Eclipse." Both are significant monuments in transportation history. The rooms of the society were kept open during the summer months from nine to five by special arrangement. Hundreds of visitors were noted as this section attracts many summer tourists and vacationers to the Pocono resorts. The society has been able to render a valuable service by making its collections available for view and furnishing information on the historical attractions of the region. Officials
of the society are to be congratulated upon this fine recognition of the possibilities of public service.

Another society deserving of commendation on the same score is the Blair county organization which arranged to have the Baker Mansion on the outskirts of Altoona open during the entire week of the state convention of the American Legion at that city in August. Special publicity called the attention of convention visitors to the location and points of interest at the mansion. As a result, hundreds of persons were guests of the society during the week. Attention was called to the fact that the veterans organizations of Altoona and Blair county had contributed several hundred dollars to the purchase of the mansion as a permanent historical society headquarters. One room of the building will be dedicated to the memory of the veterans of the county. This action of the Blair countians is worthy of high praise and emphasizes the opportunities for other societies to call attention to their contributions to patriotic citizenship which deserve the support of the American Legion.

Mr. Asher J. Odenwelder, curator of the Northampton County Historical Society, announces that it has acquired a copy of The Farmer's and Mechanic's Pocket Assistant issued in 1819 at Easton. It has also secured a copy of the first issue of the Spirit of Pennsylvania published at Easton beginning with the issue of November 10, 1815. The society has received several similar documentary and museum pieces from the estate of Ernest W. Shnyder.

The summer meeting of the Monroe County Historical Society was held at Buck Hill Falls Inn, July 15, with a continuing meeting the following Sunday, July 20, at Shawnee Presbyterian Church. The two meetings commemorated the two hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Dutch Reformed Church at Shawnee-on-Delaware. The group later affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. An address on “Barrett Township” was delivered at Buck Hill Falls by John F. Henry. The Sunday service included addresses dealing with the religious history of the region.

Tioga county historians commemorated on July 4 and 5 the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Liberty, probably the oldest permanent settlement in the county. Plans
for the event were developed under direction of the Tioga County Historical Society and its president Harry E. Bodine. The society was in charge of the July 4 program featuring an address by Dr. Lester K. Ade on “Liberty and its Historic Background.” The hamlet was founded as an outpost in the building of the famous Williamson Road. The Tioga group is following out its plan for meetings held throughout the county and has worked out a schedule for the coming season which will provide for a meeting in each of the principal towns of the county. This is a worthwhile experiment which should be followed with interest by other societies that seek to avoid becoming a “county seat” organization.

On August 20, some two hundred members and friends of the McKean, Cameron and Tioga and Potter county societies were present at a joint meeting sponsored by the latter organization at Coudersport. The spacious quarters of the well-known Scottish Rite Cathedral were the scene for the meeting which has become an annual affair for the societies of the northern tier of counties. Following a typical Potter County style chicken dinner, Mr. Merle H. Deardorff of Warren, whose attendance really represented a fifth county of the region, lectured on “Cornplanter and His Descendants,” showing motion picture films of the adoption ceremony of Governor James. The Commission historian, Mr. Stevens, was present and spoke briefly in a somewhat personal vein as a native of Potter county. These regional meetings are a fine thing and more of them should be held to bind together the interests of the county and local societies in the several regional areas of the state. On April 28, 1941 the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania will be host to all the societies in its area. Are there not other societies which would be willing to sponsor similar gatherings during the coming year? We would like to hear from some.

The regular summer pilgrimage of the Lehigh County Historical Society was held in July and was devoted to a visit to the Landis Valley Museum in nearby Lancaster county. Information concerning this enterprise has appeared here in recent issues and there is no need to re-emphasize its importance. Thousands of visitors have come from all parts of the country during the past months. Two buildings of the new museum are completed and
full of interesting material. Every historical society within driving distance should plan a pilgrimage there as soon as convenient.

Adams county historians to the number of fifty staged a tour of points of local interest in July visiting Christ Episcopal Church at York Springs, built in 1753, and Huntingdon Friends Meeting House in the same region. The Sulphur Springs, once famous resort, were visited as well as "Plainfield," the William Wright estate at York Springs and an important station on the Underground Railroad. August 5 the Adams group led by their president, Dr. Frederick Tilberg, joined with the York County Historical Society in a trip to Conewago Chapel and points of importance in that area. The September 8 meeting of the Adams County Historical Society was held at the Court House in Gettysburg, opening the fall season. Both societies are cooperating in planning for the Association meeting at Gettysburg.

The Dauphin County Historical Society has completed the task of moving its collections to the historic John Harris Mansion on lower Front Street in Harrisburg. A formal celebration and opening program was held on September 22.

Sullivan county may be one of the least populous counties of the state, but there is none which can surpass the determination of its historians. Attention has been called from time to time in this column to the project of Mr. Meylert and his associates to build a new headquarters at LaPorte. A drive of about three years standing has accumulated the necessary funds to sponsor a WPA project for the building and actual ground breaking is expected in the near future. We cannot speak too strongly in commendation of the energy and drive of these historically minded residents of Sullivan county who have worked for the success of this project. May all those representatives of historical societies who have been bemoaning the lack of suitable headquarters be inspired to "go and do likewise."

THE PENNSYLVANIA FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

The joint committee headed by Miss Frances Dorrance and representing the Pennsylvania Library Association, the Federa-
tion and the Historical Association set up for a cooperative study of the archival and public records problems of the state has begun to function. Members have been provided with the stimulating analysis of the condition and problems of the so-called State Archives presented in a recent issue of Pennsylvania History by Dr. Braderman and Mr. Levin. The July article by Marvin Schlegel dealing with the printed Archives has also been placed in their hands, together with copies of the public records laws of Pennsylvania. These should provide the members with an opportunity to study and analyze individually the present condition of Pennsylvania’s records and the laws pertaining to their care and preservation. Undoubtedly it will be found that some solutions to present problems will be found in the proper education of officials in the terms of existing laws and a stricter attention to their application. In this regard the full cooperation of the State Librarian, Mr. Keator, and the State Archivist, Colonel Shoemaker, have been pledged. There are many matters, however, which will require study and attention before much can be done.

The Historical Commission is mandated by law to cooperate in all matters pertaining to state archival problems and Dr. Nichols has pledged that this agency will assist wherever possible. The next step most certainly will be a study of conditions in other states notable for the progressive handling of public records. Suggestions as to ways and means by which Pennsylvania may profitably copy their practices will be forthcoming. The committee will not work any miracles in a year or more, but it is a concerted effort of three powerful groups cooperating with the state agencies concerned to study and improve upon past practice in Pennsylvania. Several conferences of committee members will be held during forthcoming meetings of cooperating associations.

The Federation program to cooperate with the P. S. E. A. in forwarding the development of a state-wide program for the organization of local history clubs in the secondary schools has progressed during the summer under direction of the secretary, Mr. Stevens, and Mr. J. Ira Kreider of Abington, who are acting as co-chairmen of the committee to promote the effort. A state-wide committee of key teachers in the social studies field has been organized and considerable exchange of ideas and information has already been effected by correspondence. A meeting of the committee in Harrisburg has been planned. It has
been suggested that the movement may have progressed far enough to make possible a joint meeting of school history clubs with the Federation in April, 1942. The Texas Historical Association has experimented successfully with a similar scheme in that state and the well-known Bay State League of the historical societies of Massachusetts is considering adopting such a program. Mr. Leonard Brockman of the Hershey school system, well-known as a leader in social studies activities, is compiling a manual on the organization and conduct of such clubs which has been made available in a tentative edition for distribution, use and criticism under the auspices of the Historical Commission cooperating in the project.

Reports from the societies which constitute the foundation for the annual *Year Book* are nearly all in the hands of the editor and it is expected that the 1941 edition will be available for distribution shortly.

While it did not sponsor an extensive legislative program, the Legislative Committee of the Federation headed by Mr. Charles Young of New Castle established a fine precedent for future activity and will be continued as a standing committee. Two bills introduced under its auspices were passed and signed. One of them eases the requirements for county aid to the county historical societies and another encourages assistance from third class cities for historical organizations. A meeting in the near future of key people interested in Pennsylvania historical problems with a view to formulating a more comprehensive legislative program for the next biennium has been planned.

**OF MEN AND MANY THINGS**

The recently organized American Association for State and Local History is doing very well for its first year. At a June meeting of the Council held in Washington plans were laid for an extensive program of activities. The first issue of *The State and Local History News*, which will be a regular feature, has been published. Members have received gratis several publications of interest to historians made available by the National Park Service. Progress in compiling the new edition of the *Handbook of Historical Societies* is reported by the editor, Mr.
Stevens, and it will be completed early in 1942. Dr. Edward Alexander, newly appointed Superintendent of the Wisconsin Historical Society, has written and recently published a bulletin on What Should Our Historical Society Do? which is full of stimulating ideas. Pennsylvania stands second among the states in membership in the new Association. Inquiries regarding membership, activities or program should be addressed to the secretary, Dr. David C. Duniway, Box 608, Washington, D. C.

The first annual meeting of the organization was held in cooperation with the Society of American Archivists at Hartford, Connecticut, October 8. A session under its auspices has been planned for the American Historical Association meeting at Chicago in December and will take the form of a panel discussion of problems of increasing historical society membership.

There is a gratifying increase in the use of Pennsylvania history in the schools observable during the last year. Particularly encouraging is the tendency of historical societies to cooperate with the schools in aiding such an instructional program. The encouragement of this practice by the Historical Commission for the past four years no doubt has had some influence. The Pennsylvania Historical Association has also contributed through the many helpful and stimulating articles published in the Public School Teachers Department of Pennsylvania History. It is expected that the club program mentioned earlier as a joint project of the Federation of the P. S. E. A. will give further impetus to this trend. A large number of schools used local history as a commencement theme last spring. An increased use of historical society museums by schools is noticeable and the Berks county program has been distinctive in this connection. At Towanda, Lewistown and other points, newspaper columns on local history sponsored by historical societies have been of great assistance in promoting school interest. An interesting project was completed recently at the Lewistown High School in cooperation with the historical society. Students in the vocational department built a scale model of Fort Granville, British fort near present Lewistown, which was destroyed by French and Indian raiders.

In a recent article in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, Mr. Gregg L. Neel, member of the Historical Commission and past president
of the Pennsylvania Real Estate Association, calls attention to
the important effects of the development of historical shrines as
an aid to realty values. Mr. Neel emphasized the fact that the
resulting increase in tourist travel in areas where these properties
are located produces increased business opportunities, which in
turn are reflected in improved real estate values.

During the past session of the General Assembly an increased
number of bills were introduced providing for state maintenance
of historic areas. Most of them met with a generally favorable
reception from the Assembly but a majority were vetoed by the
Governor who wisely decided that the expenses of operation and
maintenance were in most cases such as to constitute too great
a drain upon the state’s finances at the present time. Among
those approved were bills authorizing acquisition of Pottsgrove
at Pottstown and the Robert Fulton home in southern Lancaster
county. Both will be administered by the Historical Commission.

The past summer has been notable for the increase in the num-
ber of visitors to the various Commission properties. Thousands
of citizens of the state and other thousands from outside Pennsyl-
vanian have signed the guest registers at Fort Augusta, Old Econ-
omy, Pennsbury Manor and other places under jurisdiction of
the Commission. As rapidly as possible leaflets are being pre-
pared for distribution. Sketches of the history of Old Economy,
Fort Augusta and Pennsbury are available and are suitable for
school use as well as the general public.

Dr. Karl Arndt of Louisiana State University is spending a
half-year leave of absence at Old Economy undertaking research
in the voluminous documentary record of the Harmony Society
located there. Dr. Arndt has just received a grant from the Social
Science Research Council to aid his study and the Commission
expects to publish his completed history of the Harmony Society.
While its European backgrounds will be properly evaluated, to-
gether with the migrations of the Harmonites, chief emphasis will
be placed upon the colony at Old Economy, present Ambridge.
The Commission is anxious to have similar studies undertaken
in connection with other properties such as Cornwall Furnace
and Ephrata.
**Wilderness Chronicles of Northwestern Pennsylvania** made available in July marks the beginning of a parade of publications from the Commission. *Travels in New France* by J.C.B. was the second. This engaging memoir of a French soldier in the French and Indian War translated and published in its entirety for the first time in English promises to become a Pennsylvania *Anthony Adverse*. Both books were the product of the WPA Frontier Forts and Trails Survey now merged with the Records Survey in the Pennsylvania Historical Survey. *Beginnings of the Pennsylvania Petroleum Industry—Sources and Bibliography* by Dr. Paul Giddens is a third volume to be published. Another book will be *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, by Dr. Robert Brunhouse, a scholarly study of the political development of the state from its first Constitution to that of 1790.

Despite sharp cuts in the number of workers and loss of personnel due to re-employment, the WPA Pennsylvania Historical Survey under Commission sponsorship continues to be productive. Key offices and research centers are still maintained at Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Erie. Work on the *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet* continues at the latter point and a new production schedule will hasten the completion of the series. It is possible that they may be made available in a new book size format. This office is also completing *Northwestern Pennsylvania Under Three Flags*, a volume detailing the dramatic history of the region under French, British and American rule to about 1820. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh offices are concentrating upon completing the county inventory series. Washington, Blair and Adams counties have been made available and Bradford, Cambria, Crawford, Delaware, Lackawanna, Schuylkill, Warren and Lawrence are either in press or completed ready for publication.

The Survey has completed the key guide to the county archives of Pennsylvania and it is in press under Commission auspices. The *Pennsylvania Newspaper Bibliography—Philadelphia* has been completed and is in press for the Commission, while work on the remaining Pennsylvania list is nearly finished. A *Guide to the Pennsylvania Archives* in the State Library has been completed and publication is expected shortly. A revision of the *Guide to Manuscript Depositories in Pennsylvania* is in produc-
tion. The recently published *Guide to Manuscript Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* has been favorably received and is a major aid to Pennsylvania historical research.

A large number of Pennsylvania communities and cities have celebrated anniversaries this summer. This is an interesting token of the increasing age of the state. Inevitably the commemoration of the centennial of a community entails, more or less, a special edition of the local newspaper devoted to historical backgrounds. Usually there is some sort of community pageant. This is all to the good so far as creating historically-minded citizens is concerned. Historical societies usually have an opportunity to demonstrate their usefulness and, if never before, the local historians are gaining a place in the sun. In view of the increased use of historical pageantry, the Commission expects to have available shortly a pageant manual prepared by Mrs. Nora Kearns of Greenville, well-known for the organization and conduct of these enterprises in the western part of the state. At the University of Pittsburgh history conference this summer Mrs. Kearns' paper on "The Community Historical Pageant as a Contribution to National Defense" attracted much favorable comment.

The Historical Commission is coöperating closely with the State Council of Defense in utilizing Pennsylvania history as a means of encouraging better citizenship and a higher regard for our American institutions. The outstanding importance of Pennsylvania in the development of our American democracy will be given special emphasis. Publications of the Commission are being distributed to the military posts in the state and have won commendation from General Edward Martin and others. Special activities of a defense nature have been planned and await allocation of funds and personnel for fruition.