THE THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING

By Charles H. Glatfelter

THE thirty-eighth annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association was held on October 17 and 18, 1969, at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The hosts were Wilson College and Kittochtinny Historical Society.

The opening session began at 12:30 p.m. in Laird Hall, Wilson College, with President Homer T. Rosenberger presiding. Following the luncheon, Paul Swain Havens, President of Wilson College, welcomed the association to the campus during the college's centennial year. President Rosenberger then introduced David Shepard, Archival Officer, American Film Institute. Explaining that he was currently working with the national film collection of the Library of Congress—a collection which came into existence in 1894—he described the efforts in progress to copy onto permanent materials the film which can still be found. Although much of the film which was made during the past seventy-five years has disintegrated or been destroyed, millions of feet still exist in private hands and are generally inaccessible. Mr. Shepard discussed the values of films as historical sources and commented on the special problems encountered in using them for these purposes. His presentation was accompanied by shots of the Boer War, Marcus Garvey, Adolf Hitler, and Chicago during the depression of the 1930's. All of these he used to illustrate his point that while films are extremely valuable to the historian and should be employed more than they are now, yet they must be examined critically to determine what they truly depict. The value of films to the historian will be greatly enhanced once an adequate catalog is available.

"Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century Pennsylvania: The Anti-masons," was the theme of the Friday afternoon session at which William G. Shade, Lehigh University, presided. In the first paper, Herbert Ershkowitz, Temple University, argued that the Anti-masonic movement had a major impact on Pennsylvania politics from 1829 to 1840. Organized after the disappearance of a New
Yorker who threatened to expose the secrets of Freemasonry, the Pennsylvania Antimasons worked to destroy that order as the symbol of the ruling establishment. In so doing, they sought to insure greater equality in American society, to bridge the gap between the realities of American life and the pretensions to democracy made on the Fourth of July. As a political party, the greatest Antimasonic strength lay among the Scotch-Irish and German farmers of western and central Pennsylvania, in areas which had supported Andrew Jackson in 1828. Thus, much of the next decade was taken up with an effort to bring Antimasonry into an alliance with Whigs whose failure to penetrate the agricultural areas of Pennsylvania left them in the minority. The eventual union resulted in a Whig victory, but at a high cost. Radical Antimasons such as Thaddeus Stevens exposed this new combination to splits over such issues as abolitionism.

The second paper at this session, entitled “Antiparty and Antimasonry,” was read by Ronald P. Formisano, University of Rochester. In it he professed to see running through American history from John Winthrop to Eugene McCarthy a hostility to parties as centralized and authoritarian institutions. Antimasonry flourished as mass parties in this country were being formed. Many of its adherents believed that Masons were hostile to Christianity, republicanism, and benevolence. They tended to identify Masons as Democrats who in both roles were trying to take away the power of individual judgment and conscience. Ironically, by their dogmatism and insistence that all take sides, the Antimasons helped promote the formation of the very institutions which they distrusted. Much work remains to be done before the data on Freemasonry and Antimasonry will permit conclusions to be drawn with confidence.

“The Art of Pennsylvania Technology” was the theme of the second Friday afternoon session. M. Howard Mattsson-Bozé, Geneva College, was chairman. In a paper entitled “Pennsylvania Medicine: Primacy and Mechanics,” Irwin Richman, Capitol Campus, Pennsylvania State University, asked whether there is a unique style to Pennsylvania medical history and, if so, what are its attributes. The answer to the first question is yes. The reply to the second can be best summed up by using the words “primacy” and “mechanics.” The style of medicine is to be
studied within the profession’s attitudinal differences and emphases, rather than in regard to therapeutics. What sets the style in Pennsylvania apart from that of other states is the Commonwealth’s unique role of leadership or “primacy.” It has taken the lead time after time in the establishment of medical institutions (first medical school, first hospital, etc.), but has lagged seriously in public health measures. While some physicians have been notable researchers and theoreticians, most of the Commonwealth’s medical innovators have been technicians (surgeons, skiagraphers, etc.) whose contributions to medical science have been within the mechanical sphere.

The second paper at this session, read by John Tyler, William Penn Memorial Museum, dealt with “Technology of the Iron Industry: The Era of Charcoal Smelted Iron, 1855-1920.” The condition of many or most of the charcoal ironworks between 1855, when charcoal as a blast furnace fuel was first surpassed by mineral fuels, and the early 1920’s, when the last charcoal furnaces were blown out, in many respects underwent little change. Hundreds of rural blast furnaces produced iron which, because of differences in ore, fuel, and technology, was not standard in quality. At most of these works scientific analysis was unknown. Despite increasing competition from coke furnaces and steel plants after 1865, production of the small charcoal plants grew until 1890. The reason for the long life of this antique industry was the unique quality of charcoal iron for making chilled cast iron railroad wheels. Once open hearth steel became available in large quantities at low prices, the industry died.

Following the afternoon sessions a group of persons visited the Falling Springs Presbyterian Church, the Franklin County jail, and the house in which John Brown lived before the Harpers Ferry episode. This walking tour was followed by an open house at the Kittochtinny Historical Society, where refreshments were served.

The annual dinner meeting of the association was held in Laird Hall, with J. Cutler Andrews, Chatham College, presiding. Following the banquet, Homer T. Rosenberger delivered his presidential address. Entitled “A Magnificent Record—The Pennsylvania Historical Association’s First Thirty-Seven Years,” it traced the background of historical activity in Pennsylvania, show-
The Pennsylvania Historical Association was formed in order to carry on a coordinating function. Preliminary meetings held at State College in April and September 1932 led to the creation of the organization. From the beginning its purposes have been broad. Looking upon itself as a stimulator and coordinator, the association was careful to avoid encroaching upon any project being conducted adequately by another organization. It has been the only statewide historical society in the commonwealth. Among its specific achievements are holding annual meetings in various cities, publishing the journal, providing assistance to secondary schools, launching an extensive bibliography of Pennsylvania history, publishing the Pennsylvania History Studies Series, publishing the Livingston Indian Records, serving as watchdog of scholarship, conducting annual research conferences, and drawing attention to Negro history. In looking to the future Mr. Rosenberger recommended five specific activities for the association: creating an endowment fund in order to enlarge the journal; preparing a list of source material on Pennsylvania history which it believes should be published; stimulating interest in oral history by arranging for a taped interview with future governors; presenting an annual award for preservation of significant historic sites, structures, or source material; and publishing books on a nonprofit basis.

The meeting of the Council in the Laird Hall Lounge concluded the day's program.

The customary Phi Alpha Theta breakfast, at the Holiday Inn Motel, was attended by about twenty-five persons and began the activities for Saturday, October 18.

The annual business meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association convened in the Science Center, Wilson College, at 9:35 o'clock on Saturday morning, with about thirty persons in attendance and with President Homer T. Rosenberger presiding. The recording secretary read the minutes of the preceding annual meeting, which were approved. Phillip E. Stebbins, business secretary, reported present membership at 1,527 and a sizable inventory of pamphlets.

Treasurer Richard P. Wright stated that he was going to use three figures to characterize the financial situation of the association as of this date: cash balance in consolidated accounts, $694.09;
printing bills outstanding, $3,562.21; and invested funds, $6,571.26. We are in a respectable condition, he said, but our credit rating would not show it. One stern financial fact is that an issue of Pennsylvania History can cost $1.70 per copy. Thus current dues of $6 may not pay for the four issues of the journal which a member receives. To relieve the situation, the treasurer presented an amendment to the constitution increasing the annual dues, effective January 1, 1970, from $6 to $8. His report was adopted. Since all of the constitutional requirements for the amendment had been met, action on it was in order. It passed unanimously.

Editor William G. Shade reported on the progress of the journal. He proposed enlargement of the Editorial Board. Consideration should also be given to the idea of turning the “News and Comment” section into a calendar, which would free some space in the journal for other uses. Mr. Shade thanked Mrs. Gail M. Gibson, who is retiring as “News and Comment” editor, for her valuable services to the association.

Robert L. Bloom, for the Publications Committee, announced that the Pennsylvania Architecture pamphlet has been published and that one on the Negro in Pennsylvania should be available in the next few months.

Ralph Shay reported for the Membership Committee. There are twelve regional membership chairmen, he said, and hopefully sixty-seven county chairmen. Only by continuing dogged efforts can membership totals be maintained. Institutional membership is more stable than individual. There is pressing need to increase both.

President Rosenberger announced that the next annual meeting would be held at Indiana University on October 16 and 17, 1970. The association will travel to Lycoming College in 1971 and West Chester State College in 1972. Edwin Bronner introduced a resolution which was adopted directing that a letter of thanks be sent to Wilson College, Kittotchtinny Historical Society, the program committee, and the local arrangements committee for their efforts and exertions in making the thirty-seventh annual meeting a success.

Philip S. Klein, for the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate, all of whom were duly elected: for president,

The newly elected president then made some brief remarks, in which he expressed for the association appreciation for the many services well-rendered by retiring President Homer T. Rosenberger. The sentiment was confirmed by a rising vote of thanks. The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Robert Clemmer, Lock Haven State College, presided at the Saturday morning session devoted to “Reform in Recent Pennsylvania History: The Movement for Child Labor Legislation.” C. K. McFarland, Texas Christian University, read a paper entitled “Crusade for Child Laborers: ‘Mother’ Jones and the March of the Mill Children.” Mary Harris (Mother) Jones was attracted to Philadelphia in 1903 by a textile strike that involved 100,000 workers. She was appalled to learn that 10,000 of the strikers were children and that many of them were just ten years old, even though the law prohibited employment of children under thirteen. Realizing that child labor was a national as well as a local evil, she decided to arouse public support for reform. She organized an “army” of 200, including children, to march from Philadelphia to New York. Only two dozen marchers survived the rigors of the month-long, and unsuccessful, effort to visit Oyster Bay, where Theodore Roosevelt was escaping the Washington heat. But the publicity they created was not entirely in vain. In 1904 the National Child Labor Committee was formed; in 1905 Pennsylvania revised its labor laws and insisted on more effective enforcement. Beginning in 1906 an increasing number of congressmen called for national legislation on the subject. For more than a decade, however, their efforts, like those of Mother Jones, were thwarted by an obviously uninterested public.

James R. Sperry, Bloomsburg State College, read the second paper at this session. Entitled “Florence Kelley and the Quest for an Effective Child Labor Law in Pennsylvania,” it asserted that the state’s legislative record in the area of child labor was the poorest of any of the large industrial states during the
Progressive Era. In numerous provocative and highly articulate speeches and articles, Florence Kelley exhorted the state to remedy this situation. Her efforts in her native state have been obscured by her nationwide efforts and accomplishments. Despite her best attempts, the Keystone state was not the successful model she expected and hoped it would be. Among the reasons for this failure are an insensitive political system, an archaic judicial philosophy, and the energetic opposition of the state's business community. But in the eyes of Florence Kelley the biggest problem was the apathetic attitude of Pennsylvania's average citizen. His apathy allowed him to lend verbal support to child labor reform but not to achieve the necessary physical and emotional involvement.

John B. Frantz, Pennsylvania State University, presided at the Saturday session devoted to Franklin County history. William A. Hunter, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, spoke on Fort Loudoun (properly spelled, as it was named for John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun). Garrisoned from 1756 to 1765 by provincial and regular troops, it had two military roles. Until 1758, it was part of the provincial defense line extending roughly along the Blue Mountain; subsequently it was a post on the military road to Pittsburgh. As a defensive post, it constituted part of a line to which Pennsylvania garrisons withdrew after the fall of Fort Granville and Armstrong's attack on the Indians at Kittanning. As a post on Forbes' road, it served as a base for Bouquet's campaigns in 1763 and 1764. The final British evacuation was complicated by the activities of an extralegal frontier association known as the Black boys. Acquired by the state in 1968, the site of Fort Loudoun will be developed by the Historical and Museum Commission as a historic property.

In his paper on "James Buchanan and Franklin County," Philip S. Klein, Pennsylvania State University, considered the difficulties of reconstructing the youth of people who have become famous, pointing out that recollections of contemporaries are likely to be slanted after the subject has achieved notoriety, that few people leave writings of their own before maturity, and that parental letters become dispersed among the family. He then explored the development of James Buchanan, senior, from immigrant clerk to wealthy merchant of the Mercersburg area. Pro-
Professor Klein also reviewed the questions of the birthplace cabin of James Buchanan and brought the 1798 federal census of houses to bear on the problem. He concluded that we can now prove the general appearance of the birthplace cabin, but have some doubts about the subsequent history of the structure.

Newly elected President Robert L. Bloom presided over the final luncheon session of the meeting. David Voigt, Albright College, spoke on “America Through Baseball.” His thesis was that an established spectacle sport like major league baseball furnishes a mirror for viewing changes in the American character. To know America, says Jacques Barzun, is to know baseball. Baseball people learned the hard way to take a pragmatic view toward their sport. Working pragmatists, they were committed to such values as individualism: the desire to be someone. Owners, writers, umpires, players, and managers all shared this theme, the pervasiveness of which is a key to today’s American character. In its other images baseball mirrors the surging “Fun ethic,” which arose at the expense of an older, entrenched “work ethic.” In tandem with the fun ethic went a “comfort ethic,” which included an all-out espousal of marriage. To guarantee material comfort for everyone, the “union ethic” was broadly applied. By driving Americans into defensive groups, the union ethic, along with other trends reflected in baseball, mirrors the mixed strengths and weaknesses of our capitalistic economy. Continuing survival in such a fast-moving milieu demands flexibility in the form of a “hang loose ethic.” Such a need was colorfully expressed by pitcher Dizzy Dean who said that his arm “ain’t what it used to be, but then what the hell is?”

With that somewhat ominous question, the meeting adjourned into history about 2:30 p.m.