

RESEARCH PROJECTS IN PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY

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HISTORIANS have long recognized the need for some general clearing-house which should maintain an up-to-date list of research projects being undertaken, to which one could go to find what work, if any, is being done on a particular subject. The lack of such a list has resulted in needless and frequently wasteful duplication of research activity. Certain agencies, it is true, have endeavored to meet this need by publishing lists of research projects, generally limited, however, to doctoral dissertations.

The Carnegie Institution's annual list of *Doctoral Dissertations in History*, which are being prepared at the chief American Universities, the list of "Graduate Theses in Canadian History and Economics," appearing in the *Canadian Historical Review*, and the list of "Doctoral Dissertations in Political Science in Preparation at American Universities," published in the *American Political Science Review*, are helpful in studying recent trends in historical research by doctoral candidates, but they do not cover what are perhaps the more significant projects being prepared by mature scholars. Recognizing the need for such a list, a Committee of the American Historical Association on the Planning of Research has recommended "the publication (perhaps triennially) of a list of research and editorial projects being actively carried forward in the United States and Canada by mature scholars in the modern fields." The Committee further states "that such a list, by being given wide dissemination among interested scholars, would serve not only to prevent duplication and to further coöperation, but also to suggest to the profession, indirectly, the fields of historical study which are being neglected."¹

It is the purpose of this paper to give as complete a list as the

¹Schlesinger, Langer, et al., *Historical Scholarship in America, Needs and Opportunities* (New York, 1932), p. 16.

writer has been able to compile of all research projects which are being undertaken in the general field of Pennsylvania History, exclusive of philology and archæology. In its preparation, questionnaires were sent to all teachers of history in the colleges of Pennsylvania asking for information concerning any such projects which they, their colleagues, or acquaintances had undertaken. Requests were sent to every major historical society or historical library in the state for lists of projects which were being prepared through the use of their collections. The files of the historical reviews, the reports of the Social Science Research Council and the Carnegie Institution were combed; all possible subjects were recorded and those engaged in historical research were written to for information. On the basis of these replies and on information given by others, the following material rests.

It may be observed that with a few exceptions the research projects now under way in the field of Pennsylvania history are largely variations of subjects which have been prepared in other states and sections. Pennsylvania historians do not seem to be carving out new fields. Political and institutional history still rank first in the number of projects, with economic history a close second and social history, using the term in a broad sense, a poor third.

The need for an adequate general history of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has long been an outstanding want and the historical profession looks forward with much anticipation to the publication of Dr. W. F. Dunaway's one volume history of Pennsylvania. Dr. Dunaway has been forced to break new ground in his research, especially in the economic and social history of Pennsylvania, as there has been so little published in these fields. His work will therefore be not a mere synthesis, but on the contrary, largely original in its scope and interpretation. It is hoped that when future writers undertake such a task they will have more assistance in the way of monographs on particular phases of Pennsylvania history than Dr. Dunaway has enjoyed.

The increasing attention which professional historians are paying to the field of local history is certainly to be applauded. In the nineteenth century local history was largely written by amateurs without proper training and the professional group generally looked upon such persons with disdain. Recently, however, trained his-

torians have interested themselves more and more in state, county, town, and other phases of local history. Dr. Robert Fortenbaugh of Gettysburg College, like Dr. Dunaway, has been a pioneer in this activity in Pennsylvania and his projected history of Adams County should induce other professional historians to undertake histories of counties, townships, cities and regions. The surprising thing is that of all the projects with which the writer has come in contact, the above two are the only ones which aim to give a general treatment of a broad subject.

Although general surveys are not being undertaken by professional historians as frequently today as they were in the past, conventional political history is not being neglected. The majority of the research projects in Pennsylvania history belong in this field. Five of these studies are definitely biographical.

Dr. Roy F. Nichols of the University of Pennsylvania, having proved at length in his brilliant study of Franklin Pierce that the latter was not one of America's greatest statesmen, is now engaged in studying the presidential career of James Buchanan, one of Pennsylvania's gifts to the nation. In his own words, Dr. Nichols is attempting to explain Buchanan's presidential career "in a manner which will avoid the excesses and the prejudices both pro and con which have marked the treatment of this unfortunate individual."

A contemporary of Buchanan, and likewise a resident of Pennsylvania, Jeremiah S. Black, is now receiving the attention which his position and prominence warrant. Professor W. N. Brigance of Wabash College is making a study of Black's career, using the Black manuscripts in the Library of Congress, private collections in the hands of members of the family, newspapers and the court records. One article has already appeared in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* of September, 1932, and it is expected that the completed study will be ready for publication in the near future.

Other prominent Pennsylvania politicians whose careers are being studied are Hendrick B. Wright, Democratic Congressman from the Wilkes-Barre district in the pre-Civil War period, Alexander Ramsey, Whig leader and later territorial governor of Minnesota, and Thaddeus Stevens. Julian P. Boyd, now of the New York Historical Association, is editing the papers and studying the life of Hendrick B. Wright. Mr. Boyd is using the extensive

collection of Wright papers in the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society library and students who are familiar with his excellent introduction to the papers of the Susquehanna Land Company will expect an equally excellent biography. Dr. William J. Ryland of Beaver College has recently completed his study of "The Life and Times of Alexander Ramsey," a part of which is shortly to appear in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. In this connection the writer may be permitted to express the hope that someone may undertake a study of the contributions which Pennsylvania has made to the economic social and political development of other sections and states through the emigration of native Pennsylvanians to those regions. The last biographical study which has come to the writer's attention is that by Dr. Fortenbaugh, who is investigating the local career of Thaddeus Stevens, during his residence at Gettysburg. The need for a study of the Cameron dynasty, Simon, William and Don, shows no immediate prospect of being met, though the excuse that the family papers are either not available or do not exist is no longer tenable.

Party histories, as such, are not receiving much attention in Pennsylvania, but there are two studies under way on the anti-Catholic movements in the state: "Political Nativism in Pennsylvania," by Celestine Bittenbender, and the "Ku Klux Klan in Pennsylvania," by E. H. Loucks.

Five other more or less conventional political subjects in Pennsylvania history are being investigated by doctoral candidates: "The Beginnings of Pennsylvania," by Sister M. Thecla O'Malley; "Pennsylvania Politics, 1776-1790," by B. M. Herman; "Sectionalism in Pennsylvania, 1789-1829," by Elizabeth K. Henderson; "Pennsylvania and the Civil War," by William J. Martin; and "Pennsylvania Politics During the Civil War," by Stanton L. Davis. It is interesting to note that these are being prepared respectively at Catholic University, Columbia University, Bryn Mawr College, the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania.

Turning to institutional history, one finds a number of promising studies being undertaken by mature scholars, three of whom are women. Dr. Mabel P. Wolff of Wilson College is completing a study of the "Colonial Agency of Pennsylvania." Dr. Wolff

has just published a part of this study under the title *The Colonial Agency of Pennsylvania, 1712-1757*, and it is hoped that she will bring out the entire study in the future. Dr. John P. Selsam, now lecturing for the League of Nations Association, has completed a monograph on "The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776: A Study in Revolutionary Democracy," which he is planning to publish soon. Submitted as a doctoral dissertation at Princeton University, this monograph has been considerably expanded and promises to clear up many questions of importance in both state and national politics. Four studies in administrative and institutional history in which Pennsylvania is given considerable attention are likewise of importance to the student of Pennsylvania history. Dr. Lawrence H. Gipson of Lehigh University for the past ten years has been making "an intensive study of internal aspects of the old British Empire in the middle of the eighteenth century, especially those having to do with political, social and economic interrelations of the constituent parts of it. Pennsylvania history is, therefore, given considerable emphasis." Dr. Gipson has projected his study on the same scale as Osgood's *American Colonies*. He has one volume ready for publication and two others well under way. Dr. Mary P. Clarke of Beaver College has completed a study of "Colonial Assemblies with Special Reference to Constitutional Development Centering Around Parliamentary Privilege," a part of which was published in a volume of essays presented to Professor Charles McLean Andrews of Yale. Dr. Dora Mae Clark of Wilson College is working on the "British Treasury and Colonial Administration in the Eighteenth Century." Professor Albert G. Rau of the Moravian College and Theological Seminary is studying "Intercolonial Relationships, 1730-1780," with particular attention to the economics and politics of the period and their relation to the interactions between the English, French and the Indians.

The study of the Pennsylvania frontier is not being neglected. Dr. Leland D. Baldwin of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey is engaged in writing a history of the "Whiskey Insurrection." His aim is to consider more fully than others have done "the social and economic background of the movement and to try to evaluate its place in the development of the country." Dr. Russell J. Ferguson, of the University of Pittsburgh is investigating "Western Pennsylvania Politics, 1788-1824." He plans to

"trace and interpret the movements, parties, elections and personalities in their relationship to the ethnic, environmental, social and economic conditions. An effort will be made to integrate the political situation of the region with those of the state and nation." In addition to the published material, Dr. Ferguson is using the Brackenridge papers, the unpublished papers of Albert Gallatin and the James Ross manuscripts. The study of Dr. Randolph C. Downes of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey on "Indian Affairs in Western Pennsylvania and the Northwest, 1774-1795," is already familiar to many who heard his admirable paper presented at the meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Convention at State College in 1932. Dr. Alfred P. James of the University of Pittsburgh has been engaged for a number of years on a study of "the first English-speaking Trans-Appalachian frontier, that is to say, early western Pennsylvania and the Ohio valley." Dr. James has worked on this subject in the archives and libraries in Washington, Richmond, Philadelphia, New York, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Toronto, Ottawa, Oxford and London. With such extensive research, one may expect some important contributions from Dr. James' pen. Finally, Dr. Louis K. Koontz of the University of California at Los Angeles is making a comprehensive study of "The American Colonial Frontier," in which Pennsylvania will undoubtedly receive much attention. Dr. Koontz is mainly interested in the colonial period and will study the social, economic, geographic and political aspects of the development of the frontier during this period.

George Washington's interest in the west seems certain to be adequately dealt with for two outstanding scholars are now engaged in studying this phase of Washington's career. Professor St. George L. Sioussat of the University of Pennsylvania is preparing a paper on "George Washington and the Soldiers' Lands: An Unfinished Chapter in the Washington Biographies" and Professor Charles H. Ambler of West Virginia University has practically completed a volume entitled "George Washington and the West." Both of these studies will have a direct bearing on Pennsylvania history and will help to explain the importance of, and the widespread interest in land speculation which prevailed during the early years of our history.

In the field of economic history perhaps the broadest subject is

the "History of American Technology" which is being undertaken by Professor John W. Oliver of the University of Pittsburgh. The subject is of much interest for Pennsylvania history and is particularly timely in view of widespread unemployment which is a by-product of the great technical expansion of the past century. Dr. Oliver plans "to block out . . . the major technological advances that have occurred in the fields of food, shelter, clothing, communication and transportation, and then make a more detailed study of the advances in each of these fields during the different power ages."

Closely related to Dr. Oliver's project is the work of Dr. Arthur C. Bining of the University of Pennsylvania on the history of the American iron and steel industry. Dr. Bining has recently published a monograph on *British Regulation of the Colonial Iron Industry*, which is important from the point of view of Pennsylvania history because Pennsylvania was the leading colony in the production of iron during the latter part of the colonial period. Dr. Bining has also projected a comprehensive study of the Pennsylvania iron and steel industry. The first volume, "Pennsylvania Iron Manufacture in the Eighteenth Century," has been completed but not yet published. The second volume which will cover the period from 1800 to 1865, will deal with the rapid expansion and development of the industry in various parts of the state, social and economic conditions, the many inventions and changes in technological processes, as well as tariff and other problems. The third volume will bring the story down to date. Those who have heard Dr. Bining lecture on his subject or who have read some of his articles will look forward with much anticipation to the completion and publication of the work.

Dr. Louis C. Hunter of St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland, has done much research in the field of the Pittsburgh iron industry, his doctoral dissertation being: "A History of the Pittsburgh Iron Industry Prior to the Civil War." It is apparently not his intention, however, to continue his study in this subject. Instead he is now engaged on a study of steamboat transportation in the Ohio Valley which is described below.

Another great nineteenth century Pennsylvania industry, coal mining, has had to wait even longer for its historian. W. A. Itter, a graduate student and an assistant instructor at the University of

Pennsylvania has recently undertaken a study of the anthracite coal regions of Pennsylvania with special reference to social conditions from 1820 to the Civil War. It is hoped that this will be the beginning of a series of studies on the economic and social development and significance of the anthracite and bituminous coal mining industries in the eastern and western parts of Pennsylvania.

The history of Pennsylvania commerce between 1789 and 1860 is to receive detailed attention at the hands of Dr. Bining. In the preparation of this subject the correspondence of ship-owners and merchants, the customs house books and manifests, and the newspapers are being used. Dr. Bining hopes soon to have a preliminary article ready for publication on this important subject.

The Pennsylvania land system is again attracting interest, and with good justification, since there are few problems in American history which have been more neglected than the land policies and their operation. Miss Bertha Hamilton of the University of Wisconsin is now at work on the Pennsylvania land system and it is hoped that she will soon produce a monograph which will include not merely a discussion of the development of its various features, but also some treatment of the actual operation of the system and of the attitude of the settlers towards it.

Agricultural history, like land policies, has in the past been greatly neglected. A study of local histories indicates the fact that their authors did not see much significance in agricultural changes, crop conditions, prices, competition with the west, and the development of intensive farming. Frederick Miller, who is working for the doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania, has selected for his thesis subject, "Agriculture in Colonial Pennsylvania," and has already prepared an extensive list of source materials including mill records, farm ledgers, cash books, day books, and county tax lists. If it is worthwhile for doctoral candidates to produce almost a dozen histories of the Whig party in various states, it certainly is justifiable to have intensive studies made of the agricultural development of regions.

Two other studies in economic organization which are being worked out in the field of Pennsylvania history are "The Early Combination Movement in the Ohio Valley," by Dr. Louis C. Hunter and "Seasonal Aspects of Ante-Bellum Industry in the Ohio Valley," by the same investigator.

In the field of the history of transportation one observes some interest, but in view of the small amount of work which has been done in it in the past, and the great opportunity which remains open to scholars, such interest seems small. Dr. Bining's study of Pennsylvania commerce, already mentioned, will probably contain much worthwhile information concerning the shipping industry centered in Philadelphia; Dr. Hunter has a major study under way of the "Rise and Fall of Steamboat Transportation on the Ohio River," viewed in its social and economic aspects; David McCarrell has recently commenced a study of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Dr. Leland Baldwin is engaged in a history of transportation in western Pennsylvania from the beginning of the canal era. This seems to be all the major work which is being done in this important field. The crying need for histories of the Pennsylvania canals, the turnpikes, of stage coaching as well as of the railroad network and its social and economic effects does not seem likely to be met in the immediate future.

The financial history of Pennsylvania is receiving some attention, there being three projects in this field, at least one of which promises to lead to a most valuable contribution. Dr. Henrietta Larson of the Harvard School of Business Administration is at work on a study of "Jay Cook; Private Banker." Dr. Larson's plan is "to trace the business history of Jay Cooke, . . . to his failure in 1873." Some of the subjects which are to be included in this study are typical exchange and stock brokers, methods of stock and bond distribution, and investment banking. Dr. Larson is using the rich collection of Cooke papers in the Harvard library and in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, source material in the Philadelphia banks and the letter books of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The excellent work already done by Miss Larson is sufficient assurance that we shall soon have a comprehensive and valuable study of one of Pennsylvania's greatest bankers. Two doctoral dissertations in this field of financial history are also being prepared, one on the "Development of the Currency in Early Pennsylvania," by J. M. Weidman, and the other on the "Bank of Pennsylvania," by A. Moore.

Two other subjects in the general field of economic history which should be mentioned are "A Study of the Advertising Firm of N. W. Ayer & Son, Incorporated," by Ralph Hower, and a "History

of the Trotters," the well-known metal importers and wholesalers in Philadelphia from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, by Miss Elva Tooker. Both these subjects are being prepared at the Harvard School of Business Administration. Mr. Hower is going through "tons of account books, manuscripts, and printed material preserved by the Ayers." Miss Tooker is using the Trotter records which contain "hundreds of account books and letter books."

Immigration and colonization have interested historians for generations and this field of Pennsylvania history has not been neglected. Much attention has been devoted to the Scotch-Irish immigration and German immigration and the coming of a number of the smaller religious groups. Little attempt has been made to synthesize this material, however, and undoubtedly some of the racial histories have been written with a too uncritical hand. We now have two projects under way in this field which promise to go far towards satisfying a long-felt want for an adequate treatment of the settlement of Pennsylvania. Miss Bertha Hamilton is completing a study of the "Colonizing of Pennsylvania, 1682-1701," as her doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin. Miss Hamilton's study "is primarily concerned with the social and economic side of Pennsylvania during the period given, with an introductory chapter on the racial strains introduced and the general development west of the Delaware before the grant to William Penn." The author is particularly interested in the early homes, the methods of clearing the fields and tilling the soil, the development of trades and crafts and . . . the various internal struggles which rose in Pennsylvania during the period before 1701." The other and more comprehensive study is Dr. Dunaway's project for a "History of Population and Immigration in Pennsylvania." For a number of years Dr. Dunaway has been patiently collecting material on this subject which he characterizes as a "study of the complicated racial structure of Pennsylvania, from the beginning down to the present time." He has already published three chapters of the book in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* and would have completed the volume had he not been induced to turn aside from it for a time to write a general history of Pennsylvania. Dr. Dunaway is one of the

great pioneers in the field of Pennsylvania history and we wish him all the success he deserves.

The project which the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey has recently undertaken to gather materials on recent immigration into that section of the state promises that some time in the future, historians will study the recent immigration of Poles, Hungarians, and Slovaks in the same manner as Faust, Hanna, Blegen, and Stephenson have studied the earlier immigration of Germans, Scotch-Irish, Norwegians and Swedes.

Phases of the history of journalism in Pennsylvania are being studied by three doctoral candidates. Alston G. Field of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey has projected a study of the history of the press in western Pennsylvania to 1865. Many will remember the admirable paper that Mr. Field read at the meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Convention in 1932, which promises well for the present study. Elwyn B. Robinson is making a study of "Philadelphia Newspapers during the Civil War," the most important part of which, he writes, "will probably be the political affiliations of the newspapers and the manner in which the editors use their journals to serve party ends, although other trends in the history of journalism in Philadelphia will receive attention." J. Cutler Andrews of the Carnegie Institute of Technology is studying the "History of the Pittsburgh Gazette," the first newspaper to be printed west of the Allegheny Mountains. A preliminary article entitled "The Pittsburgh Gazette—a Pioneer Newspaper," has already been published in the *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*. With studies of the *Boston Transcript*, the *New York Tribune*, *Herald*, *Evening Post*, the *Toronto Globe*, and the *Chicago Tribune* in existence, one naturally wonders why Philadelphia newspapers have received so little attention heretofore, or perhaps why Philadelphia newspapers have played such small rôles, nationally, as compared with the representative papers of other sections.

In a state where there are so many religious colleges one might well expect to find a considerable interest in religious history, but such is not the case in Pennsylvania. In spite of the admirable work of Dr. Johnson at Thiel College as well as the labor of the American Baptist Historical Society and of Crozer Theological Seminary in collecting and preserving the records of religious

organizations, little interest is being displayed in this general field. Felix Fellner of St. Vincent College is collecting material for a documentary history of the founding of St. Vincent Archabbey of Latrobe, Pennsylvania, which when completed will undoubtedly contribute much to the history of the Catholic Church in our state. Professor R. W. Garrett of Bethany College is working on the origin and development of the educational principles upon which Bethany College was founded. This study is being based, in part, upon the records of the Campbell family which moved into western Pennsylvania prior to 1800. Pennsylvania needs a William Warren Sweet to arouse interest in the religious history of the Commonwealth.

The coöperative work on the history of architecture which is being prepared by the combined efforts of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey and the Pittsburgh branch of the American Institute of Architects is a promising development which might well be followed elsewhere. It is a pleasure to note that Jens F. Larson, former architect of Dartmouth College who was recently placed in charge of the new building plans of Bucknell University, instead of designing numerous pillared Greek Temples or heaven-stretching Gothic structures, is proposing to copy the predominant motifs of local Pennsylvania architecture in the projected buildings.

In a paper of this nature it is perhaps as important to suggest subjects for future research as to present the work which is already being prepared. It is with reluctance that the writer undertakes such a rash venture for the field of Pennsylvania history is still new to him. Nevertheless, in the hope that interest in Pennsylvania history may further develop a number of suggestions are humbly submitted.

From a cursory examination of recent historical activity in Pennsylvania and of the research projects now undertaken, it is apparent that political history is receiving adequate attention. However, there seems to have been little attempt to study sectionalism in the state or to prepare maps showing the different political alignments and to interpret these maps on the basis of physiographic factors, as has been done in some other states. Nor has there been any satisfactory explanation given for the almost fanatic loyalty which rural Pennsylvania has maintained towards the highly protectionist Republican Party. There would also seem

to be room for a comprehensive realistic history of party politics and political machines of the state in which the whole sordid story would be laid bare. Once such a comprehensive task were done, research scholars would be able to turn their attention to the more fruitful fields of economic and social history.

As for the economic history of Pennsylvania one feels that the surface has just been scratched. Why have scholars neglected to study corporation histories, business biographies, lumbering, furniture manufacturing, shipbuilding, navigation, river and canal transportation, land speculation, urban real estate business, coal mining, construction companies, the development of utilities and numerous other businesses whose historical importance may well exceed that of the Populist or Whig parties in the state?

It is in the field of social history that one finds the least interest shown. The contributions of the different racial elements in Pennsylvania have not been properly and completely evaluated. No attempt has been made to show what are the peculiar characteristics of northeastern Pennsylvania, which may probably be attributed to the New England migration into that region in the late eighteenth century. The contributions of the old world to Pennsylvania, with particular reference to architecture, manners and customs, household equipment, religion and social philosophy, likewise, still lack treatment. Soil characteristics, topography, minerals, climate and rainfall have been of great importance in shaping the development of the state, but few special studies have been devoted to them. Urban growth and rural decay, the impact of western farm expansion upon Pennsylvania agriculture, the physical and cultural changes produced in immigrants by new environments, the economic, social and cultural effects upon the settlers of improvements in transportation and communication, the humanitarian movements, and the history of the labor movement all cry for detailed attention at the hands of investigators.

Every teacher who has attempted to do any work in the history of Pennsylvania could add to this list many subjects and problems which have been neglected by doctoral candidates and more advanced research workers. It might, indeed, be found profitable to have a committee appointed which should study carefully the gaps in the history of Pennsylvania with the idea of preparing a detailed guide of worthwhile subjects for future investigators.