

# The Intellectual Life of Pittsburgh, 1786-1836

By EDWARD PARK ANDERSON

## PREFACE

Pittsburgh, sitting on the boundary between the East and the Middle West and at the head of the Ohio Valley, has been neglected by the historians of the culture of each of these sections. Even her own historians, obsessed with what is supposed to be a malady of the Steel City, the love for quoting figures, devote little space to relating what the inhabitants did in their leisure time. Yet, from the beginning, there were in this city of workers a few who dreamed and a great many who relaxed, though possibly with a grimace, part of the time.

Strictly speaking, of course, Pittsburgh developed no culture of its own. Closely connected with similar neighboring settlements, its culture varied from theirs only in degree. The life of the early Middle West or Ohio Valley was the life of early Pittsburgh with some slight variations in time or in extent of development.

At the close of the eighteenth century, Pittsburgh was of a different nature, of a different location, one might say. The Allegheny Mountains were much higher, were, indeed, a truly formidable barrier that isolated this settlement, that made things "from over the mountains" have an exotic quality, and that made the inhabitants of the town willing to forego roads, schools, and churches, but not the right to navigate the Mississippi River to its mouth. Pittsburgh was a frontier settlement, surrounded by wild country. The first white man had settled north of the Allegheny River, in what is now an integral part of the city, almost ten years after the battle of Lexington. Indian attacks threatened until after Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794, and even during the War of 1812, earthworks were thrown up for defense by the worried citizens. Kentucky and Tennessee were not farther west, they were merely farther down the river.

In three-quarters of a century, this settlement deserted the Far West and gave its allegiance to the East; grew

from a few traders' shacks about an isolated military outpost to a city of industrial importance connected by a cheap and comparatively rapid means of communication with Philadelphia. The manor became the town, the town the borough, and the borough the city within thirty years. The population more than doubled with every decade, and the amount of manufacturing increased at an even more rapid rate.

Since intellectual interests depend somewhat upon material development, more can be expected at the end than at the beginning. A study of such interests is necessarily superficial in some respects, because it takes in only the few and leaves out the many and because, while it can discover that certain institutions were established, cannot definitely assess their influence.

This paper relates Pittsburgh's intellectual activities to the year 1836, a date rather arbitrarily chosen. It was the year in which public schools in the modern sense became firmly established, and, though unnoticed at the time, marked an era in the city's development.

## I.

### Pittsburgh in 1786

When General Forbes built Fort Pitt in 1758, the history of Pittsburgh began. About this fort, whose commercially advantageous location at the head of the Ohio had been enhanced by the construction of a road over the mountains, a few traders' cabins appeared. Consequently, a town was laid out in 1764. Yet, despite the appointment of civil officers by the Penns in 1771,<sup>1</sup> military interests continued to be dominant until the close of the Revolutionary War.

After the war, however, a change took place in the settlement. A score of officers of the Revolution settled there with their families, bringing with them culture and ability that had not been found among the civil inhabitants previously.<sup>2</sup> The town grew, enriched by trade with the emigrants to the West who purchased supplies there before embarking upon the Ohio. Within a decade after the war, the town had five stores and thirty-six log houses, one of

stone, and one of frame <sup>6</sup> to shelter a population of between two and three hundred. In the district about Pittsburgh, there may have been as many as fifteen hundred persons. <sup>7</sup> A few had settled across the Monongahela, but, on the northern bank of the Allegheny, where the first white child was born in 1785, the Indians still ranged. <sup>8</sup> And the Ohio, whose waters were soon to be covered by "the white sails of commerce," was then "disturbed only by the yell of the savage who lay ambushed on its banks or sailed o'er its surface in his solitary canoe." <sup>9</sup>

There was little to attract one who was seeking the comforts of urban life, for the town was a trading post and nothing more. The goods sold by the merchants could not have been very bulky, for there was yet no wagon road across the Alleghenies and transportation was accomplished by pack horses. <sup>7</sup> Boat building was the only manufacturing enterprise that called for facilities that the home could not provide. <sup>8</sup> A Virginian visitor, accustomed to finer things, was appalled by the crudeness of the houses and the people, and declared, as no historian of Pittsburgh has failed to note, that the place could never amount to much. <sup>9</sup>

There was no mail service. The seat of government was at Hannastown, near the present Greensburg, for Pittsburgh was then in Westmoreland County. So isolated was it, that the appearance of each of two carriages excited the undisguised curiosity of even the leading citizens. <sup>10</sup> The town lacked public buildings of any kind; even schools and churches were not in existence. When, in 1785, the town's professional group was increased by the addition of a clergyman to its four lawyers and one doctor, there was no edifice prepared for his service. There was little enthusiasm for church attendance <sup>11</sup> and no denominational rivalry. The single clergyman, following a precedent established by a school master in 1761, <sup>12</sup> ministered to all the soberer sort of people, despite their creed. Although a group of German laymen met at irregular intervals, so lax was church interest in the town as a whole that the first church charter was sought without mentioning any particular denomination. <sup>13</sup>

Of the people in the town, a majority were Scotch-Irish and Scotch, a majority sufficiently large to set the tone of the settlement from the beginning. There were some Germans who were mechanics and laborers, while the

English-speaking people were store owners or farmers. One of the Scotch settlers, the son of an immigrant farmer who had come to America in 1758, had moved, in 1781, from Philadelphia to the town of Pittsburgh,

If town it could be called that town was none,  
Distinguishable by house or street.<sup>14</sup>

This was Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816), graduate of Princeton (1771), former teacher and army chaplain, now practicing law and dabbling in humorous prose and verse. With a young man's enthusiasm for his adopted town, he had visions of its becoming a place of great manufactory, "the greatest on the continent, or perhaps in the world," and he did his share toward starting it on the right path. In the years 1786 and 1787, largely through his efforts as a member of the state legislature, grants of land were made to aid in the establishment of an academy and of several churches. Through his efforts, two young men were induced to establish a newspaper, the first west of the Alleghenies. He was also instrumental in bringing to Pittsburgh its first book store. With the establishment of mail service,<sup>15</sup> the town was well started toward what greatness commerce and manufacture were to give it.

#### NOTES

1. S. H. Killikelly, *The History of Pittsburgh, Its Rise and Progress*, Pittsburgh, 1906, p. 75.
2. *Military Journal of Ebenezer Denny*, Philadelphia, 1856, p. 27. H. M. Brackenridge, *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West*, Pittsburgh, 1834, p. 77.
3. *Niles Weekly Register*, Baltimore, vol. XXX, p. 436.
4. H. H. Brackenridge, *Gazette Publications*, Carlisle, Pa., 1806.
5. *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, vol. I, p. 161.
6. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, August 9, 1816.
7. H. M. Brackenridge, *Recollections etc.*, Chapter VII.
8. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, October 7, 1786.
9. Extracts from the *Journal of Arthur Lee*, in *The Olden Time* (Pittsburgh), August, 1847, p. 339.
10. *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, vol. IV, p. 76.
11. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, August 26, 1786.
12. Diary of James Kenney, in *The Historical Magazine*, vol. II (1858), p. 274.
13. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 23, 30, 1787.
14. H. H. Brackenridge, *Gazette Publications*, introduction.
15. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, October 7, 1786.

## II.

### The Newspapers

It is significant that the establishment of a newspaper in Pittsburgh preceded any movement of the community toward the improvement of its social and intellectual life. The newspaper offered a means of securing co-operative action. Such was not its primary purpose, however. It sought, rather, to give its readers a glimpse of the world outside and addressed itself chiefly to national and international political events, presenting for the criticism of the backwoodsman the proceedings at Philadelphia, London, and Paris. The bits of literature that the paper contained, and the paper as a whole, were a boon to people who had little reading matter besides its columns, the Bible, and the almanac. In the newspaper, too, lay a means of civic advertising, for some copies went east of the mountains and many more were sent to the settlements along the Ohio. The "Observations Upon the Country at the Head of the Ohio," which appeared in the early numbers of the first newspaper, extolled the town in a manner unsurpassed by later promoters. Finally, the newspaper has historical value. Scanty as is the local news published in it, it furnishes the only record of the life of the people.

On July 29, 1786, John Scull and Joseph Hall, who had come from Philadelphia for that purpose, issued the first number of the *Pittsburgh Gazette*. It was a four-page publication, about ten by sixteen inches in size, varying with the uncertain supply of paper<sup>1</sup> which, until 1797, had to be brought over the mountains.<sup>2</sup> The paper was issued weekly and was delivered to subscribers living in town; country subscribers had to provide for its delivery as best they could.<sup>3</sup>

The ordinary issue was filled chiefly with news of distant places. European news usually occupied the first page, while news from the national capital was next in prominence. Although the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention and of Congress were reported in some detail, there was little comment upon their acts unless they were felt locally. The fear in Western Pennsylvania that the new Constitution would curtail personal liberty was reflected in the *Gazette*, as was also the bitter feeling excited

by the Excise Act in 1792, but national policies as a whole were neglected. The state legislature, on the other hand, was followed with keener interest. The local representative met and parried criticism through the columns of the paper. It was not until the second decade of the next century that national affairs assumed a greater importance than those of the state.

When political news was scarce, the editor looked about for other material to take its place. Essays of all sorts were inserted. Some, taken from other publications, were by well-known men, others were contributed by local writers who, with little originality, discussed the wisdom of remaining a bachelor, the wickedness of gaming, and the virtues of woman. Two of Philip Freneau's poems appeared in the *Gazette*, probably at the suggestion of his former collaborator, Hugh Henry Brackenridge. ' Half of one issue was devoted to publishing the proposed Constitution of the United States and probably gave the citizens their first opportunity to read the instrument which many of them feared. '

Local news was brief, referring, usually, to market prices, to manufacturing enterprises, or to deaths or marriages of prominent persons. With the exception of Brackenridge's "Observations," little space was given to local description, although an occasional letter or editorial discussion reflected opinions in regard to schools and theaters. It is the advertisements rather than the columns written by the editor that reveal the life of the people. About one-fourth of the paper was given to advertising, a great deal of which consisted of legal notices. Strangely enough, but in conformance with the practice of those days, news held precedence over advertising, and not a few times the editor had to apologize for not having space in which to run advertisements. In addition to the announcements inserted in the paper by the general stores, were those of booksellers and publishers, schools, theatrical productions, concerts, and exhibitions, many of which the editor neglected entirely.

Some of the advertisements are interesting in themselves alone. In 1789, for instance, appeared a testimonial for a sure cure for all sorts of disagreeable ailments. ' The virtues of similar patent panaceas were often extolled. The

first illustration in the paper was a crude wood-cut used by a manufacturer of sickles and scythes to illustrate his products.<sup>7</sup> This advertisement was, incidentally, the first notice of iron-working in the district. A bold headline, such a common feature of papers of the present, was not used until 1800, the occasion of its use being the appearance of a rival paper.<sup>8</sup>

In its four pages, the paper contained enough news to furnish conversation for a week. And its readers were probably as well-informed as most Americans outside the metropolitan centers of the time, for the *Gazette* presented a summary of what appeared in the Eastern papers. In fact, it depended upon these papers for its news. If the mails failed to arrive, there was no news. When the mails did arrive, the news was second-hand. Still it was world news, and its appearance before their eyes brought the frontiersmen under the intellectual control of the East and of Europe.

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It was not long until the difference in the political beliefs of the citizens brought about the establishment of a second newspaper. Under the patronage of Hugh Henry Brackenridge, who had sponsored the founding of the *Gazette*, but who felt that his sentiments no longer received fair treatment in it, the *Tree of Liberty* was issued in 1800. It supported the Jeffersonian party while the *Gazette* remained staunchly Federalist and no longer admitted discussion on both sides as it had done to a certain extent formerly. *The Tree of Liberty* did not prosper, but continued to be published until 1806 at least and perhaps until 1810.<sup>9</sup> Before it was discontinued, another liberal paper, *The Commonwealth*, had made its appearance.<sup>10</sup> From the beginning of the century, there were always at least two opposing organs for the expression of opinion upon public affairs. That there should be such a difference of opinion, is perhaps the earliest clear indication of the mental allegiance of Pittsburgh to the nation, for, had it remained as isolated as it had been fifteen years before, it would scarcely have been interested in, or reacted so promptly to, the change in the political feelings of the country as a whole.

In 1811, the *Pittsburgh Mercury* was established and became the chief rival of the *Gazette*, which continued to

maintain a certain precedence. Until the original editor, John Scull, resigned in 1816, and even under his son, the *Gazette* was a sort of civic institution. In 1833, it became the city's first daily paper.<sup>11</sup> The most striking change was that advertising, which had formerly been restricted to provide space for news, now occupied fourteen and fifteen of the paper's twenty columns. Local news also increased in prominence.

Meanwhile, two interesting religious weeklies had been founded. *The Pittsburgh Recorder*, a Presbyterian paper first issued in January of 1821, contained news about local and national church activities. A more important paper of similar nature was the *Christian Herald* which was established a few years after the *Recorder*. It quickly gained a circulation extending over most of the country within a radius of one hundred and fifty miles from Pittsburgh. Its typography was surprisingly good. It carried only a few advertisements, excluding especially announcements of dramatic productions. No political news was printed in it and little space was given to any secular happenings except murders, of which the gruesome details were carefully related. Considerable space was given to literature of a sort and to special "departments." Scarcely an issue was without some poetry and a short moral tale, while in the "Ladies' Department" and the "Young Men's Department," in the "Children's Department" and the "Ministers' Department," or in other departments that seem to have been called up to frame a story, were found essays which with little subtlety pointed the way to righteousness. Its editorial columns condemned all things frivolous and devoted many lines of serious language to advocating temperance.

Yet only in these religious weeklies did the editor come forward to talk to his readers. The other papers were primarily media for news and advertising. In their editorial columns were strong expressions of feeling occasionally upon matters of politics or personalities. Either a party was extolled simply because it was "the party we belong to," or the integrity of a rival editor was assailed because his views, which in most instances were not original, but of his party, did not agree with the views of his assailant, which, likewise, were not original. There were few times when the editor stopped to discuss the life of the city.



Yet on these occasions especially, and in many other instances unintentionally, the thoughts and life of the citizens were revealed.

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NOTES

1. Sometimes the newspaper was printed on cartridge paper borrowed from the fort.
2. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 24, 1797.
3. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1786.
4. *Ibid.*, July 7, 14, 1787; February 2, 1788.
5. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1787.
6. *Ibid.*, January 24, 1789.
7. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1789.
8. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1800.
9. C. S. Brigham, *Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820*, Published by American Antiquarian Society.
10. *Ibid.* Founded on July 24, 1805; changed in 1818, to the *Pittsburgh Statesman*.
11. August 1, 1833.

## III.

## Education

More fundamental to intellectual life than the news paper was education, for, without some training in the methods of learning, little progress could have been made. Under frontier conditions, however, few opportunities were found for formal instruction, and fortunate was he whose parents could spare the time necessary to teach him to read, write, and figure. Yet, as early as 1761, the settlers around Fort Pitt subscribed more than sixty pounds to hire a schoolmaster who, in addition to guiding the mental development of his twenty scholars, furnished moral instruction to "the soberer sort of people" by reading the Common Prayer and Litany in "church as they call it."<sup>1</sup> How long this teacher remained in Pittsburgh, or whether he had a successor, is unknown, for no records of other pedagogical activities prior to those mentioned in the *Gazette* have been preserved.

The "Observations" did not refer to any established schools, but did call attention to the need for an academy in the western part of the estate.<sup>2</sup> And the author of the "Observations," then in the state legislature, obtained, along with the establishment of Allegheny County with Pittsburgh as the county seat, the passage of a bill incorporating a number of trustees for an academy in the town, and procured from the Penns a square of land for its support. Despite the need that was felt for the establishment of a school,<sup>3</sup> difficulties, probably in effecting an organization and in securing funds, delayed the trustees of the proposed academy in the accomplishment of their purpose. They met thrice during the year 1788,<sup>4</sup> however, and, in the spring of 1789, announced that a teacher had been engaged and that the "Pittsburgh Academy" would offer instruction at once in the learned languages, English, and mathematics.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, other schools were making their appearance. The first was that of a lady who had had experience in England and in Philadelphia, and who, in her boarding and day school, offered to teach to girls all branches of needle work, and reading, English, and knitting if required, as well as to watch over their morals.<sup>6</sup> Soon after, there

was announced a school for teaching Latin, reading English grammatically, writing, and arithmetic. The master of this school opened at the same time an evening school to care for boys who were employed during the day.' In 1789, an academy similar to the Pittsburgh Academy was founded in Washington, Pennsylvania. <sup>8</sup> It prospered, evidently, for it soon added to its faculty a former instructor in English in the University of Pennsylvania. <sup>9</sup> Other schools outside of Pittsburgh also sought students there.

The number of subjects offered in the schools increased. Messrs. Joseph and Peter Kane proposed to teach "reading, writing, vulgar and decimal arithmetic, duodecimals, square and cube root, mensuration of superficies and solids, geography, book-keeping by way of double entries with company accounts either in the same or separate books, together with the Latin or Greek languages." <sup>10</sup> A school for teaching the French language was also announced. <sup>11</sup> A school in Fayette County offered instruction in English, elocution, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, geometry and trigonometry with their application to surveying and gauging, geography and civil history, natural and moral philosophy, logic and rhetoric. <sup>12</sup> The Pittsburgh Academy, which extended its facilities temporarily to girls as well as boys, taught "the English, French, and Latin languages, writing the different hands, arithmetic, book-keeping, surveying, trigonometry, geography, the use of globes, chronology, and algebra," with occasional reading of "lectures in natural philosophy and other sciences." The tuition was five pounds per year. <sup>13</sup>

From these examples, the general characteristics of the early schools may be gathered. The school was usually conducted by one person who taught many subjects. Yet, since the number of pupils studying under one instructor could not have been great, there seems to be no reason to believe that the instruction was too superficial, provided, of course, that the student was willing to learn. The presence of the classical languages in the curricula of the schools, was in accordance with the trend of the times. It is noticeable, however, that, even in the Academy, practical subjects had assumed an importance rivaling that of the finer arts. Mathematics was put to its practical application and the sciences of commerce invaded the schoolroom.

The facilities in the town for the education of girls drew the praise of travelers" and are worthy of notice. A girl was able to get, in addition to instruction in the domestic arts, a knowledge of music, painting, and the French language, a knowledge which, even if limited, changed the intellectual outlook of the Pittsburgh women of that generation greatly in comparison with that of their mothers, whose cultural training had been, for the most part, very limited.

Below the schools that equalled or approached the standards of the Academy, were many schools of all grades. They were rather ephemeral, springing up in numbers too great to be supported by the small population and passing away quickly. The ease with which they appeared and disappeared is not surprising when it is remembered that practically all the equipment necessary for establishing a school was confidence in one's ability to teach and a room in which to receive scholars. In the first quarter of the century, advertisements were inserted in the newspapers by at least forty-three masters or mistresses of schools, and other schools existed. The one whose existence under the same administration can be traced for the longest period was a girls' school, that of Mrs. and Miss Brevost who taught reading, writing, English grammar, arithmetic, geography, history, French, painting of flowers, and instrumental and vocal music. It continued for eight years and was then carried on by a former pupil.<sup>15</sup>

After the early twenties, announcements of schools became fewer and fewer in the newspapers. The significance of this decrease might be taken to indicate that there were fewer schools in the city. It probably signifies, however, that the more important schools had become sufficiently well established to dispense with newspaper advertising. School announcements in the papers became limited, except at the beginning of the fall terms, to those of commercial institutions.

Several clergymen of the city devoted part of their time to teaching. John Taylor, the Episcopalian minister, was at times an instructor in mathematics in the Academy, and for a time conducted a day and evening school of his own.<sup>16</sup> Robert Steele, the Presbyterian pastor, likewise taught at the Academy before establishing a private

school.<sup>17</sup> The Reverend Joseph Stockton deserted the Academy to found in Allegheny Town a similar institution which was praised for the high standards of its instruction in Greek and Latin.<sup>18</sup> Upon the discontinuance of the Pittsburgh Academy, Stockton's Allegheny Academy became the leading school in the city and sought to give 'a systematic and solid course of instruction in the various branches of an English education.'<sup>19</sup>

The Pittsburgh Academy was the one educational institution that had a continued existence on a fairly high level. What that level was may be conjectured from the fact that all its instructors were college graduates, clergymen chiefly, who took their duties as a sacred charge, and, in co-operation with a vigilant board of inspectors, saw to it that the moral as well as the intellectual interests of the students were not neglected.<sup>20</sup> Like all the larger schools in the city,<sup>21</sup> the Academy conducted public examinations which drew praise to both its pupils and to its principal. Pupils, often only ten and twelve years of age, it is said, delivered orations and dialogues in a manner that indicated that their teachers were capable men, interested in the finer things of life.<sup>22</sup> There a boy could obtain instruction from the elementary to the college grades, for there were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, the several branches of mathematics, the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French languages, and moral philosophy.

Formidable works are these, but they do not mean that the graduate of the Academy was a finished scholar. The classics and sciences were sampled in the secondary schools of that day more generously than they are in secondary schools today, perhaps, yet they were only sampled. A college was needed in the western part of the state to provide instruction for the youths who could escape the lure of going into commercial life upon the completion of their studies at the Academy only if the obstacles of the distance of the university at Philadelphia and the expense of living away from home were removed from their path toward a higher education.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the trustees of the Academy applied for a charter for a university. The Western University of Pennsylvania, which later became the University of Pittsburgh, was incorporated on February 18, 1819, and, after the necessary organization had been

completed, " was opened in the following year, temporarily sharing with the Academy the Academy's buildings. On May 10, 1822, the first faculty was formally installed. It consisted of five clergymen, including one Roman Catholic, men whom the trustees believed to be second to none in their knowledge of literature and science.

The state had given the university a grant of land which, as the result of legal complications, was changed to an endowment of twelve thousand dollars. Difficulty was experienced in securing additional financial aid, however, and the first university buildings were not completed until 1830 when the old academy buildings were finally vacated. Several times destroyed by fire, the university led a precarious and varied existence, and not until the end of the century did it become firmly established.

During the period under consideration, it was more than anything else a continuation of the old Academy, with greater emphasis upon the study of classical languages and more advanced mathematics, but without abandonment of the commercial standby, book-keeping.<sup>25</sup> What standards were maintained is unknown, for supporters were too enthusiastic and others were too critical, while no one who has recorded his impressions had more than a superficial knowledge of what was being done.

In 1824, a class of six received bachelor's degrees after their audience had listened to an oration on "Imagination" and a debate on "The Influence of Education upon National Happiness."<sup>26</sup> Two years later, a local observer referred to the University's "nominal existence."<sup>27</sup> And still later, a visitor found it poorly housed and its students surprisingly boisterous and rude.<sup>28</sup> Alongside these evidences of lack of progress, must be placed the fact that it continued to offer its regular courses<sup>29</sup> and also public lecture courses.<sup>30</sup> In short, it seems that the University was fulfilling its purpose of bringing higher education within the reach of the citizens of the district. It undoubtedly lost something by its too close association with the city, but, at the same time, it offered opportunities for those who would take advantage of them.

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The boy whose parents had sufficient wealth, progressed through the floggings of the elementary and sec-

ondary schools, and, if he did not turn aside into some business enterprise, <sup>31</sup> entered the college. For one youth at least, these educational institutions were greatly inadequate, <sup>32</sup> but to the majority of the boys of the city any education whatever was inaccessible on account of its cost. Tuition was usually about six to eight dollars per quarter for elementary subjects and from four to ten dollars per quarter for each advanced subject, according to whether instruction was received in class, privately, or at home. To the ordinary mechanic, who considered himself very fortunate if he earned six dollars a week, or to the farmer, who rarely had any surplus cash and who needed the assistance of his children on his farm, this charge, small as it was, must have been a real obstacle to the education of his children.

As early as 1787, there had been a local suggestion for county and city schools supported by the state, <sup>33</sup> and Pennsylvania's constitution of 1790 provided for the education of paupers. <sup>34</sup> Local interest in the matter waned, however, and the state legislature, willing to provide for universities and academies, did not realize the need of general elementary education in order that these schools might be entered by the greatest number of young men. In 1809, indeed, a state law provided that poor children might attend the nearest school at the expense of the county, but to many it was easier to forego an education than to sit in class under the stigma of poverty.

Some local sentiment in favor of public free schools had been expressed in 1812. <sup>35</sup> In 1816, <sup>36</sup> the Pittsburgh Union Society, or Sunday Sabbath School Association, founded the Adelphi Free School, <sup>37</sup> where "poor and desolate female children" were offered an education of the most elementary nature. <sup>38</sup> This school in itself was of little real importance or usefulness. Its establishment, nevertheless, was significant of an active interest on the part of a few in the education of poor children.

Other signs of growing interest in general education appeared. The school systems of other states were reviewed. <sup>39</sup> And with the eloquence of a crusader, the editor of the *Pittsburgh Recorder*, believing that "he who does *anything* to promote the interests of education renders an important service to his country," ably criticised the deficien-

cies and injustices of the existing school system and pointed out the blessings of education for all. <sup>40</sup> The legislature in this same year, 1824, took the first step toward the encouragement of the establishment of schools by counties, but, occupied with the construction of the Pennsylvania Canal, neglected any further provision for education for several years.

In 1828, by a special act of rather indefinite purpose, it permitted the education of the poor at public expense in Pittsburgh. <sup>41</sup> But nothing was done in consequence of this act, and nothing was to be done until the removal of the implication of poverty on the part of those who were to benefit by general education by the state. Supplication for such a system of general education continued. <sup>42</sup> This sentiment at Pittsburgh was, of course, only a part of a state-wide movement which culminated finally, in 1834, in an act providing for general education throughout the state. <sup>43</sup> The necessary officers for carrying this law into effect were elected in Pittsburgh and began their work, but it was not until two years later, when part of the bonus paid by the United States Bank for its charter was devoted to common schools, that free public schools became firmly established in Pennsylvania. Even then, only a beginning had been made. The importance of the law of 1834 and the supplementary act of 1836 was not that they provided for the education of the poor, for that had been provided for in the act of 1809, but that they established schools which were open and free to all classes of children.

Between the years 1834 and 1836, considerable progress was made in the establishment of schools in Pittsburgh. <sup>44</sup> Five wards, or districts, had erected school buildings. Each of these schools was an independent institution under the direction of its own board of directors. Naturally, standards and curricula varied slightly. In all the schools however, were taught orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and English grammar. And at least one added various handicrafts such as needle-work for the girls and painting of maps and drawing for the boys. This was the start of the public school system in Pittsburgh. The changes that have come since, have been only improvements and developments along the same line.



Pittsburgh's educational facilities, it seems safe to say, kept pace with its industrial development. Aside from the institutions already mentioned, there had been established, in 1833, the Western Female Collegiate Institute with a faculty of seven and a "regular collegiate curriculum" for women, supplemented by instruction in etiquette and daily exercises in calisthenics. <sup>46</sup> A school for the deaf and dumb had been opened in 1826. <sup>47</sup>

✓ Aside from formal education, there was not a little interest shown in lectures. In the "long room" of the gar-  
rison and in the various rooms of the court house, lectures were rather numerous. Scientific discussions seem to have been especially attractive. A series of lectures on chemistry were given during the winter of 1811-12 by a Doctor Aigster, <sup>48</sup> while, in the same winter, the Reverend John Taylor lectured on astronomy. <sup>49</sup> There were several lectures on nitrous oxide or exhilarating gas. <sup>50</sup> A course dealing with the sciences in general was offered in 1826, by a Doctor Priestley, whose name probably helped to bring him an audience. <sup>51</sup> Even phrenology was explained from the platform, <sup>52</sup> for it was considered at that time as a real science. Literary appreciation was not neglected entirely. <sup>53</sup> The University also offered courses which were open to the public. And, just as the period under consideration came to a close, another institution for the informal acquisition of knowledge, the Lyceum, was brought to Pittsburgh. <sup>54</sup>

In considering the educational facilities possessed by the city at this time, it must be remembered that there was nothing there that would have struck a contemporary from the East or from the surrounding country as unusual. Yet there was no marked inferiority. While Pittsburgh had become a manufacturing center of first importance, her schools had grown in number, in variety, and in accessibility. She could scarcely boast of herself as a center of culture or learning. Perhaps she did not care to be, being satisfied if her sons could learn enough to carry on the many branches of industry and commerce. If she produced at this time no poet or artist, she at least furnished men who had much to do with the national tariff policy.

(To be continued)

## NOTES

1. Diary of James Kenney, extracts in the *Historical Magazine*, vol. II (September, 1858) pp. 273-274.
2. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, September 2, 1786.
3. *Ibid.*, March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 1787.
4. *Ibid.*, February 23, May 24, October 11, 1788.
5. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1789.
6. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1786.
7. *Ibid.*, January 12, 1788.
8. *Ibid.*, February 7, 1789.
9. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1789.
10. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1793.
11. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1793.
12. *Ibid.*, May 17, 1794.
13. *Ibid.*, August 2, 1794.
14. John Melish, *Travels in the United States of America, 1806-1811*, Philadelphia, 1812, vol. II, p. 58.
15. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, September 14, 1814; *Pittsburgh Mercury*, December 19, 1821.
16. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, October 9, 1801.
17. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1803, October 4, 1811.
18. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, October 4, 1820.
19. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1827.
20. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 25, 1817.
21. *Ibid.*, July 1, 1803; April 24, 1812; July 29, 1817; *Pittsburgh Mercury*, October 4, November 1, 1820.
22. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, April 20, 1804.
23. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, May 1, 15, 1822.
24. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, April 6, 1819.
25. *Harris's Pittsburgh Directory, 1837*, p. 115, ff.
26. *Pittsburgh Recorder*, July 6, 1824.
27. S. Jones, *Pittsburgh in 1826*, p. 45.
28. Anne Royall, *Pennsylvania, or Travels Continued in the United States*, Washington, 1829, vol. II, pp. 57-60.
29. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, August 3, 1833.
30. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1836.
31. *Life and Reminiscences of William G. Johnston*, Pittsburgh, 1901.
32. See chapter 10 for the unusual education of H. M. Brackenridge.
33. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 1787.
34. J. P. Wickersham, *History of Education in Pennsylvania*, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1886, p. 259.
35. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 13, 1812.
36. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1820.
37. *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*, vol. XXV, pp. 181 ff.
38. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, July 23, 1819.
39. *Pittsburgh Magazine Almanack*, 1819.
40. *Pittsburgh Recorder*, January 25, February 1, 8, 22, March 8, 1824.
41. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, February 19, 1828; *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania*, 1828, p. 314.
42. *Christian Herald*, January 7, 14, 1832.
43. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 12, 1834.
44. *Harris's Pittsburgh Directory, 1837*, pp. 117, ff.
45. *Christian Herald*, June 23, 1833.

46. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, October 11, 1826.
47. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, December 13, 1811.
48. *Ibid.*, January 17, 1812.
49. *Ibid.*, January 14, 1814; August 15, 1833.
50. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, October 11, 1826.
51. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, January 2, 1836.
52. *Ibid.*, October 11, 1836.
53. *Ibid.*, February 29, March 20, 1836.