

The
BULLETIN

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By

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Pastor

**SECOND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



Oxford Historical Record

The present prospect of the old furnace affairs is none too bright, but there are some encouraging features. We have a recent letter from Dr. Keim of the State Committee on Historic Sites in which he suggests that the best plan is to obtain the active support of the the Warren County representatives to the State Legislature.

We then wrote to Senator Harry Runyon and he promptly pledged to do all in his power to obtain an appropriation at this session of the Legislature, and as he has been appointed a member of the Appropriation Committee, he will be in a most favorable place to use his influence.

Mr. Chester Shafer, the Assemblyman also replied promising his hearty co-operation. Mr. Shafer has called at the Manse to talk over the matter and inform himself of the facts more fully.

We have already stated in the Bulletin that Governor Moore has given us encouragement to hope for success this year, but he also suggested that the best way was to have the County representatives push the matter in the usual way such things are brought about.

But the people of Oxford and of Warren County should manifest more interest and urge upon our representatives to press the cause before the Legislature.

Then too we think the New Jersey readers of the Bulletin, especially those who once lived in Oxford, might help a great deal by writing or by speaking to the State representatives of their own Counties to support an appropriation for the furnace restoration.

We have received a pleasant letter from Mr. Leonard Peckitt, President of the Warren Foundry & Pipe Corporation, in which he speaks of his interest in Oxford, saying:-

"I often think of the old days at Oxford and as soon as the Winter months are out of the way, I shall be running over there and will certainly make it my business to drop in to see you when passing by the Manse."

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Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

---Jeremiah 6:16

"O God, from whom all holy desires all good counsels and all just works do proceed; give unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that by Thee, we, being ever defended from the fear of evil temptations, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Our Church Choir is taking on new life, and much interest is being shown. New anthems are being practiced for Palm Sunday and Easter, and special music provided for each Sunday morning service.

The Ladies will serve an old fashioned Supper of Roast Pork and Sauerkraut in the chapel on next Thursday evening, Feb. 1st. beginning at 5 P.M.

The Bulletin finances for the year 1939 is the best in many years. The receipts amounted to \$189.50 and the expenses \$171.50 leaving a profit of \$18.00. But the year before there was a deficit of about \$20.00, which is a most encouraging improvement.

There has never been a profit for any one in the ten years of the paper. It has all been a labor of love. The many fine and loyal writers who have made it a distinguished little publication have never been paid a cent, and on the other hand contribute generously to the expense fund.

It may be stated again that the Bulletin has always been a personal enterprise of the Editor, and the Church has never contributed to its support in a financial way.

In every way, indeed, it has been conducted on the voluntary principle.

More About The D. L. & W.
By George Scranton Humphrey

Mr. Weston's fine sketch of the origin and construction of the D. L. & W. R. R. in the Bulletin of Nov. 26th., No. 489, is a notable addition to the historical data which the paper is accumulating. What a mine of information its files will be for some future historian writing of the people and industrial developments of New Jersey!

The building of that railroad over the Pocono mountains and through the defiles and gorges among the hills between "Slocum Hollow" and Great Bend was a notable engineering achievement for that early day, or for any other period, for that matter; especially when one remembers that at that time there were no steam shovels, no steam nor pneumatic drills, nor high explosives. All excavating was done by pick and shovel; probably with teams and drags, and rock work was performed with hand drills and ordinary black blasting power. And all this through an almost unbroken wilderness, having very few settlements and no roads worthy of the name over which materials could be transported.

On top of these physical handicaps add the difficulty of financing an enterprise which no doubt appeared to many capitalists as visionary, and you have a challenge worthy of giants.

And indeed "there were giants in those days;" notably the young Scranton brothers from our own Oxford, who, having made a success of the old blast furnace here, aspired to greater things. Any one who is familiar with the personal history, especially of George Scranton, or who, as I have, has conversed with men who knew and were associated with him, must recognize that he was a man of most unusual personality, possessing a sort of magnetic power which enabled him profoundly to influence those with whom he came in contact and impart to them his own enthusiasm for the enterprise he had in heart.

After this somewhat lengthy introduction, I should like to add to the D. L. & W. history a few items, which are remotely connected with Oxford, but I think will be of interest, especially to a few persons who knew me when my home was there.

One of the very earliest means of transportation from central New York State to the outside world was by water from the salt region where the city of Syracuse is now located; at first through lakes and small streams later by the Erie Canal to the foot of Cayuga Lake, on which a line of steamboats was established (only a few years after Fulton's "Clermont" paddled up the Hudson) to Ithaca at the head of the lake; thence by wagons thirty miles to Owego on the Susquehanna River, where the material salt, gypsum, lime and other products of the region were loaded on "Durham boats" and floated down the river to Baltimore and intermediate points.

In 1832, enterprising citizens of Ithaca organized the Ithaca and Owego Railroad, the second line to be chartered in the State of New York.

It was opened in 1838, having been constructed largely by money advanced by the State, which held a lien on the property.

At that time my father, the late William R. Humphrey, was a young lawyer in Ithaca, being a "Master in Chancery" under the system then in existence, and the State authorities placed the road in his hands for sale if possible. Having heard of the Scrantons and their new enterprise at Slocum Hollow, Pennsylvania, and knowing that they were about to construct a railroad to the north and west, he conceived a plan that was briefly as follows:-

The Scrantons should build their line to Great Bend, and there connect with the Erie Railroad, then under construction; make a trackage arrangement with the Erie by which coal trains should be run over that road to Owego; buy the bankrupt Ithaca and Owego road and reconstruct it, and acquire, or arrange with the steamboat company on Cayuga Lake to carry passengers and tow canal boats from Ithaca to Cayuga; there entering the Erie Canal and reaching all the important cities in central New York and the great Lakes at Buffalo.

Mr. Humphrey made the journey to Slocum Hollow quite an undertaking in those days, explained his plan to George W. and Selden T. Scranton, who recognized its feasibility.

They, especially, George W. in turn
(over)

presented the idea to his backers in New York, Moses Taylor, William E. Dodge, Mr. Gale and others, with the result that it was adopted, and the Cayuga and Susquehanna Railroad was organized to take over and rebuild the Ithaca and Owego Road.

At this point my father considered his interest in the matter terminated. But the Scrantons and their associates, realizing that they must have a capable man to supervise the undertaking, and having taken a liking to young Humphrey (then about 25) offered him the position at a salary considerably greater than the amount he was earning as a young lawyer just beginning practice. By what, as it seemed to some of his friends at the time, and as I have always believed, was an error in judgment, he accepted the proposition and so became connected with D. L. & W. affairs during all his active life. He himself never expressed regret at having made the decision. The Company constructed extensive coal docks at Ithaca and for many years all anthracite from Scranton, destined for the north and west passed through Cayuga Lake.

In the early 1870's the "Valley Road," was constructed from Great Bend to Binghamton and was promptly leased by the D. L. & W. which also acquired the Binghamton and Syracuse Railroad; thus obtaining direct rail access to Syracuse and Oswego on Lake Ontario. In 1884 or 1885 the "New York, Lackawanna & Western" was completed to Buffalo, and also leased by the D. L. & W. These acquisitions of course put an end to coal shipments via Ithaca and Cayuga lake; and the Cayuga and Susquehanna (also on long lease to the D. L. & W., and known as the Cayuga division) almost faded out of the picture. The coal docks, shops etc. which were quite extensive, were dismantled and now there is scarcely a vestige left of what was once a busy and prosperous center.

But the D. L. & W. still continue to pay a dividend of 7% per annum to the stockholders of the Cayuga and Susquehanna, and I have no doubt that it is one of the railroads which "Clin's" friend in the Lackawanna told him they would be glad to give him, if he would assume its burdens!

All this explains why I in 1875 left Ithaca and came to Oxford!

The friendship between Selden and Charles Scranton and my father, continued, and when an opening occurred in the office of the Oxford Iron Company, it was offered to me and I accepted it. Whether, like my father before me, I made a mistake, I shall never know, but my life in Oxford was very happy and I did find my wife there-- a good fortune which covers any possible loss many, many times.

Mr. Humphrey sent with the above article a letter that should be included in this account. It runs:-

"I think that the enclosed sketch may be of interest to the Bulletin readers. The fact is, that the connection between the D. L. & W. and Oxford is not so remote as it might at first appear to be; as is becoming more and more evident. The building of that road as well as the development of the resources of the Lackawanna Valley, was due to the foresight and enterprise of two Oxford "Boys" George and Selden Scranton.

The little stone furnace at Oxford was the mother of lusty children, and for that and many other reasons the old stack should be preserved.

Part of the enclosed article with more details is to be incorporated in a series of historical sketches which I am writing for the Ithaca Journal; you may be sure that I will give Oxford a 'Boom' in it."

The Bulletin is very fortunate to be able to print such valuable historical articles as this of Mr. Humphrey, as well as that of others. But Mr. Humphrey is the only living person who can write as he does from intimate knowledge of the motives and plans of the origin of the D. L. & W. railroad.

The bulletin has received \$2.00 each from George Weber and Mrs. Dr. Tunison, and \$1.00 each from Chas. Renner and Mrs. Mildred Tunison.



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