A PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY

Between the East and the Middle West and partaking of the character of both lies the section known to geographers as the Allegheny Plateau. Embracing western Pennsylvania and adjacent parts of New York, Ohio, and West Virginia, the section is drained mainly by the upper Ohio and its tributaries, and its heart and center is at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, where stands the city of Pittsburgh. The importance of this region and especially of the forks of the Ohio in American history has long been recognized by historians, but its history has received comparatively little intensive study. While the East and the Middle West have been enjoying in recent years a veritable renaissance of interest and activity in local, state, and regional history and have developed vigorous programs of historical activity, the people of this region have done less to support and stimulate such activity than have those of sections less populous and less well endowed with worldly goods.

All of you present tonight are aware, however, that now, largely through the generosity of the Buhl Foundation, provision has been made for a program of collecting materials for and research in the history of western Pennsylvania. That program is under the joint auspices of this society and the University of Pittsburgh and is known as the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey. The professional staff consists for the present year, in addition to the director, of Dr. Alfred P. James, on leave of absence as professor of history in the University of Pittsburgh, as research associate; Mr.

1 This paper is a revision of a stenographic record of an informal address by the director of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey before the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on October 27, 1931.
Franklin F. Holbrook, who has had many years of experience in historical work, as curator; and Mr. Alston G. Field, a graduate student in the university, as fellow. We expect to have a somewhat larger professional staff in future years, but the necessity of using funds for other purposes prevented additional appointments for the first year.

The purpose of research is to make contributions to knowledge. For a research project, therefore, it is obvious that definitive plans cannot be made in advance, since not all the factors are known. It is possible, however, to formulate a tentative program of procedure, and that is what I am going to lay before you tonight.

In the planning of any project the first thing to be done, of course, is to determine the objectives. Many people seem to have the impression that the major if not the only objective of the survey is the writing of a comprehensive history of western Pennsylvania. It should be made clear at the outset, therefore, that such a work is not one of the immediate objectives. Just as a research bureau in one of the natural sciences would not be expected to produce a comprehensive work covering the whole field of that science in a limited time, so the survey should not be expected to produce a comprehensive history. Its primary objective is to increase the existing knowledge of the history of the region, not only by its own research work but also by discovering, collecting, and making available to others the materials from which contributions to historical knowledge may be made. In addition the survey hopes to disseminate information, both the new knowledge and the old, more widely among the people of the region and among the people of the nation than it has been disseminated before. A third objective is to make a demonstration of what can be done by systematic collection and research in the history of a region such as western Pennsylvania. It ought to be possible to show that such work is worth doing, that its results will make life more interesting, more worth while, more understandable for the people of the region. And
finally it is hoped that the demonstration will be so convincing that the people of this community will be prepared by the end of the five-year period for which the survey is now financed to support work in the history of the region indefinitely.

Now that the scope of history has been broadened to include all the activities of mankind in the past, social and economic as well as political and military, it becomes more necessary than ever before for the historian to select for investigation those events, conditions, and movements that are most significant in explaining the development of the region under consideration. Such selection made in advance must necessarily be tentative and subject to revision as the work proceeds, but it cannot be avoided. Fortunately certain aspects of the history of western Pennsylvania stand out so clearly today that there can be no question as to their significance.

The first of these is the contest that took place in and through this region between France and England for the control of the great interior of the continent of North America. Pennsylvania traders began to cross the mountains to visit the western Indians in the thirties of the eighteenth century, and about the middle of the century Virginia speculators undertook to promote settlement in the upper Ohio country. In the meantime the French were trying to strengthen their claims and keep out the English by constructing a line of forts from Lake Erie to the Ohio, for they realized that once the English were firmly established in this region the whole interior would lie open to them. The struggle came to blows in 1754, it developed into a world war, and when it was over the interior as far west as the Mississippi belonged to England.

Another important phase of the history of western Pennsylvania is the story of its settlement by white men. This is a significant part of the story of the great westward surge of European peoples that started with the founding of Jamestown and Plymouth and continued for nearly three centuries
until practically the whole continent had been occupied by white settlers. It took the English-speaking people a century and a half to occupy the country between the Atlantic coast and the Appalachian Mountains. Finally, however, in the second half of the eighteenth century, they began to push across the barrier, and their first permanent settlements in the great interior valley were established in the region with which we are concerned. The story of the planting of these frontier outposts and their development into stable communities has never been adequately told. The same is true, also, of the part played by the region in the settlement of the country beyond, for the young city at the confluence of the Allegheny and the Monongahela was the gateway to the West and out from this region went a considerable proportion of the settlers of such states as Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.

A third important aspect of the history of western Pennsylvania, and one that should contribute especially to an understanding of the present situation, is the part that this region has played in what may be called the American industrial revolution. In the years following the Civil War, the United States has been gradually transformed from what was primarily an agricultural country into a great manufacturing and industrial nation, and no part of the country has had more to do with that transformation than has western Pennsylvania. This development calls for research, both from a national and from a regional point of view, in order that there may be a better understanding of the great change and of what it means for the manners and customs and activities of the American people.

Closely connected with this industrial revolution is the change that has taken place, largely during the same period, in the racial composition of our population. The original settlers of this region were mainly of English, Scotch-Irish, and German extraction, and by the time of the Civil War they had formed a stable and uniform society with well
defined ideals and institutions. Since then, however, large numbers of immigrants, mainly from southern and southeastern Europe, have poured into the region—people whose ideals and institutions are often quite different from those of the original settlers and their descendants. The newcomers and their children and grandchildren will inevitably have a large share in the future history of the region, and the society that will ultimately emerge here will have its roots in southern and southeastern Europe as well as in the American colonies and northern Europe. It is essential, therefore, that the history of this immigration and of these immigrant peoples in the region be studied, if we want to understand the processes by which the different elements are being assimilated to each other and the society that is going to emerge from these processes. It might be noted also, in passing, that it is likewise important that the new elements be given some understanding of the earlier history of the region in order that they can better adjust themselves to the new environment.

All these aspects of the history of western Pennsylvania are not merely of local but also of national importance, and yet, with the exception of the struggle between the French and the English for the possession of the interior, they have received comparatively little study from historians, particularly in their local aspects. Even in the case of the exception noted, it is clear that much more work can be done with profit. Some of the reasons for the neglect of western Pennsylvania history are not difficult to see. One of them is the fact that until recently the attention of historical writers and students has been largely centered upon politics to the exclusion or minimizing of economic and social history. Most of the important aspects of the history of this region, however, have been social and economic rather than political. A second reason for neglect is the fact that western Pennsylvania is not, itself, a political entity. It is merely a geographical expression and, moreover, it is the western part of an eastern
state. The major interest in the history of the state, particularly from the political standpoint, has naturally been in the eastern part, where the first settlements took place and where the capital and the metropolis are to be found. If western Pennsylvania had been an independent state or a part of a western state, its importance in American history would have received greater recognition, as has that, for example, of Kentucky. Geographically, the section is quite distinct from eastern Pennsylvania; most of it belongs to the Mississippi Valley; and its early history is a part of the history of that valley, rather than a part of the history of the state of Pennsylvania. Now that more attention is being given to the importance of geographic sections in history, western Pennsylvania is likely to receive greater consideration, for it is only when viewed as the center of the Allegheny Plateau that its real significance in the development of the country becomes apparent.

For these and perhaps other reasons the people of the region have not exploited their history so vigorously as have the people of some other parts of the United States. Certainly they have not brought it so continuously and effectively to the attention of writers of general history and of the public at large as the people of New England or Virginia or Kentucky have done with their histories. The general historian must depend to a considerable extent upon the studies of others who have worked with the sources and, quite naturally, he gives the greater attention to those subjects that have been adequately treated. It is not strange, therefore, that in most histories of the United States the early settlements of Kentucky bulk much larger than do those of western Pennsylvania, which, as Professor James has recently pointed out, were actually the first to be established west of the mountains.

The history of western Pennsylvania has not, however, been wholly neglected by its citizens, and in planning for future systematic work it is important to look about and see what foundations have already been laid upon which the super-
structure can be built. It appears that there have been at least three agencies in this community that have been notably active in laying foundations for historical work. One of these is the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. While a society of that name appears to have been in existence before the Civil War, and the present society's charter dates from 1874, it can hardly be said to have been a vigorous and effective institution before the reorganization that took place in 1909. Since then, however, the society has kept alive and stimulated interest in the history of the region, particularly on the part of the people of Pittsburgh. It has held frequent meetings for the reading of papers; it has, since 1918, published a quarterly magazine, thus providing a medium for the dissemination of historical information; it has accumulated a small library; and finally, it has in comparatively recent years succeeded in erecting this admirable building to serve as a center for historical activities and as a safe place for the preservation of historical material. A second agency for the advancement of the cause of history in this community has been the University of Pittsburgh. Especially in recent years it has through its history department promoted and encouraged considerable research on the part of graduate students in the history of the region. Some of the product of this work has been published in the society's magazine, but much of it lies unpublished in the form of master's theses filed in the university library. The acquisition by the university of the Darlington library, containing many rare books and a number of important newspaper files pertaining to the region, is also a notable step forward. Another agency of great importance in the field is the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, which in its comparatively short existence has built up a very extensive collection of materials for the history of Pennsylvania and, especially, of western Pennsylvania. Its collection of books and files of old newspapers in this field is probably the most comprehensive to be found anywhere in the region. Undoubtedly there are other agencies and
certainly numerous individuals who have been active in collecting and in research in this field but the three that have been mentioned appear to be the most important at the present time. The survey is under the auspices of two of these agencies and has the assurance of the coöperation of the third. It is hoped that all other organizations and individuals in the region interested in promoting the study of its history will also be willing to coöperate.

The first steps in any research project in history must necessarily be to find out what has already been done in the field and what materials are available for research. Obviously it is not desirable to do over again things that already have been well done or to do work that will later have to be done over because important materials have been overlooked. We have undertaken, therefore, to compile a comprehensive bibliography of western Pennsylvania history. As a basis for this bibliography, printed catalogue cards have been obtained from the Library of Congress for general Pennsylvania material and for local material relating to the counties and cities of western Pennsylvania. With this as a start, the bibliography will gradually be built up by checking through other bibliographies and catalogues, examining files of historical publications, and listing Pennsylvania material in libraries; and locations of copies will be indicated on the cards.

Material published in books, pamphlets, periodicals, and collections, whether source or secondary, will be listed in the bibliography, but there are at least three classes of important source materials that will have to receive separate treatment. These are newspapers, maps, and manuscripts. Unfortunately, no comprehensive collection of materials of this sort for western Pennsylvania has ever been assembled, but it is certain that large quantities are in existence in the attics and storerooms of the people and the institutions of the region. Newspaper files are to be found in the offices of the papers themselves, in the hands of former publishers or their descend-
ants, in county offices, and sometimes in local libraries. Personal and family papers have undoubtedly been preserved in many families, and it is hoped that their custodians can be made to realize their value for research, especially in social history, regardless of the prominence of the people concerned. All sorts of institutions and organizations have records of their past activities—churches, schools, railroad companies, industries, and commercial associations. Sometimes these are well cared for but often the older records are packed away in unsafe and inaccessible places if they have not been deliberately destroyed. Then, there are the public records, or archives, as they are usually called. The counties, cities, towns, and boroughs, and even the school districts, of western Pennsylvania all have their archives containing material that may be valuable to the historian. A systematic campaign for locating and listing materials of these types is being carried on. Mr. Field, who is devoting most of his time to work of this sort, has already made an extensive survey of the historical resources of one county, and it is hoped that ultimately comprehensive inventories of public archives, business records, personal papers, maps, and newspaper files may be compiled.

Not all the important materials for research in the history of western Pennsylvania are to be found in the region, however. In fact, for the earlier period most of the material must be sought elsewhere—in the state archives in Harrisburg; in the federal archives in Washington; in great collections of manuscripts such as those to be found in Philadelphia, in the Library of Congress at Washington, and in the Clements Library at Ann Arbor, Michigan; in the archives of England, France, and Canada; and in great libraries abroad, such as the British Museum. The problem of dealing with material in foreign depositories, fortunately, has been greatly simplified by the activities of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and of the Library of Congress. The former has compiled and published extensive guides to materials of
American interest in most of the European archives and has also issued a comprehensive calendar or descriptive list, arranged chronologically, of every document to be found in the French archives relating to the Mississippi Valley. Utilizing these guides and making independent searches, the Library of Congress has, in the last few years, obtained photostats or film-slide reproductions of vast quantities of this unpublished material for American history. Dr. James is devoting the year mainly to the work of inventorying and calendaring materials for the history of the region to be found in outside depositories. He is working at present in the Library of Congress, mainly with the reproductions of materials in Europe, but he expects to visit a number of the other places referred to in this country and then to go abroad and complete his work in London and Paris. He is attempting to make a comprehensive list of all documents relating to the region down to 1783, including published as well as unpublished material.

The compilation of bibliographies and the discovery of materials are fundamental steps for historical research, but they need to be supplemented by extensive collecting before wholly effective research and writing can be done. Papers in private hands, newspaper files in the publication offices, and institutional records stored in attics or in the homes of officials can usually be consulted by scholars only with great difficulty, if at all. An effort will be made therefore to persuade people who have such materials to deposit them in the custody of this society or in other public depositories if preferred. By so doing they will not only make the material available for use but will also insure its preservation. When important materials are discovered in private hands that cannot be so transferred, an attempt will be made to obtain reproductions of them; and fortunately new methods of reproducing documents that have been developed recently make this procedure much more feasible than it has been in the past. The amount of collecting to be done is so large that any attempt to preëmpt
the field would be extremely unwise. The survey will encourage all libraries and historical agencies in the region to collect as much as they can and will endeavor to bring about cooperation among them to the end that the work may be done more adequately, needless duplications may be avoided, exchanges may be effected to get material where it will be most useful, and loans may be made to facilitate scholarly work.

With materials already assembled in depositories outside the region the problem is somewhat different. Obviously in such cases the originals cannot be obtained, but here again resort can be had to reproductions when the documents are sufficiently important. The facsimiles of documents in Europe which the Library of Congress now possesses in such great quantities fortunately can be borrowed for limited periods, and in many cases that will probably suffice.

It is not the intention of the survey, however, to make materials available only to members of its own staff who may be engaged in a particular piece of research. It wants to increase the availability of the documentary sources of western Pennsylvania history to interested scholars, wherever they may be located, and the only way to do this effectively is through publication. Efforts will be made, therefore, to bring about the editing and publication in scholarly fashion of volumes of documentary material, with the hope that ultimately there may be available to scholars printed sources for the history of this region as comprehensive as those that are available for any other section of the country. Fortunately there exist a number of agencies interested in the publication of sources that may be willing and able to cooperate in this work. The Clarence Walworth Alvord Commission of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, for example, has planned a series of documentary volumes, and it happens that the first two of these — on the Vandalia Company and on the British occupation of the West — will relate largely to this region. Perhaps the state of Pennsylvania, through its state library or its historical commission can be induced to
publish more material concerning the western part of the state. But these outside agencies are not sufficient. There is need for a continuing series of "Collections" devoted wholly and specifically to western Pennsylvania; the work of the survey will result in the assembling of material for such a series; and it is to be hoped that means may be found for inaugurating its publication under the auspices of the survey or of the society.

The arrangement, filing, cataloguing, and making available for research purposes of the collections of books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, maps, manuscripts, and reproductions that will pour into this building as the work develops — and the river has already begun to flow — will require a large amount of labor. This material will ultimately become the property of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, but the society's present staff is inadequate for the task of caring for it and it has no funds that can be used for engaging additional workers. In fact the small library and miscellaneous collections of manuscripts and other material that the society had already accumulated were unclassified and uncatalogued when the survey was started in September; and, as they could not be used effectively in this condition for research purposes, it was necessary for the survey to take on the task of putting them in shape for use. This is one of the reasons why the survey is not able to employ a larger professional staff for the first year; and the expense of caring for materials accumulated will continue to restrict the amount of research work that the survey can do unless the income of the society is increased sufficiently to enable it to enlarge its staff.

The specific research projects as distinguished from collection projects that will be undertaken cannot be determined in advance. The selection will depend upon the gaps in existing knowledge discovered in connection with the bibliographical work, upon the available materials discovered, and upon the interests and training of members of the staff. It is the intention, however, that definite studies shall be undertaken leading
to the production of published monographs; and it is probable that much of this work will be in the field of social and economic history. In addition, moreover, to the research work that may be done by members of the staff, the survey expects to encourage and facilitate research in western Pennsylvania history on the part of scholars connected with the various educational institutions of the region. In fact anyone, wherever situated, who is engaged in scholarly research in this field can count on the cooperation of the survey to the full extent of its resources and facilities.

If historical knowledge is to fulfill its mission, however, it is not enough that it be embodied in collections of documents and monographic studies. In time, of course, such knowledge will ordinarily be utilized by the writers of general and popular histories and ultimately it will affect even the textbooks used in the schools. This is normally a slow process, however, and the survey will attempt to speed it up by promoting the writing and publication of popular works in the field of western Pennsylvania history—books and articles that will be accurate and will embody the latest results of research but will have an appeal to the general reader. Efforts will also be made to bring about the preparation and publication of books suitable for use in the schools. There is reason to believe that teachers and school officials would be glad to give more attention, both in the high schools and in the grades, to local and regional history, if more adequate materials were available for their use. Papers prepared by the survey or with its assistance will also be available for reading at the meetings of this society and for publication in its magazine, and material in popular form will probably be supplied to other magazines and to newspapers.

These plans for disseminating historical information and arousing interest in the history of the region— for developing what may be called "historical consciousness" on the part of the people—have a very definite bearing on plans that are being worked out for reorganizing the Historical Society of
Western Pennsylvania and developing it into a more effective agency for promoting historical activities. The achievements of the society must necessarily depend very largely on the interest taken in its work and the support given to it by the community. If the size of its membership is a fair criterion of that interest, it must be admitted that it is not large at the present time. It is believed, however, that, as the work of the society expands and becomes better known, thousands of people in western Pennsylvania will be glad to affiliate with it when the matter is brought effectively to their attention.

An increased membership will add somewhat to the available funds of the society; but, unless a considerable proportion of the members contribute more than the minimum dues, which do not much exceed the cost of printing the society's magazine, the direct financial gain will not be very great. It is hoped, however, that the people of the community who can afford to do so will see the desirability of supporting the society's work through sustaining and contributing memberships and by gifts and bequests to an endowment fund. It is particularly desirable that the society should have sufficient income to enable it to relieve the survey of the necessity of cataloguing and otherwise caring for the accumulations of material belonging to the society or to be turned over to it. The society now has adequate quarters for a small historical museum and funds for the purchase of equipment; it has a miscellaneous collection of museum objects, which can readily be enlarged and rounded out by a systematic campaign for contributions; but it lacks the funds needed to provide a trained museum assistant to carry on such a campaign, to classify and catalogue the objects, and particularly to arrange them in orderly and logical exhibits adequately labeled and changed from time to time, so that the museum will serve as an effective medium for recreating the life of the past. A worthwhile museum is an educational institution and a research collection, rather than a collection of curios; it is constantly growing and constantly changing its exhibits; and it requires the continuous services of a competent curator.
The concrete results of the work of the survey may be expected to include: a comprehensive and continually growing bibliography of the history of western Pennsylvania; inventories and descriptive lists of documentary material for research in this field; extensive collections of maps, manuscripts, and newspaper files and reproductions of such materials, supplemented by a good working library and all adequately classified and catalogued and made available to workers in this building; a series of carefully edited volumes of source materials relating to the region; a number of monographic studies of special phases of its history; publications designed to interest the general reader and disseminate historical information; and material that can be used in the schools to cultivate in the rising generation a knowledge of and interest in the section in which they live. More important, however, are some of the less tangible results that are hoped for: the development of historical consciousness on the part of the people of the region—a greater appreciation of the value of a knowledge of the past and a fuller realization of the part that it has played in producing the present; a more widespread knowledge of the history of the region and a more general recognition of the important part that it has played in the making of America; and finally a vigorous historical society, adequately financed and prepared to "carry on" indefinitely.

The success of this program is largely dependent on the good will and coöperation of the people of the region and especially upon that of the members and friends of this society. Many of you must have or know of materials that would be useful in historical research, especially personal and family papers; and you can help us by calling them to our attention and assisting us to acquire them, or, at least, enabling us to examine them. When one thinks of the number of collections of such papers to be found in libraries in such places as Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville, Detroit, Chicago, Madison, St. Paul, and St. Louis, not to mention the older centers in the East, he wonders
what has become of the similar material that must have been produced in this region. Much of it undoubtedly has been destroyed for want of a collector, but much of it is probably still in existence and more is being produced constantly. If one does not value the papers in his possession, he should be willing to surrender them for the use of the historian. If one does value them, and wants them preserved for posterity, the surest way to accomplish that is to turn them over to some public depository. Your assistance is also essential to the building up of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. In the long run the society will have to be the backbone of continued historical work in this region. It is your society and if you believe in it you can greatly increase its effectiveness by supporting it as liberally as possible and by bringing it to the attention of your friends and acquaintances and persuading them to become members and share in its support. There is every reason to believe that the members of the society and the community in general will give the heartiest coöperation to the survey, and with that support its major objectives will be attained.

Solon J. Buck

Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey
Pittsburgh