THE HISTORICAL TOUR OF 1935
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For four years in succession historical tours, not only into the countryside but also into the past, have been staged by the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and the summer session of the University of Pittsburgh. Each has appeared to be more successful than its predecessor, but those responsible for the tours have sometimes wondered whether the results were sufficient to warrant the very considerable outlay of time and energy necessary for their promotion. Numerous expressions of appreciation of the value of the tours by participants have been of much encouragement to the sponsors, however, and none more so than the following statement written by Dr. A. C. Krey, visiting professor in the University of Pittsburgh, with reference to the most recent tour:

Last week-end, July 12 and 13, I accompanied the historical tour on its journey to Johnstown, Altoona, and Indiana and with the help of the scholars present was able to relive important stages in the development of western Pennsylvania. There were the Indian trails reminiscent of the days when the only white men in this region were the traders, trappers, and missionaries who followed these trails. Then there were the houses that called to mind the time when the counties through which we passed were studded with homes.

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that were veritable fortresses with loopholes through which to ward off the attacking Indians whose natural lust for scalps had been further stimulated by the rewards that the French and then the English governments provided. At intervals throughout the two-day journey we encountered monuments, relics, and pictures of the old Portage Railroad, reminiscent of the days when the all-important problem was that of getting the produce of farm and mine to market. In the city of Indiana we saw numerous mementos of the times when with humanitarian zeal fugitive slaves were sheltered there and advanced farther on their way to Canada and freedom. At Johnstown we lived again through that time when the juncture of excessive rain and man's carelessness in the pursuit of pleasure resulted in one of the nation's most tragic catastrophes. What impressed me quite as much as the calamity was the evidence of a great national sense of humanity revealed by the spontaneous influx of aid—medicines, materials, police, and lastly, money—that, while insufficient to replace all the losses, was yet sufficient to start the survivors back on the road to recovery. Above all, I was impressed by the work of Clara Barton, whose labor was to benefit not only the stricken town but the nation, indeed the whole world. At Johnstown we also saw the place where the first Bessemer steel was made, a process that was to accelerate the industrial revolution in this country, hasten the urbanization of our whole society, and ultimately transform the skyline of our American countryside. Of most recent, and yet truly historical, interest was our experience at Loretto and Altoona, where we listened to a man who is one of the few surviving heroes of the triumph of industrialization, Charles M. Schwab. He chatted rather than made a formal talk and spoke, it seemed to me, out of the fullness of his heart and mind. He is still working, up there at Loretto, working, he confessed, more hours even than in some of the periods when he was still on the active roll. In those days he said he had always been able to plan clearly no matter what the momentary economic conditions were. Now, however, that assurance is gone. He cannot see clearly in this time in which we are living, nor is he altogether happy about it all, even though he has faith that it will come out right in the end.

If the trip meant so much to a professor of medieval history from Minnesota, surely it must have been of very real value to the citizens of the region who took part in it. Here in a day and a half was epitomized the history of western Pennsylvania: the first penetration of traders and missionaries, the trials and perils of the pioneers, the heroic struggle for markets, the gloomy battle with the blight of slavery, the growth and triumph of industrialization, and finally the period of uncertainty in which we now live.

This year the society's motorcade covered an itinerary of nearly 250
miles, chiefly in Cambria, Blair, and Indiana counties; and a total of 216 people took part in the tour and in the various functions connected with it. The route had been planned beforehand by the director of the society, Mr. Franklin F. Holbrook, and by Mr. C. Stanton Belfour, assistant director of the extension division of the University of Pittsburgh; and carefully prepared itineraries were passed out to each pilgrim. The cars that belonged to the motorcade were distinguished by red, white, and blue paper streamers dancing merrily in the breeze, while Mr. John Harpster’s car, which led the procession, was literally festooned with the gay bunting. A score of cars, escorted on the way by motorcycle patrolmen, made the start from the Historical Building about 1:30 P.M. on Friday, July 12.

No stops were made until Mundy’s Corners was reached, about sixty-five miles from the starting point, but the motorists slowed down in Murrysville to see a Forbes Road marker, and in Blairsville to observe the course of the old Pennsylvania Canal along the river and an old house once used as an inn by “canawlers” and travelers. A fifteen-minute stop was made at Mundy’s Corners and everyone was given an opportunity to realize a fact that had not been readily evident while the cars were in motion—that Friday was the hottest day of the year to date. The tourists next took a Pinchot road to the south and, after driving through Summerhill and South Fork, parked along the highway near the remains of historic old South Fork Dam.

There a delegation from Johnstown met the group and everyone gathered at the verge of the break in the dam, now covered with a luxuriant growth of trees and bushes. Mr. Alvin Sherbine, a prominent attorney of Johnstown, explained the circumstances of the erection and destruction of the dam. It was begun, he said, in 1838 as a water feeder for the Pennsylvania Canal and was completed in 1853. It broke in 1862 but was eventually mended by the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club and was heightened to seventy feet. In May, 1889, after heavy rains and a cloud-burst, the pressure became too great and the structure gave way. In the consequent inundation of Johnstown over twenty-one hundred people were drowned. The raging wall of water stormed through the
narrow canyon and around the many bends of South Fork Creek and finally burst in all its fury upon the little city in the basin of Laurel Ridge. All this was made graphic to the tourists during the course of the afternoon. After Mr. Sherbine’s address the motorcade made the circuit of the old lake, passing the pretentious home, now rapidly deteriorating, of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club, and viewing the break in the dam from both sides of the valley that had been the reservoir. Thereafter the tourists drove to Johnstown by Route 53, which follows the course of one of the old Frankstown roads. The city was approached from the east, and a magnificent view of the place and its guardian hills was seen during the descent into the valley. In Johnstown the pilgrims ascended either by the incline or by the roundabout road to Westmont where the splendid panorama of the city lay spread out at their feet. Mr. Gomer Walters, a survivor of the flood, acted as guide and from the vantage point of the incline pointed out the show places of Johnstown and graphically described the destruction wrought by the flood. The pilgrims then drove through Grandview Cemetery, circled the burial plot of the seven hundred unidentified victims of the flood marked by row upon row of plain slabs, and descended to Johnstown by the cemetery road.

The dinner meeting Friday evening was held in historic Capital Hotel, one of the few buildings that withstood the flood. A mirror hangs on the wall of the lobby with the watermark of the flood still visible on it. The dinner was excellent—in fact all the meals served on the tour set a standard for the caterers of the big city to strive to attain—and though the weather was sweltering every one of the hundred guests present seemed to enjoy himself. Mr. Fred Krebs, president of the Johnstown Savings Bank, presided and introduced former Governor John S. Fisher, who, in his usual felicitous manner, spoke on the activities and objects of the society and confessed that he had “stretched” his conscience as governor to provide for the enlargement of the Historical Building. The tours, he stated, had been initiated to enable the membership “to make a point of seeing where history was made.” He closed with an earnest and vigorous peroration upon the richness of Pennsylvania history and expressed the belief that it should become more widely known both in Pennsylvania
and in the nation. Mr. Krebs then introduced Mr. Harry Hesselbein, managing editor of the Johnstown Tribune, who spoke a few words of welcome and recalled that Johnstown had claims to historicity other than the flood, among them the fact that the Bessemer steel process had been invented in Johnstown by William Kelly and that the first Bessemer steel had been made there. Dr. John W. Oliver responded on behalf of the visitors and expressed their pleasure at the reception accorded them in Johnstown.

The principal address of the evening was delivered by Miss Anna Catherine Saylor of Johnstown, a graduate student in Columbia University. She read an informative paper upon "The Construction of the Allegheny Portage Railroad," which it will be remembered had its eastern terminus in Johnstown. She pointed out that the railroad was an integral part of the transportation system between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh that Pennsylvania had been forced to build in order to meet the competition of the Erie Canal, and she described the nature and construction of the railroad in a clear and interesting manner. Mr. Nathan Shappee, instructor in history at the Johnstown Center of the University of Pittsburgh, who was scheduled to read a paper on "Prince Gallitzin, a Cambria County Pioneer," was unavoidably absent because of illness. Miss Saylor substituted for him and, with the help of his notes, gave a very interesting and instructive talk on the Russian prince who became Pennsylvania's most famous and successful missionary. At the close of Miss Saylor's talk Mr. Leo J. Buettner, through the courtesy of Mr. James Madden, exhibited stereopticon views of the wreckage left in the wake of the Johnstown flood.

That night there was a refreshing shower and Saturday dawned clear and cool, a pleasant change from the heat of the day before. The motorcade started within ten minutes of the scheduled hour and, preceded and followed as on the day before by motorcycle policemen, headed through the woods and fields of beautiful Cambria County to Ebensburg, the county seat. At Ebensburg the tourists paused at the courthouse and, under the guidance of Mr. P. J. Little, vice president of the Cambria County Historical Society, inspected the museum of the society on one of
the upper floors. Many objects of interest were to be seen there, among them a section of rail with a shoe from the Portage Railroad and an old copper-pot still.

From Ebensburg the tourists journeyed to historic Loretto, passing at the edge of the town the beautiful grounds of "Immergrün," the summer home of Mr. Charles M. Schwab, the steel master. Loretto will be remembered as an early Catholic settlement, the headquarters of the Russian priest, Prince Demetrius A. Gallitzin, and the place where in 1799 the first mass atop the Alleghenies was performed. On the eastern edge of the village the humble home and chapel of Father Gallitzin still stands, an ell-shaped stone structure covered with stucco. It was built in 1832 and reconstructed in 1900. Several of the sisters in charge received the group and graciously explained the history and points of interest of the structure. The chapel, a lovely room as refinished, contains Father Gallitzin's original altar, encased in stone and flanked by wood carvings from Oberammergau, and a relic of the true cross handed down for generations in the Gallitzin family and set in an exquisite frame of white gold. The windows of the chapel are stained glass, one of them bearing the Gallitzin coat of arms, and in the belfry above the building is the bell first used in the region to call the devout to worship. A charming little library has been made by throwing together Father Gallitzin's two rooms, in one of which he died. A number of the pictures, books, and relics connected with the good father are assembled in the library and were examined with eager interest by the visitors. Another relic that excited interest was an old handbill printed for Father Gallitzin giving instructions to the worshipers. It is well worth quoting to a careless modern age as an example of the decorum that our ancestors were taught:

I  Scrape the dirt off your shoes on the iron scrapers provided for that purpose.
II  Do not spit on the floor of the chapel.
III Do not put your hats and caps on the chapel windows.
VI Do not rub against the papered walls of the chapel.
V  Do not put your heels on the washboards.
IV  After coming in at the passage door shut the door after you.

Those who had taken the opportunity meanwhile to visit the grounds
of beautiful St. Michael's Church were rewarded by the sight of Gallitzin's tomb, a massive stone sepulcher surmounted by a statue of the missionary. Mr. Schwab joined the group there and stood chatting for a while with various old friends, among whom was the society's president, and receiving introductions to members of the party. Altogether the stop at Loretto was one of the most pleasant of the tour.

At the junction of Routes 45 and 22 near Cresson the motorcade slowed down to view a house the back ell of which is said to have been a part of the house in which Admiral Peary was born. In the triangle between the forks of the road near by, on land donated by Mrs. William Reed Thompson of Pittsburgh, the Cambria County Historical Society plans to erect a monument to Peary. Beyond Cresson, near Blair's Gap of the Allegheny Mountains, the cars again slowed down for the old Lemon House, once an inn and station on the Portage Railroad at the head of inclined plane No. 6, or, as it is referred to locally, "Plane Six." The house is a dignified yet gracious structure of stone retaining a flavor of the beauty and romance that marked its history. Perhaps a mile beyond, the tourists stopped at the old skew arch that once carried the Huntingdon Turnpike over "Plane Six." It is in an excellent state of preservation. Near by is the Portage Monument, which bears four bronze tablets with bas-reliefs and a short history and description of the Portage Railroad. The pilgrims spent half an hour or so wandering around the little park that contains the arch and monument, then gathered at the monument to have a number of news photographs taken in a group with the friends who had come out from Altoona to join them.

From the Portage Monument to Altoona a Blair County resident rode as a guide with each car, a fact that made the journey much more interesting and instructive. The motorcade passed the site of the old Fountain Inn, a notorious place in the days of the Conestoga wagons and the Portage Railroad. A little farther on was Gallitzin's Spring, named for the missionary, who often resorted here upon his journeys through the region. The old landmarks came thick and fast: the Blair House, built of clapboard-covered logs and stone and said to be the oldest house in the vicinity; a marker calling attention to the proximity of the
site of Fort Fetters, the Revolutionary headquarters of the Frankstown garrison; the bottom of inclined plane No. 10, or the "Foot of Ten"; and finally Hollidaysburg, the eastern terminus of the Portage Railroad where in a basin now covered by railroad tracks the portage road joined the canal from the east. In Hollidaysburg the tourists circled through the Presbyterian Cemetery, where an enormous boulder now marks the site of the first Presbyterian church in the vicinity. The journey to Altoona led through a region historic for iron furnaces, among them the Frankstown and Allegheny furnaces.

The Baker Mansion on the outskirts of Altoona, now the home of the Blair County Historical Society and its collections, well repaid the visit made of half an hour or so. It is a stately structure of stone laid in lead, with enormous pillars on two sides, and is surrounded by spacious grounds and magnificent trees. It was begun in 1845 by Elias Baker, the original owner of much of the land around Altoona and a prominent local entrepreneur. The drawing-room of the mansion is furnished with a richly carved suite of furniture that is supposed to have cost forty thousand dollars. The Belgian artisan who produced it is said to have been able to finish only two suites during his entire lifetime. The kitchen, the spring-house cellar, and the many other rooms of the mansion were eagerly explored; the room with the transportation relics was especially popular. The stay at the mansion was also enlivened by a paper read by Mr. Harry Jacobs, an authority on the Portage Railroad, who contributed much information on the railroad supplementary to that furnished by Miss Saylor the night before.

By the time the Penn-Alto Hotel in Altoona was reached the pilgrims were fairly famished, but time was taken by nearly everyone to inspect the assembly rooms dedicated to the war governors in commemoration of the meeting of governors of northern states upon the site of this hotel in 1862. A delightful luncheon was served to 103 members and friends at tables decorated with summer garden flowers. Mr. Matthew M. Morrow, president of the Blair County Historical Society, presided and Mr. William T. Canan, city controller of Altoona, welcomed the guests. President Fisher was then introduced and in his turn introduced Mr.
Charles M. Schwab, the chief speaker of the afternoon. "Uncle Charlie," he said, was a great steel master, but he had other qualities just as outstanding, among them the art of telling stories. "If I could tell a story like he can," Governor Fisher concluded, "I wouldn't care who made the steel."

Mr. Schwab opened with a tribute to Governor Fisher as a statesman and friend. He then spoke of the importance of sentiment in human relations, enlarged upon its uses in softening and coloring a life none too easy at best, and applauded the historical society for its rôle as a preserver of sentiment. "Continue, my friends," he said, "this feeling of sentiment that we have for historic things. In times to come it will delight us to remember them." From a discussion of the past he went on to a brief analysis of the present. Time, chance, and place, he said, play important parts as the molders of men's lives, and this has never been more apparent than today when all seems to be chaos. "I am worried," he confessed, "because I cannot plan for the future, but I have been optimistic all my life and I am not going to change. I believe in the spirit of the people of this country, and I believe that we are going to see things restored to the usual course. All that we have at present is the result of individual initiative, exercised not for personal gain but because of the urge to progress. The future, my friends, will be individualistic rather than coöperative."

There was much more said, of course, and those who were present will never forget the running fire of anecdotes with which the speaker enlivened his discourse and illustrated his points.

The motorcade left Altoona by a route that followed the old Kittanning Path used by the Indians, missionaries, and traders and along which John Armstrong and his men marched to the attack on Kittanning. Beautiful Horseshoe Curve was passed, and then on top of Allegheny Mountain those who desired had an opportunity to ascend the eighty-foot Elstie Tower of the state department of forests and waters, from which a view could be obtained for a distance of fifteen miles in every direction. One of the great thrills of the afternoon came when at a place near Eckernrode Mills the pilgrims were able to look up a hillside and see through the trees a distinct trace of the Kittanning Path. Those who wished to do
so were privileged to walk up the forest aisle and feel that they were treading on historic ground. The treaty marker at Cherry Tree was the next stop. Here Dr. Alfred P. James, professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh, explained that the line of the purchase from the Indians at Fort Stanwix in 1768 ran up the West Branch of the Susquehanna to the fork nearest to Kittanning and thence in a straight line to Kittanning. The beginning of the straight line was marked by a cherry tree at a spot then known as Canoe Place, whence the name of the modern town. The monument has been erected approximately on the site of the tree, and the counties of Clearfield, Indiana, and Cambria meet at the point.

After leaving Cherry Tree the motorcade made no stops until it reached the grounds of the Teachers College at Indiana. Much of the way lay through the reforested holdings of the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation, which is said to have four million seedlings growing in the nursery. This commendable enterprise should be widely imitated so that some of the sadly denuded hills of Pennsylvania may be restored to their pristine beauty. The village of Clymer, named for the signer of the Declaration of Independence and in the development of which the president of the society had a hand, is situated on the site of a station of the "underground railroad." In Indiana other places connected with the "underground" system were on every hand, for Indiana was a famous anti-slavery town and the home of numerous "conductors."

The dinner meeting in the dining hall of the college, the last meeting of the tour, was attended by 128 guests. The Indiana gathering was a feast, both gastronomically and intellectually. President Charles R. Foster, of the college, presided with his usual hearty good humor. After a few words of welcome on his own behalf he introduced the Honorable Elder Peelor, who officially welcomed the visitors and recounted a few of Indiana's many claims to historicity. He also exhibited an old Bible saved from the ruins of Hannastown and called attention to the fact that the day was the one hundred and fifty-third anniversary of the Indian attack upon that ill-fated town. The response was made by Judge Robert M. Ewing, former president of the society, who echoed Mr. Peelor's
sentiments concerning the importance of Indiana County history and urged the formation of a county historical society. Professor Walter M. Whitmyre, head of the social science department in the college, as the personal representative of Governor George H. Earle, then extended to the society the greetings of the governor of the commonwealth and assurances of his interest in the activities of the group.

The first paper on the program was "The Beginnings of Settlement in Indiana County" by Dr. Cortlandt W. W. Elkin, now of Pittsburgh but a native of the county of which he spoke. Dr. Elkin treated the subject in thorough fashion, indicating the reasons that induced the pioneers to leave their old homes, the routes that they traveled, and the conditions that they found in their new homes. Especially interesting was his description of the trails, which he illustrated by lantern slides. The second paper, by Mrs. Sarah R. Christy, a prominent Indiana club woman, dealt with "The Underground Railroad and Fugitive Slave History." Mrs. Christy had ably performed the arduous and important task of collecting and setting down the traditions of Indiana's connection with the work of aiding the escape of fugitives from the South, and her paper interested the audience very much. There should be more of such work done before the older citizens of western Pennsylvania's communities pass away and the memories of such significant events die with them.

It was fitting that President Fisher should conclude the meeting with some reminiscences of former years in Indiana when Judge Ewing and the Honorable Elder Peelor and he were studying law there. Various old friends were singled out in the group and their families placed in relation to the history of Indiana County. It was only natural then for Governor Fisher to second heartily Judge Ewing's suggestion that a county historical society be formed. It is to be hoped that the project will be followed up. There is need for western Pennsylvanians to recognize the significance of their history and to enter more zealously into the task of preserving it and passing on its inspiration to coming generations. The tree grows and survives not simply by absorbing the sun, and rain, and air of the upper world, but finds much of its sustenance as well as its firm anchorage in the roots that push down through the nourishing humus of
accumulated years to the streams of living water that abound beneath the surface. Only thus can a community arrive at its full stature: it must depend upon the present for many material wants—it may be freshened by the gentle rains of prosperity, or buffeted by the storms of depression—but its true anchorage is in the accumulated culture of the past and its surest sustenance is found in the ever living stream of inspiration furnished by the courage and accomplishments and ideals of the great souls of the past. To arouse an appreciation of this heritage and to vivify the past of the region has been an object of the historical society in sponsoring these annual historical tours.