EARLY COURTS, JUDGES, AND LAWYERS OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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A passing glance at some of the facts, incidents, and characters of the early period of our Western Pennsylvania history is all that can be expected in a paper of this kind.

In preparing it, I cannot claim original research,—the delving into ancient manuscripts and records (save in a few instances), but like many other "Historians" of all times and ages, I have culled my material from the works of more laborous and erudite predecessors.

For those whose taste directs them into the pleasant field of study of the chronicles of the "Good Old Days," there is no more absorbing subject than that of the Provincial, Colonial, and early post-Revolutionary period of our Pennsylvania history, and especially of that relating to our own section of the state, which, for a long time, was the outpost of Empire and almost the last portion of the original Colonies to know and feel the influence of the Pioneer, the Indian Trader and Fighter, the intrepid hunter and woodsman, or

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the hardy navigator of the western waters, who set out from Pittsburgh to carve out that greater empire which touches the Pacific.

We must, however, confine ourselves to the story of the old time Courts, Judges, and Lawyers who did so much to make history in our great county, which Lincoln called “The State of Allegheny.”

The first Pennsylvania Court having jurisdiction over the settlers in this region was convened at Bedford on April 16, 1771, this being a part of Bedford County. It was there that the first Judges of that Court, George Wilson, William Crawford, Thomas Gist, and Dorsey Pentecost (who were justice of the peace and not Judges learned in the law) established the Township of Pitt, which embraced the greater part of what is now Allegheny and portions of Beaver, Washington, and Westmoreland counties,—having Fort Pitt within its boundaries. This township then included within its enormous limits fifty-two land-owners, twenty tenants, and thirteen single freemen!

The hardy and aggressive settlers on this side of the Alleghanies soon convinced the authorities that the great distance, inconveniences, and hardships of a trip to the seat of justice at Bedford required a county organization and a Court nearer their homes, and as a consequence Westmoreland County was erected February 26, 1773, out of Bedford’s territory.

There seems in those far distant days to have been a certain affinity between the Courts and the taverns,—because Westmoreland’s first Court was held in Robert Hanna’s tavern, and, as will be hereafter noted, Allegheny County’s tribunal sat in the hospitable third story of William Irwin’s house of entertainment and tarried for a time in John Reed’s “Sign of the Waggon.” But this is a digression.

Five trustees were named to locate the county seat and erect buildings for the new county of Westmoreland. Robert Hanna and Joseph Erwin were among them, as was also Arthur St. Clair. Hanna rented his loghouse to Erwin, to be kept as a tavern, and got a majority of the board to recommend his place, which was done against the protest of St. Clair and a minority, who advocated Fort Pitt as the county seat. The new seat of justice was christened
Hannastown, a few rough log cabins quickly sprang up, and here, in 1773, the first court west of the Alleghanies was held under Pennsylvania jurisdiction, by William Crawford, one of the justices who sat in the first Court at Bedford.

Though remote and primitive, Hannastown was promptly equipped with a jail, a whipping post, stocks, and a pillory. Here, too, was heard the first murder trial that was held in this western country,—that of an Indian tried for killing a white man. Chief Justice McKean presided, and the prisoner was defended by Hugh H. Brackenridge, who was afterwards among the first lawyers admitted to the Bar of this county, and one of the most famous.

In the Hannastown log courthouse, one small room had to suffice for the parties, witnesses, jurors and spectators, who stood, the only seats, which were rough hickory chairs, being occupied by the judges, and were placed on a rude platform made of clap-boards.

Arthur St. Clair was the first Prothonotary of Westmoreland County.

The Indians attacked and burned Hannastown in 1782, and, as a result, the county seat was removed a few miles distant to its present site, Greensburg.

Until the organization of Allegheny County, suitors from Pittsburgh and vicinity were obliged to travel either to Hannastown or Greensburg,—the first Court in the new location being held at the latter place in January, 1787.

Although the first Court under Pennsylvania jurisdiction that was held west of the Alleghanies, sat at Hannastown, the first which sat within the present limits of our county was held at Pittsburgh under the jurisdiction of Virginia, which claimed this territory, and whose Governor, Lord Dunmore, renamed Fort Pitt "Fort Dunmore." Here, the Court of the West Augusta District sat in February, 1775, the last sessions being held in November of that year. Lord Dunmore's tribunal was equipped, if not with a pillory and stock, at any event with a "ducking stool," which was placed at the "Point." Upon the formation of Virginia, among others, from this debatable ground, of the County of Yohogania, in which Pittsburgh was situated, the seat of Justice was removed from Fort Dunmore to a new site up the Monongahela River, where a courthouse and jail were
erected, but whether the noble Earl also removed his "ducking stool" is not narrated in the chronicles of that troubled time.

The justices of the peace who held this Virginia Court in Pittsburgh were the famous George Croghan, the generally disliked and infamous John Connolly, Dorsey Pentecost, who was of the earlier Bedford County magistrates, Thomas Smallman and John Gibson, whose nephew, Chief Justice Gibson, was later to be one of the greatest of our Pennsylvania Justices of the Supreme Court.

Westmoreland is the great mother, not only of Allegheny, but of many other Western Pennsylvania counties. Out of its original territory were formed in whole or in part Washington in 1781, Fayette in 1783, Allegheny in 1788, Butler, Mercer, Crawford, Erie, Venango and Armstrong in 1800, and Indiana in 1803.

Although, as above indicated, Washington County had been carved out of Westmoreland in 1781, her territory was yet too large, and moreover the vigorous demands of the settlers of this section who were compelled to travel to Greensburg, at last resulted in relief, and on September 24, 1788, Allegheny was formed out of portions of Westmoreland and Washington counties, to which, somewhat later, more territory taken from Washington was added. Our county was almost "imperial" in its limits. It extended to the boundary of New York and the shores of Lake Erie. When Pennsylvania in 1792 bought from the National Government the "Erie Triangle" containing about two hundred thousand acres, which gave her a lake coast and port, this new territory was added to the limits of Allegheny County.

At last, Fort Pitt and the "Forks of the Ohio" have come into their own and a real court is about to be held in Pittsburgh, and since then, for 134 years, the courts of this great county have been busy with the affairs of one of the most important, progressive, and influential Judicial Districts in the Union.

This first of our Courts had a very humble beginning, not being housed in a magnificent temple of justice, such as now hold our tribunals, but in Watson's old two-story log-house, long used as a store, but now turned into a Court-house. Here the courts sat for a long time. Of course, there
was a jail, and in all probability the accompaniments of that rude time—stocks, a pillory, and a whipping post were also to be found.

The Court of Quarter Sessions met here in December, 1788. Its President was George Wallace, and his associates were John Scott, John Wilkins and John Johnston. None of them was a lawyer. William Penn disliked lawyers, and for a long time the Courts of Quarter Sessions were held by men of the rough community, who, by their good sense and native ability, provided for the administration of justice in the backwoods country probably as well as trained lawyers could have done.

It is certain that George Wallace, who was a man of education and substance, filled all the requirements for many years, since he presided in that Court with honor and success for thirteen years, or until the new Constitution of 1790 went into effect, when, in 1791, he was re-appointed as an Associate Judge to sit with the first Law Judge of this Western District, Alexander Addison, who was one of the nine lawyers admitted to practice in this county, before President Wallace, when he held his first court in 1788. Wallace owned, lived upon, and cultivated the famous tract known as Braddock's Fields, and died there in 1814.

In addition to Addison, eight other lawyers were admitted at the first session of the court held here. They were David Bradford, Hugh H. Brackenridge, James Ross, John Woods, George Thompson, David St. Clair, James Carson and Michael Huffnagel, several of whom became famous at the bar of this or adjoining counties. Their admission was moved by Robert Galbraith, Esq., designated by the Attorney General as his deputy for this district.

As Judge Addison, our first "law judge," an educated, refined and distinguished jurist, fell a victim to the venom of one of his lay associates, it is not out of place to note here what William H. Loyd, in his "Early Courts of Pennsylvania," says of some of these Associate Judges. He was discussing the tendency of many people of the early period of our history to indulge in radical attacks upon the judiciary, and then proceeds:

"It may be said, however, for those who railed against the Courts, that many of the lay associate judges set any-
thing but a good example of judicial dignity, and quarreled even to the point of coming to blows and dragging each other from the bench. The lay judges, who rode the Circuits, manfully attempted to preserve in the log courthouses of remote counties the dignity of Westminster Hall, and added to their unpopularity with the uncouth inhabitants by instructing them in manners as well as law.”

The lay judges, however, did not sit as sole judges in the Courts of Oyer and Terminer and Nisi Prius. Consequently, the first of these more important courts was held here by Chief Justice McKean and Justice George Bryan, and evidently with much more ceremony than was found in President Wallace’s Court of Quarter Sessions. One Chronicler notes that they wore scarlet robes. Their entrance into the Pittsburgh of that distant day was in all probability such as is described in the following extract: “They were greeted by the leading gentry and lawyers, marshalled by the High Sheriff; not in coaches, which were not then in use in Western Pennsylvania, but on horse-back. They did not wear gowns or enormous wigs, but were carefully dressed in black coats and knee breeches, with cocked hats, and, in going to and from the Court, they were preceded by the Sheriff bearing a long white wand. This procession was given somewhat of a martial effect by the rattling of a drum.”

The Act of Assembly which established this county provided that the Courthouse and other public buildings should be built upon the “Reserve Tract” opposite Pittsburgh, which would have caused the then wild and unpopulated “North Side” to become the real center of the young community. This part of the Act thus locating the public buildings was repealed, and a lot in the Diamond, on the west side of Market Street, was secured for the new court house, and here it was built. It was during the construction of this building (not completed until 1799) that the Watson log-house was relinquished and the Court given lodging on the third floor of William Irwin’s tavern, as heretofore noted, whence, after a brief sojourn in the tavern kept by John Reed at the “Sign of the Waggon,” it removed to the “New Court House,” the pride of the community. In this structure not only was justice administered, but here also
were held the local entertainments of the time, including Punch and Judy shows, tight and slack rope performances, farces and comic operas.

Thousands of lawyers have passed through the portals of our various court houses since the humble but important structure thus described was opened for sessions of the Courts. Many have left no trace,—a name upon the Register of Attorneys, and that is all, whilst, again, many have written their names high upon the scroll of fame both at the Bar and on the Bench and in their country's service either as legislators, diplomats or soldiers.

But we can not pause to consider the men who in recent years,—or following the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century have made our Bench and Bar famous; we must select but a few of the types of the earlier period for presentation,—but shall mingle with them the names of some who though not lawyers were closely associated with the administration of justice.

One such is William Crawford, first President of the first Court held at Hannastown and also a member of the Bedford Court that sat for all this vast territory. He was removed from his office as Justice of the Peace because he supported Virginia in the border controversy.

Those who recall the story of the Indian warfare "beyond the Ohio" will recognize him as Col. Crawford, who, after capture by the red men near Sandusky, was cruelly tortured before being burned at the stake.

Another tragic tale which has to do with one of the officers of the Courts of this county presents one of the many incidents of the violence of party spirit in 1806.

Tarleton Bates was then Prothonotary. He quarreled with Pentland, an editor of the period, who bitterly denounced him in his paper. Pentland challenged Bates, who declined on account of his challenger's conduct and character, and, in some manner, mortally offended Pentland's second, Stewart, who in turn challenged Bates, who accepted. They met near the site of the present Bates Street, which bears his name, and he was killed by Stewart's fire. It is interesting to note that Lincoln's Attorney General, Edward Bates, was the victim's youngest brother.

The intense bitterness of the times can be judged by
the will of Col. Adamson Tannehill, who, though not a lawyer, was prominent in this community, having represented this district in Congress in 1813 and 1815. His will is dated April 21, 1815, and is registered in Will Book vol. 2, p. 224. "In a former will I directed two busts to be placed in the Court house, as legacies to two of the most unprincipled scoundrels who ever appeared before a court of justice; one of them * * * is dead in reality and the other dead to all feelings of moral principle. I now decline a continuation of that appropriation, and direct that it be applied to a tombstone and epitaph for myself, as follows:

Adamson Tannehill
Was born 23d of May, 1750
Died

---18 ---Aged ---years
He served his country as an officer during the American Revolution, with the confidence of his superior

And Known to Himself
But
In the year 1798 his character was assailed by the slander of unprincipled men and the Virulence of Party.
He left this world with the Hope of a Better: Farewell, vain world:
I've seen enough of thee,
And am now careless what thou say'st of me,
Thy smiles I court not, nor thy frowns I fear:
My cares are past, my head lies quiet here.
What faults you found in me, take care to shun,
And look at home, enough there's to be done:
False swearing and vile slanders cannot reach me here,—
Of each, when living, I have had my share.

A. TANNEHILL."

Arthur St. Clair was one of the first Justices of the Peace commissioned in Western Pennsylvania. He was appointed by the Penns in 1771.

As already noted, as one of the five persons designated to select a county seat for Westmoreland, he opposed the Hannastown site. He was the first prothonotary of that
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county, and his name is intimately associated with the courts of that period.

As a magistrate, he issued a warrant for the arrest of John Connolly, the emissary of Lord Dunmore, and caused his incarceration for a short time in the Hannastown jail.

He was one of the most famous men of the early period, but tragedy and pathos marked his declining years. He was a pioneer, a patriot, and a soldier, as well as magistrate. As Major General of the Army of the United States, he conducted the unfortunate expedition to punish the Western Indians that resulted in disaster, and the news of which almost broke Washington's heart. He died at his homestead near Ligonier in 1818, aged 84, and his remains were interred in the old cemetery at Greensburg.

He was one of the most distinguished and pathetic figures in American history.

Of the lawyers admitted here in 1788, those who were the ablest and achieved greatest fame, were Alexander Addison, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and James Ross. They would have reflected credit upon any Bar at any time.

We must not look upon those pioneer judges or lawyers as crude, uncouth, and uneducated men, wearing coon-skin caps and fringed hunting-shirts and leggings. We must remember that many of the provincial lawyers of Philadelphia and the East were the products of the "Inns of Court" of London and were as well equipped for the law as were their English brethren and were just as cultured. Consequently, the men who came to Western Pennsylvania to practice their profession were, in some instances, students under those English-bred lawyers, or were themselves college or university men, possessing all the learning, as well as the refinement of the cultured East.

Addison was a graduate of the University of Aberdeen, and his rival, Brackenridge, of Princeton. A little later came William Wilkins, David McKeehan, and Steele Semple, all graduates of Dickinson College; Thomas Collins, who claimed Trinity College, Dublin, as his Alma Mater; and Henry Baldwin and Charles Shaler, both products of Yale.

One authority says that Addison was born in Ireland and educated at the University of Edinboro. Another, and in my judgment the better, assigns his birth-place to Scot-
land and gives the university from which he was graduated as Aberdeen.

After graduation, he studied for the ministry and was licensed for the Aberlow Presbytery, at the age of twenty-three. He came to America in 1785 and settled at Washington, Pa., where he for a time supplied the church there. Another account says that he applied to the Redstone Presbytery for a license to preach in the Southwestern section of the state, but that his examination for some unexplained reason proved unsatisfactory, although, as stated, he was permitted to officiate at Washington.

In Washington he took up the study of the law with David Redick, a prominent figure—an Irishman, and a little later one of the members of the Executive Council of Pennsylvania, and in 1790 a delegate to the State Convention. He was admitted to the Bar in Washington in 1787—here in 1788. His rise was rapid, because this green Scotsman and ex "dominie" who arrived in 1785 was commissioned President Judge of the 5th Judicial District, comprising practically all of Western Pennsylvania, August 27, 1791, aged thirty-seven. He had previously sat as delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

He was impeached by the Pennsylvania Senate, found guilty, and removed from office January 27, 1803, returned to the practice of the law here in Pittsburgh, and died November 24, 1807, aged forty-nine.

Judge Addison was a cultured gentleman, a learned and able lawyer, and a fine, courageous and just judge.

He was too dogmatic and fond of sermonizing (a trait resulting from his first calling), too severe a critic of the uncouth and rude customs and manners of the times, and too bitter and uncompromising in his political beliefs to meet the approval of the radical anti-Federalists, and they finally proved his destruction.

His leading enemy was Hugh H. Brackenridge, a brother Scot and a fellow minister of the gospel. Brackenridge, it is said, instigated John B. Lucas, a Frenchman imbued with the revolutionary principles of the Anti-Federalists, and one of the lay associate judges, to address the Grand Jury, and Judge Addison interposed and prevented it, on the ground
that he, the President Judge, was the spokesman of the Court.

For this, an attempt was made by the Attorney General to indict him, but the Supreme Court refused the motion, holding, however, that the associate had a right to address the jury.

A second attempt by Lucas to charge the Grand Jury, in which he was again stopped by Judge Addison, resulted in the impeachment proceedings.

Of these, Judge Agnew has said they "were the most flagitious ever urged on by vicious hate and obnoxious partisanship."

The following extracts from his charges to the various grand juries will indicate his mental attitude, and you can see how the Anti-Federalists would squirm under some of them. He liked neither the politics nor the amusements of the citizens of Pittsburgh.

At the sessions of June, 1796, he presented his views on the fairs of the period as follows:

"You have probably seen an advertisement in the Gazette and in printed hand-bills, of a fair to be held in this place at this time. * * * The only fair I have seen in this country is that which was held here last June, as now, during the Court. An unusual number of idle people were assembled, strolling through the streets from tavern to tavern, drinking, dancing, and exerting themselves to be noisy. * * * From that specimen of a fair, I am disposed to think that a fair is another name for a nuisance; and I think it ought to be considered as such and the promoters of it as promoters of disturbance of the peace."

He was emphatic and insistent on "Liberty- poles" as being evidences of intention to overthrow the government. At a trial here in 1794 for a riot and conduct intended to insult the Commissioners who sought to procure an amicable adjustment of the Whiskey Insurrection, he said, "Pole raising was a notorious symptom of dissatisfaction, and the exhibition of this * * * must have made an impression very unfavorable to the whole country, promoted violence in the people here and induced force on the part of the government."

In a charge to the Grand Jury at December Sessions,
1794, in which he discussed "the late insurrection," he again returns to "Liberty Poles." He says:

"One offense which I would recommend to your particular consideration is the raising of liberty-poles. What is the liberty these pole-raisers wanted? A liberty to be governed by no law; a liberty to destroy every man who differs from them in opinion, or whom they hated; a liberty to do what mischief they pleased."

Again, at the September Sessions 1795, discussing the evils of political clubs and associations, he continues:

"We had an unhappy instance of this in the late insurrection. A set of mush-room patriots whose voice had never before been heard nor influence felt, sprung up at once * * * with nothing to recommend them, but ignorance, impudence and violence * * * by working on the passions of the people, they acquired all the influence of virtue, wisdom and patriotism."

But it was in defence of the Alien and Sedition Acts and in denunciation of the French Revolution and French propaganda that he was most fiery: At December Sessions 1798, he said:

"But is all our pity to be extended to strangers, and shall we extend no care to our wives and children. The French have threatened us with pillage, plunder and massacre * * * they have threatened us with a party among ourselves which will promote their views. Some of them, it is said, have told us that we dare not resent their injuries, for there are Frenchmen enough among us to burn our cities and cut our throats. And it seems we dare not remove these gentle lambs! Gracious Heavens! Are we an independent nation, and dare not do this? * * * * * * * * * * * *

May the God of Wisdom open our eyes to the excellence of our Constitution and the purity and wisdom of our administration. * * * * May He wean us from all partialities towards any foreign nation and preserve us from the machinations of a government ambitious, desperate, faithless and corrupt, which flatters only to deceive and carresses only to destroy!"

Equally well equipped for the law, and perhaps even a more able and brilliant barrister and scholar, was Addison's
great rival and enemy, Hugh Henry Brackenridge. He and his distinguished son Henry Marie Brackenridge, not only by their legal attainments and prestige, but by their literary labors, have a high place in the annals, not alone of Western Pennsylvania, but of the Nation.

The senior Brackenridge was born in Campbellton, Scotland, in 1784, and came to America with his parents as a child of five. The family was poor. By teaching school he saved enough to go to Princeton, where he became a tutor, and was graduated with the class of 1771. At the outbreak of the Revolution he was Master of an Academy in Maryland. He removed to Philadelphia, where he studied for the ministry, and evidently was licensed to preach, as he became a Chaplain in the Colonial Army. In 1778 he began the study of law with Samuel Chase, afterwards a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States; was admitted to the Bar in Philadelphia; and in 1781 removed to Pittsburgh, and during the same year was admitted in Washington and Westmoreland counties. As already noted, he was admitted here in 1788, upon the organization of our first Court. He had much to do with procuring the erection of the new County of Allegheny,—having been elected to the Assembly in 1786 for that purpose. He evidently was the leader of the Bars of the various Courts in Western Pennsylvania at which he practiced from 1781 until his being commissioned as one of the justices of the Supreme Court of this state, December 18, 1799.

He was engaged in most of the cases reported in "Addison." The prominence of the various lawyers of that period may be gauged by the following summary of their cases as found in Addison's single volume of Reports:

Brackenridge, 56; Ross, 39; Young (Westmoreland Co.), 33; Woods, 32; Bradford, 6; Steele Semple, 6; and Galbraith, Deputy Attorney General (principally connected with his office), 11. Carson, admitted here with Brackenridge, had but three.

Brackenridge's career was not only a distinguished, but a stormy one. He was considered radical and against the excise tax; and it is claimed by some writers that if he did not support the insurgents, was not active in opposing them. It is said that Hamilton had marked him for arrest, but he
was saved by James Ross, his rival at the Bar. He was the leader of the advanced Republicans, whom their enemies then styled “Jacobins.” The tenets and extravagances of the French Revolution were supported by these radicals. As a result, the Gazette, a Federalist journal, took pleasure in referring to Brackenridge as “Citizen Brackenridge,” and when a little later this “Stormy Petrel” of the Bar set up an organ of his own, called the Tree of Liberty, the conservative Gazette forthwith dubbed him “Jacobin printer of the Tree of Sedition, Blasphemy and Slander.”

These ardent Republicans met in John Marie’s tavern, and no doubt regularly drank damnation both loud and deep to the hated Federalists. It is said that one of Brackenridge’s Fourth of July orations was so appealing to the French sympathizers of the time that they printed and circulated it with that of one of the leading French revolutionists.

Brackenridge was a patron of learning, and his name appears with that of James Ross, in 1787, as one of the incorporators of the Pittsburgh Academy.

He supported the candidacy of Chief Justice McKean for the governorship, as against his co-incorporator, James Ross, and the day following Governor McKean’s taking the office he nominated Brackenridge to the place upon the Supreme Bench, which he held until his death in 1816, aged 68. He had some years before removed from Pittsburgh to Carlisle, where he died.

Loyd, in “Early Courts of Pennsylvania,” says of him: “At the Bar, Brackenridge was rated for his shrewdness, wit and eloquence. * * * On the bench, he did not display the same power as at the Bar; his opinions were racy, but not profound, and failed to do justice to his real learning; an untiring student, his dislike of convention led him at times into a show of flippancy.”

He hated Judge Yeates, one of his brethren, and rarely agreed with him. His antipathy likely began with Yeates’ visit to Western Pennsylvania as a Commissioner to placate the “insurgents,” and when he and his fellow commissioners were more than once threatened with violence including an application of tar and feathers by the “disgruntled” fellow
citizens and, perhaps, supporters of Hugh Henry Brackenridge.

Judge Brackenridge was a prolific writer, and, among other volumes from his pen was "Law Miscellanies." In this, in an article considering the obloquy under which the Supreme Court was then resting, he gives as reasons: (1) The affinity of three of the judges in which each deferred to his brother and did not care to hurt any one's feelings by dissenting; (2) The aristocratic tendency of the three, who were of distinguished and wealthy connections, and, therefore, disposed to look at things through class spectacles, and, finally (3) The spirit of the times in which people spoke of Courts in the language of Jack Cade.

There was an attempt to impeach three of the Judges, but Brackenridge, though not included, insisted upon being treated like the others. Loyd says of this: "This offer to stand impeachment with his colleagues was the most courageous act in the public career of the most eccentric genius that ever sat on our Supreme bench."

Before leaving Judge Brackenridge, we may note that his friend, John B. C. Lucas, the obstinate Associate Judge who finally triumphed over Judge Addison, was, in 1805, appointed to the United States Court for the new territory of Louisiana.

James Ross' name, his personality and activities are more firmly imbedded in our local history than are those of his two great contemporaries already mentioned. He seems to have been more practical, not a philosopher, a dreamer or a literary man, and, therefore, perhaps fitted into the intensely practical life of this community better than either Addison or Brackenridge.

He was born in York County, this state, in 1762, and was fourteen when the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed. He died here in 1847, and, therefore, lived to within thirteen years of the Civil War—and saw the beginning of the modern era of Pittsburgh and of the Bar which was personally known to men who are yet living.

Our Courthouse and City-County Building are upon the land that Ross once owned, and Ross Street and Ross Township perpetuate his name.

His education was obtained under the Rev. Dr. McMil-
lan, at Canonsburg. His legal studies were made in Philadelphia, where he was admitted, and then he came west—being admitted in Fayette and Washington counties in 1784, Westmoreland in 1785, and here in 1788.

Hon. Russell Errett, in his Chapter in the "History of Allegheny County," devoted to the Bench and Bar, assigns to Ross the first place as a lawyer—not noted for his ability as an orator before juries, but for the soundness of his judgment and his comprehensive knowledge of the law. In the early days, here as elsewhere in pioneer counties, controversies as to land titles were the most frequent, as well as the most important matters coming before the Courts. In the trial of such cases James Ross excelled, and was employed in practically every important ejectment case in this section. He was a successful business man as well as lawyer, and was counted as a man of great wealth.

The history to which I have referred describes him as "a very large man, over six feet high, broad and full in his proportion, with big feet, of which he was not ashamed." He was not too much engrossed in the trial of ejectment cases or the acquisition of wealth to participate in the politics of the time. He was a Federalist and, therefore, in opposition to Brackenridge. He was a candidate for Governor, in 1799, and again in 1808, being defeated each time, and in his campaign encountering the malignant slanders and vituperative abuse peculiar to the politics of that period.

He was accused of avarice, blasphemy, mockery of religion, of being the candidate of the lawyers and the aristocracy, and of oppressing the wife of John Marie, who at one time kept the tavern on the site of the Ross property on Grant's Hill where Brackenridge, Lucas, John Marie, and other so-called "Jacobins" had their meeting place.

It seems that he either purchased this site from Marie, or else the latter had a long lease upon it. In any event, Marie and his wife fell out, the latter refused to vacate the property and Ross was obliged to begin legal proceedings to dispossess her. When, in 1808, he became a candidate against Simon Snyder, the editor of a scurrilous sheet in
Philadelphia, the *Aurora*, issued a pamphlet against Ross, entitled:

"The Case of Jane Marie, Exhibiting the Cruelty and Barbarous Conduct of James Ross to a Defenceless Woman, Written and Published by the Object of his Cruelty and Vengeance."

This libel, spread broadcast throughout the State, aided in Ross' defeat.

As a relief from the savagery of such campaign methods, we may note a more humane and really humorous one. During the Snyder campaign Ross' adherents composed a marching song, which ran thus:

"James Ross
He's a hoss."

The supporters of the Pennsylvania Dutchman soon improved on this, and marched to victory with the following:

"James Ross
He's a hoss.
Simon Snyder
He's the rider!"

Ross was not, however, without civic honors, as he was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1790 and was elected to the United States Senate, where he served from 1794 to 1805, and was presiding officer of that body in 1795 and 1797. He was also president of the Select Council of the City of Pittsburgh from 1816 to 1833, and, as already noted, was with Brackenridge as incorporator of the Pittsburgh Academy.

Thus far I have sketched but three of the ten men who assumed their places at the Pittsburgh Bar in 1788. Of most of them there is not much to say because the records are barren of more than a brief mention. Of George Thompson's career, nothing is known. Michael Huffnagel, of German extraction, was a Revolutionary officer and, no doubt, held a worthy place at the Bar, but I can find no trace of his activities. He was Prothonotary of Westmoreland County. David St. Clair was a son of the distinguished Arthur St. Clair, but I can not find that he was active here. James Carson's name appears in three cases in Addison's Reports, but he did not settle in this county and his career can not
be traced. John Woods was a son of Col. Woods, who laid out the plan of Pittsburgh in 1784. He was in active practice here and, as heretofore noted, appeared in many local cases, having thirty-two to his credit in Addison's Reports. He represented this district in Congress and was a State Senator and a Presidential Elector. He had a distinguished and honorable record, and ranks with the great lawyers of his period.

Robert Galbraith, Deputy Attorney General, already mentioned, had an important place in the history of the law here and left an honored name.

The "black sheep" of the flock was David Bradford, who was Deputy Attorney General for Washington County and served in that capacity from 1783 to 1795. He was a leader in the Whiskey Insurrection and was excluded from the terms of amnesty. He fled to Louisiana Territory, where he died. Hon. Russell Errett, in the "History of Allegheny County", says of him: "That he was a demagogue pure and simple is evidenced by his career, and that he was likewise a coward is shown by his speedy departure from the scene of action, when the insurrection began to collapse."

In the preparation of this paper reference has been had to the following books upon the period discussed: Chas. W. Dahlinger's "Pittsburgh: A Sketch of Its Early Social Life;" Craig's "Pittsburgh;" Killikelly's "History of Pittsburgh;" Hon. Russell Errett's article on the Bar in "History of Allegheny County;" Col. Blakely's "Bar of Allegheny County," and Loyd's "Early Courts."