SOCIAL LIFE IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
AS SEEN BY EARLY TRAVELERS

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To attempt a survey of social life in western Pennsylvania from the beginnings to 1820 is to deal with the evolution of the frontier during a period in which the isolated, and necessarily self-sufficing, hunter and farmer gradually took his place in a less simple economic structure, the foundation of which, however, was still not manufacturing but agriculture. The economic mainstay of the cities and villages of the region was still the farm, even though such places as Brownsville, Elizabeth, and Pittsburgh were drawing new blood into their veins from the stream of westward immigration. It must be remembered, furthermore, that dates are deceptive milestones in the march of settlement: that conditions prevailing in such early settled counties as Westmoreland, Washington, Fayette, and Allegheny at a given period were duplicated much later in such counties as Erie, Crawford, Armstrong, Venango, and Potter, the last of which had in 1810 a population of only twenty-nine. In 1750 the region was almost unbroken wilderness; by 1790 it had a total population of approximately seventy-five thousand; by 1810 it was, especially in the southern portion, a relatively settled district, with such towns as Washington, Brownsville, Uniontown, Canonsburg, Connellsville, New Geneva, Elizabeth, Pittsburgh, Greensburg, and Ligonier well established, and with settlements beginning to flourish at Presque Isle (not yet called Erie), Waterford, Meadville, Franklin, and Butler. Because of the difference in time of settlement, dates must be used carefully in making generalizations about social conditions.

The trustworthiness of all the narratives of travel is of course a question to which this paper, a sampling from some twenty accounts ranging

1 Read at a meeting of the Historical Society on February 26, 1935. The author is head of the English department at the Thurston School, Pittsburgh. Ed.
from 1770 to 1818, does not attempt a final answer. Some of these narratives were written for publication and may have been influenced by a desire to promote emigration to the West. Others are unconscious records in the form of personal letters and diaries by emigrants themselves. The latter were often not published until years after their writing and have found their way into print only recently in the pages of historical magazines. It should also be noted that many of the accounts do not stop with the western boundary of Pennsylvania, since they were written by persons primarily interested in Kentucky or Ohio. In these the western Pennsylvania material is incidental, though often valuable and illuminating. Some of the narratives are undoubtedly colored by prejudice against frontiersmen in general or against some nationality in particular; all, of course, are conditioned partially by chance experience and contacts; but, admitting this, the accounts of travel in the region still comprise a large body of evidence that cannot be disregarded. Taken all in all, they draw a picture of the typical frontier in American history. Parallels for other regions and other periods can be cited. One such account, in the style of an earlier and still more formal generation, is that of the elegant Colonel William Byrd, written while touring the back country of Virginia; another of later date is the account of the frontier in Wisconsin written by the Norwegian official, Ole Munch Ræder. Doubtless parallels could be cited for many other regions.

Most of the travelers’ accounts of early western Pennsylvania are agreed in one detail: the region possessed immense and desirable physical possibilities. Frequent mention is made of good farming land, of vast stores of timber, of coal and petroleum—although at an early date petroleum was known as Seneca oil and was used chiefly as a liniment for the relief of rheumatic pains. Fish and game were so abundant in the region that the earliest explorers could subsist for months in the wilderness, relying only on their fishing tackle and rifles. As late as 1788 Colonel John May, stopping at the foot of Coal Hill (Mount Washington), opposite Pittsburgh, writes: "Within ten rods of the house we catch any quantity of fish... bass of two sorts, sturgeon of two sorts, and others," and "this morning... two lads brought to my quarters a number of fine fish, just caught. Amongst them were two perch, weighing forty and one-fourth pounds together." Another traveler, on the Allegheny in 1807, reports
that turkeys "are very plentiful in this quarter... many of them weighing from thirty to forty pounds, and sometimes so over-burthened with fat that they fly with difficulty. It frequently happens, that after shooting one on a tree, you will find him bursted by falling on the ground." Altogether the accounts picture the region as an earthly paradise, where every prospect pleases—with too often the addendum that only man is vile.

When settlement began, the one-room log cabin was the housing unit of western Pennsylvania, and it remained the standard, especially in rural districts, for many years. François A. Michaux, a French botanist who traveled through the region in 1802, comments on the fact that Patrick Archibald, a prosperous miller near Ligonier, lived in such a cabin.

One would think that this man, who has a mill and other valuables of his own, might live in the greatest comfort; yet he resides in a miserable log-house about twenty feet long, subject to the inclemency of the weather. Four large beds, two of which are very low, [and which] are placed underneath the others in the day-time, and drawn out of an evening into the middle of the room, receive the whole family, composed of ten persons, and at times strangers, who casually entreat to have a bed. This mode of living, which would announce poverty in Europe, is by no means the sign of it with them; for in an extent of two thousand miles and upward that I have travelled, there is not a single family but has milk, butter, salted or dried meat, and Indian corn generally in the house.3

Mrs. Mary Dewees, a Philadelphia gentlewoman emigrating to Kentucky and passing through the region in 1787, writes:

This night our difficulties began; we were obliged to put up at a Cabin... perhaps a dozen logs upon one another, with a few slabs for a roof, and the earth for a floor, and a Wooden Chimney Constituted this extraordinary Ordinary. The people were very kind, but amazing dirty. There was between twenty and thirty of us; all lay on the floor except Mrs. Rees, the Children and your Maria, who by our dress or address or perhaps both, were favored with a bed, and I Assure that we thought ourselves lucky to escape being fleaded alive.

In another respect Mrs. Dewees was more fortunate than she knew, for a wooden chimney in a cabin indicated a certain luxury: many such dwellings, according to Thaddeus Mason Harris, had "only a hole at the

2 John May, Journal and Letters...Relative to Two Journeys to the Ohio Country in 1788 and '89, 34, 50 (Cincinnati, 1873); Christian Schultz, Jr., Travels on an Inland Voyage...Performed in the Years 1807 and 1808, 1:122 (New York, 1810).

3 François A. Michaux, Travels to the West of the Alleghany Mountains, 49 (London, 1805).
top for the smoke to escape." David McClure, a New England minister, who was benighted in the Ligonier Valley in 1772, writes:

By good providence we got safely through [Bushy Run] & soon arrived at another Dutchman's, one Tegart. We knocked at the door & awoke one, who held a conversation with us, while the rain was pouring down. At first he declined letting us in, alleging that the house was full of Indian traders from Pittsburgh &c. At last we wrought a little upon his humanity, and he unbared the door.

In this house McClure and his companion were furnished with filthy and flea-infested blankets and were given the privilege of sleeping on the floor. Neither supper nor breakfast could be had. But the hostess "made an apology for our coarse accommodations, & charged nothing for our lodging." Sally Hastings, in 1800, finding a similar cabin in Bedford County, reports: "To increase our Difficulties, three Families of Yankees arrived, after we had supped; and no persuasion of ours could prevail on them to proceed farther."

Before the country was sufficiently settled for the establishment of inns, the only places in which travelers could stop were naturally the cabins of the inhabitants. Perhaps this fact explains the allegations of inhospitality so frequent in travelers' journals. If a settler was willing to take in one family overnight in his one-room cabin, he might well be excused from extending that willingness to later comers. Even the modern hostess would be a bit reluctant to admit "three families of Yankees" into a sleeping room that already held her own family and the five persons who made up Sally Hastings' party.

On the reverse of the shield are testimonials from travelers as to the kindly hospitality with which they met. Of the "tourist homes" in which Sally Hastings stopped, three might fairly be described as good, two as bad, and two as falling into the category "indifferent." Fortescue Cum- ing, somewhere on the left bank of the Ohio, about ten miles below Beaver, records:

4 Mary Dewees, "Journal from Philadelphia to Kentucky, 1787-1788," in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 28:185 (1904); Thaddeus M. Harris, Journal of a Tour into the Territory Northwest of the Alleghany Mountains, 15 (Boston, 1805); David McClure, Diary ... 1748-1820, 43, 44 (New York, 1899); Sally Hastings, Poems ... 10 Which Is Added a Descriptive Account of a Family Tour to the West, 191 (Lancaster, Pa., 1808).
We were received very hospitably in their small log house by Mr. and Mrs. Potts. Our landlady gave us bread and milk, which after changing our wet clothes, we supped on sumptuously. We then made some milk punch, which our Landlord partook of with us with great gout [gusto?], entertaining us with some good songs, and long stories about his travels. Time thus passed away while the storm pelted without, and it was not until eleven o'clock that we stretched ourselves on the floor, with our feet to the fire, and enjoyed a good nap, resisting the kind importunities of the Potts's to take their own bed, their other one being filled with their five children.5

Almost all travelers frankly remark that the frontiersmen lived in the midst of filth. The blood brothers of the fleas that troubled David McClure and Mrs. Dewees seem to have been inhabitants of almost every cabin, not to mention their cousins the lice—and even less reputable relatives. That this should have been the case is after all not surprising. Vermin were common at the time: Robert Burns could write a poem about a louse seen on a lady’s bonnet at church, and even so great a colonial gentleman as George Washington included among his rules of etiquette, learned as a boy, that it was not considered good manners to kill a louse before other persons. It is usual at the present day to consider the wearing of wigs as a fad or foible of the eighteenth century, but a recent article in the Atlantic Monthly points out that the shaven head beneath the wig was a good insurance against the omnipresent louse!6 Dirt was a natural concomitant of existence in the log cabin. The most important reason for this is probably the fact that the frontier family, in order to exist at all, had to put agriculture first and domestic comfort last. Moreover, the fur robes often used for bedding were not washable; and even when blankets, bedding, and clothing could be washed, a large kettle and tubs for the purpose were seldom available, and the carrying of water was a back-breaking task. Let him who has kept his dish towels and clothing clean for a month’s camping trip cast the first stone! Or, better still, let the modern housewife ask herself what she might accomplish, unaided by domestic help, if she were expected to do the milking and churning, tend

5 Fortescue Cuming, Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, 83 (Pittsburgh, 1810). Various references to inns are in Hastings, Poems, 191–206.
the kitchen garden, grow and prepare the flax for spinning, and, in a one-room cabin with a dirt floor, do the cooking, spinning, weaving, garment-making, and nursing for a family of five or ten—all this without the help of electricity, running water, cookstoves, and other conveniences that modern women take for granted.

Travelers sometimes comment on the overworking of women. Dr. Increase Matthews, physician and farmer, made a journey to the Ohio country in 1798 and on his return stopped with a family living somewhere between Washington and Chestnut Ridge. "I endeavored to persuade them," he writes, "that they put too much hardship on their women. In excuse they plead, that their business at certain seasons of the year is very urgent. This is truly the case, but it is not in my mind a sufficient excuse. The landlord has two Daughters... They had been employed all day in spreading flax, which is very hard work."

Life was not all work for these people, however. In the country various "bees" were held in which work was combined with play. A wedding was a time for great hilarity. Even the dour Scotchmen unbent for such an occasion, while persons of other nationality gave jollification free rein. David McClure writes with disapproval:

Attended a marriage, where the guests were all Virginians. It was a scene of wild and confused merriment. The log house, which was large, was filled. They were dancing to the music of a fiddle. They took little or no notice of me, on my entrance. After setting a while at the fire, I arose and desired the music and dancing to cease, & requested the Bride and the Bridegroom to come forward. They came snickering and very merry. I desired the company who still appeared to be mirthful & noisy, to attend with becoming seriousness, the solemnity.

As soon as the ceremony was over, the music struck up, and the dancing was renewed. While I sat wondering at their wild merriment. The Lady of a Mr. Stevenson, sent her husband to me, with her compliments requesting me to dance a minuit with her. My declining the honor, on the principle that I was unacquainted with it, was scarcely accepted. He still politely urged, until I totally refused... The manners of the people of Virginia, who have removed into these parts, are different from those of the presbyterians and germans. They are much addicted to drinking parties, gambling, horse race & fighting.

Not long after this, early in 1773, McClure records in his diary: "Rode

7 Increase Matthews, "Diary Kept... on a Journey to the Ohio Country, 1798," in New England Historical and Genealogical Register, 86:41 (January, 1932).
7 miles to Mr. Stevenson’s & preached. The hearers mostly Virginians. . . . Several present, appeared almost intoxicated. Christmas & New Year holly days, are seasons of wild mirth & disorder here.” In the towns the amusements were somewhat more sophisticated. Holidays such as Christmas and New Year’s Day had been observed from the beginning by the ungodly. After the Revolution, the Fourth of July became a great day, celebrated with fitting enthusiasm, food, and sixteen or more toasts accompanied by salvos of artillery. The most popular amusement in the early days was unquestionably horse racing. Henry Marie Brackenridge’s vivid description of the races at Pittsburgh is perhaps too well known to be quoted. In October, 1800, Sally Hastings found Greensburg and its inns crowded because, as she writes, “there are public Races in Greensburg; and the Beaux are flocking into Town by dozens. It seems singular to me, that they are principally in Uniform, and have the air of Gentlemen.”

Some interest in music and the theater was apparent when Fortescue Cuming reached Pittsburgh in the first decade of the nineteenth century. He says: “Several musical amateurs are associated here under the title of the Apollonian Society. I visited it by invitation at the house of Mr. F. Amelung the acting President, and was most agreeably surprised to hear a concert of instrumental musick performed by about a dozen gentlemen of the town, with a degree of taste and execution, which I could not have expected in so remote a place.” According to Cuming the Apollonian Society had been formed by “all the respectable people who were harmoniously inclined,” and “meets one evening every week, and consists not only of those who can take parts, but also of many of the most respectable inhabitants of the town, who do not play, but who become members, for the sake of admission for themselves and families to the periodical concerts.” Thus early in Pittsburgh was foreshadowed the buying of season tickets for the Pittsburgh Art Society and the Pittsburgh Symphony Society concerts. To quote still more from the invaluable Cuming:

There are also two drammatick societies in Pittsburgh, one composed of students of law and the other of respectable mechanicks. They occasionally unite with each other in order to cast the pieces to be performed with more effect. The

theatre is in the great room of the upper story of the courthouse, which from its size, and having several other contiguous apartments which serve for green room, dressing rooms, &c. is very well adapted to that purpose. . . . The female characters being sustained by young men, are deficient of that grace and modest vivacity, which are natural to the fair sex, and which their grosser lords and masters vainly attempt to copy. On the whole however, the dramatick societies, exhibit in a very respectable manner, a rational entertainment to the inhabitants of Pittsburgh about once monthly through the winter.

Despite Cuming's kindly words, however, the theater did not really flourish in Pittsburgh at an early date. Although the Pittsburgh Theatre, a house seating four hundred, was built by subscription and opened in 1813, it was not financially successful. In November, 1816, the Commonwealth reported that the theater had been opened almost two weeks and had not taken in enough to pay expenses. The editor caustically adds, "This is a severe satire on the taste of the place."

Accounts vary considerably in estimating the social qualities of the inhabitants of the towns at an early date. The first witness will be David McClure, who wrote in 1773:

A great part of the people here [in Pittsburgh] make the Sabbath a day of recreation, drinking & profanity . . . The inhabitants of this place are very dissipated. They seem to feel themselves beyond the arm of government, & freed from the restraining influence of religion . . . Drinking, debauchery & all kinds of vice reign, in this frontier of depravity. In Pittsburgh, however, are to be found a few fearers of God & friends of religion, but alas, too applicable to some moral characters, are the words of the poet, They

"Hear with sickly smiles, the venal mouth
With foulest licence, mock religion's name."

The second witness will be Arthur Lee, a Virginian in Pittsburgh in 1783, who has been so often quoted that it is perhaps enough merely to mention his concluding statement that there was in the town "not a priest of any persuasion, nor church, nor chapel, so that they are likely to be damned, without the benefit of clergy." From the same year comes a comment of John Wilkins:

I found the place filled with old officers and soldiers, followers of the army, mixed with a few families of credit. All sorts of wickedness were carried on to

9 Cuming, Sketches, 65, 66, 67; Commonwealth (Pittsburgh), November 12, 1816. Interesting explanations for the local indifference to the theater are suggested in Edward P. Anderson, "The Intellectual Life of Pittsburgh, 1786–1836," ante, 14:225 (July, 1931).
excess, and there was no appearance of morality or regular order. . . . There appeared to be no signs of religion among the people, and it seemed to me that the Presbyterian ministers were afraid to come to the place lest they should be mocked or mistreated.  

Later travelers have less to say about immorality and more about dirt and inhospitality. Palmer, in 1818, says: "From the number of manufactures, and the inhabitants burning coal, the buildings have not that clean appearance so conspicuous in most American towns." Others comment on the dense pall of smoke overhanging the town, the fact that snow is not white in Pittsburgh, and that soot sifts into the houses so that the persons and clothing of the citizens cannot be kept free from dirt even within doors. In 1817 Cramer's Navigator notes the general impression of Pittsburgh as an inhospitable town. "Strangers are not much pleased with the place in point of hospitality merely, but those who have business to transact, will meet with as many facilities as elsewhere." Cuming grudgingly notes that "a few neighboring gentlemen hearing that a stranger was at M'Cullough's confined by indisposition, did me the favor of calling on me, and the attentions of doctor Andrew Richardson, Mr. James Mountain, a learned practitioner at the bar, and Messrs. Anthony Beelen and Nicholas Cunningham respectable merchants, prevented my being able to charge Pittsburgh with an absolute want of hospitality."  

Commenting on another phase of life in Pittsburgh, Cuming later makes the following remarks:

Politicks have reduced society to a most deplorable state . . . are argued with more warmth, and are productive of more rancour and violence in Pittsburgh than perhaps in any other part of America. There are very few neutrals, as it requires a bold independence of sentiment, to prevent a person from attaching himself to one or other party, and besides, to a man who has not resources for the employment of time within himself, the alternative of not being of one or other party is insupportable, as he is shunned equally by both, and in this populous town lives with respect to society, as though he were in a desert. This may be one cause that Pittsburgh is not celebrated for its hospitality, another, (which

10 McClure, Diary, 46, 53, 107; Richard H. Lee, Life of Arthur Lee, 2: 385 (Boston, 1829); Centennial Volume of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Pa., 17 (Pittsburgh, 1884).

is equally applicable to most new settled towns,) is that it is inhabited by people who have fixed here for the express purpose of making money. This... leaves them no leisure to devote to the duties of hospitality. Another cause, which one would scarcely suspect, is pride. Those who from the adventitious circumstance of having settled here at an early period, and purchased, or become possessed of landed property, when from its very low value, it was obtained in the most easy manner, for a mere trifle, now find themselves rich suddenly, from its rapid increase in value. Those who came after them, had not the same opportunities, and of course were not so fortunate. Wealth acquired suddenly, generally operates on the ignorant, to make them wish to seem as if they had always been in the same situation; and in affecting the manners and appearance of the great, they always overact their part, and assume airs of superiority even over the really well born and well bred part of the community. . . . There is also a very numerous class which assumes a certain air of superiority throughout this whole country—I mean the lawyers. They (even their students and pupils) arrogate to themselves the title or epithet of esquire, which the uninformed mass of the people allow them; and as, by intrigue, they generally fill all the respectable offices in the government as well as the legislature, they assume to themselves a consequence to which they are in no other way entitled.12

So much from the casual traveler. Henry M. Brackenridge, on the other hand, indicates that to those who came with recommendations to the "inner circle" the town was very cordial indeed. "It so happened," he writes, "that, after the revolutionary war, a number of families of the first respectability, principally of officers of the army, were attracted to this spot, and hence a degree of refinement, elegance of manners and polished society, not often found in the extreme frontier." Mrs. Dewees of Philadelphia mentions in her journal a pleasant stop in Pittsburgh in 1787. The boat in which her party traveled and which, she says, "resembles Noah's Ark not a little," left McKee's ferry at the junction of the Youghiogheny and the Monongahela and arrived at Pittsburgh before the baggage wagon, so that Mrs. Dewees was somewhat embarrassed when the fine ladies of town called upon her with invitations to come ashore. "We have declined all," she says, "as the trunks with our clothes is not come up, and we in our travelling dress, not fit to make our appearance in that gay place." Later, however, "Mr. and Mrs. O'Harra waited on us and insisted on our going to their house, which in Compliance to their several invitations we were obliged to accept, and find them

very polite and agreeable; we staid and Supp’d with them, nor would they suffer us to go on board while we Continued at this place.” Other callers were “Col. Butler and his lady,” and when Mrs. Dewees returned the call she “saw a very handsome parlour, elegantly papered and well furnished, it appeared more like Philadelphia than any I have seen since I left that place.” It is scarcely necessary to remark that the O’Haras and the Butlers were among the most aristocratic residents of Pittsburgh at the time, and this evidence of their affability in spite of the “travelling dress” of the Dewees family indicates real hospitality. In such items as this and in the *Recollections* of Henry M. Brackenridge may be caught glimpses of a circle in Pittsburgh more cultured and more hospitable than would be suspected from most accounts of the town. Brackenridge, indeed, implies with delicate snobbery that, as casual strangers were not received by the exclusive circle, they necessarily formed their opinion of the social graces of Pittsburgh from a group not quite so well supplied with these graces as his own.13

There can scarcely be a more difficult task than the reconstruction of the social characteristics of a given region. Of certain factual material—such as houses, food, and clothing—it is possible to speak with reasonable accuracy. It is far harder, however, to arrive at an understanding of the qualities and characteristics of the people who built the houses, ate the food, and wore the clothing. In discussing the facts of frontier life contemporary accounts do not differ greatly, but in their interpretation of the people of the frontier they vary considerably, according to the prejudices of the observers and the individual traits of the people observed. Later accounts of particular groups were naturally written by persons whose traditions derived from those groups and who cast the rosy glow of idealism about the “rugged” or “sterling” qualities their ancestors are alleged to have displayed. Thus it is said that the Scotch were more hospitable than the Germans, that the Germans were more hospitable than the Scotch; that the Scotch were cleanly and the Germans dirty, that the Germans were cleanly and the Scotch dirty; that the Virginians were wild and in-toxicated revelers, that the Virginians were aristocratic gentlemen; that

frontiersmen were surly, that frontiersmen were polite—and so on, until the head spins in trying to reconcile these contradictory statements. Probably all these judgments were correct about individuals in the groups mentioned, and the early observers tended to generalize from the instances they happened to note. The same sweeping statements might result if a modern observer, after walking through one of our large cities and asking hospitality of members of different races, should make generalizations from his experiences.

There are certain statements, however, that occur so often that they may be accepted as probably true. One is the allegation of prevailing dirtiness, which has been discussed earlier. Another is the charge that most frontiersmen were unlettered and ignorant. This is borne out by the fact that wills disposing of considerable property are signed with the testators' marks; some declarations of slave-births are so signed; and many legal depositions of the early days show that the deponents could not write their own names. Probably more education and a greater desire for education were present among the Presbyterians than among any other group, for their religion, with its tradition of daily family prayers and Bible-reading, demanded literacy. Along with the ignorance of the frontier, and destined later to overcome that ignorance, went another quality—curiosity. This is mentioned in more than one early account. It was a characteristic natural to people living isolated lives, for whom the coming of strangers was an event to be wondered at, a phenomenon to be understood. It was only in the blasé cities of the day that strangers received no notice. The frontier was eager to know about their plans, their destination, their appearance, their dress. "What part of the world do you come from?" was a question often addressed to strangers and indicated not impertinence but a consuming desire to know, to understand. Though there was little tact on the frontier—for tact is one of the finer flowers of civilization—there was a great deal of general good heartedness. This is mentioned by Mrs. Dewees, Sally Hastings, Fortescue Cuming, François Michaux, and even (with reservations) by David McClure. Despite the instances of inhospitality, kindliness to travelers seems to have been one of the virtues of the frontiersmen.

The freedom of the frontier had different effects on different temper-
aments. Some, in revulsion from previous constraint, flung themselves into license and excess; others imposed constraint on themselves and tried to impose it on others. Of the first group were most of "the Virginians"—at least in the estimation of those commentators who were not Virginians themselves. Drinking spirituous liquors was common on the frontier, although according to most observers there was actual drunkenness only among the Virginians. Perhaps the Scots had the harder heads for hard liquor! The Germans, with their traditional predilection for beer and cider, are never accused of insobriety. Pittsburgh is represented as a sink of iniquity in the early accounts, though it should be remembered that some of these were written by clergymen or other persons of distinctly pious persuasion. Their indignation seems to be directed quite as much against the laxity of Sabbath observance as against drunkenness and vice, perhaps because they felt that the first lapse implied the later ones. It must be remembered that Pittsburgh in the early days was somewhat like the later western mining town: it was a place to which fur traders and farmers might repair after a period of hard, grinding work and in which, when they had disposed of business, they might relax in a glorious "good time." Probably these casual visitors were quite as much responsible as the permanent residents for "painting the town red."

In matters of sexual conduct, also, two different attitudes are recorded. Discreetly writing in Latin, McClure says of one distinguished resident of western Pennsylvania that he had a virtuous wife but kept a scandalous woman near by. Many of the Indian traders and even such casual travelers as the Englishman Nicholas Cresswell, in the region just before the Revolution, took temporary Indian "wives" for comfort and convenience. On the other hand, McClure records marrying "two couple, up the Monongahela. They were soldiers," he says, "who for want of some one to marry them, had lived with their women, several years, & now were desirous to wipe away reproach by lawful marriage. They made a decent appearance." Evidently in this as in other matters the more reckless spirits defied tradition while the more sober worked for law and order.14

The individualism of the frontier manifested itself in other ways. As has been noted, political prejudices were strongly marked. This political cleavage grew up on the frontier at about the time when it was growing up elsewhere in the United States. It cannot be called entirely a frontier product, although on the frontier it was perhaps intensified by the prevailing narrow-mindedness and lack of urbanity. When economic interests cut across political boundaries, as they did in the case of the Whiskey Insurrection, the frontier acted as a unit against the East, but mostly it was sharply split on lines of political cleavage.

Yet the very spirit and conditions of the frontier worked for eventual unity. Certain qualities—industry, thrift, hard-headed practicality, and individualism—were characteristic of the West. Under the influence of these traits and of a common environment the frontier gradually broke down inherited prejudices and folk-ways. The amalgamation was by no means complete in 1820, but it had begun. Quakers had had to read out of their communion some members of the sect who had married outside the Society of Friends; Scotch Presbyterians had occasionally seen their sons and daughters attracted by the graces of the children of neighboring “Dutch” families; and Germans who had acquired wealth near Pittsburgh were launching their descendants on a social scene in which racial and religious differences became less and less important. As immigration increased, newcomers filtered into all the settlements, and some of the settlers found themselves, in spite of racial differences, looking on their older neighbors as more akin to them than some newer arrivals of their own kind. The frontier had subtly worked on them more than they realized; and out of their differences was being built up a new Americanism, individualistic and acquisitive, which was to play a large part in the future development of the region and of America.