

Community Leader Dies



ARCHIBALD JOHNSTON

Archibald Johnston Dies In 83rd Year

Pioneer Steelman, City's First Mayor Had Been Long-Time Civic Leader

Archibald Johnston, Bethlehem's first mayor and pioneer steelman whose genius aided in the development of an infant company to the largest independent steel producer in the world—the Bethlehem Steel Corporation—died yesterday. In ill health for several years, death came to him Sunday morning at nine o'clock at his home, Camel's Hump Farm. He was in his 83rd year.

Inroads advancing years made upon his rugged constitution did not detract from his interest in the community and the great corporation he helped build. In his retirement Mr. Johnston kept contact with his many friends and former business associates in the steel industry, the local, national and world scene with which he became so familiar as vice president of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, which he headed for a short time before the late Charles M. Schwab took over the presidency.

Funeral services are to be held at 2 p. m., tomorrow at his Camel's Hump home. Interment will be private in Nisky Hill Cemetery.

FATHERS BRIDGE PROJECT

After the old covered wooden bridge across the Lehigh was condemned by the commissioners of both counties, as being unsafe for heavy truck traffic and the citizens' committee looked around for an inspirational leader, they prevailed upon Mr. Johnston, and although very busy with his duties at the Bethlehem Steel Company, he accepted and the campaign ended in a blaze of glory. Again when the consolidation movement was started, he was once more placed in command of the forces and his ringing speeches will long be remembered by those who labored in that campaign a quarter of a century ago. The union of the boroughs of Bethlehem and South Bethlehem with Northampton Heights following later was another dream realization.

When consolidation was legally consummated and the late Governor Martin G. Brumbaugh signed the charter for the third class city of Bethlehem in 1917, a survey was made for a citizen of irreproachable character to direct the affairs of the maiden city. It took the signatures of 5000 citizens to persuade "Arch" as he was familiarly known to his fellow workers and friends, that he was badly wanted for the first mayor of the city of Bethlehem. His almost unanimous election followed. He was thoroughly conversant with the tangled affairs of the former boroughs and the urgent needs for the rapidly growing enlarged municipality.

The Public Service Commission of Pennsylvania realized his eminent fitness and appointed him chairman of the Bethlehem Bridge Commission in charge of planning and inviting bids for the "Hill-to-Hill" bridge, a modern \$3,000,000 structure, which, due to the first World War, did not become a reality until 1924. The late Charles W. Hudson, of New York City, was the consulting engineer.

Since that memorable day when Mr. Johnston walked at the head of the parade at the opening of the big structure down to his last day of life he did not lose interest in the betterment of Bethlehem.

FRIEND OF RECREATION

During his administration as the first mayor Mr. Johnston succeeded in having the Bethlehem Steel Company donate the land on which was developed beautiful Saucon Park, the city's first and still its largest park. Up to that time the city had no park for recreational grounds.

Johnston Park along Monocacy Creek was named in his honor.

A number of years ago he developed his homestead on the farm at Camel's Hump along Monocacy Creek, moving there from his homestead on East Church Street. Upon his becoming a gentleman farmer, Mr. Johnston modernized the dwellings and created fish ponds and ponds for the graceful swans and for boating. He entertained many of his friends and club members at his country home, always proving a genial host.

On February 11, 1891, he was married to Miss Estelle Borhek, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Ashton Borhek, of West Broad and Guetter Streets. They became active members of Central Moravian Church and identified with a number of the organizations of the church.

They have two children, a son, Archibald B., residing adjacent to his parents' homestead, and Mrs. Gordon Jost, also residing at Camel's Hump, south of her parents' homestead. He also has five grandchildren.

Despite his vast business interests before his retirement from most of them, Mr. Johnston found time for recreation. At college he was interested in football. In his later years he took up golfing. He enjoyed motoring, driving his own car. During his administration as mayor of the city, it was his wont to drive his car over every street in the city to ascertain where re-

pairs were needed. These facts he jotted down in a small pocket memorandum book and at each meeting of city council he would consult his little book and ask the chairman of the Street Committee whether such and such a hole had been attended to, whether the ruts had received attention. He influenced the first council to engage S. J. Hughes, city clerk at Hazleton at the time, to do similar work here, and Mr. Hughes, who later was ordained to the Baptist ministry, accepted. Originally Mr. Johnston was reared in the Baptist Church, as his parents were Baptists.

He also took an active part in the Liberty bond drive in the first World War.

In his extensive travels while affiliated with the Bethlehem Steel Company, Mr. Johnston not only visited European countries but South American countries as well, especially the Argentine, taking with him Andrew W. Litzenger, his clerk and architect, now architect and supervisor of buildings at Lehigh University.

While Mr. Johnston never aspired to State or national public office, he was prominently mentioned in January, 1922, at the close of his mayoralty for the office of U. S. Senator, to succeed the late Senator Boise Penrose, of Philadelphia. His Republican friends throughout Northampton County proposed him for the appointment to the unexpired term by the Governor, but when approached on the subject by a local newspaper representative he treated the matter lightly and stated that he was not "seeking any more glory."

Mr. Johnston was also mentioned by his admiring friends for Governor of Pennsylvania but he never consented to become a candidate for the office.

Born at Phoenixville May 30, 1865, a son of the late Joseph and Martha Stroman Johnston, he came with his parents to Bethlehem when four years old. He was educated in the local schools.

STARTED AT BOTTOM

Donning a workman's regalia—a pair of overalls—he got a taste of the iron and steel industry in serving his apprenticeship with the old Bethlehem Iron Company, now the Bethlehem Steel Company, before completing his mechanical engineering course at Lehigh University in 1889. He entered Lehigh in 1885.

After his graduation, Mr. Johnston entered the physical testing department at the old Bethlehem Iron Company. He desired to learn the iron and steel industry from the bottom to the top. His ability was soon recognized and his advancement followed in rapid strides. From the testing department he was placed in charge of the gun-forging plant, the first to be established in the United States.

In 1890 he was in charge of the 125-ton hammer which took 8 months to erect. Later he was appointed superintendent to erect the armor plate department, also the first of its kind built in America.

Still later he was successively assistant general superintendent and general superintendent, following the late John Fritz, noted ironmaster, who came to the Iron Company in 1860 from Pittsburgh.

In 1908 he became vice president of the Bethlehem Steel Company, Bethlehem Steel Corporation; second vice president of the Juragua Iron Company; vice president of the Bethlehem Steel Company, and Bethlehem Iron Mines, director of the Harlin & Hollingsworth Corporation, Samuel Moore & Sons Corporation and later he became a director of the First National Bank and Trust Company, trustee of the Moravian College and Theological

Archibald Johnston: Symbol Of A Growing City

In the death of Archibald Johnston, Bethlehem loses a man whose life was woven deep into the industrial and civic fabric of the community. For Archibald Johnston helped build the city's greatest industry, helped build the corporate city itself, and helped give the community a blueprint for the expanding future.

Archibald Johnston, in many ways, was a symbol of growing Bethlehem, just as he was a symbol of the best in the American free enterprise system.

He worked his way to the top in a tough, demanding industry, in a day when hours were long and mechanical and electrical aids few. Muscle and sweat were the main ingredients in refining steel from ores and other materials when Archibald Johnston made iron and steel his life's work. He saw the old Bethlehem Iron Company become the giant Bethlehem Steel Company and help win two modern wars.

With it all, he was a warm, interested friend, a friend of rich and poor, high and low, throughout the wide sweep of his acquaintanceship. In his latter years, he liked few things more than a visit from old friends. He was partial to those men of an earlier generation who worked with him and for him in building an industry.

An impression of him will linger long. It was the warm gleam which lighted his eyes as a gnarled, bent workman of an earlier day passed him on Main Street several years ago. "Hi, Tom," said Mr. Johnston. "Hi, Arch", came the response. Then a hearty handclasp and five minutes of eager conversation.

It was on the same occasion that Mr. Johnston had a short obituary item from the newspaper pinned to one of his vest pockets. Pinned there, we are sure, so that he wouldn't forget to send flowers or other expression of his loss at the passing of an acquaintance or friend.

As the first mayor of the newly incorporated city just 30 years ago, Archibald Johnston made a great contribution. Until that time, he had been primarily concerned with production and jobs for the people who lived here. Now he became concerned with living conditions and services for the people—through their infant municipality.

He envisioned a beautiful, safe, healthful and happy community. He wanted Bethlehem to be a better city in which to live and work.

In his inaugural address in January, 1918—after his election had been prompted by petition of the people—he set forth his dreams: a system of parks, a good water supply, a sewage disposal plant, improved streets, health measures, and others. He wanted efficiency in government, too, and good men in office. And he served four years as mayor—without salary.

Mr. Johnston was energetic, hard-working, a man of action. He lived to see some of his dreams for Bethlehem come true. He lived to see the old Bethlehem Iron Company become the hub of America's second largest steel producer. He lived to see the city become a better place in which to live and work. He was a warm friend; a generous benefactor in a quiet, unostentatious way; a keenly interested citizen of the city and the world; and a symbol of his times.

Bethlehem will miss Arch Johnston.

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