NEWS AND COMMENT

BY DONALD H. KENT
Associate State Historian, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

ASSOCIATION NEWS

NEWS AND COMMENT will be edited as of this issue by Donald H. Kent, associate state historian, with the exception of the section on Association affairs. This will continue to be written by the state historian and present president of the Association. Mr. Kent will have available all of the news sources formerly utilized for this section. A new approach to this division of the quarterly should result from this arrangement. It is difficult for anyone to write such a news section year after year without becoming somewhat repetitious in terms of ideas and approach to the news. We are sure that the NEWS AND COMMENT for the future will be more stimulating and valuable than in the past.

Any extended report on the meeting at Erie will be left to the capable pen of the secretary in another portion of the magazine. As one of those who pressed vigorously for a meeting in northwestern Pennsylvania, I must say that I am more than pleased at the result. A majority of those from the eastern part of the state who customarily attended the annual meeting were present at Erie. Many persons were there from the western part of the state who have not been with us on previous occasions. As a state-wide Association, we are obligated to reach all sections of Pennsylvania. Furthermore, such contacts cannot help but benefit the cause in terms of membership and in interest in what the Association is doing. All of us owe a hearty vote of thanks to the Erie County Historical Society and to Gannon College for acting so capably as hosts. We are pleased also that so many Erieites found time to attend our sessions.

Plans for the 1949 meeting already are being formulated. The place for the meeting, while not officially approved by the council as a matter of routine, will be at historic Carlisle. Dickinson College and the Hamilton Library and Historical Association, actually
a Cumberland County historical society, will act as hosts and take care of local arrangements. The exact date will be determined a little later but it will certainly be in October. Carlisle is one of Pennsylvania’s most historic towns and retains much of its old-time flavor as a center for great events and the home of great men. Dickinson College is likewise one of the commonwealth’s most historic institutions of higher learning. The visit to Carlisle will be looked forward to and should be attended by a large part of our membership.

The council of your Association reviewed much business at Erie. Plans are being made for a vigorous membership drive. We need more members in order to place the Association on a sound footing financially and in terms of long range development of our plans. The pamphlet series projected under the committee headed so capably by Dr. Homer T. Rosenberger was revealed by Dr. Fortenbaugh to be a genuine success. It will be continued and suggestions for its development and improvement will be welcomed.

S. K. S.

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Many historical societies held special meetings or undertook special activities, in celebration of Pennsylvania Week, September 26-October 2. The Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society held open house at its headquarters on September 30, and had 125 visitors. Its librarian, William Carling, gave three talks, to the Girl Scouts Teachers’ Association, the Easton Newcomers’ Club, and the Riegelsville Kiwanis Club, all on topics associated with Pennsylvania Week; and its secretary, Richard Shelling, gave the Pennsylvania history quiz to all seniors at the Easton High School.

The Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County assembled an interesting Pennsylvania Week exhibit which was displayed in a local store window. This exhibit included one of the first deeds for a lot in Indiana, dated 1805, the oldest printed map of the county, the passport and naturalization certificate of an early German settler, and many other interesting items. The society also prepared several articles on Pennsylvania and local history for the county newspapers. One of these articles dealt
with Fergus Moorhead and James Kelly, pioneer settlers of the county, and ancestors of film star James Stewart, a native of Indiana. Charles H. Russell, Sr., was chairman of the Pennsylvania Week Committee for the society.

The Wayne County Historical Society, on October 2, featured a lantern-slide talk by Dr. Louis Yerkes, of Allentown, on the history of the Delaware and Hudson Canal, with a display of pictures and objects relating to the canal. The Historical Society of Frankford invited the public to visit its museum and library during Pennsylvania Week, and held an outing at Lorimer Park. Leo J. Wilt, President of the Bradford County Historical Society, wrote a daily article for the Towanda Daily Review during Pennsylvania Week. The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania arranged a special exhibit of more than eight hundred guns from the French and Indian War and the Revolution, with the cooperation of the Old Westmoreland Rifles and the Pennsylvania Gun Collectors Association. More than five hundred persons visited the exhibit on October 2 and 3.

The Mifflin County Historical Society had a full schedule of activities for Pennsylvania Week, including four “open house” evenings which were well attended. On September 27, the society combined the observance of Pennsylvania Week and National Newspaper Week by presenting “Mifflin County Newspapers, 1796-1948,” an illustrated talk by J. Martin Stroup and Richard K. Ruble. On September 29, nearly four hundred persons, including many high school students, participated in the society’s tour to five points of historical interest in the Kishacoquillas Valley. The program of the November 22 meeting included a paper on “Thomas Mifflin, Soldier, Statesman, Governor,” by Horace J. Culbertson, and an illustrated talk on the “Genealogy of Mifflin County Townships,” by J. Martin Stroup. It is evident that the Mifflin society fully appreciates the value of visual aids in presenting historical information.

An antiques show sponsored by the Lehigh County Historical Society was a feature of Pennsylvania Week in Allentown. Many rare and interesting items were shown by the nearly twenty exhibitors in the Sky Terrace of the Hotel Traylor. The society’s
booth displayed its annual publications, dating from 1908, and books by Lehigh County authors.

Pilgrimages to points of historical interest continued to be featured by historical societies during the fall, a season when the Pennsylvania countryside is especially colorful.

On October 9, seventy-five members of the Historical Society of Montgomery County visited historic Germantown, stopping at the Germantown Church of the Brethren and at "Upsala" and "Cliveden," two of the famous Germantown mansions, and visiting "Far Country," the home of Charles Francis Jenkins, who helped to plan the tour. Stops were also made at "Wyck," "Stenton," and "Gumblethorpe," other historic Germantown houses, and the pilgrimage ended with a visit to the Germantown Historical Society. The Montgomery County society reports a current membership of 551. The current volume of its Bulletin appeared in October.

The Northampton County Historical Society visited Nazareth and its early Moravian buildings on October 16. After this pilgrimage, there was a dinner meeting, addressed by John Charles Pohl, Jr., on the subject, "David Brainerd at the Forks of the Delaware."

The annual pilgrimage of the Historical Society of Berks County, on October 9, visited historical sites in the valley of Tulpehocken Creek. Informal talks by Daniel K. Hoch, Dr. Arthur D. Graeff, curator of the society, and George M. Jones, explained the history of the various frontier forts, taverns, and homes whose sites were visited.

On October 11, the Clinton County Historical Society was addressed by Assemblyman D. Raymond Sollenberger of Williamsburg, Blair County, on the historical traditions of Pennsylvania as a guide toward its future. Announcement was made of several significant gifts to the society's museum.

On October 16, Elsie Singmaster Lewars addressed the Northumberland County Historical Society, Sunbury, on the subject
of the battle of Gettysburg. The meeting in the Sixth Ward school building was attended by more than two hundred members and guests of the society.

The October 19 meeting of the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, was addressed by Dr. Francis Harvey Green, whose subject was “A Beautiful Friendship Revealed,” based on the society’s collection of letters from Bayard Taylor to Richard Henry and Elizabeth Barstow Stoddard. A talk by Gilbert Mather on the unusual topic, “Fox Hunting in Chester County,” was the feature of the meeting on November 16.

The Pennsylvania German Society, holding its fifty-eighth annual meeting at Franklin and Marshall College on October 16, announced plans to build a $400,000 library on the college campus. This building will provide space for an extensive collection of books and historical data on the Pennsylvania Germans. Dr. Harvey Bassler, of Myerstown, has offered his fine collection of Pennsylvania German books, manuscripts and paintings to the society. The society awarded its citation of honor to Dr. Frank D. Fackenthal, provost of Columbia University and, until recently, its acting president.

The annual dinner meeting of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County was held at the Necho Allen Hotel in Pottsville on October 19. Dr. Henry Pleasants, Jr., of West Chester, related the exploits of the 48th Regiment in the Civil War and the famous episode of the “crater” at Petersburg, Virginia, where Pottsville miners in this regiment sank a shaft under the fortifications to blow them up.

Ann Hark, well-known author of works on the Pennsylvania Dutch, addressed the Lycoming Historical Society on October 21. Her talk, “Gaudy but Neat,” traced through the folk art of the Pennsylvania Germans a picture of their important contribution to American culture. William Maclay, pioneer, statesman, senator in the first congress, was the subject of an address by Rev. L. G. Shannon at the November 18 meeting of the society. The society states that its meetings are “planned to be brief, interesting and
ininformative”—a policy which makes for good attendance at meetings.

The Lancaster County Historical Society announces an interesting program for its fall and winter meetings. On October 1, Dr. Horace R. Barnes related the history of the gas and electric industries of the county, and on November 5, Dr. Robert Fortenbaugh reported on his “Study of the Versions of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.” The December 3 meeting heard a paper by Wilmer J. Eshleman on “The River Brethren Division,” and M. Luther Heisey addressed the January 7 meeting on the famous Lancaster markets.

The Delaware County Historical Society held its annual meeting on November 16. Dr. Nathan V. Plafker, a member of the society, presented a paper on the “Religious History of Early Delaware County.”

The program of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania at its meeting of November 23, dealt with three topics very much in the public mind at the time. Sumner B. Ely, Superintendent of the City Bureau of Smoke Prevention, spoke on important events in the history of smoke control, and Frank C. Harper, Pittsburgh historian and editor, discussed the Pennsylvania Turnpike and its forebears. A special exhibit of medals, ribbons, buttons, glassware and other items relating to presidential campaigns from 1828 to the present was displayed for the occasion by Henry G. Wasson, Jr., its owner, who gave an interesting account of the collection and its origin.

The Hamilton Library and Historical Association, Carlisle, on November 18, heard the Hamilton prize essays, “A Pillar of Dickinson College,” by Charles J. Herber, and “The Barony of Pine Grove,” by Hannah B. Ritter. The October issue of the Hamilton Library Notes published several servants’ indentures from the library’s collections, and included an interesting article on places and persons in early Carlisle to which Hervey Allen alludes in his latest novel, Toward the Morning.

The York County Historical Society added a car to the Freedom
Train during its visit to York, to display documents and pictures relating to the history of the county. The list of items, ranging from a 1681 deed of William Penn to a photograph of Codorus Forge, from a letter book of the county commissioners, 1780, to Confederate General Early’s proclamation to the people of York, 1863, is indicative of the richness of York County history, and of the care which the society has taken to preserve its relics.

Special mention is due the Radnor Historical Society, of Wayne, Delaware County, which was incorporated on April 30, 1948, and is therefore in all probability the youngest historical society in Pennsylvania. Mr. Francis James Dallett, Jr., is its secretary.

According to the Ninety-sixth Annual Report of the Presbyterian Historical Society, the 250th anniversary of the beginnings of Presbyterianism in Philadelphia will be celebrated this fall. The society’s collection of church records and of correspondence relating to church activities makes available a rich store of material from which to elicit its significant background in American history.

The 1948-49 program of the Bradford County Historical Society opened on October 29, when Mrs. L. J. Keagle, of Canton, spoke on “The Minnequa Springs.” On November 20, the speaker was Dr. Harold W. Thompson, of Cornell University, whose topic was “Folklore.” This talk was illustrated with some of the folk songs of Frank Warner, Carl Sandburg, and Burl Ives, and a male quartet sang several early lumbering songs. The December meeting will hear L. E. Wilt, president of the society, on early Connecticut land troubles. The society’s membership campaign is still moving along, and the total membership now numbers 426. Its goal is 500 members by the end of the year.

The Snyder County Historical Society maintains its usual active program, with regular meetings. A recent meeting was devoted to a quiz, with questions on county history. The society’s regular Bulletin has been published, and Dr. George F. Dunkelberger’s Story of Snyder County is now in press.

The annual dinner and business meeting of the Monroe County Historical Society will be held in Stroudsburg on January 12. Dr.
Charles S. Flagler will speak on the “History of Medicine in Monroe County.”

The prehistoric occupation of the Susquehanna Valley as revealed by archaeological work of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission was discussed by John Witthoff, anthropologist of the commission, at the November 18 meeting of the Keystoneans, Harrisburg’s unique historical dinner club. At the December meeting, Norman B. Wilkinson, assistant state historian, spoke on the Swedish and Dutch beginnings of Pennsylvania.

The Old York Road Historical Society held its fall meeting on November 3. The program included “Early Landowners in Abington Township,” a paper prepared before his death by Charles Harper Smith, as well as “Headquarters House,” by Russell B. Graves, and “Presidents amongst Us,” by Horace M. Lippincott. The 1948 issue of the society’s Bulletin is a handsome publication, with a biographical sketch of Thomas Holme, by Frederick S. Crispin, and an article on the historical background of Lorimer Park in Montgomery County, by Edward Morrow.

OF MEN AND MANY THINGS

The first issue of The Autograph Collectors’ Journal, magazine of the newly formed National Society of Autograph Collectors, reveals the significance and utility of this organization to historical research. An article by Victor Hugo Paltsits, former Keeper of Manuscripts and Chief of the American History Division in the New York Public Library, dispenses of the authenticity of the purported Washington commission at the Washington Headquarters, Morristown, New Jersey. Colton Storm, of the William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, discusses “The Care and Feeding of a Manuscript Collection,” and Otto Eisenschiml reports on “An Intriguing Letter” from Edwards Pierrepont to Governor Horatio Seymour of New York. Dr. Joseph H. Fields, president of the society, disentangles the “Four Gunning Bedfords,” who have puzzled collectors and historians alike. Other interesting articles, news and notes, show the way in which this
organization and its bulletin can be of service to historians in locating the rich materials in the hands of American collectors.

The above viewpoint was also expressed at the joint annual meeting of the American Association for State and Local History and the Society of American Archivists, held in Raleigh, North Carolina, on October 27-29. Colton Storm and Forest H. Sweet, a director of the National Society of Autograph Collectors, at one session discussed the common interests of collectors and historical depositories, and the mutual benefits to be gained by their co-operation. Among other sessions of the joint meeting, there was one devoted to the history and program of state archival agencies, in which Henry H. Eddy, archivist of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, reported on the background and development of the Pennsylvania public records agency and on its hopes and plans for the future. Dr. S. K. Stevens, state historian, and president of the American Association for State and Local History, addressed the annual dinner on "The Association's Eight Years and its Future." This organization was formed in December, 1940, as the successor to the more informal Conference of State and Local History, dating from 1904. The Association aims to co-ordinate the efforts of both institutions and individuals interested in state, provincial and local history, and to serve as a clearing house for information in this field.

The Fourth Annual Conference on Iroquois Research was held at Allegany State Park, Red House, New York, on October 8-10. Ethnologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists reported and discussed the findings in the Iroquois field during the past year, with especially interesting sessions on folk songs, dances, and linguistics. John Witthoft, anthropologist of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, reported on archaeological excavations and progress in Pennsylvania.

The appointment of Dr. Charles A. Ford as Editor-in-Chief of the Educational Department of the John C. Winston Company has been announced. Dr. Ford was formerly Dean of the Community College and Technology Institute at Temple University.
Masontown, Fayette County, celebrated its 150th anniversary during Pennsylvania Week, with a historical pageant, as well as by parades, sports events, and addresses by notable visitors.

Through the co-operation of the Canadian Library Association and of Robert M. Hamilton, chairman of its Microfilm Committee, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has received microfilms of the Pennsylvania materials selected last spring in the Public Archives of Canada. The library association is engaged in a project of microfilming early Canadian newspapers in Ottawa for the use of its member libraries, and made its photographic facilities available to the commission. The letters and documents thus brought on film to Harrisburg cover many aspects of the state’s history. The papers of Daniel Claus, British Indian agent, relate to many frontier developments, and include many items on Alexander McKee and General Arthur St. Clair, whose papers captured at the time of his defeat, form part of this collection. Selections from the Minutes of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs at Albany, New York, the volumes of the Monckton Papers pertaining to his command in Pennsylvania, the naturalization records in the colonies from 1740 to 1761, and numerous transcripts also are recorded on these microfilms.

The thirty-eighth annual fall meeting of the Westmoreland County Federation of Women’s Clubs in Greensburg, on November 4, devoted the entire evening session to a panel discussion of Bushy Run Battlefield Park and its development. C. Martin Bomberger, Jeannette newspaper publisher and chairman of the Bushy Run Battlefield Commission, presided over the panel. A sketch of the life and historical significance of Colonel Henry Bouquet was presented by Mrs. Autumn L. Leonard, editorial assistant, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; and James L. Kennedy, Greensburg attorney and historian, discussed events of historical significance in Westmoreland County. Other speakers on the panel who discussed practical aspects of the park’s development were James Hughes, associate county superintendent of schools, Hubert Snyder, director of recreation in Latrobe, and Wilmer Cain and V. M. Bearer, both of the State Department of Forests and Waters. This interesting program, which directed the
attention of an important county-wide organization to one of
Pennsylvania's most significant historical shrines, was arranged by
Mrs. D. Ray Murdock, chairman of the Federation's Bushy Run
Committee. At the conclusion of the discussion, Mrs. Howard E.
Bolton, president of the Westmoreland County Federation, sum-
marized the addresses, and a resolution was adopted, specifying
measures which should be taken for the further development of
Bushy Run Park, and backing the Park Commission's request for
funds.

The November issue of the Monthly Bulletin of the State De-
partment of Internal Affairs has, as usual, several articles of in-
terest to historians. Secretary of Internal Affairs William S.
Livengood, Jr., writes on "Making History Pay off in Dividends
for the Future," an article which originally appeared in the Har-
risburg Evening News. This details the services of the depart-
ment in the historical field, through the Land Office, and through
the compilation of statistics and other information on natural re-
sources and geology. The Bulletin also publishes the fifth install-
ment of John Elmer Reed's article on the Erie Extension Canal,
as well as the first of a series of articles by Robert C. Stephenson,
of the Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey, on "Topo-
graphic Maps: Their Character and Use."

The first Bulletin of the Landis Valley Museum, which was re-
cently published by the Landis Valley Museum Association, con-
tains the report of the curator, Henry K. Landis, for the year
1947. The present nine buildings hold more than a quarter of a
million antiques and over thirty-five thousand books, for the most
part relating to the culture, handicrafts and customs of the Penn-
sylvania Dutch. About sixty thousand pieces are on exhibition, in
the office building, gun house, transportation and farm sheds, and
the barn. The maintenance and operating expense in 1947 was
$3,754, including the salary of one man, and in that year there
were 11,025 visitors.