

## THE FORTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**T**HE 48th annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association was held on 12 and 13 October 1979 at Washington, Pennsylvania, and California, Pennsylvania, jointly sponsored by California State College and Washington and Jefferson College. Registration on 12 October was at the Ramada Inn, Washington; on 13 October in Duda World Culture Building lobby at California State College. Ninety-one people registered for the conference.

A panel discussion, "Careers for History Majors" from 10:00 A.M. to 11:45 A.M. in Room #1, Ramada Inn, was presided over by Mahlon Hellerich (who arranged this part of the program). Other panelists involved in exploring opportunities for history students were Walter Sanderlin (Washington and Jefferson), Peter Stearns, and Michael Weber (both of Carnegie-Mellon).

A luncheon was held in Room #2, Ramada, from 12:15 P.M. to 2:00 P.M., Roland Baumann (Chief, Archives and Manuscripts Division, PHMC) presided. The speaker was James Oliver (Indiana University of Pennsylvania). His topic was "I.U.P. Local History Project: A Public Role for Academic Historians." He related how a college faculty can become involved with the citizenry and interested groups in benefiting local history.

From 2:15 to 4:00 P.M., there were two concurrent meetings. Ronald Benson (Millersville) was the moderator for Session A, "The Industrial Revolution in Pennsylvania: A Local Approach." A paper by Robert Case (Our Lady of Angels College, Aston, PA) was entitled "Industrialization and Wealth in a Middle Atlantic Mill Town: Aston, Pennsylvania, 1860-1900." In the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century, Aston was one of several mill towns in Delaware County that specialized in textile production. The 1850s were years of rapid industrial expansion in the

township, followed by 40 years of steady growth in cotton and woolen manufacturing. One impact of industrialization on this small town was to alter drastically the structure of landholding wealth. Rather than benefitting the few and producing a concentration of wealth at the top, the reverse occurred. Analysis of tax assessment data from 1860 to 1900 revealed that from the 1880s through 1900, industrialization contributed to a rapidly expanding group of small landowners at the low income end of the tax structure, and a slightly declining group of wealthier landholders. Map and graph transparencies were used to illustrate the changing landowning wealth structure.

Thomas Winpenny (Elizabethtown) delivered his paper, "Progress Without Tears: The Rise of the Factory System in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1840-1880." The emergence of the factory system in mid-19th century Lancaster did not produce the anguish and misery that some authorities expect to be inevitable. The community seemed to take the change in stride; from the late 1830s through the late 1860s there is scant evidence of any union activity or labor unrest. What accounts for the tranquility? Intimidation, conservatism and the timing of the industrial revolution are not valid explanations. Better reasons for this quiet revolution are: 1) Lancaster never became a "mill town" with all its connotations; 2) the local work force enjoyed the benefits of family life; 3) there were abundant and inexpensive workers' homes; and 4) a benign influence was exerted by many institutions. The introduction of steam-powered cotton mills apparently represented an *opportunity*, not a *threat*, to the laboring households of the community—three, four, or even five incomes might be available in one family. Mayor Sanderson learned, as he sought reelection in 1866, that it was difficult to oppose construction of yet another cotton mill and still pose as a friend of the workingman!

The commentator for both papers was Michael Weber (Carnegie-Mellon). Winpenny relied on the absence of union activity (1836-1870) in Lancaster as his main evidence although he suggested that labor consciousness was kept alive through several small craft unions and that the laboring environment remained "agreeable enough" to prevent labor-management hostilities. Weber called for more stringent evidence to support the general hypotheses and offered a few alternative causes for the peaceful labor conditions in Lancaster. He raised questions regarding the extent of industrialization in Lancaster, and the size of the industrial labor force.

Mr. Winpenny provided little evidence on housing conditions, wages, mortality and job related accidents or health conditions such as sanitation. "Few mid-nineteenth century cities," Weber noted, "were healthy." That "the rigors of mill life were countered in evenings and on Sundays by the support and warmth of the family," is a romantic notion, Weber countered, and not supported by data on the ages of workers, their hours, the length of time they were employed nor data on households. Labor unrest may have been absent because workers saw their jobs as temporary conditions leading to other long term goals. Finally, Weber suggested that an analysis of the acculturation of Lancaster's industrial workers might reveal considerable labor-management tension which eventually contributed to the post-1870 labor struggles. Pre-1870 Lancaster may be the wrong time period and the wrong place in which to examine labor-management harmony in the nineteenth century.

Case also suggested that industrialization had less harmful effects on laborers than most historians suspect. It is unclear from Case's data, however, whether the mills at Aston dominated the town enough to stifle any potential union activity. Did the small size of the town, 2400 people in 1880, significantly ameliorate the relations between labor and management? Research by a number of historians suggests that community size was an important factor. Case's main argument "that the lower end of the landholding wealth structure benefitted more than the upper level" from industrialization, raises more questions than it answers. The samples employed are so small that one can hardly consider them reliable. Fewer than one third of all landholders have been identified; we are told that only twelve laborers in Aston owned any land in 1900. What proportion of the laboring class owned land remains a mystery. The twelve landholding laborers would thus represent less than one percent of the laboring population. What proportion of the small landowners actually worked in Aston's mills? Some of the dozen men may have in fact been farm laborers trying to eke out a living on an acre or less of land.

It was possible that the hypotheses of Winpenny and Case may prove accurate although they fly in the face of much of what we know—or think we know—about the impact of industrialization on blue-collar workers. Community size may have exerted a powerful force on labor management relations and community concern may have prevented employers from exploiting workers as they

did in America's large industrial cities. Their research raises more questions than it answers. Nevertheless, the questions and suggested hypotheses are important and may have implications far beyond Lancaster or Aston, Pennsylvania. Both researchers have demonstrated courage in suggesting unconventional positions. Their courage should be applauded, but they should investigate further in attempting to substantiate their cases. The speakers skillfully defended their themes after the comments by Weber and the audience.

Session B, on "Jacksonian Biography" was moderated by Richard McLeod (Shippensburg). Judith Heberling (Colorado Historical Society) spoke on "David Rittenhouse Porter: An Evaluation." Bruce Ambacher (Archivist, National Archives and Records Service) read his essay, "The Transformation of Party Leadership on the Jacksonian Era: Philadelphia, 1824-1837."

He analyzed 693 Philadelphia city and county political candidates and officeholders between 1824 and 1837 to determine the composition and changes in leadership and how leadership patterns in Philadelphia compare with other urban areas in Jacksonian America. The upper class provided 30% to 40% of all candidates and 50% to 60% of all officeholders. This group was less dominant in the Democratic party. The number of these candidates and officeholders, especially "gentlemen," declined slightly during the period, replaced by middle class politicians, including artisans. Democrats elected more artisans, grocers, tradesmen and retailers, especially to city council, than their opponents did. The number of candidates and officeholders with college educations or legal training far exceeded their percentage in the general population; educated candidates more often tended to seek state and federal offices. Seventy percent of all candidates and officeholders were Pennsylvania-born, another 14% were born in states bordering eastern Pennsylvania; the rest were from other states or from Europe. The Whig party afforded immigrants greater opportunity to gain political offices. Democrats showed greater longevity in seeking and holding office. Incumbents retained their office in 80% of the elections and won new offices in 70% of the elections they entered. Upper class incumbency was greater than for other classes. Non-quantifiable factors which also affected the character and composition of leadership included the Bank War, the ensuing newspaper "campaigns," mass rallies and petitions and the emergence of the "partisan politicians" who accepted more

national guidance. Philadelphia's patterns were similar to other American cities of that era.

William Shade (Lehigh) began his commentary by complimenting the speakers for clearly discussing topics of interest to historians of Pennsylvania politics and of the Jacksonian period. Then he used aspects of the papers to comment upon some problems in writing about the era. First was the question of party labels which are a necessary element defining a political party. Ambacher's use of "Democratic" and "non-Democratic" categories implied much more organization and continuity than existed. Shade asked Heberling how Porter had run for the legislature—as a local notable or a partisan? He urged Heberling to emphasize Porter's anti-partyism in her thesis since her findings about Porter add much information about such attitudes in the years between those studied by Michael Wallace and those examined by Michael Holt. Finally Shade discussed problems of periodization, especially those of defining 1824–1837 as a period in American political history. He argued that these were not the most relevant years to test Ambacher's thesis. "His data seems to run out when all the fun is beginning." Shade also faulted Ambacher for inconsistent use of economic categories noting that "entrepreneurs" are discussed in the text, but do not describe the groups listed in the tables. In conclusion, he emphasized the way both papers reveal the transitional nature of the 1830s.

John M. Coleman (Lafayette) president of P.H.A., presided at the annual dinner, beginning at 7:00 P.M. in Room #2, Ramada Inn. Those present were entertained and enlightened by Samuel Hays (Pittsburgh) who spoke on the topic "Pennsylvania Environmental Politics Since World War II: A Comparative Look."

The Executive Council of the Pennsylvania Historical Association met at 9:00 P.M. in Room #1, Ramada Inn.

The program resumed at 7:30 A.M. on 13 October in Room #1, Ramada Inn with the Phi Alpha Theta breakfast, hosted by Donald Hoffman.

At 9:30 A.M., 13 October 1979, the annual business meeting convened in the Duda Building at California State College, with President Coleman presiding. The minutes of the 47th (1978) business meeting were approved as printed in the April 1979 issue of *Pennsylvania History*.

Business secretary McNall reported that, as of 1 October 1979, there were 1060 members, a net loss of three since 1 October 1978.

In the past year, there were fifty-four new members; fifty-one others did not renew membership (ten of them are deceased). The *Pennsylvania History* journals' inventory showed 3184 copies (187 were sold since October 1978). The *Studies* booklets inventory was more than adequate for all titles, especially *Pennsylvania Oil* (3824), *Negro in Pennsylvania History* (3781), *Pennsylvania Boundaries* (2728), and *Pennsylvania Reformers* (2386). McNall presented a proposed budget for 1980 showing expenditures of \$12,175, the same as for 1979.

Treasurer Wright reported a total account balance, as of 30 September 1979, of \$18,368.45; a year ago it was \$18,389.66. This drop in total funds would be greater but for the \$1385.80 income from the sale of booklets. The general fund account cash deficit was \$4481.52; a year ago the deficit was \$2281.38. The cost of printing the *Pennsylvania History* quarterly this past year was \$10,124; each issue costs from \$2300 to \$2600. Almost all the money collected as dues is needed to print a year of the magazine. The journal expenses are included in the general fund, not the publication fund; the latter has a balance of \$10,488.40. The investment fund total was \$12,361.57. Wright urged an increase in annual dues, as recommended by Council the previous evening. Such a motion passed; if it is again passed at the October 1980 business meeting, dues would be raised to \$12 for individuals and \$15 for institutions-libraries.

There was no formal report from Editor Cox. It was noted by President Coleman that the editor seeks more funds.

Membership chairman Hoffman insisted that a concentration on recruiting new members is greatly needed. It is hoped that a bonus for joining will be fruitful. He lamented the lack of a current list of members. Last night, Council approved the printing of 2500 membership brochures.

There was no publications committee report. The Council, last evening, approved a 20% discount off the booklet price for book-sellers, including college bookstores. There were no reports from the research committee nor from the committee on the status of history in the schools of Pennsylvania.

The resolutions committee reported:

1) Ira Brown: "Whereas members and friends of the P.H.A. have enjoyed the 48th annual meeting because of adequate space, excellent food and lack of interruptions, be it hereby resolved that the P.H.A. heartily commend the Local Arrangements Committee,

John Folmar, chairman, (California) and Walter Sanderlin (Washington and Jefferson), for planning the accommodations in the city of Washington, Pennsylvania, and at California State College."

2) George Swetnam: "We express our thanks to the members of the Program Committee, co-chairmen John Folmar and Roland Baumann, and Arthur Jensen, Robert Plowman and Donald Swift, for their efforts in preparing the program of this 48th annual convention of the P.H.A. They have succeeded in the difficult task of offering a wide variety and geographically well-distributed group of subjects and participants. Appropriately, they included a large proportion of western Pennsylvania scholars and topics with representative themes from other areas of the state, and covered topics from the late 1770s to the 20th century. We commend their balance and imaginative approach to future program planners."

3) Chairman Homer Rosenberger: "Whereas the authorities of California State College and Washington and Jefferson College have generously sponsored the 48th annual meeting of the P.H.A., be it hereby resolved that the officers and members of this Association extend their sincerest gratitude to the representatives of these institutions for their hospitality."

The nominating committee's report was presented by Arthur Jensen. There being no additional nominations, the following slate was elected: for vice-president (three-year term, renominated after a one-year term): John Frantz (Penn State); for recording and corresponding secretary (three-year term): Ronald Benson (Millersville); for council (three-year terms): James Mooney (2nd term); Benjamin Powell (2nd term); Helen (Mrs. C. B.) Andrews (1st term); John F. Coleman (1st term, again eligible after a year's absence from council); and John Hoffman (1st term).

Future meeting dates are: 49th (1980), tentative October 17-18, at Wilkes College; 50th (1981) at West Chester; and 51st (1982) at Gettysburg.

The annual business meeting adjourned at 9:55 A.M.

The program resumed at 10:30 A.M., 13 October 1979, with two concurrent sessions. The moderator for Session C, "The Whiskey Insurrection: A Revaluation" was Kenneth Keller (Ohio State). Dodee Fennell (University of Pittsburgh), in her paper "Western Insurrection: Popular Classes, Culture and Ideology in Late 18th Century Pennsylvania," emphasized the influence of Rev. Harmon Husband and millennialism on the course of events. The second essay,

"The Whiskey Rebellion: A Constitutional Analysis," was presented by Steven Boyd (University of Texas, San Antonio). The Rebellion and its suppression served a dual constitutional purpose. First, its suppression and the ensuing collection of federal excise taxes demonstrated the ability of the federal government to exercise powers granted to it by the Constitution: a) to tax and b) to coerce a compliance with its policies. Second, the suppression served to deny the legitimacy of the colonial and revolutionary tradition of popular action and defined narrowly the meaning of the first amendment right of petition.

The moderator, Keller, commended Ms. Fennell's imaginative use of the concept of "rebellious traditional culture" but offered an alternative explanation for the expressions of rebellion she observed. Were there truly millennial expectations among western Pennsylvania's poor? Hugh Henry Brackenridge observed in his *Incidents of the Insurrection* that during his 1780 visit to Harmon Husband's home, Husband told Brackenridge that the only person he could get to believe his millennial stories was his wife. Keller suggested that if there were latent millennial hopes in Pennsylvania, they certainly would have surfaced during the political confusion of 1780. Ms. Fennell must explain why they became so appealing by the 1790s. Millennialism would have been anathema to such western Presbyterians as those in John Macmillan's congregations. The youthfulness of the local population may explain the rebellious acts Ms. Fennell described. Census records show that western Pennsylvania was filled with young males, persons given to pranks and horseplay; perhaps gestures of "rebellion" were more the products of adolescence than of class struggle.

Keller found Professor Boyd's paper lacking in specific detail and documentation. He advised Boyd to explain the division between "adopting" and "non-adopting" anti-federalists more completely.

Jacob Cooke (Lafayette), the commentator, submitted his remarks in writing since he could not be present. They were read by Roland Baumann. Cooke took exception to both papers. He found Boyd's assertion that the insurrection legitimized the new government a truism, but commended his suggestion that the insurrection's suppression helped define the meaning of the right of petition. He noted that Boyd's paper failed to support this puzzling hypothesis. Cooke found Ms. Fennell's interpretation stimulating, but her claims that one sermon of Husband being so significant were exaggerated; instead it was merely a minor document. Cooke's



own studies of western Pennsylvania show that although millennialism was popular elsewhere, it was not in western Pennsylvania. If it were such a potent and popular force, why did it not produce an insurrection elsewhere? Cooke believed that Edward Thompson's studies of late eighteenth century English plebian culture were inapplicable to western Pennsylvania. Ms. Fennell's views of western Pennsylvania culture, though interesting, did not explain very much about the military fracas of 1794.

Session D, "The Aeronautical Community In Pennsylvania Before 1903," had Eugene Levy (Carnegie-Mellon) as moderator. Tom Crouch (curator of astronautics, Smithsonian Institution) could not be present, but submitted a paper on "Samuel Pierpont Langley and the Experiments in Aerodynamics: The Pittsburgh Years," which was read by William Trimble. The paper examined Langley's laboratory experiments in aerodynamics at the Western University of Pennsylvania, 1887-1891. Langley viewed the problem of heavier-than-air flight as essentially an exercise in applied physics and sought to disprove Newton's sine square rule which seemed to preclude the possibility of heavier-than-air manned flight. With an elaborate "whirling table" at the Allegheny Observatory, the scientist made many sophisticated experiments designed to show how much power was needed for flight. His methodology and conclusions, published in *Experiments in Aerodynamics*, came under fire in some circles, but Langley's lofty reputation in the scientific community convinced many that aeronautics was a viable field of endeavor.

William Trimble (editor, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania) followed with the paper, "The Amateur in Aviation: Gustave Whitehead and George A. Spratt." He examined two amateur inventors and aviators around 1900 and showed that their connections with other scientists studying heavier-than-air flight helped to determine success or failure. Whitehead, a German immigrant living in Pittsburgh in 1899, worked practically alone and had little success. Spratt, a resident of Coatesville, had the support and advice of Octave Chanute and the Wright brothers in trying aerodynamic experiments; he built and flew a number of gliders on his farm. Neither amateur, however, made any substantial contribution to solving the complex problem of flight.

Edward Constant (Carnegie-Mellon) commented on both papers. He noted that Langley, who defined the problem of heavier-than-air flight as a physicist and developed a rational experimental

program to solve the problem, went furthest astray of all the early experimenters. Constant emphasized that in the case of heavier-than-air flight, the technology, i.e., actual flying, preceded the full understanding of the scientific principles. Spratt, Constant argued, provided a good example of the isolated genius bringing a rigorous and well-defined empiricism to bear on a technological and scientific problem. Asking why the problem of flight generated such widespread enthusiasm, Constant concluded that it was perhaps time to examine the social dynamics of the technological problem.

The next event was a luncheon in Gallagher Hall, California State College, at 12:30 P.M., with John Folmar (California) presiding. Nancy Nelson (California vice-president for Academic Affairs) welcomed the members of P.H.A. George Swetnam (Glenshaw, PA), historian, free lance writer, legendary journalist, spoke most knowingly and entertainingly on "History and Folklore: Enemies or Allies?" Although "folklore" has long been considered a naughty word by historians, many of their documentary and other materials are closely related to folklore, or even contain many folk materials. This is particularly true of oral history and genealogy, and also of newspaper and magazine stories; memoirs, biographies and autobiographies; statements quoted by modern or earlier historians; official reports; letters; and personal papers. Unfortunately, few historians have any knowledge of folklore. Often these folklore bits are very persuasive and bear the general stamp of truth, so that even careful historians are deceived. Yet to one with even a slight knowledge of folk themes, symbolism and similar tendencies—let alone many of the typical stories themselves—the danger of trusting such evidence is readily apparent. Folklore also provides valuable information as to the thinking of people of certain backgrounds, or of certain periods or areas. At least one course in folklore should be a prerequisite for every history major. "Don't knock it if you haven't tried it," was his final warning.

The last part of the program was Session E at 2:15 P.M., "Erie County in Pennsylvania History." The moderator was Carrolyle Frank (Edinboro). An essay, "A Latter Day Populist's Quarrel with the New Deal: Frank Henry Selden and the Passing of the Pietistic Republic," was given by Donald Swift (Edinboro). Frank Henry Selden (1866-1950) of Lundy's Lane resisted the collapse of what Norman H. Clark has called "the pietistic republic" by

opposing the repeal of the eighteenth amendment, the legalization of Sunday baseball and the consolidation of rural schools. As a Prohibition party candidate for Congress in 1934, he blamed the depression on "Tory" bankers who created a money famine and allied with Franklin D. Roosevelt to seize control of government. In 1936, this latter-day populist actively supported the presidential candidacy of William Lemke. An officer of the National Federated Independent Union, Selden fought the N.L.R.B., the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O., claiming they stood for union racketeering and bred class antagonism. James Young (Edinboro) spoke on "Repression of the United Electrical Workers at the Erie General Electric Works, 1948-1954." The United Electrical Workers (UE) in Erie's General Electrical Works suffered the same barrage of blows which rained upon the union nation-wide during this period. A remarkable—and not entirely coincidental—convergence of corporate, political and rival union interests produced the onslaught. Veiled behind anti-Communist rhetoric, the attackers of Erie UE Local 506 ignored Erie Communist Party leadership and aimed at the union president, John Nelson, who was not even a CP member.

The aim of General Electric seems to have been, quite simply, to break the powerful UE union. Politicians participated in the red-baiting campaign against UE. Finally, the rival IUE—created by the CIO after UE left that organization—served both the ambitions of James Carey, who had been deposed as UE president in 1941, and the defensive strategy of the CIO in the face of the rising tide of anti-labor sentiment engineered by various forces in the United States. Despite the ordeal, the UE leadership emerged from the attempted repression intact, if badly bruised; the challenge to UE 506 in Erie failed. The commentator was John Claridge, Executive Director of the Erie County Historical Society.

The 48th annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association adjourned at 4:00 P.M., 13 October 1979.