THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE ASSOCIATION AT CARLISLE

BY PHILIP S. KLEIN

ABOUT one hundred persons from all quarters of the Commonwealth took advantage of fine Indian Summer weather and a beautiful display of autumn foliage to journey to Carlisle for the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association October 21 and 22, 1949. Another hundred from Carlisle and its environs joined the group to form one of the largest meetings of the Association in recent years.

A luncheon meeting in Dickinson College Commons on Friday, October 21, marked the formal opening of the two-day session. Dr. William W. Edel, President of Dickinson College, and Samuel M. Goodyear, President of the Hamilton Library and Historical Association, representing the co-hosts, welcomed the members of the Historical Association to Cumberland County and invited them to make full use of the facilities of the college campus and the library. Dr. J. Paul Selsam of State College, presiding at the luncheon, then introduced Dr. S. K. Stevens who delivered his presidential address on the subject: "Pennsylvania History—Past, Present and Future."

President Stevens recounted the widespread development of local historical societies and the splendid work they had done in the past and which they are doing at present. He told about the work now being done by the State Historical and Museum Commission, as well as that of the Federation. Looking to the future, he deplored the lack of the leadership of a strong state-wide organization and emphasized the fact that such leadership for state-wide activities is essential for the future. He suggested that the Pennsylvania Historical Association, because of its state-wide nature, can fulfill this function. But to do so its membership must be increased and its work broadened. He also pleaded for an archives building and said the Pennsylvania Historical Association had gone on record in support of this several years ago.

In the absence of Dr. Roy F. Nichols, the general session of Fri-
day afternoon was opened by Dr. Homer T. Rosenberger of Washington, D. C., who introduced the speakers. Mr. William A. Sullivan, of Brooklyn, N. Y., read the first paper on the subject "A Decade of Labor Strife; or, The Struggle of the Unskilled Wage-earners of Pennsylvania for Social and Political Equality." He presented a picture of the deteriorating condition of unskilled work-ers in Pennsylvania in the years 1828-1832, arising, as the women claimed, from the "avarice" of employers who reduced wages about thirty per cent in these years, employed "scabs," used the blacklist, "yellow dog" contracts, and the speed-up system, and demanded excessive hours of work. The laboring group met these conditions with organization and strikes; such were the cotton textile workers strike in Philadelphia in 1828, and the strike of workmen on the Pennsylvania Canal at Clark's Ferry, whose refusal to repair a broken dam without an increase in wages from $.80 to $1.00 per day led to the mobilization of the Dauphin County Militia. Employers effectively broke strike efforts, while the press generally was unfavorable to the cause of the workmen. Mr. Sullivan's conclusion was that the unskilled working men and women of the Jackson era fought a losing battle to maintain living standards in Pennsylvania.

Professor Hubertis Cummings' paper, "Some Notes on the State-Owned Columbia and Philadelphia Railroad," proved to be a literary as well as a historical treat, filled as it was both with human interest and with provocative suggestions for new lines of research in the field of his inquiry. Professor Cummings spoke first of the old Union Canal, describing it as a school for the engineers who were later to build the Erie Canal, the Pennsylvania State Works, and many other national transportation routes. He pointed out that the great Pennsylvania Canal system was more an American than an exclusively Pennsylvania project. It was conceived, designed and built largely by engineers from other parts of the nation, or from other countries. After tracing the vain efforts of surveyors to discover a practicable all-water route from Philadelphia to the Susquehanna at Columbia, Professor Cummings spoke of the part played by such men as J. Edgar Thompson in the building of the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad—men whose early railroad experience in the Keystone State was the groundwork for their later leadership in building national trunk lines and trans-
continental railroads. The speaker finally summed up the arguments which raged in the '30's and '40's regarding the merits of canals as compared to railroads. The clinching point was that by 1854, just before the sale of the State Works to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad was earning more than all the rest of the State Works combined. In this regard, at least, the vision of the engineers had been sharper than that of the politicians who had clung to the canal development program.

Professor Cummings' presentation provided an excellent point of departure for the paper of George M. Hart, of George School, who gave a detailed account of the work of one of the engineers of whom Dr. Cummings had spoken briefly. Mr. Hart's topic, "Moncure Robinson: Railroad Surveyor and Civil Engineer in Pennsylvania," proved for many to be a fascinating introduction to an eminent but neglected architect of the present economic structure of the Commonwealth. Virginia-born Robinson, student of railroads and canals in Britain, France and Holland, prophet of the eventual superiority of railroads over internal waterways as early as the 1820's, and builder of the greatest anthracite transportation system of the nation, devoted his major engineering efforts to Pennsylvania projects. He was chief engineer of the Portage Railroad, and then, in succession, chief engineer of the Little Schuylkill Railroad, the Danville and Pottsville Railroad, the Lancaster and Portsmouth Railroad, and finally of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. In the course of his construction work, he supervised the building, in Pennsylvania, of the first two railway tunnels in the United States, the longest inclined plane, and the first all-rail route from anthracite country to tidewater. Among his major technical contributions to railroading were his studies of gradients, the radius of curves, and tunnels. His economic contribution to Pennsylvania was to open the anthracite country by connecting it by rail with its logical markets.

At the conclusion of the Friday afternoon session of historical papers, many of the members visited the Hamilton Library and Historical Association which held open house and displayed an interesting exhibit of early Carlisle imprints and of Cumberland County arts and crafts. Meanwhile the Council of the Association held its annual meeting. At Council the question of continuing the
recent campaign to increase membership was thoroughly discussed. It was decided to continue the membership campaign, to continue the publication of additional numbers of the Pennsylvania History Series of pamphlets, and to consider ways of furnishing additional service to the membership. Council recommended an investigation of the establishment of joint memberships by means of which local historical society members could subscribe to Pennsylvania History at a reduced rate. Council also suggested that when funds became available, some free publications should be prepared both for distribution to the membership and for circulation among the public school population of the state.

Friday evening at 7 o'clock, almost 200 persons gathered at Dickinson College Commons for the annual banquet of the Association. After a delightful dinner, President S. K. Stevens introduced the main speaker of the evening: Revelle W. Brown, LL.D., President of the Reading Company. Dr. Brown spoke on "Some Aspects of Early Railway Transportation in Pennsylvania," bringing to light many little known incidents in the early history of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, but primarily sketching the development of the free enterprise system in America, using the Reading Company as a case study. Following Dr. Brown's well-considered and illuminating address, Frank Warner, widely-known ballad-singer, both instructed and entertained the assembly by singing a series of selections from George Korson's new book, Pennsylvania Songs and Legends. In response to Mr. Warner's infectious invitation, the audience participated in many of the more familiar songs. To conclude the banquet, Mrs. Helen Hall Bucher of Boiling Springs, sang a song of her own composition entitled "Pennsylvania."

At the business meeting of the Association, held at 9:30 o'clock on Saturday morning, the major recommendations of Council, as previously noted, were approved, and the following new officers were elected: Second Vice-President, Miss Frances Dorrance; Third Vice-President, Paul H. Giddens; for Council, to fill the vacancy created by Dr. Giddens' election to the Vice-Presidency, Melville J. Boyer; to assume membership on Council for the term 1945-1952: Oliver S. Heckman, Louis J. Heizmann, Alfred P. James, and John H. Powell.

The historical session, Saturday morning, was a panel discussion of "Pennsylvania's Contributions to the Arts," conducted by Dr.
Harold E. Dickson of State College. The panel consisted of G. Edwin Brumbaugh, architect in charge of the Ephrata Restoration; E. Gordon Alderfer, associate editor of Commonwealth Magazine; and Charles Coleman Sellers, biographer of Charles Willson Peale. Dr. Dickson briefly explained the field of inquiry and referred to Mr. Alderfer for a discussion of Pennsylvania's contributions in literature. Mr. Alderfer pointed out that much of the best literary work of Pennsylvanians had never been generally recognized. The standard histories of American literature, for example, rarely included mention of such eminent writers as James Logan, John Kelpius, Provost William Smith, Benjamin Rush, James Wilson, Lloyd Mifflin, and others. In summing up the work of Pennsylvanians in the literary field, the speaker pointed to five dominant tendencies which, over two centuries, have influenced Pennsylvania authors: (1) Medieval mysticism, represented by such men as Kelpius and Zinzendorf; (2) 18th Century Classicism, as seen in Proud, Dickinson, and Logan; (3) Revolutionary Romanticism, carrying up to the Civil War; (4) escapist writing from the Civil War era until the early Twentieth Century; and (5) the “Looking Backward” tradition, flowering in the historical novels of such men as Hervey Allen and Joseph Hergesheimer.

Virginia Lewis, of the Department of Fine Arts, University of Pittsburgh, who had been scheduled to discuss painting, was unable to attend the meeting, but her place was ably taken on the spur of the moment by Charles Coleman Sellers, authority on early Pennsylvania painting and painters. Mr. Sellers emphasized that the central theme of Pennsylvania history has been mechanical and industrial development. This scientific and technical emphasis was in part responsible both for the lack of appreciation of painting, and for some of the types of painting produced. He drew an interesting picture of the close association of mechanics and painting as combined in such men as Charles Willson Peale and Robert Fulton.

G. Edwin Brumbaugh, discussing architecture, opened his remarks by pointing out the fallacy of the frequently heard statement that Pennsylvania never had an architecture of her own. In correcting this misconception, Mr. Brumbaugh pointed to certain characteristic aspects of Pennsylvania’s architecture. The people who came to Pennsylvania brought with them distinguishing archi-
tectural forms; the gable-end chimneys of the British, the pent roofs of the Germans, the medieval structure of the plain sects; the narrow rectangular homes of the Welsh. These architectural individualities, as much a part of Pennsylvania as the people who brought them, were easily identifiable and gave the opportunity for a fascinating search to any observing traveller in the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania geography forced the creation of certain architectural forms; brick homes along the Delaware Valley; stone in the eastern foothills; and log or timber dwellings along the Blue Ridge. Mr. Brumbaugh concluded by showing the peculiar blending of many of the above forms of architecture—the small but obvious modifications of a British style home if built by German workmen, or the adaptation of a Quaker farmhouse to the locally available building materials.

The general discussion which concluded the panel presentation drew a comparison between the questions what Pennsylvania had done in the field of the arts and what Pennsylvanians could or ought to do to develop further an understanding of the artistic life of the Commonwealth.

About one hundred persons gathered for the Saturday noon luncheon to hear Dr. Lyman H. Butterfield, associate editor of the Jefferson Papers, Princeton University, speak on Benjamin Rush. In a sprightly, humorous, and brilliantly written paper, Dr. Butterfield gave all of those present a new insight into the contemporary importance, the character, and the manifold accomplishments of Dr. Rush. Explaining that for many years the eminent Doctor had been left in comparative obscurity, primarily because he at one time had written a strong criticism of General Washington, Dr. Butterfield proceeded to illustrate, largely by extracts from Rush’s letters and other writings, the breadth of his interests. He spoke of Rush as a physician, as a politician, as an educator, as a theologian, as an author, as a scientist, as a humanitarian, as a philosopher, and as one of the most influential, versatile, and controversial personalities of his day. Dr. Butterfield’s talk was an inspiring climax to the formal historical sessions of the convention.

The historical tour which immediately followed the luncheon could not have been favored by more delightful weather or by a more interesting selection of historical spots. Carlisle itself brought memories of the presence of Washington, Major André, James
Buchanan, and Roger B. Taney. At the Carlisle Barracks Museum were mementos of the French and Indian War, the Revolution, the expedition against the Whiskey Rebels, and many other historic military enterprises. At Silver Springs Presbyterian Church, founded in 1734, the members examined the stone church building which had been built in 1783. Reverend Edward J. Ardis, speaking from the high pulpit, sketched the history of the building which, some years ago, was carefully restored to its original condition by the McCormick family of Harrisburg. Those sitting in the box stalls, observing the simple white woodwork, the austere gallery, the wall-brackets for candles, the spiral stairway and elevated pulpit framed between two many-paned windows looking out on a grove of ancient oaks, could not fail to experience a vivid sense of life in days long past.

At Friedens Kirche, near Shiremanstown, Pastor Stanley B. Jennings explained how that stone structure, built in 1798 as a union church for Lutheran and Reformed congregations, and architecturally similar to Silver Springs Church, had served through the years. The two congregations worshipped on alternate Sundays until separate buildings could be erected. Commemorative services are still held annually at Old Peace Church. At St. John's Lutheran Church, across the road from Frieden's Kirche, the group listened to an old pump-organ built in Lancaster in 1807. This organ, which is thought to be the oldest in the United States still in active operation, was brought by raft up the Susquehanna, and by cart from Harris Ferry to the church.

Finally, in the face of the setting sun, some thirty cars of the procession drove southwardly to Boiling Springs where, at Allenberry, Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. B. Heinze served high tea for all.

The Carlisle meeting was in every sense a worthwhile and delightful occasion. To the co-hosts of the meeting, Dickinson College and the Hamilton Library and Historical Association, to the committees on program and local arrangements, to Mr. and Mrs. Heinze and others who extended their gracious hospitality to visiting historians, the Pennsylvania Historical Association owes a debt of sincere thanks.