

The Castle Light

The Passaic County Historical Society, Lambert Castle, 3 Valley Road, Paterson, NJ 07503

(201)881-2761

A Message From The President...

Dear Members:

It gives me great pleasure to address you in this newsletter. Although the Passaic County Historical Society is currently experiencing some financial constraints, we remain a healthy, strong, and growing organization. As you know, Lambert Castle (which serves as the Society's headquarters) is undergoing some renovations. We look forward to returning to Lambert Castle sometime in 1997. In the meantime, our Spring Craft Show will begin on Friday, March 15, 1996 with a wine and cheese reception. The show will continue through March 31, 1996 in School No. 3 on Main Street, Little Falls, New Jersey.

On June 23, 1996, the Passaic County Historical Society will participate in Wayne Days which will be held at the Municipal Complex in Wayne, New Jersey. I look forward to seeing you there.

During the coming summer months, we are planning bus trips to various historic places including a trip to Longwood Gardens, the Smithsonian, Lyndhurst, and other places of interest.

I look forward to hearing from you and welcome your active participation in the Society. This year marks our 70th anniversary. If you would like to be more involved by contributing your time and talent(s), please call us at (201) 881-2761. This is your Society!

Cordially,

Anne R. Sia, President
Passaic County Historical Society

70th Anniversary Celebration Dance At The Dey Mansion!

In 1926 the newly founded Passaic County Historical Society took on its first, major project: to help protect and restore the famous Dey Mansion. That dream came true! Now the Society faces the great project of Castle restoration seventy years later. To celebrate both, and a major anniversary milestone too, PCHS will have a dance on Saturday, June 1st, on the front lawn of the Dey Mansion Museum from 6:00pm-9:00pm.

Music will be live and hot, with a 1920s theme from the days when PCHS was just a babe, as well as

swing favorites. Come in your best duds, or even costume. Either colonial or 1920s "Flapper" numbers are encouraged. There will be prizes awarded for the best outfit for each period. Wine and delicious hors d'oeuvres will fuel your version of the Charleston or Blackbottom.

The dance will be under an open tent, with the romantic, Eighteenth Century, brick mansion as a backdrop. Inside the museum will be an open house, with docents to explain the rich past of this national landmark. Some of George Washington's friends may drop by for a minuet.

The weather is at its sweetest moment of the year in June. But, if the June 1st night is not dry, there will be a rain date for the next week, on Saturday, June 8th. Mark your calendars and look for the invitation in the mail! It'll be the cat's pajamas and the bee's knees for sure!



Dey Mansion, Wayne

PCHS Annual Meeting, 1996

On Wednesday, April 17 the Society will have its annual member's meeting at 7:00pm. This year we will be meeting at the beautiful Hawthorne Public Library, on Lafayette Avenue. There will be light refreshments, and all members are urged to attend.

Along with the annual Society Trustee elections, the meeting's featured speaker will be Mr. Gordon Lewis of Stoneledge Conservation. Mr. Lewis will present a fascinating slide talk called "The Art Of Conservation". He should know, his firm is one of the largest and most successful of its kind in New Jersey. His program could not be more timely, either, since the Society must seek to restore its fine and decorative arts collections before the Castle reopens. Join us and learn how your own treasures might benefit from a conservator's professional skills, and the miracles of science they can work!

Society Shares Records With Rutgers

In 1995, the Society was given parts of the Midlantic Bank Collections for its permanent archives. Over the years, as banks absorbed other banks, many of Paterson and Passaic's oldest financial institutions have

disappeared under new names. The records of the Paterson Savings Institution and Passaic National Bank wound up with Midlantic.

Thanks to Midlantic's generous gift, through Vice President Charles Huha, PCHS has shared with Rutgers University Library these important documents. The Rutgers Library now houses the financial records of these banks and some Roswell Colt's papers. PCHS received the lion's share of photographs, prints, objects and art works in the collection.

A highlight from the collections are objects originally from the collection of the late Walter A. Lucas. He was a dedicated railroaddiana collector and the objects PCHS has received reflect our area's manufacturers such as the Rogers, Cooke, and Magor mills (locomotive plates, railroad equipment, etc.).

A ca. 1830s, hand tinted engraving is an especially important item in the group. It depicts Paterson's Congress (now Market) and Main Streets, with a view of the Paterson-Hudson Railroad station, Congress Hall and St. Paul's church. When the print was framed the owner included an original, 1836 ticket from the Railroad. Truly a treasure!

Another delightful bonus surprise was found when two, 19th Century portraits of important bank officials, Edo Mersellis and Edward Bell, turned out to have been painted by local artist Isabelle V. Hayward. These sensitive watercolors surpass, by far, the usual official portraits, and also represent the largest works now in Society collections by this well known artist.

The collection of Railroad items are now on view as part of PCHS' travel exhibition "On The Move: The Rise of Travel and Transportation in Passaic County", at Hawthorne Library through March. The photographic holdings are being archivally arranged and inventoried by our new intern, Ms. Cathy Grimshaw of Clifton.

The Society owes a debt of gratitude to our Trustee, Mr. Robert Masiello, for helping secure these wonderful items for the collections. Mr. Masiello has been involved with the Society for many years and has given his time unselfishly in many ways. This is only the latest fruit of his hard work!

Congress And Main, Paterson ca. 1830s



"On The Move" Still Moving

The Society's latest travel exhibition is now in its third venue, at Hawthorne Public Library, at least through March. "On The Move: The Rise of Transportation In Passaic County" charts the development of roads from the Minnisink indian trails of the 1600s to the Parkway today, the Morris Canal, the rise of the locomotive and bridge building industries of Paterson and ends in the air with the Curtis Wright Aeronautical Co. and Lindburgh's flight.

PCHS thanks the Hawthorne, Clifton and Wayne libraries for lending their space for this display. We look forward to creating other, similar, exhibitions that keep our collections active during the restoration period at the Castle. If you know of other places that might be interested in hosting our present, or future, exhibitions call the Society at (201) 881-2761. The exhibit is designed to be scalable and flexible to fit the facilities available in schools, libraries and other public institutions.

Colt, Sloat And The Great Paterson Stagecoach Race

This account was drawn from Trumbull's *History of Industrial Paterson*, 1880, with commentary added by PCHS curator, Andrew Shick

What Roswell Lyman Colt wanted, Colt got! As Paterson's wealthiest man, as Director, and virtual owner, of the Society for Useful Manufactures with all its valuable water and land rights, he was the power in the fledgling town. People did not question his orders, they followed them. No wonder he could comfortably demand something which had never been done before, just for his own convenience. Sometime before 1830, Colt would spark a great race, not of horse against horse on a race course. It was a race of horse and man against time.

Stagecoaches were still the basic mode of public "mass" transit before the arrival of the Paterson-Hudson Railroad's smoke belching locomotives in 1833. Despite their bone shaking bounce over unpaved "roadways" (for they were hardly more than well rutted trails) the coaches were the only thing, next to walking, if you did not own a horse.

The drivers of these contraptions had to be fairly young and robust to handle four horses at once. One such was Peter Sloat, a young man in his twenties and a noted "whip". He drove for the stable of Brom Van Blarcom in Paterson. According to Paterson historian Trumbull, Van Blarcom was a character in himself and "a leetle quick-tempered at times".

It was to Brom's stable that Roswell Colt went when he needed a special favor. He needed to get to the Hoboken Ferry, for crossing into New York, so he could catch a boat south to visit his wife in Baltimore. The

catch was he had to arrive at the ferry in under two hours, just time enough to make his connection. Today, by car, this is no problem at all (unless there is a jackknifed truck on Rt 3). But around 1829, going fifteen miles by a heavy carriage, loaded with eight people and trunks, over muddy roads, it was another matter. But what Roswell wants.....well.

It is here Trumbull quotes driver Sloat's own words, and like him we will let Peter tell of his moment of glory:

"When I came to the stables Mr. Van Blarcom said: 'Bring out the four grays.' Then I knew there was business to be done, for they were fine animals and speedy. When all was ready Van Blarcom said, 'Now I want you to make Hoboken ferry inside two hours. Don't spare the horses-do it.' 'All right, sir' said I, and I sung out 'All aboard,' and climbed up on the box, and when all was stowed drove slowly up the street, on a walk. Near where the First Presbyterian Church stands there was a great sand hill, so close to the road that the whiffletrees scraped it. I drove slowly around this and turning the curve gave the horses the word and on we went. When I drew up at Aquackanok the tavern-keeper came out and wanted to know what I meant by driving my team in that fashion. All the answer he got was an order to dash some water over their foaming fronts, sponge out their mouths, but not allow them to drink a drop. Then I drove on. At every stage it was the same; they wanted to know if I was trying to kill the horses, and several even talked of stopping me, but I pushed on. Arriving at the top of Weehawkin hill, I looked at my watch; either twenty-one or twenty-two minutes of the time was left. Then I touched up the leaders, spoke a word of cheer to the left wheeler [horse], who was drooping a little, and dashed on for the ferry. We got in sight of the boat just as it was about to move out from the slip. I beckoned to the captain to stop, and he held the boat. It lacked several minutes of the two hours, and by catching that boat my passengers were landed in New York within the two hours, and a gladder man you never seen than Mr. Colt...."

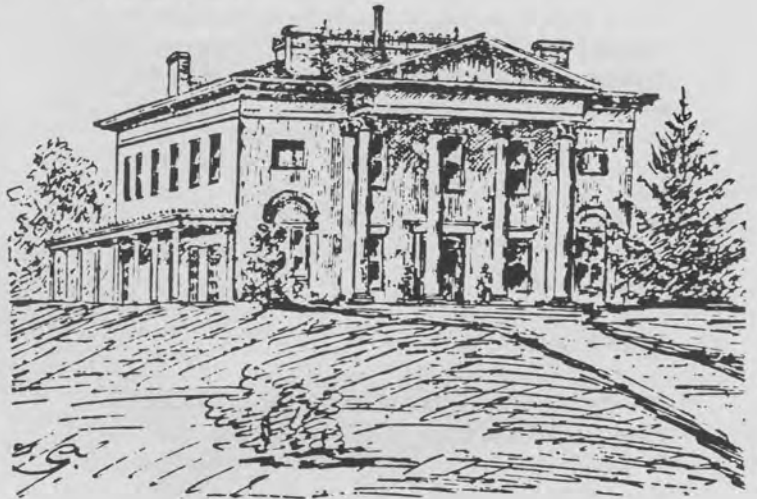
According to Sloat, he was rewarded by Colt with a dollar, and two other passengers each gave him fifty cents. Not bad in 1829! Mr. Van Blarcom also awarded his "whip" with a good dinner, a dollar, two days off and his choice of a riding horse to borrow from the stable.

But, why did Colt wait until the last moment before embarking for New York? He must have known if he missed the boat to Baltimore he would have had to wait another week for the next one. What was his rush anyway? Travel in the 1800s was counted in weeks, even months, without surprise. On this Trumbull and Sloat are silent. We do know that Mrs. Colt did not want to live in Paterson; even the splendid, new mansion her hubby was building there did not sway Madame. Perhaps Roswell thought she had changed her mind from a letter she sent

him, and he was hurrying before she could change it back. We will probably never know the reason for his haste.

Trumbull knew and spoke to Peter Sloat about his triumph. By the 1880s, when Trumbull's *History of Industrial Paterson* was published, the driver would have been nearly eighty. Maybe, just maybe, our hero embroidered the story's facts just a "leettle" bit by then? Anyway, it makes a good yarn around the stables.

Colt Mansion, Paterson



Spring Craftshow

The 1996, Holiday House Spring Boutique returned to Little Falls School Number 3, to the delight of over three thousand visitors. This was the eighth, annual spring craftshow sponsored by the Society. Two of the reasons for its enduring popularity are the wide range of quality items it offers, and the reasonable prices they charge compared to other shows of its kind.

The Society is deeply grateful to all our volunteers for helping to staff the admission desk and raffle during the two weeks the show was open. The Boutique is a critically important fund raising tool for PCHS, especially now that the Castle is closed. Without the work of many people it could not be done!

The problem now facing the Society is to find a new home for the November/Christmas show. The building has been leased out by Little Falls Board of Education to a school for autistic children and is no longer available. If any of our members have any suggestions for an alternate location they are urged to call the Society office. We need to find a new home as soon as possible, preferably before the beginning of June! Hard as it might be to think of Christmas in Spring it must be done. Contact Andy at 881-2761.

Valentines Gala Canceled

Sadly, the Society's annual Valentines Day Gala had to be canceled this year. Ticket sales lagged far below the necessary numbers needed to make it a success. This usually well attended event fell, a temporary, victim to changing times. Without its romantic Castle location there was just not enough of a "draw". The Society is deeply grateful for all the work done by the Gala Committee members, who gave their best to make it happen. We apologize for the delay of refunds for those who bought tickets or advertising space in the souvenir journal, but these should be going out shortly. Thank you for your patience.

The Gala is not an abandoned event by any means, but it will have to wait for another year. When the Society's Castle home reopens it will become the social event of the year! Ideas are also in the works for similar events and concerts throughout the year. Perhaps a Summer Cotillion?

Historian's Hotline

The regular "Folk Finder" section of our newsletter has moved to the "Castle Genie" newsletter of the PCHS Genealogy Club. In its place, we hope to feature queries from students and scholars who are looking for additional information to what the Society has available in the Archives and Library. Maybe you can help, or maybe you would like to have a question of your own answered!

Ms. Ita Nelisson seeks information on architect **Richard Meier**. She believes he designed some of the buildings in our area. She is seeking photographs, plans or any other materials. Unfortunately, she did not name the buildings in her letter. Can you help? Write her at Grootstraat 151, 3570 Alken, Belgium.

Mr. Jack DeVries is planning a major book on the **Doherty Silk Sox** baseball team. They were a semi-professional team, sponsored by the Doherty silk mills in the 1915-30s period. If you have any memorabilia, stories or know someone who does contact him at: 671 Centre St., Nutley, NJ 07110. This promises to be a great addition to local history!

In Memorium

This year the history community lost a truly great friend. **Grace George** greeted visitors at the Great Falls Visitor Center since its beginning. Her inexhaustible fund of Paterson history and lore, as well as her sharp sense of humor, let her bring the Historic District's past alive for adult and child alike. She was a treasured resource who cannot not easily be replaced. The Society is deeply saddened, but remembers her light.

Castle Update

The last time we saw the Castle was back in August 1995. Then the thrilling first view of the newly reopened atrium sang to us of a glorious future. Well, less spectacular work is proceeding as this goes to press.

Recently, staff member, **Andrew Shick**, visited the site and saw an almost eerie sight. Inside, where our PCHS offices used to be was a hole right down to the basement! Its the location for the new elevator and fire stair shafts. The basement itself is being largely excavated to lower the floor in preparation for our new, environmentally controlled library. Throughout the building there is obvious evidence of the extensive new wiring being installed.

Right now, this phase of the work is dirty, but even more necessary than the romantic, pretty stuff to come later. Meanwhile, the beautiful plaster and woodwork, chandeliers, stained glass and fireplaces are all intact, waiting for the not so far off day when they will dazzle us again!

To Our Members....

Thank you for your patience in waiting for the Castle Light to return to a regular publishing schedule. The Society has gone through many strains in these last months, largely due to the temporary move from the Castle. We hope, however, that the worst is past now and we can look forward to offering you, our members, a quality publication each quarter. If you have any questions or comments about this issue, please contact the Society office at (201) 881-2761. Again, Thank You For Your Forbearance!

