THE THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

By CHARLES H. GLATFELTER

The thirty-ninth annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association was held on October 16 and 17, 1970, at Indiana, Pennsylvania. The hosts were Indiana University of Pennsylvania and the Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County.

The opening session began at 12:30 p.m. on Friday in a university dining hall, with former President Ralph W. Cordier presiding. Following the luncheon, William W. Hassler, President of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, extended greetings. Professor Cordier then introduced David Montgomery, University of Pittsburgh, who spoke on the subject of "Religion and Nativism Among Workingmen in Early Nineteenth Century Pennsylvania." Although religion played a significant role in shaping the response of workingmen to industrialization before the Civil War, the specific nature of that role varied greatly from one ethnic group or even geographical location to another. Responses of some groups were sharply hostile to those of others, and no unified labor movement emerged from the widespread working class activity and protest of the 1840's and 1850's. Initiative lay with the distinctly middle class advocates of evangelism. Their espousal of "holy living," temperance, orderliness, moral education, and nativism was seldom preached directly to the workers, who were generally deemed unworthy of the revival movement. It nevertheless generated emotion-laden political and cultural controversies which made workingmen active participants and tended to align them in voting behavior with the middle classes of their respective religious groupings, rather than with their fellow-workers along the lines of economic class. The American Republican movement in Philadelphia, which came to dominate that county's politics after the riots of 1844, provides a case study of this process.

Arthur L. Jensen, Westminster College, presided at the first afternoon session. Russell S. Nelson, Jr., Wisconsin State University at Stevens Point, read a paper on "Government and Politics in the Back Counties, 1729-1771." He argued that Pennsylvanians
had a greater opportunity to participate in county government and politics than did residents of Virginia or Massachusetts Bay. The Pennsylvania constitution provided for elective as well as appointive county offices. The appointed justices shared administrative duties with an elected sheriff and elected commissioners and assessors. The commissioners by gaining control of county finances successfully checked the authority of the justices. Within a generation Germans won elective offices in every back county except Cumberland, evidence that in Pennsylvania freemen had great opportunity to participate in government as voters and officeholders.

The second paper at this session, entitled "Lancaster Borough and Politics, 1742-1790," was read by Jerome H. Wood, Jr., Swarthmore College. Incorporated as a borough in 1742, Lancaster had a formal political structure which was democratic in eighteenth-century terms. Magistrates were chosen by an electorate consisting of at least sixty percent of male heads of families in 1759 and seventy-two percent in 1788. The thirty-six men who served as burgesses between 1742 and 1790 represented thirty-one families; nineteen were of a German-speaking background. But, as an element of deference, the elected leaders were almost always drawn from the wealthiest four percent of the male heads of families. There was a town meeting in which all eligible voters could participate, but mainly because the lack of significant issues failed to encourage participation, it was not an efficient instrument. The result was reduction in the scope of authority of the meeting, and creation of more specialized, autonomous agencies of administration.

Elizabeth Geffen, Lebanon Valley College, presided at the second afternoon session. William W. Hummel, Albright College, read a paper on "A Neglected Facet of the Progressive Era." This was the Pittsburgh survey, ignored by most historians of the Progressive Movement but still a valuable accomplishment, one of the first of its kind.

William L. Quay, Lehigh University, delivered a paper on "Philadelphia Democrats in the Turbulent Decade of the 1890's: A Study in the Decline of a Vital Minority Party." In the 1880's the Philadelphia Democrats had a united organization which threatened the Republicans who, since the Civil War, had regularly produced strong pluralities for their national ticket. A decade later the Democrats experienced chaos, confusion, and turbulence. In
1894, all the normally Democratic wards except one went Republican in the gubernatorial election. Two years later the party suffered another great loss when the party leadership divided over Bryan. Loss of grass-roots strength in 1894 and defection of most of the leading Philadelphia Democrats in 1896 were the two most important events in the decline of the party in the city.

Following the afternoon session a number of persons visited the site of the Indiana Academy, built in 1816, and the old log house where ancestors of James Stewart, the actor, once lived. Members of the Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County served refreshments.

The annual dinner meeting of the association was held in the Crown Rooms of the Holiday Inn, with President Robert L. Bloom, Gettysburg College, presiding. Following the meal, Francis Jennings, Cedar Crest College, spoke on “The Trouble with Turner, or, The Old West Versus the Frontier.” He argued that Frederick Jackson Turner depicted the American frontiers in mythological rather than empirical terms. Sources contradict Turner’s statements of supposed fact. His assumption that “savagery” and “civilization” were absolute entities locked in perpetual conflict is unsupported by evidence. Indian and European cultures had much in common, including agriculture and settled communities, and they cooperated regularly in trade and politics. Particularly during the time of Turner’s “Old West,” English colonies were allied to a confederation of Indian tribes under Iroquois leadership. Until the end of the Seven Years’ War, they depended heavily upon Indians for aid against the French. The Old West was a period of war between empires rather than between races. An alternative to Turner’s thesis would establish comparable frames of reference in which all the peoples of colonial America are seen as contributors to modern American society much as the mixture of peoples of medieval Europe are recognized as having created modern European society.

The meeting of the Council in The Coffee Shop concluded the day’s program.

More than twenty persons attended the Phi Alpha Theta breakfast at the Holiday Inn on Saturday morning.

The annual business meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association convened in Cogswell Hall, Indiana University of
Pennsylvania at 9:40 Saturday morning, with about thirty members in attendance and with President Robert L. Bloom presiding. The recording secretary read the minutes of the preceding annual meeting, which were approved.

Treasurer Richard P. Wright reported that during the year the financial situation of the association had improved, thanks to an increase in dues, limits on the size of Pennsylvania History, and a closer watch over its printing. For the year just closed (October 1, 1969 to September 30, 1970), the beginning general fund balance was $1,473. Receipts totaled $12,283 (membership dues $8,303; back issues of the quarterly sold, $1,855; and pamphlets sold, $2,125). Expenditures of all kinds amounted to $13,220, leaving a balance of $537. A bill for the October issue of Pennsylvania History will be soon payable. The treasurer concluded that association finances were on a sound basis. Life memberships and invested funds amounted to $6,833.36. There is also a considerable inventory of publications. The report was adopted.

Editor William G. Shade's report was brief—announcing a special issue in honor of Roy F. Nichols—and was received as information.

Phillip E. Stebbins, reporting as business secretary and for the membership committee, stated that there were 1,441 members and that several drives to increase that number were under way. He observed that there was an ample stock of a number of pamphlets on hand, including many of the first edition of Pennsylvania Transportation. There was an inconclusive discussion of what might be done to distribute these wisely.

For the Publications Committee, John M. Coleman reported a Council decision to reprint the pamphlets on the Germans and the Quakers. One on the Negro in Pennsylvania is about to come out; 10,000 copies will be printed. Also, 1,000 copies of an index to Pennsylvania History, covering the years 1934-1962, will soon be available.

Homer T. Rosenberger, for the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate, all of whom were duly elected: for vice-president, John M. Coleman (1973); for business secretary, Phillip E. Stebbins (1973); for recording secretary, Charles H. Glatfelter (1973); and for the Council, Robert E. Carlson (1973),

The president reported that a 325 foot observation tower is being proposed for a site adjacent to Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. By majority vote the Council had expressed itself in opposition to the project, and the matter was now before the annual meeting for its disposition. After some discussion, the following resolution was adopted unanimously.

Resolved, that the Pennsylvania Historical Association, at its thirty-ninth annual meeting, express its opposition to the construction of the proposed National Gettysburg Observatory Tower at the projected site on the grounds that such a tower adjacent to the Soldiers' National Cemetery would represent an intolerable desecration and commercialization of a historic area important to Americans in general and to Pennsylvanians in particular.

President Bloom announced that during his absence from the country on sabbatical leave during the first half of 1971 Donald H. Kent will serve as Acting President. The annual meetings of the next four years will be held successively in Williamsport, West Chester, Carlisle, and New Wilmington. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Benjamin Powell, Bloomsburg State College, presided at the first Saturday morning session. John F. Meyers, Wilkes College, read a paper on "Generosity in the Gilded Age; The Case of George Hollenback." Despite local legend, he said, George Matson Hollenback (1791-1866) did not begin the philanthropy usually attributed to his family. Instead, it began with his nephew, adopted son, and heir, who took the name John Welles Hollenback. George was a businessman whose energies were devoted to building a fortune and whose few benefactions were meant to institutionalize the family name. It was John Welles Hollenback, during the Gilded Age, who sought to aid the needy or distressed.

who became a strong supporter of the philosophy of Spiritualism, which called for the perfection of society through the counsel of great minds in the spirit world. Spear used the Kiantone community as a proving ground for the social reforms he believed were dictated to him from the spirit world. These reforms encompassed education, women, and marriage.

Donald H. Kent, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, presided at the second morning session. Carol Golab read a paper on “The Slavic Community in Philadelphia, 1870-1920,” comparing it with similar communities elsewhere and describing the methods used in reaching her conclusions.

James P. Rodechko, Bloomsburg State College, chose as his topic “Irish-American Society in the Pennsylvania-Anthracite Region, 1870-1880.” Although anthracite Irishmen were conscious of their ethnic origins, they were unable to forge strong organizations to deal with poor socio-economic conditions. Geographic division and limited numerical strength prevented Irish organizations from having an influential role in the region. Beset by weaknesses in leadership, ethnic rivalries, and business hostility, Irish societies and clubs were identified with violent activities and suffered from adverse public opinion. Catholic spokesmen provided contradictory attitudes towards such societies and left Irish Catholics confused about their social commitments. Lack of a strong Irish press was also a handicap. Without strong organizations, Irishmen were frustrated in their efforts to solve basic problems. As a consequence, a few became involved with the Molly Maguires while more left the coal region entirely.

Wallace E. Davies, University of Pennsylvania, presided over the final luncheon session of the convention. Daniel Walden, Pennsylvania State University, spoke on the career of Dr. Nathan Mossell (1856-1946). Born in Canada, Mossell grew up in New York. Graduated by Lincoln University, he applied to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, and was admitted “as an experiment” because of excellent grades and demonstrated aptitude. He was the class valedictorian in 1882 and was wildly applauded when awarded his degree. Opening an office in Philadelphia’s black belt, Dr. Mossell worked hard to serve the needs of the community. A decade later, with backing from white and black, he founded The Frederick Douglas Memorial Hospital and
Training School. In subsequent years, Mossell waged a long struggle to get Girard College to admit black orphans and warred against racism in numerous ways. He died in 1946, having lived a long and useful life of high principle.

The final session of the convention adjourned about 2 p.m.

CHARLES H. GLATFELTER
Recording Secretary