SOME years ago at an assembly in our junior high school, the speaker, a recognized local historian, began his talk with the question, "How many of you know who the white man was to discover Lake Erie?" To his amazement, not one hand was raised. He followed this with similar questions: "When was Erie founded? Where is General Anthony Wayne buried? How did Misery Bay derive its name? Where was the western terminus of the Erie Canal?" No one volunteered an answer to any of these questions, which revealed that we were woefully deficient in a knowledge of the history of our city. He then proceeded to give a most interesting and informative talk on Erie's historic background and the part it played in our country's history. Among other facts, we were told that if an Erie man, known by the name of Captain Dobbins, had not acted so promptly in 1812, in acquainting President Madison with the situation on the Great Lakes, Erie would probably now be British territory. Perry's fleet, responsible for saving the Lakes for the United States, would never have been built had it not been for the timely action of Captain Dobbins. And yet in not one United States history high school textbook is this man even so much as mentioned.

The outcome of this assembly was the organization of a "History of Erie" Club, of which the writer was elected sponsor. We had an average membership of about twenty and met informally once a week for an hour during the regular weekly activities period. It is one thing to arouse interest in a subject, but another to keep up the enthusiasm. The first major problem to confront the club was where to find historical data with which to work, and
second, how to proceed in the use of the material after it was collected. Merely reading local history is not very exciting or challenging to ninth grade pupils.


Pupils and teacher searched the city libraries for historical accounts of Erie, but to their amazement there were no books listed in the catalogs within the reading comprehension of junior high school pupils. Two large cumbersome volumes of Erie County history were examined, but these were too complicated and detailed for classroom use. Pamphlets and newspaper clippings were found in the files of the reference department of the Erie Public Library, but these were not available for circulation. It began to appear that we were stymied before we actually got started on the program of studying our community. The only way that appeared to us to meet the need for usable material was to condense the two volume history of Erie County into a series of articles which could be read and understood by the pupils. These stories were mimeographed and bound together in small booklets of forty-four pages each. Among the subjects included in the volumes were: The Indians of Erie; The French at Presque Isle; Anthony Wayne; Perry and His Fleet; Biography of Charles Vernon Gridley; The Story of the Old Michigan (now the Wolverine); Cranberry Day on the Peninsula; The Old Beaver Canal; The Erie Railroad War; Erie as an Underground Station in Civil War Days; Lafayette's Visit to Erie in 1825.

The next step that confronted us was to discover additional materials suitable for reference and study. Residents of Erie searched their attics, teachers and pupils haunted second-hand book shops and rummage sales, and, as a result, the library collection grew by leaps and bounds. Some books were bought, others borrowed, and a few presented as gifts. In scrapbooks we found old ballads, clippings from newspapers and photographs of places, incidents, and persons of an earlier time. Children brought in old
diaries, ledgers, and account books. Anniversary pamphlets printed on the occasion of different celebrations were uncovered and from the advertisements in these the class was able to make an extended list of Erie's vanished industries. It was interesting and enlightening to study the pictures and accounts from newspapers of industries and business establishments that at one time had been a part of the thriving city of Erie.

Much of the club's work was done through activities, and now since local history is included in the civics course, the same plan to some extent is followed in teaching this subject. It was then entirely voluntary, and each person selected the activity he wanted to do and could do best. Excellent results were obtained from the projects and pupils really enjoyed doing them. We compiled a scrapbook by making a systematic collection of newspaper articles about old Erie that appeared from time to time in local newspapers.

A brief description of some of the activities which were successfully carried out then, and some that are still being used, is given in the succeeding paragraphs:

1. We made large charts of the six wards of Erie, with each ward on a separate sheet, and pasted on these in correct location, small cut-outs to represent historic spots, schools, churches, public buildings, using a different color for each. When finished it looked somewhat like a pictorial map.

2. One ingenious pupil constructed to scale a beautiful model of Fort Presque Isle. He went to the Erie County Historical Society and from their model prepared his plan. Now this little fort is a permanent exhibit in our Erie Museum.

3. We made city tours, both individually and in groups, and prepared reports on our observations and interviews.

4. Two girls who had a movie camera, visited places of historical and civic interest and made movies. They showed their pictures to local audiences accompanied by interpretive descriptions.

5. In collaboration with the art department, cuts were made of the Wolverine, and the Wayne Block House.

6. As a group we visited the Erie Museum, and one of the attendants there lectured to us.

7. Some read books with an Erie background. To get the pupils
interested in reading, books were borrowed from the library, and selected passages were read aloud to them: *Fleet in the Forest* by Lane; *We Have Met the Enemy* by R. Crosby; *Biography of Oliver Perry* by a former Erie man, Rev. Dutton; *With Perry on Lake Erie* by James Otis.

8. Collections of picture post cards of cities from anywhere in the state.

9. Quiz programs on local history and Pennsylvania government, both in assembly and over the Public Address System.

10. One good crossword puzzle was produced and mimeographed, and a prize given for the first correct solution.

11. Two jigsaw puzzles were made—one cutting Erie County into its townships, and the other cutting Pennsylvania into its counties. These were made by pasting the maps on thin wood, and then cutting out. After they were finished the pupils took turns in putting them together.

12. Everyone contributed something to a “Vanished Industry” display. When the actual product could not be obtained, we drew a picture of it.

13. We gave an exhibit of old utensils and articles used in Colonial Pennsylvania.

14. Pupils who had made the pilgrimage to Valley Forge and Gettysburg, gave talks and showed their pictures.

15. In the drafting room, some of the boys made blueprints of the city, the peninsula, and the county, and each child had his own copy.

16. We made graphs based on growth of population, business, trade in and out of our harbor, health statistics, information which we obtained from the City Hall and the Chamber of Commerce.

This is a list of books and pamphlets collected:

1. "Guyed to Erie" by Ralph Lund—1921.
2. Dedication of the Perry Memorial—1925.
6. *Greater Erie*, on the occasion of the one hundredth anni-
versary of Perry’s victory on Lake Erie—Chamber of Com-
merce.
7. Centennial Newspaper, published Wednesday, September 11,
1895. Erie’s one hundredth birthday.
10. *Map of Erie City—About 1850, showing the route of the old canal, with names of owners and industries, et cetera.*
11. *Map of Millcreek Township, about 1850, also showing route of the old canal and old roads, owners of farms, et cetera.*
12. *The Erie Triangle,* by Elmer Reed.
13. *The Iron Ship, 1928,* a Burton Historical Collection Book-
let, issued by the Detroit Public Library.
16. Semi-Annual *Extra,* 1890, issued by the *Erie Dispatch Herald.*
17. *Erie Magazine,* April 1915, Board of Commerce.
20. *One Hundred Years, 1840-1940,* a history of the Erie City Iron Works, really a history of the boiler industry in Erie.
21. City Directories—including the years 1871 through 1876.
23. *Inventory of the County Archives of Pennsylvania.* Erie County No. 25, a W.P.A. project.

This year Erie is to celebrate its one hundred and fiftieth birth-
day. No doubt there will be much published about its history and we will be able to add to our collection.

About five years ago, the Social Studies Revision Committee built our Civics Course around life in Erie. In connection with this revision, as a member of the Civics Committee, I gathered the information on Erie past and present, and a reference book for all the schools was made, called “Know Erie.” My work in the History of Erie Club has been a great help since. Now that local history has been written into the State’s requirements, many excellent Pennsylvania histories are available; but the teacher in any community can find much in the way of community lore. It is there and can be uncovered with a little effort.
IN THE Allegheny Mountains, about fifteen miles west of Altoona on Route 553, and a few miles southeast of the mining town of Gallitzin, stands the picturesque little town of Loretto founded in 1799 by a Russian prince, Demetrius Augustin Gallitzin who gave up wealth and luxury in the cities of Europe to live and work among early settlers in the mountain fastnesses of Pennsylvania.

"Father Smith" was the name by which he was known to the scattered Catholics among the Alleghenies. Not for a long time did the hunters and traders who gathered in his little chapel know the romantic history and noble background of their unassuming little priest with the steady blue eyes.

The father of Demetrius Augustin Gallitzin was Prince Dimitri Gallitzin, a councillor to Catherine II of Russia, and an ambassador to the Netherlands. His mother was the beautiful Countess Amalia, daughter of a Prussian field-marshal. His father was, also, an eminent scientist, and his mother was the center of the intellectual life at the Hague. Demetrius Augustin was born in Holland in 1770. His childhood friend and playmate was young Frederick William, who later became the King of the Netherlands.

When Demetrius and his sister, Anna, were in their teens, their mother suddenly turned from the social life of the Hague to devote herself to her children. For their education she took them to Germany where she was associated with Goethe and other scholars.

When Demetrius was sixteen, his mother had a serious illness. Upon her recovery, she returned to the Roman Catholic Church in which she had been brought up. Upon her marriage, she joined her husband, Prince Gallitzin, who was of the Greek Orthodox faith and they reared their children in the Russian Church. But Demetrius now went with his mother, taking his first communion in the Roman Catholic Church when he was seventeen.

Upon the completion of his academic studies, the young prince was appointed aide-de-camp to an Austrian general, but he lost his rank when the Austrian government dismissed all foreigners from its service. Demetrius then gave up the military and political career his father had planned for him, and set out to complete
his education by travel. He visited the West Indies under the name of Augustine Schmet, which became Smith when he came to Pennsylvania in 1792.

Among the Prince’s letters of introduction was one to Bishop John Carroll, the first Catholic prelate in the United States. On the invitation of the Bishop, “Augustine Smith” visited the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Baltimore, where he was entered as a student. Already well educated, fluent in Russian, French, German, and Dutch, Augustine Smith was an apt pupil. He was so influenced by the devotion of the priests that he decided to spend his life in the New World in the service of the Church. When he was twenty-five he was ordained as Father Smith, and few knew of his aristocratic background.

His father commanded him to come home, his mother entreated, and his sister warned him. But the slight, sensitive, blue-eyed priest remained firm. He preferred a life of pious devotion in the New World to a career in war-torn Europe. He wrote home:

“I can find no lasting satisfaction except in the labors of my vocation. From the path I have chosen I cannot retreat.” The next year, 1796, Father Smith made his first trip into the Alleghenies to administer the rites of the church to a dying woman. Finding in the mountains a few Irish and German Catholic families, Father Smith decided to remain with them and to build a church. It was a wild, uncouth country of thick woods, wolves, bears, log cabins, crude manners, no doctors, no priests. Father Smith bought a tract of land and, with the help of his parishioners, built a chapel, that was dedicated on Christmas Day 1799. The people built, also, for their priest, a little house with a kitchen, and a stable.

Prince Gallitzin wrote home, “I have now, thanks to God, a little home of my own, for the first time since I came to this country. God grant I may be able to keep it.”

With the money his father sent him and with some money he borrowed, Father Smith bought some 20,000 acres of forest land in Cambria County. He sold or rented small tracts to the settlers, on easy terms. He constructed saw-mills, grist-mills, and a tannery, all this in expectation of a fortune from his father.

The Prince Dimitri died in 1803; the beautiful Countess Amalia in 1805. But Prince Gallitzin did not inherit the wealth of his parents, for Alexander, the Czar of Russia, disinherited him because he had deserted his country and his church. The Czar directed that
all the Gallitzin fortune be given to the daughter, Maria Anna, who had married the profligate Prince de Salm.

In 1802 Father Smith had become a naturalized citizen of the United States under his real name Demetrius Augustin Gallitzin. There had been some suspicion of his past. The new Bishop, an Irishman, named Egan, was not so friendly as Bishop Carroll had been. There was dissatisfaction among the parishioners, but when they learned of the noble birth and high rank of their modest Father Smith, they turned to him with respect and devotion. He became a power for good in the community and was known throughout the Church as "The Apostle of the Alleghenies."

He received no salary and supported several orphan children so that he had to live a very abstentious life. He was harassed by debt because of the loss of his fortune. His sister helped him some and would have done more but for the extravagance of her husband. When the Countess Amalia's library was purchased by the King of the Netherlands for $20,000 Gallitzin received his share of the proceeds, but he was in debt for the land he had purchased. The Reverend Peter Henry Lemka, who became his assistant, described the Prince as, "An old reverend gentleman with snow-white hair, wide-brimmed, badly worn hat, and in a coat of homespun twill, but noble in bearing and mien."

Father Gallitzin died May 6, 1840. His humble little chapel at Loretto has become a place of pilgrimage. The Sisters in charge are pleased to relate the noble life story of the founder of the mission, and to show the interesting relics. The chapel has been refinished and contains Father Gallitzin's original altar, encased in stone and flanked by wood carvings from Oberammergau. There is a relic of the true cross handed down for generations in the Gallitzin family and set in an exquisite frame of white gold. The windows of the chapel are now of stained glass, one of them bearing the coat of arms of the Gallitzin family. In the belfry, the first bell used in the parish still calls the devout to worship. A charming little library has been made by throwing together the two rooms of Father Gallitzin's house. He is buried in the churchyard of old Saint Michaels.

As a memorial for Father Gallitzin, Charles M. Schwab, who was brought up in Loretto, built a beautiful grey stone church, with a red tile steeple. It is a new St. Michaels, among the stately pines whose evergreen branches symbolize the unchanging devotion of the prince-priest who sleeps in their shadow.