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CATHOLINA LAMBERT

A Biographical Sketch

By Edward M. Graf

Catholina Lambert, born in Keighley, Yorkshire, England on March 28, 1834, died at Belle Vista Castle, Paterson, on February 15, 1923, at nearly 89 years of age. His obituary was front page news of the Paterson Morning Call the next day.



Catholina Lambert

factured for upholsterers, the military, parasol makers, milliners, hatters, furriers, and cloak and dress makers.

In 1856, business had grown, and with the need for increased space, the firm erected another larger mill on Lennox Street. Three stories high, it measured 160 by 50 feet.

Catholina Lambert married Miss Isabella Shattuck in 1856. Of an old New England family, she was one of eight children.

By 1860 Paterson had become the American center for silk manufacturing as well as of the necessary machines, thus frequently bringing Lambert to Paterson on business trips. Attracted to the natural beauty of the Passaic Valley and Garret Mountain, he purchased 22 acres in South Paterson known as 'Maplewood' from James Close in 1861.

In his native England, he started work at the age of 10 in the cotton mill of Walter Evans & Company for 32 cents (American money) a week. At the age of 17 he looked toward the land of promise, and in search of greater things, set out for New York City where he arrived on October 29, 1851. Since he had a friend living in Boston, he went there, and found employment as an office boy for four dollars a week with the silk firm of Tilt & Dexter, of which the principals were Benjamin B. Tilt and Anson Dexter.

In 1853, Lambert bought the shares of the retiring Mr. Tilt and the firm changed its name to Dexter, Lambert & Co., so remaining until its termination more than 60 years later.

The firm had experimented with ribbon weaving as early as 1849 and again in 1856 but was not financially successful in its first attempts. Tilt and Dexter have been credited with being the first to weave ribbon in America. Their factory, a two-story building, 40 x 100 feet, was on Coventry Street in Boston -- the street having been named by Mr. Tilt. They had machines to weave fringes, gimps, and braiding as well as trimmings. Known in those days as a trimming house, they manu-

The same year, Anson Dexter retired. George R. Dexter, his son, and William Nelson Lambert, a younger brother of Catholina, were admitted to the firm. But in 1869, during a visit to South America for reasons of health, William Lambert died. George R. Dexter retired in 1875.

On July 25, 1870, while on a return trip from Europe where he had gone to recuperate from failing health, Lambert was notified at sea of the death of his son, Clifford, one year and five months old. The funeral was postponed, pending the arrival of the child's parents and was held in their home August 4th.

Henry B. Wilson was admitted to the firm in 1878, and Charles Barton who had been in the firm since 1860, retired in 1880. In 1885, three more partners were added – Catholina's son, Walter S. Lambert, William Farrington Suydam, his son-in-law, and Charles N. Sterrett.

In 1866, Lambert wished to locate nearer to New York City and he purchased a mill site in Paterson on the east side of Straight Street and north of Clay Street (now called 21st Avenue). The mill erected there was called the Dexter Mill, three stories high, built of brick, and measuring 220 by 50 feet. (This mill was sold in December, 1916, to Van der Weyhe Brothers, Belgian fur manufacturers, for \$60,000.)

In 1874, Mr. Lambert went to England and bought a plant of power looms which he shipped to Paterson and set them up in the Straight Street mill, which then began weaving broad silk goods. Three years later, the firm purchased the ribbon plant of A. Soleliac & Sons, located in the Dale Mill and operations continued there until June 1879.

The Lambert Mill, across Straight Street and opposite the Dexter Mill, was built in December, 1878, on land purchased from the SUM. This building was 100 by 75 feet and two stories when completed July 1, 1879. Lambert and Dexter Mills were connected by a bridge over Straight Street, connecting the second stories.

Expanding further, the ribbon loom plant of Sterrett, Ryle & Murphy was purchased in the Spring of 1879. In 1880, the fourth large silk mill was erected at Hawley, Pennsylvania, measuring in size 380 by 44 feet with a center projection 80 by 80 feet. This mill was christened Bellemont Mill on Thursday, June 3, 1881, by Lambert in company with his wife, daughter, and a large group of personal and business friends. Subsequently, in 1887, the last large mill was erected at Honesdale, Pennsylvania, where the firm could manufacture silk of all kinds, starting from raw, imported skeins and later market the royally beautiful product. (At Lambert Castle, the Passaic County Historical Society Museum often exhibits the silk manufactured by them and others.)

Catholina Lambert took great pleasure in planning and building the edifice now called Lambert Castle. He built it on the side of Garret Mountain, as his new residence during the year 1892 and named it Belle Vista in honor of his wife Isabella. Their original home, Maplewood, in no wise sufficiently large or appropriate for Lambert's immense art and antique collection, stood on the plot of the old Close Farm lying between Valley Road and Marshall Street. Maplewood was afterward occupied by Freeman Shattuck, brother of Mrs. Lambert. During 1892, stonecutters began assembling brownstone blocks from local quarries, and construction of the castle proceeded. By the end of the year, the present building as it now stands was completed and is said to resemble Warwick Castle in Lambert's native England. Miss Ruth Bree Rebbeck, the daughter of one of Lambert's long deceased retainers, recounted that, as a poor delivery boy in England, Catholina had often delivered goods to Warwick Castle and achieved in his later success, the boyish dream to build such a castle. He accomplished it in the space of 40 years, only to lose it during the next 30.

In 1893, Lambert established his residence at the Castle Belle Vista, setting up his immense art collection in a home of princely magnificence.

Three years after Mrs. Lambert's death in 1901, Lambert married her sister, Harriet Estelle Bibby, widow of Doctor Bibby, by whom she had had a son, Harry Lambert Bibby who was a practicing physician in New York City.

Mr. Lambert's second wife also pre-deceased him, dying November 27, 1916. Seven of his eight children also pre-deceased him, with only his son, Walter, remaining of his large family. Two daughters who had married, left nine grandchildren between them.

The labor troubles of 1913 in Paterson and elsewhere put a great strain on the silk manufacturing business and by 1914, the firm of Dexter, Lambert & Co. found itself in such financial difficulties, it decided to liquidate. Credit was obtained on October 20, 1914, in an effort to meet liabilities against the firm, and Mr. Lambert signed notes payable two years from date with the pledge of his estate as collateral. On January 15, 1915, Lambert offered his entire estate, including his collection of art, for an extension of credit, and placed his signature to a trust mortgage in favor of the Paterson Safe Deposit and Trust Co. in the amount of \$1,103,754.95 – said to be the largest personal mortgage ever recorded in Passaic County up to that time.

Subsequently, it was decided to sell the Lambert art collection, and a great auction was conducted by the American Art Galleries in the Grand Ballroom of New York's Hotel Plaza from February 21 to 24, 1916. There were 365 pictures and numerous pieces of statuary auctioned, realizing a total amount of \$592,050 which was estimated at about one-third of the real value.

On Thursday, February 15, 1923, Lambert was visited in his library at the Castle by one of his closest friends, his brother-in-law, John C. Ryle, and they discussed their favored topic – the silk industry. Then, nearly 89 years of age, Lambert showed that he yet retained his keen mind and insight into the trade conditions that had made him the remarkable man he had been all of his business life.

By two o'clock of that afternoon, however, the pioneer manufacturer took to his bed and a few minutes after four P.M., peacefully passed away. With him at the time was his only living child, Walter, and his personal physician, Dr. Victor E. Bullen.

Mr. Lambert had requested a simple funeral and such it was. Services were conducted at the Castle on Sunday at two P.M., February 18, 1923, by the Reverend Alvin C. Sawtelle of the Second Presbyterian Church on Broadway at Summer Street, of which Mr. Lambert had been the oldest member of the congregation. The services were held in the northeast parlor where the body lay in a mahogany half-couch coffin surrounded by numerous floral pieces. A quartette sang "Abide With Me," "It Is Well With My Soul," and "Lead Kindly Light." Rev. Sawtelle delivered a fitting eulogy, and a Masonic service terminated the proceedings with the deposit of the lambskin apron, the badge, and the evergreen as emblems of Lambert's Masonic connections.

He had been initiated into Joppa Lodge No. 28, F. and A. M. in April, 1879, and raised to Master Mason August 27, 1879. The Masonic services at the funeral were conducted by Worshipful Master Walter W. Penney, assisted by several 33rd degree masons of Paterson, and Robert J. Hanna, Everett T. Whitford, and Rev. O. M. Demcott.

Following services at the Castle, the funeral procession passed down Main Street and out Market Street to Cedar Lawn Cemetery, where interment was made in the family plot. More than 300 men of prominence attended the services, not only former employees but important figures in the textile world. The honorary pall bearers had all been colleagues of Mr. Lambert, and those from Paterson included U. S. Attorney-General John W. Griggs, Vice-Chancellor Vivian M. Lewis, Judge William I. Lewis, Hon. William B. Gourley, Henry Doherty, Elmer Z. Halstead, Daniel H. Murray, Wayne Dumont, Dr. Victor E. Bullen, and Thomas Smith. Eight well-known associates from New York completed the cortege.

LAMBERT GENEALOGY

SAMUEL LAMBERT, lived and died in England. He married twice but the name of his first wife is not known. They had two sons, William Nelson Lambert and Catholina Lambert, both of whom came to America.

WILLIAM NELSON LAMBERT, (birth date unknown) died a bachelor in 1869 in South America.

CATHOLINA LAMBERT, born March 28, 1834; died February 15, 1923. His first marriage, in 1857, was to Isabella E. Shattuck, born 1837; died 1901; the daughter of David R. and Elizabeth W. Shattuck. They had eight children.

1. *FLORENCE DEXTER LAMBERT*, born January 26, 1859; died March 24, 1883; married William Farrington Suydam, September 9, 1880. They had two children, William Farrington Suydam, Jr. and Florence Suydam.

2. *FRED LAMBERT*, born 1861; died 1875.

3. *WALTER S. LAMBERT*, born 1864; died 1943. His first wife, Anna Carpenter, died July 20, 1903, age 38; they had two daughters, Helen M. and Dorothy L. His second marriage was to Mrs. Ida Batsford Lord of Long Eddy, N. Y. They had two sons, (1) Catholina A. Lambert, born 1906; died March 19, 1970; married Sigrid Gelertsen, 1926; (2) Stanley W. Lambert, born in 1909.

4. *ISABELLA LOUISA LAMBERT*, born 1868; died 1906; married William Francis Dorflinger and had five children: Lambert Dorflinger; Florence Dorflinger; Isabelle Dorflinger; William F. Dorflinger, Jr.; Louis E. Dorflinger.

5. *CLIFFORD LAMBERT*, born February 1869; died July 25, 1870.

6. *PERCY LAMBERT*, born 1871; died 1882.

7. *CHESTER LAMBERT*, born February 1873; died March 1873.

8. *HARRY LAMBERT*, born 1875; died 1885.

Catholina Lambert's second marriage in 1904 was to Mrs. Harriet Estelle Shattuck Bibby. There were no children of this marriage.

SAMUEL LAMBERT's second wife was Sarah Ann Davis; they lived at Welles, Somersetshire and had three children.

1. *SIDNEY LAMBERT*, married Jessie McEwan and had seven children, Margaret Rebertha Lambert; Catholina Lambert; Gertrude Mary Lambert; Frederick Nelson Lambert; Sidney Lambert; Harry Lambert; Dora Helen Lambert. Sidney Lambert's second marriage was to Anne Jane Yale, and they had no children. (The family yet lives in Somersetshire.)

2. *REBERTHA LAMBERT*, came to America and married Asher Atkinson of Hawley, Pennsylvania. They had one daughter, Isabelle, who married Dr. John Clayton.

3. *JOHN WALLACE LAMBERT*, came to America and married Lucy Russell Dimmick. They had three children, (1) Nelson Dimmick Lambert, who married Dorothy Rossman and had two daughters, Barbara and Carolyn; (2) Priscilla Lambert, who married Reeder Miller and had two daughters, Anne and Reeder Lou; (3) Anne Russell Lambert, who married Col. John Mesick and had two sons, John, Jr. and William Mallory.

David R. Shattuck, born 1808; died 1884; married Elizabeth W., born 1808; died 1881. Their children included: Samuel S. Shattuck; Isabella, first wife of Catholina Lambert; Freeman Shattuck; Harriet, second wife of Catholina Lambert; Adeline; Mrs. Robert Gilmore.