IN NOVEMBER, 1758, the Forbes expedition reached the "forks of the Ohio" and gazed at the smoldering ruins of what had once been the French Fort Duquesne. It was not long before the English conquerors realized what a valuable trading center they had captured. On December 17 Colonel Hugh Mercer arrived to take charge at "Pittsburgh," and on the nineteenth he wrote to Colonel Henry Bouquet, "If a Quantity of Indian Goods were got up with a proper person to deal with Indians, great numbers would come over with skins & furr. I have been obliged already to refuse a good many skins, not having a Proper Apartment & besides that, too small acquaintance with the Trade."*  

The Pennsylvania Assembly meanwhile had made plans to control the trade of this region. An act passed in 1758 appointed three commissioners who were to regulate the profitable "traffick" with the Indians. Shortly after the fall of Fort Duquesne, the commissioners appointed Robert Tuckniss to go as their agent to Fort Duquesne, now called Fort Pitt, and establish a lawful trading post there.

During the next four years the provincial agent was followed by other storekeepers who also braved the wilderness to open trading shops at the "forks of the Ohio." About the middle of April, 1759, James Kenny, a Quaker, arrived and set up a store as the agent for Israel Pemberton, a Philadelphia merchant.³ Competition for the flourishing Indian trade be-

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¹ Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on March 30, 1937. A more extended account is to be found in a thesis on the same subject presented by Mr. Douds in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master of arts at the University of Pittsburgh. Ed.

² Bouquet Papers, British Museum, Additional Manuscripts, volume 21643, folio 271.

gan in earnest in 1760. One of the largest of the private shops was that run by William Trent and Levi Levy who were resident partners of the Lancaster firm of Joseph Simon and David Franks. Other trading centers were managed by Hugh Crawford, John Hart, and Major Thomas Smallman. Jonathan Plumer in 1761 established a “Sadling and Shew-makeing Business,” and Kenny mentions a baker in his journal for this period. These first shops were stocked very largely with goods to barter with the Indians for their furs and skins. Used for this purpose was a coarse kind of cloth called duffel or strouding. Other items used in large quantities were blankets, checked shirts, axes, knives, guns, powder, rum, tobacco, and such trinkets as beads and jew's-harps.

Merchandising in this early period was attended by many risks. In 1759 rumors of Indian attacks kept the inhabitants in a constant state of apprehension throughout the summer. Kenny wrote in his journal on July 3 of that year, “I like not staying here on account of these frequent rumours.” Again on July 15 he noted that some Indians had reported that the French were about fifteen miles up the river, “which made many wish they were at home.”4 Many of the storekeepers moved their goods into the fort for added security; later all stores and houses outside the fort were burned to keep the enemy from using them as shelters during an attack. The same thing happened in June, 1763. The hard and expensive task of rebuilding their shops must have been a discouraging one to the merchant-traders.

Losses from floods were also a constant menace. On January 12, 1762, Bouquet wrote to General Amherst that the inhabitants had just suffered from one of the worst floods they had yet experienced. The rivers rose ten feet over their banks. "No Lives have been lost," reported Bouquet, "but most of the Effects of the Traders [have been lost] by the Suddeness of the flood, tho' we gave them all the assistance in our Power."5 Again on March 7 and 8, 1763, the fort and "lower town" were inundated by a flood. Kenny declared that the water rose so high that many who had delayed in moving their goods had to break in the roofs to

5 Bouquet Papers, Add.MSS., 21634:78.
carry the goods away in boats. Indian thieves and counterfeit money likewise operated to the disadvantage of the merchant-traders.

With the growth in the Indian trade and the corresponding increase in the number of shops in Pittsburgh, troubles arising from competition and jealousy became inevitable. The private traders were jealous of the exemptions from certain trade regulations enjoyed by the provincial store, and the provincial agents charged that the other stores were unlawfully granting credit to the Indians and selling under the regulated prices. The sale of rum and powder to the Indians was another fruitful cause for grievance and argument. In fact the merchant-traders were so quarrelsome that Colonel Bouquet became convinced that there were too many there. A dozen, he asserted, would be more than sufficient to carry on the trade and supply the garrison.

Naturally competition became keen. The Indians, canny enough to seek the best bargains for their furs, visited all the shops, often trailed by the merchants. In order to draw trade many novel methods were used. Indians were trusted with goods till they were able to pay. Some of the shops, especially the provincial store, occasionally met the Indians on the other side of the river, ferried them across, and escorted them to a given store; there, if the merchant could keep them, he might do a profitable piece of business. Other traders endeavored to entice the Indians with rum or punch.

Pontiac's War desolated the Ohio country. Pittsburgh, though it had reached a population of 332 by 1761, was nothing but a fort in 1763. All dwellings and stores had been razed. But in 1764, with the worst Indian danger past, the merchant-traders' log huts were rebuilt, and the little town of Pittsburgh reappeared. Its growth, however, was not rapid; by 1770 there were probably not more than twenty houses there, and most of these were occupied by traders. During this middle period the two most prosperous trading houses were those of Simon, Levy & Company, closely connected with Barnard and Michael Gratz of Philadel-

Philadelphia, and the firm of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, also of Philadelphia. These two concerns were great rivals for the new and rich Illinois trade which eventually reached large proportions.

From 1770 to 1776 Pittsburgh apparently owed its existence to the Indian trade, which was now firmly established. The town, even as late as 1775, could not have contained many more than thirty houses, and it was largely a town of stores. One writer declares that with a single exception all the houses at Pittsburgh were occupied by traders.7 Travelers stopping at the town remarked on the prosperous Indian trade.

In 1774 trade was violently interrupted by the boundary dispute between Pennsylvania and Virginia. Loyal Pennsylvania merchants who questioned the authority of Dr. John Connolly were roughly treated, friendly Indians were driven away, and a tax of four pence was laid on each pelt leaving the town. The only store that continued to prosper was the firm of Simon and Campbell. It has been alleged that the owners entered into an agreement with Connolly whereby, in return for upholding the boundary claim of Virginia, they would be given a monopoly of the Indian trade.

During the Revolution the Indian trade was practically killed. The Indians were much more interested in taking scalps than in trading in furs and skins. After the war ended, in 1781, and the troops were disbanded, a number of army officers who had become acquainted with the western region while serving on duty around Fort Pitt returned to Pittsburgh to live. Many of them became merchants, and their coming brought a touch of refinement and culture to the village, which had known nothing but rough traders and ignorant settlers. The list includes General James O'Hara, General Richard Butler, Major Isaac Craig, Colonel Stephen Bayard, Major William Amberson, and others destined to become influential local leaders.

The westward immigration, which increased after the war, was a powerful factor in stimulating the growth of the stores in Pittsburgh. The Revolution had hindered this movement, but when the Continental Congress decided to pay off the soldiers with grants of unsettled western lands, immigration was resumed in earnest. Pittsburgh lay directly on the best

7 History of Allegheny County, 1:450.
route to the West. It was a midway resting point, the last place where the immigrants could stop and buy supplies before they "jumped off" for the unknown. Accordingly, besides stimulating the growth of the stores, this new factor changed the type of retail trading carried on. In place of the old Indian trade, which never recovered from the disastrous effect of the Revolution, there sprang up the business of selling supplies to the passing immigrants. The journals of travelers stopping at Pittsburgh during this period contain many references to this new trade of the merchants.

But the fear of Indian attacks still lingered, and up to 1794 the growth of merchandising for a time was gradual. In 1786 there were approximately nineteen stores. Among them were fourteen general stores, two bakeries, a ropewalk, a gold- and silversmith's shop where watches were sold, and a printing shop, that of John Scull and Joseph Hall, where books and writing equipment were sold. A visitor in the town during September of that year remarked that Pittsburgh was a very dissipated place and that no dependence could be placed on any of the tradesmen, who were "indifferent in their profession." In 1790, when the population was 376, but twenty-eight stores were doing business in "Pittsburgh town." 8

The growing confidence of the settlers and the increased immigration following General Anthony Wayne's decisive victory over the western tribes in August, 1794, is strikingly reflected in the immediate growth of Pittsburgh shops. In that year the number of stores rose to forty-two. This included twenty-five general stores, six blacksmith shops, two saddleries, two cabinetmaking shops, two ropewalks, a bakery, a hair-powder "Manufactory," a goldsmith's shop, a shoemaker's shop, and an establishment for making and selling candles and soap.

A traveler visiting the town in 1796 observed that the greater number of the inhabitants were "either store-keepers or engaged in some handicraft." 9 According to the advertisements in the Pittsburgh Gazette a total of sixty-three stores were engaged in business. By 1798 the peak was


reached with seventy-four wholesale and retail establishments listed. An interesting feature quickly noted about this large group of stores is that only thirty-six of them, not even half, were general shops. Undoubtedly the increasing demands of the inhabitants of Pittsburgh and the varied needs of the immigrants had been forcing the merchants to specialize.

It is significant that the greatest increase in the number of shops took place among the kinds that supplied the common necessities of life. By 1798 there were five cabinetmaking shops, five shoemaking shops, four blacksmith shops where sickles and scythes were made and sold, and three tailor establishments. At the same time four gold- and silversmiths, three saddlers, two gunsmiths, two bakers, and two ropemakers also carried on important business in a growing town on the route to the frontier. Nor is the appearance of a coach- and wagon-making establishment a surprising one. Two tobacco "manufactories" are somewhat unexpected, however, and a "hosier" who sold stockings wholesale and retail may cause one to wonder. A bookstore and a French luxury store indicate that the borough of Pittsburgh was becoming somewhat refined.

In the succeeding year, 1799, sixty-nine shops were listed, including two nail "manufactories" opened as part of an attempt of the western merchants to escape from their dependence upon the East for manufactured articles, and the next and last year of the period under discussion found sixty-three shops advertising in the *Gazette*.

During this period the number of general stores, products of a frontier region, decreased, having fallen to twenty-three by 1799. On the other hand, the specialized shops of the mechanics and tradesmen greatly increased, giving an atmosphere of permanence and solidarity to the young town. The merchants, realizing that every immigrant was a potential, cash-paying customer, had quickly applied themselves to the new business of supplying the needs of the west-bound travelers. The large number of stores, then, is not only an indication of the growth of the town and its geographical importance, but a tribute to the energy and wisdom of the merchants.

From 1786 to 1800 money was scarcely seen in Pittsburgh. In May, 1789, Colonel John May, a merchant, came west to establish a store.
At Pittsburgh he noted in his journal: "Found money affairs here at a low ebb. Everybody unwilling to part with money but very anxious to get it." Practically all business transactions were carried on by barter. Most of the stores took in country produce, whiskey, furs, and ginseng, a medicinal root. Because there was little local sales demand for these products, the merchants shipped them down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans. There they were sold, and the agents continued around the coast to Philadelphia or Baltimore where a new supply of goods was purchased and brought overland to Pittsburgh. Most of the merchandise sold in the general stores there was secured from Philadelphia and Baltimore, with New York and Alexandria furnishing smaller quantities. The specialized shops of the shoemakers, cabinetmakers, blacksmiths, bakers, and others made the articles they sold, though the raw materials were often brought over the mountains from the East.

The close connection between early merchandising and early manufacturing in Pittsburgh is readily seen in the shops of these tradesmen. The merchants who owned the boot and shoe stores were shoemakers in the true sense of the word, for they actually made the shoes in their own shops. Though often called factories or "manufactories," there is no doubt but that these shops were also retail stores and therefore belong in a history of merchandising. James Wills declared that he "makes and sells wholesale & retail fair and black top boots" at his "Boot, Shoe and Sandal Manufactory." Likewise William Davis advertised: "Gentlemen can be furnished with the best materials, and have them made up and finished in the most fashionable manner, and on the shortest notice." Other infant industries were located in little dwellings where the goods and articles sold in the front room of the house were made in the shop at the rear. There were hat and baking shops; blacksmiths who made sickles and scythes; nail, tobacco, rope, and saddle "manufactories." Watches and clocks were made and sold by the gold- and silversmiths, and rifles

and pistols by the gunsmiths. Cabinetmakers had shops where they made and sold "windsor chairs" and many other pieces of furniture. Among several unique shops in this group may be mentioned the one of John Arthirs, who in 1794 announced that he had received a machine from Philadelphia that enabled him "to manufacture Hair Powder equal to any imported." In 1797, Mathew McEown carried on the stocking-making business; while the "chandler" business, the making of candles and soap, was followed by James Anderson.12

On the shelves of the stores of Pittsburgh during the last fifteen years of the eighteenth century was a variety of goods that may well have surprised the travelers from the East. They furnish a rather complete picture of the life of the inhabitants, revealing much as to the food they ate, their work, their religion, and their amusements.

The general stores contained an assortment of dry goods calculated to gladden the eye of any female shopper. Imagine a Pittsburgh housewife of that day setting forth on a bright Saturday afternoon to buy some cloth. Strolling down Water Street she enters the large store of Oliver Ormsby. The clerk takes from the shelves a variety of goods, such as calico, chintz, baize, cassimere, swansdown, dimitry, muslin, muslinet, cambric, nankeen, gingham, corduroy, and flannel. Or perhaps something a little finer is desired. The clerk hurries to bring fine linen, broadcloth, satin, crepe, and velvet. Or from another shelf he displays "white, Italian and love tiffany," a very thin, gauze-like silk. And the colors—commonly olive, dove, buff, salmon, straw, and snuff—surprise with their variety. Of the heavier woolen cloths there are kersey, calamanco, rattinet, moreen, and shalloon. A choice of linens includes lawn, Holland, and the German-manufactured ticklenburg and "oznabrig" (Osnaburg) cloths. Still other cloth goods may perhaps be shown to our imaginary shopper, the meanings of whose names—pelong, antaloon, humhum, gurrah, and "forest cloths"—seem to have been lost in the musty cobwebs of the eighteenth century.

But dry goods were only a small part of the great quantity of goods sold by Pittsburgh shops. Various leather goods were sold by the shoe-

12 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 1, 1794; March 17, April 28, 1798.
makers and the saddlers. Over half of all the shops advertised groceries, principally spices. Tea and coffee had a large sale. Most of the merchants sold loaf and muscovado sugar. Salt, always expensive, became cheaper after 1796 when enterprising James O'Hara began bringing it to Pittsburgh by way of the lakes.

"Wet goods" were in great demand. Practically all the general stores sold whiskey and other kinds of liquor. A new drink with a rather modern name was introduced by Benjamin Herr in 1800, when he advertised that he had "just received from the east side of the Allegheny Mountains, a quantity of Cherry Bounce of the best quality."13

Articles in the hardware line were secured chiefly from the blacksmiths. These artisans had to be rather versatile, for they were called upon to make many implements as well as to do repair work. Much of their trade must have been in the furnishing of tools for immigrants who would need them when they began their new homes in the West. In their grimy huts the smiths forged locks, keys, hinges, grates, shovels, and all kinds of iron articles for the kitchen. In 1789, George McGunnegle, a particularly talented smith, made and sold such surprising things as pipe "tomahawks," scalping knives, bread toasters, flesh forks, currying combs, curling tongs, and rupture belts.14

Up to 1790 not many books were sold. Most of the people were probably too busy making a living to have much time or desire to read. The Bible, to be sure, was used, and it could be bought at many of the early stores. Moreover New England primers and Dilworth's spelling books were advertised by the general stores, for education of the young had never been neglected. But the first shop devoted exclusively to the sale of books was opened as late as December, 1798, by John C. Gilkison. This pioneer in the book business died shortly, but in 1800 Zadok Cramer opened a spacious bookstore of eight hundred volumes at the same place.15

The group of miscellaneous shops is an interesting one. Bakeries, usually run in connection with taverns, had long been supplying bread, cakes, biscuits, and crackers. At Pittsburgh's two ropewalks, owned re-

13 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, November 21, 1800.
14 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, August 1, 1789.
15 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 28, 1800.
spectively by John Irwin and Margaret Ross, a variety of cables, lash rope, drum cord, and tent lines was made and sold; while the hat shops exhibited fur, wool, castor, felt, and “roram” hats. Doctors not only prescribed medicines at this time but made and sold them as well. At their "Medical Stores" Dr. Nathaniel Bedford and Dr. Andrew Richardson dispensed “Asthmatic Elixir,” “Glauber’s Salts,” “Huxham’s Tincture of Bark,” “Mercurial Pills,” and licorice juice.\textsuperscript{16} Some of the general stores also sold medicines, the store of Irwins & Christy being particularly fortunate in having for sale “Doctor Anderson’s famous Scotch pills,” and “Old Robert Turlington’s original balsam of life.”

It would be a strange town if some confectionary were not sold even at this early date. After 1797 adults as well as children went to the shops of Gabriel Dubac, A. Hauguel, and Oliver Ormsby, where they purchased “Sugar Plumbs,” licorice balls, mint drops, and other sweetmeats. Here, too, the men secured their Spanish and American “Segars,” the inevitable plug and pigtail tobacco, and Scotch and rappee snuff; and the women, their perfumes and powder.

Such articles of luxury and necessity made possible a more comfortable existence. With the burden of life in the young town eased, the inhabitants became more contented. They applied themselves with greater zeal to the tasks before them. Thus did the merchants of a village lay the foundation for a city. They were indeed pioneers of distinction.

\textsuperscript{16} Pittsburgh Gazette, May 9, 1789.