THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA IN 1932

SOLON J. BUCK

The year 1931 witnessed three notable developments with reference to the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. The first of these was the completion of the addition to its building, more than doubling the space available for its collections and activities, the second was the establishment under the joint auspices of the society and the University of Pittsburgh of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey, and the third was the reorganization effected by the adoption of a new set of by-laws and the appointment of a director to administer the affairs of the society. These three closely related developments have made possible the increased activities and accelerated pace of the society in 1932, but they have not changed its objects, which, as expressed in the new by-laws, are "to increase and diffuse knowledge of the history of western Pennsylvania and the Allegheny Plateau in particular and of the United States in general." Since both the society and the survey are working toward these ends and since their activities are closely interwoven, no attempt will be made in this report to distinguish sharply between them.

Eight meetings of the society were held in Stevenson Hall during the year, at which eleven papers or addresses were presented. The attendance at these meetings was very good, the room being comfortably filled on nearly every occasion. At the annual meeting, on January 26, officers and trustees were elected in accordance with the new by-laws. The officers now have three-year terms, and two trustees will be elected each year for terms of five years. The program of addresses and papers for the 1932–33 season was prepared as usual under the direction of Mr. John E. Potter as chairman of the program committee and was printed

Report of the director of the society read at the annual meeting on January 31, 1933.
and distributed in October. An outstanding event of the year was the historical tour conducted by the society and the summer session of the University of Pittsburgh from Pittsburgh to Erie on July 15 and 16. As a full account of this tour has been published in the November number of the society's magazine, it will be sufficient here to say that it was successful beyond all expectation. Nearly two hundred people participated in it, besides local people who attended the sessions in their communities, and at one stage there were about fifty cars in the line. Much interest in the society was undoubtedly aroused in the communities visited, and it is to be hoped that a similar tour can be held in another section the coming summer. The society also had a part in the Washington Bicentennial dinner given at the William Penn Hotel on February 22 under the auspices of the Allegheny County Bicentennial Committee. A group of tables was reserved by the society and they were occupied by over fifty members and friends.

The Historical Building is rapidly becoming a center for a variety of historical activities. Besides the meetings of the society and various conferences and committee meetings, it was used during the year for a weekly seminar of the University of Pittsburgh on western Pennsylvania history, occasional meetings of other university classes, meetings of two chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution, a section meeting of the Western Pennsylvania Educational Conference, sessions of the Pennsylvania Forensic and Music League, and the Third Annual History Conference of the University of Pittsburgh. This conference, which was attended by about one hundred and fifty people, mostly teachers, was of special interest to the society inasmuch as the general theme was teaching and research in regional, state, and local history.

The membership of the society on January 1, 1933, amounted to 516, of whom 3 were life members, 2 contributing members, 29 sustaining members, 481 annual members, and 1 was a permanent institutional member. This represents an increase of 2 life members, 2 contributing members, 8 sustaining members, and the permanent institutional member, but a loss of 62 annual members, or a net loss of 49. Sixty new members were elected during the year as compared with 36

\(^2\) See ante, 15:309-322.
in 1931 and 8 former members were reinstated, but 15 members were lost by death and 29 by resignation and 73 others failed to pay their dues for 1932. The pressure of other work made it impossible to conduct an active membership campaign during the year, but it is hoped that one can be inaugurated in the near future. The fact that so many have applied for membership without active solicitation would seem to indicate that a vigorous campaign would result in a large increase in membership. In the meantime, many new members will be obtained if the present members will bring the activities and publications of the society to the attention of their friends and acquaintances.

The four numbers of the society's quarterly, the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, for 1932 were published in February, May, August, and November — one month later than heretofore. They included seven major articles, of which one, Mr. Dahlinger's study of "The Marquis Duquesne" ran through three numbers. When this was completed it was reprinted, together with an index, in book form at the expense of the author. Copies were placed on sale in the bookstores and the small edition is now practically exhausted. A book review section was included in each issue of the magazine, and twenty-nine books, most of them dealing with some phase of the history of western Pennsylvania, were reviewed by fifteen different writers. Other sections were devoted to "Notes and Documents" and to items designed to keep the readers informed concerning historical activities and publications of western Pennsylvania interest. The title-page, table of contents, and index for the 1932 volume of the magazine were printed separately, but copies are supplied to any members or subscribers on request. One hundred copies of each issue were reserved unbound and these have now been bound up in volumes and may be obtained in exchange for the unbound numbers by paying fifty cents to cover the cost of binding. Some changes were made in the format of the magazine at the beginning of the year, but the board of editors felt that there was room for further improvement and it is expected that the next issue will appear in an entirely new dress. The amount of suitable material available for the magazine is very considerable, and it is unfortunate that the resources of the society will not permit the publication of larger numbers.
The number of books and pamphlets in the society's library at the end of the year as shown by the accession record was 2,350. This does not include duplicates and items not within the field of collection, which will probably be disposed of, nor does it include the large collection of unbound magazines, some of which will ultimately be added to the library. A considerable number of pamphlets not thought to be of sufficient importance to warrant separate accessioning and cataloguing have also been excluded from the count. The number of books and pamphlets entered in the accession record during the year was 1,525, but only 511 of these were actually acquired in 1932. This represents, however, an increase of about 27 per cent in the size of the library. Of the additions 82 were purchased, 30 were received as exchanges, and 399 came in as gifts. A special effort has been made to obtain bibliographies, inventories, and calendars of source material, and other reference works; and important material of this sort has been generously contributed by such institutions as the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the Public Archives of Canada, the Pennsylvania State Library, and the Archives of Quebec. In general, it may be said that the society's library is appreciably nearer than it was a year ago to being a satisfactory working library for research in the history of western Pennsylvania, and it is supplemented by approximately 2,600 volumes from the Darlington library of the University of Pittsburgh, which are on deposit with the society.

The society's newspaper collection consists of 364 bound volumes and a considerable quantity of unbound issues, and these are supplemented by 153 volumes from the Darlington library. Important additions to the newspaper collection during the year include a bound file of the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, 1833–1930, received on deposit from the publisher, the Pittsburgh Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; a bound volume of the Allegheny Democrat, 1833–36, purchased for the society by Mrs. William R. Thompson; and photostatic copies of 127 issues of the Pittsburgh Gazette, 1786–99, made for the society from the originals in various libraries outside the region. Arrangements have been made with the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh for photostats of its copies of the Gazette to the end of the eighteenth century, and these will be inter-filed with the photostats from other libraries,
making as complete a file of the paper for this period as it is possible to assemble. It is hoped that this work of building up a file of the oldest newspaper published west of the mountains can be carried forward at least to 1820.

The additions during the year to the manuscripts belonging to or on deposit with the society have been extensive and important. Among them may be noted papers of General James O'Hara, Major Ebenezer Denny, Harmar Denny, Henry M. Brackenridge, John Thaw, William Thaw, James R. Mellon, William H. Stevenson, William G. Hawkins, and General Albert J. Logan; several hundred transcripts of the papers of General Henry Bouquet in the British Museum made from photostats belonging to the Library of Congress; letter books of Bollman & Garrison, and of Kingsland, Lightner & Co., early iron manufacturers of Pittsburgh; records of the Dolly Madison chapter of the United States Daughters of 1812; and an extensive collection of transcripts made by Mr. Jesse Coldren of early records of churches in the Redstone Presbytery, of Brownsville Borough records, and of early diaries.

The efforts of the survey to promote the collection of materials relating to “the new immigration” have resulted in the assembling of large quantities of newspapers, pamphlets, and other printed material, mainly of the last three decades, relating principally to the Hungarian and Polish peoples of western Pennsylvania, and gathered largely with the assistance of committees representing these nationalities. Some manuscript material in this field has also been acquired, and the current issues of forty-two foreign-language newspapers and periodicals representative of nationalities prominent in this region are now being received.

The custodian of the museum reports the addition of 398 objects to the museum collections during the year. Among them may be noted an interesting collection of steins presented by Mr. Merton J. Deyo; a varied collection of domestic articles including furniture, jewelry, costumes, and daguerreotypes from Miss Edith G. Cole; a considerable group of Indian remains and artifacts from Mr. and Mrs. George S. Fisher of Finleyville; and a collection of mementos of several members of the Mellon family, and other objects, from James R. Mellon. Among
portraits acquired may be noted those of Dr. Joseph C. Gazzam and Dr. Peter Mowry, early physicians of Pittsburgh, and one of William H. Stevenson loaned by Mrs. Stevenson. A colonial sideboard, once the property of General James O’Hara, has been loaned to the society by Mr. Arthur M. Scully. Much of this material has been obtained as a result of over five hundred letters soliciting contributions, which were sent to members and friends by the custodian.

Historical collections are of little value unless they are classified, catalogued, and made accessible to those who have occasion to use them. It is gratifying, therefore, to be able to report that much progress along these lines has been made during the past year. In the library 1,407 books and pamphlets were catalogued in 1932, bringing the work practically up-to-date except for some of the unbound periodicals and the less important pamphlets, which are to be classified and catalogued by groups. The catalogue now contains about 8,740 cards, over two-thirds of which were added during the year. The manuscript and miscellaneous collections have all been sorted and arranged by groups, and some progress has been made in cleaning, repairing, pressing, and arranging individual items. An inventory of these materials, with brief descriptions of each group, has been compiled by the curator, and is to be published in a preliminary multigraphed edition of eleven pages as number 1 of the Bibliographical Contributions of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey. An inventory of the society’s newspaper collections by issues to 1880, and by volumes thereafter, has also been compiled under the direction of the curator. This is to be supplemented by inventories of other files of American newspapers to be found in Allegheny County, and it is expected that the whole will be issued as the second of the Bibliographical Contributions of the survey.

That great progress has been made in caring for, and exhibiting, the museum collections is obvious to anyone who visits the building. The custodian reports that 632 objects have been accessioned, catalogued, and marked. Most of these have been arranged in exhibits on the first floor of the building and supplied with explanatory labels, and 178 pictures, also labeled, have been hung on the walls of the exhibition rooms and the auditorium.
No statistics are available of the use made of the society's collections during the year but it is evident that there has been a very considerable increase, especially on the part of research workers. In addition to the members of the staff of the survey, who make constant use of the collections, faculty members and graduate students of the local colleges and universities are frequent workers in the building, and in several instances scholars came from abroad to use the materials available here. Writers of local histories, club papers, and feature articles come to the library for data; and considerable information on historical topics is supplied by letter and over the telephone. As the collections, especially the manuscripts and newspapers, increase in quantity and their availability for research becomes better known, there will undoubtedly be a considerable further increase in their use. The custodian reports a total of 294 visitors to the museum from April 22 to the end of the year, not counting those in attendance at meetings of the society and of other organizations. This number will undoubtedly be greatly increased also as the museum becomes better known. A special form of service rendered by the society was the lending on several occasions of museum objects, pictures, and facsimiles of manuscripts and old newspapers for exhibition outside the building.

For the installation of the museum four wall cases, one of which is a gift from Mr. James R. Mellon, and three table cases were acquired. These are insufficient, however, for the proper display of the exhibits, and should be supplemented by additional cases in the near future. As reported a year ago, book and newspaper stacks were installed in the building in 1931. These proved to be inadequate and during 1932 additional newspaper and book stacks and a special locked stack for the manuscript collection were installed. Other additions to the equipment included sixty folding chairs for the auditorium; a multigraph outfit for use in printing announcements, circular letters, catalogue cards, and minor publications; and a special camera, projector, enlarger, and other apparatus for use in the reproduction of manuscripts and similar material.

Research and bibliographical work in the field of western Pennsylvania history is especially the province of the survey, but its activities along this line are so vital to the society that a summary of them will
not be out of place here. The comprehensive bibliography of all books, pamphlets, and articles of importance for the history of the region makes slow progress because the director, who has undertaken to compile it himself, finds little time to devote to it. Even in its present incomplete and unorganized state, however, it is of considerable use. The work of collecting information about materials for research available outside the region was carried forward by Dr. Alfred P. James as research associate of the survey in various depositories in this country, Canada, England, and France, until September 1. With his cooperation the data that he collected are being organized and supplemented by Dr. Randolph C. Downes, who joined the survey staff September 1, and it is hoped that they will ultimately take the form of a published “Guide.” The calendar of documents, published or unpublished, relating to the history of the region in the eighteenth century, to which Dr. James made large contributions, is also being carried forward by other members of the staff.

The bibliography of newspapers and periodicals published in western Pennsylvania, with an inventory of extant files, is making progress in the hands of Mr. Alston G. Field, fellow of the survey. A recent feature of this work was the circularizing of the editors of all papers now published in the region, which resulted in the accumulation of considerable information about files in their offices and elsewhere. Research projects under way by members of the staff include studies of Indian affairs from 1774 to 1795, of political developments from 1778 to 1824, and of transportation before the canal era.

The success of the society is dependent to a very large extent upon the good will and cooperation of the people of the district. These cannot be very extensive, however, unless the society and its activities and possibilities are widely known. No deliberate campaign of publicity has been carried on during the past year, but the president and members of the staff have spoken frequently at local commemorative meetings and before clubs and other organizations. News items and feature stories concerning the activities or possessions of the society have appeared from time to time in the Pittsburgh papers, and the summer tour resulted in considerable publicity in the newspapers of the communities visited. There is much popular interest in historical objects, events, and activi-
ties, and the papers would probably publish more concerning them and
the society if the data were prepared in suitable form and distributed.
Several historical societies issue a monthly clip sheet to the newspapers
of the regions they serve, with gratifying results, but our resources are
not sufficient to permit us to undertake anything of this sort at present.
Another important medium of publicity is, of course, the radio, and the
society has been able to make some use of it as the result of an invitation
from station KQV to present a short talk once a month as part of its
"Pittsburgh Today" series. These talks have been given on the first
Saturday in each month at 9:00 P.M. beginning with September and
are to continue until May.¹ One of them was given by the president and
the others by members of the staff and all are designed to acquaint the
listeners with the work of the society and the survey.

No historical organization can function effectively without keeping
in touch with agencies and activities outside the borders of its special
province. The society was represented by the president, the treasurer,
and the director at the meetings of the Pennsylvania Federation of His-
torical Societies and the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology in Jan-
uary and by the treasurer at a special meeting of the federation in Phila-
delphia in October. It might be noted in passing that our treasurer is
serving as treasurer of both of these organizations.

The director and two other members of the staff attended the meet-
ings of the American Historical Association and the Conference of His-
torical Societies at Toronto in December. In April the director partici-
pated in a conference on the needs of state history at State College which
resulted in the holding of a State Historical Convention at State College
in September. The director served on the committee on arrangements
for the convention and spoke at one of its sessions on "Local History
as a Field for Scientific Research." At this convention steps were taken
to organize a Pennsylvania Historical Association, which is to hold its
first annual meeting at Bethlehem on April 28 and 29; and the director
has been appointed as chairman of the committee on constitution of this
organization.

The staff paid by the society consists only of the custodian of the

¹ The remainder of the talks will be given at 6:00 P.M.
museum and a porter. In April Miss Emma D. Poole was transferred from the position of librarian to that of custodian of the museum. Miss Mary K. Marshall, who had previously been employed by the survey to catalogue the society's library, served as acting librarian until September 1, when the survey took over the administration of the library. The director, curator, librarian, editorial assistant, and office secretary of the survey are serving also as members of the staff of the society, and the other members of the survey staff frequently assist in society work. A number of members and friends of the society have also contributed their services from time to time.

From the treasurer's report it appears that the expenditures of the society from its general fund, although only about six thousand dollars, were considerably in excess of its income. This is due in part to the increased expenditures necessitated by the enlarged building, but the main factor in the situation is the failure of the society to receive its usual appropriation of one thousand dollars from Allegheny County. The society now has the equipment and organization to render very valuable services to the people of western Pennsylvania, but in order to do that with complete effectiveness it must have a larger staff and more funds for the purchase and care of historical material. The survey is assured of financial support for only a few years and in the long run the maintenance of regional historical work in this community will depend primarily on the resources of the society. Normally there would seem to be three ways of increasing the society's income: by enrolling more members, especially in the classes paying the higher dues; by obtaining larger appropriations from the city and county; and by building up an endowment. Present conditions make achievements of this sort very difficult, but it is believed that the support from members can be materially increased in the near future. A start has been made on the building up of a permanent fund during the present year, and it is hoped that people will realize that by making contributions or bequests to this fund they will be rendering a valuable service to the community.