

489

The
BULLETIN

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

OXFORD, NEW JERSEY

By

A. G. YOUNT
Minister



Oxford Historical Record

Bulletin No. 489. Nov. 26th. 1939

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. I Pet. 5:78

"O Thou who dwellest in heaven, mercifully regard all Thy sorrowful children upon earth, we beseech Thee.

Draw near to them with the comfort of Thy love, and sustain them by the right hand of Thy power.

Grant us a heart to sympathize with them in their distress, and give us both the opportunity and the will to help those who are in any trouble for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

There will be a covered-dish luncheon at the Manse at noon next Wednesday by the ladies of the church. The invitation is to all.

Mrs. William Dawe of Oxford, sends a card saying:-

"Congratulations on the tenth anniversary of the Bulletin.

I wish to express my appreciation and thanks for your work in publishing so valuable a paper, and for promoting so many worth while projects in our community. My best wishes that you have health and happiness in carrying on this good work."

In a note Mr. Humphrey remarks:-

"The anniversary Bulletin is one of the 'best ever'. The history of the publication is really inspiring and quite unique. I doubt if any periodical, in proportion to its size has ever had a greater or more far reaching influence. In fact there has never been anything just like it. May it continue its mission for many years to come!

Subscription receipts:-Mr. Humphrey \$10.00 for himself and Mrs. L. S. B. Hadley, Miss Mary E. Belden, Mrs. J. E. Loder and Miss Eugenia Henry. \$2.00 each from James Kearney and P. W. Henry.

Old Oxford Days----Railroads
By Clinton E. Weston

The many thousands of people who have witnessed "railroads on parade" at the World's Fair saw a stirring illustration in the development of railroading in America. It vividly portrayed the gradual improvement in the mode of travel, but behind the scenes must be taken into account the struggles and discouragements of the intrepid pioneers to organize and get started. And in this connection the story of the inception of the Lackawanna Railroad is one of unusual interest.

It all came about through the genius and foresight of one of our great American characters - a country doctor, Dr. Andrew Bedford; and the ones to carry the scheme to a successful conclusion were Col. George Scranton and a Mr. Platt, known as the firm of Scranton & Platt.

Dr Bedford graduated from Yale Medical School in 1823, and in the following year began practicing as a country doctor in Waverly, a small village about ten miles west of Scranton, then Slocum Hollow. His practice extended over an area of some 200 miles of almost unbroken forest land; travelling on horseback and attending the owners and families of the scattered farms.

Being thus in touch with the entire district he was able to estimate the possibilities of a railroad to provide better marketing facilities for the farmers and especially to obtain an outlet for the coal and iron of the Lackawanna valley. Accordingly in 1830 Bedford began agitating the construction of a railroad to extend from Scranton westward through Leggitts Gap to Great Bend, 50 miles, to connect with the Erie Railway.

His was a difficult problem for at neither terminus nor at any point along the right of way was there any well developed industry. And yet he persevered and was able to secure some prominent men to act as a committee to procure a charter which he obtained in 1832. Right here his difficulties began. For he was unable to get the necessary financial support, and so the project slept for 15 years, with Dr. Bedford making periodical trips to Harrisburg to

renew the charter. Meanwhile, the firm of Scranton & Platt were making progress with the utilization of hard coal in smelting the iron ore of the valley. They were the first firm in America to make the "T" rail, and in 1847 made a contract with the Erie Railroad for the delivery of 13,000 tons of T rails at \$80 per ton, and this assured the success of the company.

Col. Scranton then turned his attention to providing adequate means of transportation to take care of the output. Accordingly Scranton & Platt, in 1847, purchased the Charter of the Leggitts Gap Railway, and Col. Scranton was able to secure financial

support from New York capitalists, and events thereafter proceeded rapidly. Dr. Bedford was given the task of securing right of way and construction was begun in May, 1850 and on October 15 1851 the road was formally opened for business. Being encouraged with their success, two new projects were immediately put in motion.

Legislative authority was secured for construction of a railroad from Scranton eastward through Cobbs Gap and the Delaware Water Gap, and also for another road in New Jersey, the Warren Railway to connect with the Jersey Central at Hampton. And at the same time authority was given to construct a bridge across the Delaware River. On March 11, 1853 by a special act of the Penna. Legislature authority was granted to merge Leggitts Gap, Cobbs Gap and Water Gap and Warren Ry. and the combined Companies to be known as the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railway. In 1857 the Warren Ry. was leased in perpetuity to the D. L. & W. Railway.

The road bed through Oxford originally made a wide sweep; the course being past the Shippen Manor and along the brow of the hill, making a wide curve to the other side of the valley passing near where the Catholic church now stands, thence along Tunnel Hill road and on to Washington.

The Station was a brick building, a short distance from the old blast furnace. I understand the agent was O. N. Perry, who was transferred to the new station on the site of the present one when the Tunnel was completed in 1862. Mr. Perry was succeeded by Richard Hunt, and then in succession came Andrew E. Ryan, William J. Axford, (over)

James Kearney and the present incumbent, Benjamin Green.

Oxford was a good customer of the railroad, both incoming and out going freight. In the prosperous times there was an average shipment of 650 kegs of nails daily, except Sunday, making an annual shipment of over 200,000 kegs. No passenger trains ran on Sunday until the new regime was installed in 1899, due to the strong belief of President Samuel Sloan, that Sunday should be religiously reserved as a day of rest. After hearing the steady and continuous grind of the trains during the week, the absolute silence on Sunday was terrific. Coal trains were well patronized by a horde of men and boys hitch-hiking and many fatal accidents occurred, some I have actually witnessed, too gruesome to relate.

The most picturesque figure among those who devoted their lives to the service of the railroad was the same Samuel Sloan. He was born of a poor family in Ireland in 1817, and came to America with his parents when a small child, and settled in New York. He graduated from Columbia College Grammar School in 1831, at the age of 14. His first job was in a dry goods store where he learned the art of merchandizing and later set up in business for himself.

At 23 he entered the field of railroad finance and in later years was known in Wall street as the Nestor of Finance. During his lifetime he was President of no less than 17 American railroads, the last and most important being the Lackawanna. No Company was ever guided on more rock-safe principles, and as a consequence Lackawanna became the strongest and richest in the country. To-day we witness the fall of a great Empire, and with the Lackawanna, as with most roads, the plight is indeed pitiable, which may be illustrated by an incident that occurred shortly after Christmas last. Meeting one of the officials, and after some chatter, he asked me what Santy brought me for Xmas, and I told him I was somewhat disappointed. He looked at me in surprise and asked "How come." and I told him my disappointment was due to the fact that no one had bought one of the cheap railroads and put it in my stocking. "Buy one!" he exclaimed, "come around and we will give you one, and be glad to get rid of it."



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