The Intellectual Life of Pittsburgh, 1786-1836

By Edward Park Anderson

(Continued)

IV.

Church Life

The deep religious feeling that is associated with the founding of American communities and that played such an important role in their life during the nineteenth century, was not present in Pittsburgh for many years after its original settlement. The primary cause of the lack of formal religious organization was the fact that Pittsburgh was not settled by a group of emigrants, but grew up about a frontier outpost. For a time, the only settlers were men attracted by the opportunities for profits in trade. Families came, for the most part, singly, and felt no ties between themselves and their neighbors. Then, too, the earliest civil development came at a time when the enthusiasm of the Great Awakening had burned itself out or had been extinguished by the unsettled conditions accompanying the Revolutionary War.

Many of the settlers about Fort Pitt were, undoubtedly, pious. But their piety was neither sufficiently widespread nor enthusiastic to bring about a church organization. Consequently, the ecclesiastical services held in the town prior to the last decade of the eighteenth century are of interest because they were the earliest rather than because they had any relation to what came after them.

The first religious rite performed at the confluence of the Allegheny and the Monongahela was the mass which was celebrated on April 17, 1754, by the chaplain of the French expedition that had just taken possession of the place. The Forbes expedition also had a chaplain, a Presbyterian by chance, who conducted a thanksgiving service after the expulsion of the French in 1758. After the departure of the army and the chaplain, there was no clergyman in the community until the schoolmaster procured in 1761 added the public reading of the Litany and Common Prayer to his duties. Five years later a Reverend Mr.
McLagan spent some time in Pittsburgh preaching alternately in Scotch and English. For twenty years after that, no congregation that had any continued existence was established and only occasionally did a visiting clergyman conduct services.

In 1782, a German minister, the Reverend J. W. Weber, visited Pittsburgh and assembled the German inhabitants for worship. A congregation was formed, but neither a meeting house nor a regular minister was secured for almost a decade. Meanwhile, the Redstone Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church sent Samuel Barr to care for the Presbyterians in Pittsburgh, where he was for some time the only clergyman. He organized a congregation and, before the end of his four years' residence, saw it erect the first church edifice in the town. Here worshipped the leading men of the time—James Ross, later a United States Senator; Judge Addison, later chief justice of the state supreme court; John Scull, editor of the Pittsburgh Gazette; Ebenezer Denny, later the city's first mayor; and John Wilkins, the leading merchant.

The immediate cause for the erection of a church building was Hugh Henry Brackenridge's procuring from the Penns, who still owned land in the manor, grants of land for the Presbyterian, Episcopal, and German churches. Brackenridge realized that a church was necessary to the cultural progress of the town. He therefore sought a chart-er for a "Church of Pittsburgh," defending his action on the grounds that all the people of the town interested in attending church were at that time sufficiently well served by one minister and that there were not enough people in the town to adequately support more than one church. His suggestion was successfully resisted. Had he been able to put his plan into effect, Pittsburgh might have refrained from establishing more churches than it could support and might have set an example to all the Middle West, where many towns have had, and have, two or more churches in an unprosperous condition when one could flourish.

The only church able to take advantage of its grant immediately was the Presbyterian which erected a small squared-timber building that was for several years the only church edifice in town. It did not prosper. After 1789, when the Reverend Barr departed, there were only occasion-
al services. The building was little used. And it was not until the spirit of the Kentucky Revival aroused the congregation, in 1802, to obtain Robert Steele as its pastor, that the continuous dominance of Presbyterianism in the city began.

Meanwhile, however, congregations of several other denominations had become established. The first of these was the German Evangelical which had been organized in 1782. Its first church was erected in 1794, the year in which Pittsburgh became a borough. Two years later, Methodism became fixed with the arrival of John Wrenshall, a merchant who had a license to preach. Barred from the unused meeting house of the Presbyterians, he conducted services in the fort, then in private homes, and, for two years, was forced to preach in a nearby town. The Methodist congregation grew despite the hardships it encountered. Its strength was created and increased by three visits to Pittsburgh by Bishop Asbury who drew large crowds to hear him talk.

Before the end of the century, an Episcopalian congregation had been organized and had, in 1797, secured as its clergyman, John Taylor who was probably the most colorful character of this early period. Like his Presbyterian fellow, he had been born in Ireland and reared as a Presbyterian, and, like him also, taught at the Academy in addition to performing his ecclesiastical duties. He profited from his skill in mathematics not only in teaching, but in calculating the local almanacs, with an accuracy that surprised people, and in lecturing on astronomy. About him was a spirit of adventure and a delightful confidence in his own ability. He was a public character. Everybody knew him and respected him, and, even after he had resigned from his position in the church, in 1817, affectionately referred to him as Father Taylor.

In contrast to the flavor of sophistication about Reverend Taylor, was the narrow nature of the Calvinistic congregations in the borough. According to tradition, the Presbyterian congregation, as a result of the Reverend Steele's reading two lines of a stanza to be sung instead of the conventional one, split and formed the Second Presbyterian Church, erecting a new building partly from the proceeds of a lottery. The second theological disagreement
was of a more serious nature. The Reverend David Graham was, in 1811, brought before the court of the Reformed Church in North America on charges which even the long account of his trial does not make clear to the layman. It seems that his sin lay in expressing too readily his rather free mind. Be that as it may, the decision of his judges was very unpopular, and Graham did not cease to preach despite the verdict against him.

At the time of Graham's trial, eight churches had become established in Pittsburgh, a number fully adequate to care for its population of three thousand. Of these eight, five were incorporated and had places in which they met regularly—the two Presbyterian, the Episcopalian, and the German Evangelical which have been mentioned, and the Covenanter, a Presbyterian offshoot whose pastor, the Reverend H. J. Black, was later a professor in the University. The Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Anabaptist congregations were without meeting houses.

There was little or no sectarian animosity. This was sufficiently curious to arouse the comment of a traveler, especially in view of the fact that political feeling ran high. All of the organized churches in the borough were, however, of fundamentally the same doctrines, Calvinistic in nature. The two Presbyterian and the Covenanter followed, of course, more or less directly in the steps of Calvin; the Lutheran was much the same in its spirit of strictness, and the Episcopalian minister had been a Presbyterian. Generally strict standards of behavior prevailed, and the Sabbath was observed with a surprising degree of severity.

After the slow start that religious activity had made in Pittsburgh, it progressed well. Nothing was unusual about the city's religious life except that it was the first important city in the United States to have no religious difficulties without special provision against such difficulties. Nothing marked Pittsburgh as a part of the West more than this fact. Calvinism predominated in it, but was not militant against other beliefs. The Calvinistic churches were increased in number in 1815 by the organization of a congregation of Seceders under the guidance of the Reverend Robert Bruce whose learning was to make him the head of the new University. The Roman Catholic church also prospered. The Roman Catholics had received the
ministrations of a priest for a few months in 1792. After that time, however, they grew but little until Pittsburgh's rise to industrial importance after the War of 1812, and until the beginning of the work on the western end of the Pennsylvania Canal brought an influx of Irish and German laborers and mechanics to the city. A consequent growth in the number of Roman Catholics enabled them, in 1815, to erect their first church. Finding that a German as well as an English congregation had to be cared for, they began, in 1829, to erect a second church, Saint Paul's, the largest church in the United States at that time, although the Roman Catholic population of Pittsburgh was comparatively small.

Other churches arose until, at the end of the period under consideration, there were fifteen in the city, including three African, each with one or more auxiliary organizations.

The first of these auxiliary organizations was the sabbath school founded by the Reverend Robert Steele of the First Presbyterian Church in 1801. The purpose of this school was to combine secular and religious instruction. Not only was it the first in Pittsburgh, but it was, perhaps, the first voluntarily taught Sunday school in the United States. Other such schools were organized in the city until, in 1819, there were ten. They formed an association in order to co-operate and to supply books at reduced prices. In a sense, they were the first free schools in the city.

The churches further extended their social work through the Humane Society, organized in 1813 by the Reverend Joseph Stockton, "to supply the wants of the hungry, the naked, and the aged—to administer comfort to the widow, the orphan, and the sick." Its funds were derived from the admission fees and contributions of members and from the proceeds from "charity sermons" preached quarterly for this purpose. Other contributions were collected by ward committees whose duty was to seek out those in need of assistance.

A third work promoted by the churches was the distribution of Bibles free or at a nominal cost. This was accomplished through Bible societies. The first was organized in 1814 in the First Presbyterian Church. Within ten years, it had distributed twenty-five hundred Bibles. Three
more societies were organized. * The churches went afield in 1817 when the Presbyterian Synod of Pittsburgh organized the Western Missionary Society to send missionaries to the Indians. *

The growing importance of church life in Pittsburgh was marked by the location there of two theological seminaries which were founded in 1825. It is an error, perhaps, to say that these seminaries were in Pittsburgh, for both were located in Allegheny Town, but even then the two towns were closely related. The first seminary was that established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church after it had decided that the seminary at Princeton could not adequately serve the West. * The seminary was secured by Allegheny Town after a keen competition for it by towns along the Ohio. Until the first buildings were completed, classes were conducted in the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh. The Western Theological Seminary, as it was called, had within a few years a student body of thirty, provided with excellent facilities for study. * It was well supported and survived without difficulty several very destructive fires.

The theological seminary of the Associate Reformed, later the United Presbyterian, Church was founded in the same year, but began its operation in a less prosperous manner. * For a long time it occupied temporary quarters in the basement of a church, and not until 1880 were its first buildings completed. *

The churches took a hand, indirectly, in secular education also, for the clergymen were the best educated men in the city and gave some of their time to teaching in the Academy and the University. The learning of the Presbyterian ministers was due to the high standards of their sect, but the other Protestant ministers and the one Roman Catholic priest were not behind in ability or education as has been seen in the roster of the first faculty of the University, which was picked entirely from clergymen. The selection of the Reverend C. B. Maguire, a Roman Catholic, as professor of modern languages showed that the trustees of the University were as broad in their religious views as his position showed that they were broad in their educational policy.
The churches, indeed, spread their influence over all fields of intellectual life. It was not a theocratic control, for no force was connected with it, but the leading men of the city were church members who had, in common with everyone, a sort of middle-class piety. And in the schools clergymen formed the minds of youths and instilled, not from any set purpose, the puritan attitude toward the theater, literature, and art.

The prevailing Calvinistic spirit and the learning of the clergymen were the two outstanding features of the church life of the city. It has been said that the dominant Presbyterian spirit in Pittsburgh puts into every clergymen, no matter of what faith or from what section he may be, a conservatism from which he cannot escape. This was true almost from the beginning. From the same Calvinistic root whence came the strict observance of the Sabbath, came the opposition to the theater and, later, to certain pieces of art. It was an attitude that commenced, not as a prohibition, but as a sort of neglect, a neglect that in time became rather sacred and, among so many, prohibitory.

In every-day business life, religion did not greatly interfere, for there the citizens were on solid ground, but in the more uncertain region of intellectual cultivation, they walked as they had been told.

NOTES

1. A. A. Lambing, Mary's First Shrine in the Wilderness.
2. Diary of James Kenney, loc. cit.
4. Ibid., p. 293.
5. Ibid., p. 294.
6. Pittsburgh Gazette, August 26, 1786.
8. Pittsburgh Gazette, June 23, 30, 1787.
11. Ibid., vol. I, p. 3.
15. Ibid., p. 222, and Melish, Travels in the United States of America, 1806-1811, p. 54.
17. Pittsburgh Directory for 1815.
23. D. A. McKnight, Sabbath Schools of the First Presbyterian Congregation of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, 1867, p. 10.
24. Pittsburgh Mercury, October 18, 1826.
27. Pittsburgh Directory for 1815.
30. Ibid., p. 128.
The public institutions for the advancement of learning and morals, the school and the church, could benefit their patrons comparatively little if no facilities for personal development were available. It is by reading that this individual development is usually brought about, and as books are the steps by which the seeker after knowledge or mental recreation progresses, so are they also the tracks by which his historian traces where he was going intellectually. The tastes that had been acquired or were being developed by some early Pittsburgher may, therefore, be surmised in part from the books in their libraries. The literary tastes of the city as a whole may be conjectured from the books that were offered in the bookstores and from the books for which there was sufficient demand to justify local publication. A final indication of the tastes and culture of the city's inhabitants is found in the literature produced in it.

Post-Revolutionary Pittsburgh was a town in which, as a town, literature was almost unknown. The Bible and possibly the almanac were the only printed matter upon which those who could read had an opportunity to use their knowledge. Some of the more prosperous settlers had, undoubtedly, brought with them small libraries. Merchants offered Bibles and primers along with drygoods. And the printers of the newspaper, feeling themselves to be the appropriate venders of the products of their art, since there was no store devoted to selling books, kept a limited supply of spelling-books and catechisms, and later added copies of the state laws enacted between 1775 and the Revolution, an account of a journey from Philadelphia to New York, and a few books for learners of the French language—signifying some local interest in legal matters, travel, and linguistic accomplishment.

The rather up-to-date nature of the libraries of three gentlemen of the town may be inferred from their advertisements for the return of borrowed books. These strayed volumes included Sterne's works, "elegantly bound and gilt," a volume of Pope's works, the lectures of Adam Ferguson, a Scotch philosopher, and Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison. The owner of the latter work must have
had an interest in scientific matters, for his losses also included Euclid's *Elements*, Haway's *Mensuration*, and Gibbon's *Surveying*. 7

But all who wished to read were not able to own books. As early as 1788, therefore, John Boyd, who had become Scull's partner in publishing the *Gazette*, attempted to establish a circulating library. It was to have contained five hundred volumes, and was to have carried all the new American publications, including magazines, and all political or other pamphlets published in or interesting to the State of Pennsylvania. * Boyd's death by suicide a week after his announcement may have been either the cause or the result of the failure of his undertaking.

No library was established. Nor did bookselling flourish. A merchant who advertised, along with a good horse, books "to the extent of many hundred volumes on divinity, history, voyages, etc." * finally called in the books that he had lent, and auctioned off his stock. " Four years later, the printers of the *Gazette* disposed of their stock of books also * and left the town without a bookseller. Outside firms were willing, however, to care for orders for books, and Baltimore * and Philadelphia * stores advertised complete selections of books in all fields of literature.

Once more Hugh Henry Brackenridge, the patron of Pittsburgh's cultural interests, came to her aid and induced a kinsman, John Gilkison, to settle there and to open a bookstore. The selection that he offered was chiefly of text books, but he had also books of "general instruction and amusement" that could be bought or borrowed. * Gilkison was evidently not the man to make bookselling a successful business, for he was more of a scholar than a merchant. Consequently, Brackenridge sought a successor to him, and, fortunately, hit upon Zadoc Cramer.

Thus was brought to Pittsburgh the man who more than any other fostered and guided its literary activity during the fifteen years that he lived there and for a decade after his death. Cramer was a native of New Jersey who had come west at an early age, apprenticing to a book-binder in Washington, Pennsylvania, whence he came to Pittsburgh. * In the summer of 1800, he announced the opening of his bookstore in an advertisement that was large for the times, but not large enough for him to enumerate the
eight hundred titles that he had in stock; so he named only the twenty-three categories of literary production represented. His special care was to remedy the lack of classical authors which hindered the work of the academies. 22

A year later, he, realizing the need as Boyd had done, set about establishing a circulating library. 23 Like everything to which Cramer turned his hand, it was successful. The privilege of using the library cost five dollars a year. The library was open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from nine until one o'clock and from two until six. This pioneer venture led the way for other circulating libraries and, finally, when Cramer was no longer able to attend to it, merged with one of them, the Pittsburgh Permanent Library, in 1814. 24 The cost for membership in this library was ten dollars per year. Although comparatively well patronized, it made no astounding progress. In 1816, after three years' existence, it had received one thousand and forty dollars in membership fees. The books purchased with this money and those contributed by subscribers amounted to perhaps two thousand, most of them well chosen. They were kept in a room of the court house. 25 This seems to have been a laudable growth; yet it must be remembered that private libraries in the East, in more than one instance, surpassed it in size. That men of a frontier town with no background of learning had made this library grow is, however, remarkable.

Two other circulating libraries had short existences during the second decade of the century, 26 and, in 1823, was founded the first free public library. 27 This was the Apprentice Library, maintained for the exclusive use of apprentice boys in the mills and factories. After several years of successful operation, 28 it, as its predecessors, passed out of existence. A more permanent circulating library was organized in 1835 under the name of The Mercantile Library Association. 29 Under various names, it survived until after the Civil War.

From the establishment of the first circulating library by Cramer, the city was never long without a source from which those who were without books might borrow them, if they were able to pay the fees of the library. The circulating libraries usually kept on hand also some of the leading magazines, both English and American. These grew so in
number that one of the booksellers established, in 1833, a "literary reading room" where some twelve American and fifteen English periodicals might be perused in a well-lighted and well-ventilated room that was open until ten o'clock in the evening. * It was many years, before the city had free public libraries.

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While public collections of literature were growing, private libraries were also improving, as was natural when the city began to become settled enough to have more leisure. A visitor in 1808 was offered the use of their "judiciously selected libraries" by two different men. * What a judiciously selected library was is hard to ascertain. The term might well be applied to that of Henry Marie Brackenridge who tells here and there in his Recollections the books that he read. When studying in a law office in Butler, Pennsylvania, he carried with him as lighter reading Shakespeare, Plutarch's Lives, Dacier's Horace, Pope's Homer, Voltaire's Henriade, Ossian, and the Travels of Anacharsis. * After his return to Pittsburgh, he devoted his time to the leading eighteenth-century English historians, reading Robertson's Charles the Fifth, Gibbon's Decline and Fall, some of Hume, and also Marshall's Life of Washington. Although he read from Voltaire, D'Alembert, Hume, Mirabeau, Volney, and Tom Paine, he did not like their works and decided—perhaps Pittsburgh Presbyterianism had cramped the liberal spirit that he should have inherited from his father—to read no more of them, * preferring, instead, Grotius's On the Christian Religion, Locke's On Christianity, and Paley's Evidences. While traveling in Louisiana in 1809, he read several travelers' accounts of the West, and "many French, English, and American works," among them Malthus's Essay on the Principles of Population which he believed opened a new vista in political economy, "although the greater part is little more than the expansion of one of those pregnant hints of Dr. Franklin." * Malthus's book was published in 1798. In 1809, Brackenridge, who was among the best read men of his time, considered it a new work. From this fact, it may be surmised that it took a book about a decade to cross the Atlantic and penetrate to the frontier.
Brackenridge was an exceptional man in early Pittsburgh, and, even had he not left a more complete record of himself than did any of his contemporaries, it would have been suspected that his reading was broad. Since records of what others read are not to be had, rather scanty evidence must be depended upon in estimating the general trend of literary taste. Cramer's bookstore had, under various names, a continuous existence and at least ten other bookstores were established during the period under consideration. From their advertisements, which became quite numerous in later years, some conjecture may be made as to what was offered.

A careful perusal of these advertisements shows, and is confirmed by at least one contemporary, that serious works, especially theological treatises, were most numerous on the shelves of the booksellers. Non-fiction writings, including practical scientific works and accounts of contemporary celebrities, were always in stock. These, of course, were accompanied by text books for the local schools. Translations of the classics, as well as the originals, were used for both study and recreation. Only one title of a drama, Lillo's *George Barnwell*, was advertised. The state laws were offered frequently.

Fiction was confined to the circulating libraries for the most part, especially in the early years. Before the end of the period, however, a complete assortment of fiction was for sale. The most popular writer was, perhaps, Robert Burns, whose works in various editions were almost continuously advertised. This was probably a result of the large Scotch element in the population. Scott's novels were usually received within a year after their publication, and the writings of Cooper and Irving, of course, reached the town more quickly.

More popular fiction was found in the libraries. Charles Brockton Brown's *Edgar Huntly* and *Arthur Mervin* were in the library in 1801. Some of the other titles suggest sentimental contents—such were *Julia and the Baron*, *Sailor Boy*, *Nocturnal Visit*, and *Spirit of the Castille*. The same collection contained, however, Plutarch's *Lives*, *The Spectator*, in eight volumes, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and *Gil Blas*.

As the century advanced, and especially when the War of 1812 and later the Canal brought Pittsburgh into closer
communication with the Atlantic seaboard, the quantity and variety of the stocks of the local booksellers greatly increased, and they were apt to have a supply of books nearly as up-to-date as had the stores of the eastern cities. One Philadelphian publisher, John I. Kay and Company, had a branch in Pittsburgh as early as 1831. Besides this direct connection with the seaboard, newspapers and magazines, both from all America and from Great Britain, kept intellectual Pittsburgh abreast of the times. It seems safe to say, therefore, that anyone with an interest in any field of literature could satisfy it almost as easily in Pittsburgh as in Philadelphia or Boston. And they did. At the end of our period, Pittsburgh was a real city and had a group of men and women who were really well-educated and well-read.

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Some publishing was done in Pittsburgh, and, since local publishing came only in answer to a demand larger than usual, a consideration of the books reproduced there throws some light on the tastes of the inhabitants. *Belles lettres* formed but a small part of the city's publishing. Yet the first book published there was a part of one of the first sustained works of fiction attempted by an American. This was the third volume of Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*. It came from the press of the publishers of the *Gazette* in 1793, and was the first book published west of the Alleghenies. The same publishers had been printing an almanac for several years, but almanac publishing did not become important until Zadoc Cramer stepped into the field in 1801. At the same time he announced the publication of a spelling book. Thus he began his valuable service of supplying elementary text books. Formerly, transportation over the mountains had made such books expensive and inaccessible to many.

A year later, Cramer announced a publication that was to make him famous throughout the valley of the Ohio and the Mississippi and wherever the stories of western travelers were read. On March 7, 1802, the first *Navigator* was put on sale. This book embodied an original idea of Cramer who, seeing emigrants set forth upon the rivers, fearful of their dangers and mysteries, realized the need of a printed guide, and, with various travelers' accounts as
sources of information, compiled directions for navigating the Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, accompanying them with detailed maps printed from woodcuts. It is an interesting coincidence that, in the same year with Cramer's *Navigator*, appeared Nathaniel Bowditch's *New American Practical Navigator*, published in Newburyport, Massachusetts, with directions for navigation of the Atlantic. The latter was a more scientific work, but scarcely more practical than the former.

The *Navigator* grew in accuracy and content in its almost yearly editions. That of 1814, the last under Cramer's personal supervision, contained three hundred and sixty pages in which were inserted a great deal of local history. Afterwards, it dwindled in size until its publication was discontinued in 1824.

Meanwhile, Cramer was publishing other books. In 1804, he printed *The Youth's Gazetteer*, "intended to incite a taste in youth for studying geography." Three years later, he undertook and successfully completed his most ambitious publication, *A Dictionary of the Bible* by the Reverend John Brown of Haddington, Scotland, "a bold attempt when we consider the state of typography in this part of the country at that period." It was in two octavo volumes, printed on excellent paper in double columns of fine type with marginal and dividing lines. The two volumes contained more than thirteen hundred pages and each volume had twelve elaborate steel engravings. Altogether, it was a surprisingly good production.

In 1810, Cramer brought forth the edition of F. Cum- ing's *Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country*, a work that compares favorably with similar works produced in the East. This was one of the very few first editions issued in Pittsburgh. Other publishing was usually reprints from editions originally published elsewhere. The variety of the works issued is shown in a partial enumeration: in 1811, Joseph Scott's *Geographical Dictionary of the United States*, with a map, probably based upon an edition published in Philadelphia; in 1812, John Imison's *Elements of Science and Art*, an introduction to the study of physics and chemistry, reprinted from the latest London edition; a *Catechism of Nature* by Dr. Martinet of Zutphen, translated, for the use of children; a *Life of General Putnam* with a biographical
sketch of General Wayne, and *The Vicar of Wakefield*. In 1813, Cramer announced his publication of three of Lindley Murray's elementary texts, *The Introduction to the English Reader, The English Reader, and The Child's Library.* In the next year, local writing and local publication were combined in Henry Marie Brackenridge's *Views of Louisiana.*

Cramer practically monopolized the little publishing that was done. One book, however, the *Observations* of Congressman William Findley upon the Reverend S. B. Wylie's *Two Sons of Oil*, was published by another firm in 1812. In a stout volume, this statesman defended the separation of church and state with a wealth of Biblical references. Thereafter, as a result of the disturbances of the War of 1812 and of Cramer's death, no publishing took place for several years. Then, in 1818, the Reverend Joseph Stockton's *Western Calculator*, "a new and compendious system of practical arithmetic," appeared. In this same year, an edition of Scott's *Rob Roy* was printed in Pittsburgh in two volumes and in a common and a fine edition.

As communication with Philadelphia improved, local publication became less and less. In 1824 *The Memoirs of the Life and Writings of John Calvin with a History of the Reformation* by John Mackenzie was reproduced, "probably because the strength of Presbyterianism in the city made it popular. Henry Marie Brackenridge's *Recollections of Persons and Places* in the West was published in 1834.

It may be seen from these examples that in most instances the publishing done in early Pittsburgh was one of three kinds: it either supplied practical books, such as text books, that otherwise could have been procured only by transportation over the mountains; or it was in answer to a demand for a book sufficiently great to make its reproduction profitable, especially if it were an English work unprotected by copyright; or it was the work of a local author whose chief merit was that he was local. While the amount of publishing was, comparatively, much greater than in later years when the industry became concentrated in the East, it was never great. No piece of literature that became nationally known was originally published in Pittsburgh except *Modern Chivalry*. And no intellectual leader in Pittsburgh waited for the local publication of a well-
known book. Yet local publication did bring to many people books that they might never otherwise have had.

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Many inhabitants of the city and of the surrounding countryside found a large part of their reading in almanacs and in almanacs published in Pittsburgh. The printing of almanacs, like so many other enterprises, may be traced to Hugh Henry Brackenridge who suggested it to the printers of the Gazette as a means of enlarging their meager profits. "As a result of his suggestion, the first almanac, that for 1787, was announced within three months after the first issue of the newspaper." The earliest copy preserved is for the following year. "Although of good typography of a good quality, it had few of the attractions that later almanacs were to have. Yet, on the whole, it was a very practical pamphlet and served the varied interests of its readers who may have been anywhere in the Ohio Valley.

Zadoc Cramer entered the almanac field soon after his arrival with an almanac for 1801. "His almanac for 1802, the earliest preserved, was an improvement upon that issued by the Gazette in content if not in appearance. "It contained, in addition to the tables of calculation, a poetical description of a country school, a story, Peter the Wild Boy; a description of Pittsburgh, its schools, churches, and manufacturing enterprises, for Cramer was ever zealous in civic advertising; and, finally, the Constitution of the United States.

Cramer had only started, however. He made a great advance when he issued his Pittsburgh Magazine Almanack in 1804. "Thereafter, he published two almanacs, the "magazine" and the "common." After 1805, the almanacs were calculated for the exact meridian and parallel of Pittsburgh by John Taylor, the Episcopalian minister.

No other souvenirs of the times are so interesting in themselves or so filled with the life of the people as the copies of the Pittsburgh Magazine Almanac. The newspapers furnish a step by step account of the events that took place, but with one of these almanacs before him, one can peer into the life of the ordinary man through the pages of a book that he had by him for a whole year, a book that, in the absence of other reading matter, did a great deal to fashion his ideas and to mould his knowledge. The issue
of 1807 is typical. It was divided into two parts. The first contained, after an explanation of the signs, a poem, *Few Happy Matches*, by Dr. Watts; then two fragments of Shakespeare; under each of the twelve months' calculations was placed a proverb; there followed three pages of a letter from a father to his son on the choice of a wife, then, of equal length, a father's advice to his daughter; a report of a farcical trial; a letter telling of an archaeological discovery in Dantzig, Prussia, and of another near Cincinnati; three pages of medical remedies; distribution of the militia of the United States; commerce of the United States; a table of the rate of exchange of foreign and state currencies; a page of unusual facts; two pages of schedules of the dates on which met the courts in Pennsylvania; post office information; a table of distances to nearby places; a table of foreign coins; a table for computing interest at six percent; and an advertisement for subscriptions for the publication of Brown's Dictionary of the Bible. Part two was wholly for entertainment. It began with an account of the self-immolation of the widows of the late regent of Tanjore; then followed an account of an infernal machine designed to destroy Bonaparte; an account of Bonaparte and his wife (taken from the *London Monthly Magazine*, which had taken it from the *Boston Monthly Anthology*); letters of Jefferson and Stark; *Lord Littleton's Dream*, a story; *A Tour of the Red, Black, and Washita Rivers*; *The Great Concerns of the World*, by Franklin; an explanation of the motto; an account of the manufactures of Pittsburgh; a list of eight slave sales taken from one Charleston paper, headed "Mourn! Humanity, Mourn!" (taken from a Baltimore paper); and, finally, a list of deaths and marriages—the only such record kept in the city. Thus its sixty pages were filled.

The contents of some of the other issues are interesting. Beginning in 1808, a chronological table of historical events from the creation of the world was continued from year to year. In modern magazine fashion, articles were continued from number to number and one ran throughout twelve years. Readers had to wait a year for answers to mathematical conundrums. Franklin's *Way to Wealth* was inserted in 1811 and 1825; the hatchet story from Weems' *Life of Washington* appeared in 1811; the story of
William Tell also found a place. The issue of 1829 devoted sixteen of its seventy pages to the Constitution, which was again inserted in 1821. The almanac of 1822 had the longest piece of fiction, Blind Allan, an eight-page story. In 1828, an illustration of the signs of the zodiac was included for the first time, and the same number contained Washington's Farewell Address.

The people were reading, therefore, pieces of literature that were, in some instances, almost or quite classical, in some instances, trash, and, in some instances, informative. Here they found things to think about and to talk about, and, here, no doubt, they found the foundation for many of their ideals as well as their ideas. The circulation of the almanac was chiefly rural if the statement of the editor is correct that it found its way into twenty-thousand homes at a time when Pittsburgh contained only six hundred dwelling houses.

Cramer's almanacs continued to be published as late as 1832, and perhaps later. The "common" or Pittsburgh Almanack contained the same calculations and some of the same literature as the "magazine," and was of about half as many pages. The Pittsburgh Magazine Almanack was one product of the Pittsburgh of this period that compares favorably with similar work done in the East. The famous Farmer's Almanack of R. B. Thomas was scarcely its superior. Of course, neither the contents or the plan of Cramer's almanacs were original with him. The important thing is that he was giving his patrons a work of a very high quality.

It is well to mention that at least two other almanacs were issued during this period. In 1813, Patterson and Hopkins published The Honest Man's Almanack, with a title page that declared that "This almanack contains nothing to encourage the evil practices of liars, drunkards, rogues, lazy fellows, infidels, tories, cowards, bad husbands, and old bachelors." The same firm also issued The Pittsburgh Town and Country Almanack for Rogues and Honest Folks.

In addition to almanacs, there was some periodical literature produced in the city. The first periodical of which there is any knowledge was, in fact and name, The Pioneer. It was projected, in December, 1811, by the Reverend David Graham who had in that same year been in
difficulty with his church. He requested men of literary ability or inclination to make contributions of their writing. Contributions must have been slow in arriving, however, for the first appearance of The Pioneer was delayed. Intended as a weekly, it was issued irregularly during the one year of its existence. But, if it was irregular, it was also excellent. It was about eight and a half by five inches in size, and of excellent paper and typography. The contents were rather ponderously but correctly written, and treated of things academic as may be seen from the essays included in one issue. This issue had articles on the origin and progress of periodical essay writing, on the selections in the English language for the use of schools, on the necessity and utility of literary acquisitions to a preacher of the gospel, on earthquakes, on the art of reading, and on the studies of the ancient classics. Contributions to this serious and learned magazine were unsigned, which is a pity, for it would be interesting to know the names of the men, probably ministers all, who had sufficient interest in literature to make possible such a work. With the exception of an occasional college commencement program, there is no other evidence of a critical literary spirit in the city.

Zadoc Cramer had his hand in the publication of periodicals also. Here his practical nature did not show to advantage, for his magazine differed too little from an almanac. The Western Gleaner, as it was called, was issued in 1813. It was intended to be useful, primarily, but it also promised entertainment, criticism of American literature, and translations from the French, German, Italian, and Spanish, reflecting the anti-British feeling inspired by the war. Unfortunately, the editor permitted things practical to take up most of his publication.

Other periodicals had brief periods of existence. Most successful of all was the Hesperus and Western Miscellany, edited by N. Ruggles Smith in 1828. It was a bi-weekly, containing eight pages of three columns each, printed on a paper scarcely superior to newsprint. It had subscribers scattered all over the East. The bulk of its pages were filled with essays on chemistry, botany, mineralogy, or other sciences treated in an amateur manner. There was an occasional tale and usually a page of original verse. Most of its contributors, men and women, were known as the Hes-
perian Society. They signed their work with Latin pseudonyms. The *Hesperus* was a surprisingly good periodical, and it is strange that its publication did not continue longer. In 1829, it was succeeded temporarily by the *Bee Hive*, an almost identical production which was not long lived.

A third periodical, *The Masonic Souvenir*, had appeared in 1828. It was a weekly quarto devoted to literature, science, and the arts. Its appearance, according to the editor of the *Hesperus*, was neat and its contents useful and entertaining.

The last periodical to appear, or, rather, to be announced, for there is no proof of its appearance, was the *Pittsburgh Mirror*, a literary periodical that was to begin its career in June of 1834. The editor in his prospectus gave the feelings with which he set about his work:

> It has often been remarked, at home and abroad, as very singular, that a city so old as Pittsburgh, and possessing so much intelligence as it undoubtedly does, should be entirely destitute of a Journal devoted to a taste for Literary Pursuits among its citizens. Attempts have more than once been made to supply this deficiency, but, from some cause or other, they have always proved abortive.

Such was the opinion of a contemporary. Looking back, it seems remarkable that anyone could have expected success for a magazine that had to depend for both its contents and its subscribers upon local talent and local appreciation. The attempt to found such magazines, however, indicates that on the part of some there was a desire, and perhaps ability, to do something in a literary way. They were handicapped by not having an interested public behind them, and they were helpless among a community whose chief interest was commerce or industry.

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**NOTES**

15. H. M. Brackenridge in the Pittsburgh Magazine Almanack, 1816, p. 64.
17. Ibid., June 12, 1801.
18. Ibid., January 7, 1817.
19. Pittsburgh Directory for 1815. But see also The Pittsburgh Post, September 27, 1908.
22. Pittsburgh Mercury, February 21, 1827.
24. Pittsburgh Gazette, August 1, 7, 1833.
25. F. Cuming, Sketches of a Tour etc., pp. 63-64.
27. Ibid., p. 99.
28. Ibid., p. 211.
29. S. Jones, Pittsburgh in 1826, p. 45.
30. Pittsburgh Gazette, December 18, 1801.
31. Ibid., September 25, 1801.
32. Ibid., February 26, 1802.
33. For instance, Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years, p. 20.
34. Pittsburgh Gazette, March 7, 1802.
35. Ibid., March 23, 1804.
36. Pittsburgh Magazine Almanack, 1816, p. 64.
37. Pittsburgh Gazette, July, 1811.
38. Ibid., March 20, 1812.
39. Ibid., November 13, 1812.
40. Ibid., January 22, 1813.
41. Ibid., September 4, 1812, but the book is dated 1814.
42. Patterson & Hopkins, S. Engles & Co.
43. Pittsburgh Gazette, September 1, 1818.
44. Ibid., March 13, 1818.
45. Pittsburgh Mercury, October 7, 1823.
46. Introduction to H. H. Brackenridge’s Gazette Publications.
47. Pittsburgh Gazette, September 30, 1788.
48. Its title ran: Pittsburgh/Almanack/or Western Ephemeris/For the Year of our Lord, 1788./Bissextile or Leap Year/Pittsburgh:/Printed by Scull and Boyd. It was about four and one-fourth by seven inches in size.
49. Pittsburgh Gazette, November 7, 1800.
50. Its title ran: The/Pittsburgh/AlmanackFor the Year of/our Lord, 1802,/ [an eagle] /Printed for Zadoc Cramer, Book-seller/by John Israel/Price per dozen, 50—single, 7 cents.
51. Pittsburgh Gazette, September 23, 1803.
52. Its title ran: No. IV/Cramer’s/Pittsburgh Magazine /Almanack/for the year of our Lord, /1807./ Being the third after Bissextile or Leap-Year/And after the Fourth of July,/the 32d of the American Independence./ Calculated for the meri-dan of/Pittsburgh, in Lat. 40.35 N. Long. 80.38 W. But will serve without any sen-/sible variation for the states of Ohio,/ Virginia, Kentucky, &c./ [cut of a farmer and a mechanic shaking hands, with the motto: Friendship, Agriculture, and Manufactures]/printed by Zadoc Cramer,/And sold at his
Bookstore and Printing Office, in Market, between Front and Second streets—where German Almanacks may also be had, by the gross, dozen, or single.

55. *Christian Herald*, September 10, 1831. The last issue preserved is for 1828.
57. The issues of 1817 and 1822 are preserved.
59. Its title ran: The /Pioneer/ consisting of /Essays, Literary, Moral, and Theological/ By the Reverend David Graham, /Pastor of the United Congregation of Pittsburgh and Cannonsburgh/ *Fossor Castrensis Ago* /Pittsburgh:/ /Printed by S. Engles & Co./ 1813.
60. Its title ran: The /Western Gleaner/or /Repository for Arts, Sciences and /Literature/Vol. I for December, 1813/ No. 1.