BOOK REVIEWS


The town of Irvine in Warren County on the upper Allegheny River near the mouth of Brokenstraw Creek is testimonial of the almost feudal land and business enterprises of the Irvine family that endured through five generations until the final thousand acres were sold after the death of the last resident member of the family in 1963. Before the Civil War it was a flourishing community containing a sawmill, grist mill, foundry and machine shop, blacksmith shop, woolen factory, general store, and a tavern, all owned by the Irvines; while the post office was not Irvine's, the postmaster was of course an Irvine. Surrounding the settlement were thousands of acres of Irvine timber (now part of Allegheny National Forest) and hundreds of acres of fertile farm land worked by Irvine tenant farmers.

General William Irvine (1741-1804), founder of this family in America, was commandant at Fort Pitt during the latter part of the Revolutionary War. Being sent in 1785 to locate Donation Lands for war veterans, he was impressed with that near Buckaloons, Indian name for Brokenstraw Creek, and obtained warrants in 1792 for several tracts in that wilderness area, which could not be surveyed until after the Treaty of Greenville. Following service as major general during the Whiskey Insurrection he and Andrew Ellicott laid out the towns of Franklin, Warren, Waterford, and Erie; the Irvine tract near the latter was granted for his military services only because the state of Pennsylvania did not have clear title to Montour's Island in the Ohio River below Pittsburgh and became instead Neville's Island.

The eldest son, Callender Irvine (1775-1841), was named for his maternal grandfather, Robert Callender, who had been an Indian trader and colleague of George Croghan at Carlisle, where General Irvine ultimately settled. With considerable aid from his father Callender endured a military career — he, too, became a general — and was the first to settle and reside briefly on the Allegheny lands, though his son was born at Erie, and Philadelphia was considered his home. It was Callender Irvine who in 1828 built on a bluff overlooking the Allegheny opposite Brokenstraw Island the house which, much added to and still standing, was the Irvine seat for more than a century; its Greek Revival style of architecture was considered too plain during the period of expansion of Irvine enterprises.
That expansion was directed by Dr. William A. Irvine (1803-1886), for whose fascinating story the greater part of this book is reserved. The varied enterprises included lumbering, turnpike and railroad building, petroleum, and of course land. But these enterprises were frequently ill-timed and over-expanded and in later life Dr. Irvine's financial resources scarcely equalled the grand, albeit lonely, manner in which he lived. His only son was killed in a hunting accident when a boy. His elder daughter, Margaret, lived part of the year near the homestead following the death in 1864 of her husband, Thomas M. Biddle. Winters at Irvine were avoided by the ladies, but she died and was buried there in 1925, as was her daughter Lydia.

Sarah, younger daughter of Dr. William A. Irvine, married Dr. Thomas Newbold in 1863 at Erie, where he died in 1874. Their five daughters — Elizabeth, Mary, Margaret, Emily, and Esther — were raised by Mrs. Newbold in Philadelphia, but summertime always found the family at Irvine; only the first married and escaped the influence of Irvine. The life of the Newbold ladies there in the homestead that lacked central heating, plumbing, or utilities until those conveniences were partially admitted to some of the house in the 1920's is only sketched, but the picture of carriages and sleighs still ready for use in the carriage house, the array of side saddles used by the Newbold girls to ride out in force, and a 1928 Ford on blocks, all prepared for the eventual day when the heirs took over, are not easily forgotten. After 1933 only Miss Mary and Miss Esther Newbold carried on the Irvine tradition, if not the name; both lived for many years, becoming at last hopeless invalids until the youngest died at Irvine, not quite ninety-one years old. In 1963 "the heirs disposed of the property itself, which still consisted of more than a thousand acres. Thus, for the descendants of General William Irvine, the road to Irvine had come to an end."

From the voluminous papers and records of the Irvine family of northwestern Pennsylvania presented to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania — the Gen. Irvine Papers in 1887, the G. A. Irvine Papers in 1956, the "wild confusion" of Newbold-Irvine papers remaining in the homestead in 1963 from John L. Welsh, Jr., and Mrs. Caryl Roberts, and from the purchased Mrs. Caryl Roberts-Irvine Papers of 1963 — the Research Librarian of the Society has distilled a relatively undetailed but comprehensive picture of the changing times and people at Irvine. The narrative owes its existence to Mrs. Roberts, a descendant of General William Irvine, and is published in co-
operation with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

In such a modestly-priced and ably-edited work complete with footnotes, line engravings, and excellent half-tone illustrations — especially portraits of General William Irvine, General Callender Irvine, and the Byronic young Dr. William A. Irvine — economies of production in a limited edition are doubtless responsible for its paper-back format and, regrettably, lack of an index. But unless one is a genealogist, who believes that there is a special place in hell reserved for those responsible for books without indices?

*Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania*  
**John W. Harpster**

*History of Hancock County — Virginia and West Virginia.* By **Jack Welch.** (Wheeling, West Virginia: The Wheeling News Printing and Litho Co., 1963. 202 pp. Index, maps, illustrations. Sold for $5.00 by author at 509 South Capitol Street, Iowa City, Iowa.)

This book, issued for the West Virginia Centennial Year Celebration, was sponsored by the Hancock County Centennial Committee. It tends to be a journalistic production written for a special occasion, rather than a definitive history, and it should be evaluated in its intended context. The compact little volume digests much information into brief scope. It is well printed and bound, and contains valuable photographs and drawings. A foreword makes useful interpretations, and the index is rather complete. The interesting Beers 1871 map of the area is used on the endpapers. A two-page bibliography lists both primary and secondary reference materials, and a page of acknowledgments lists the names of source persons. This book will be of interest to many Western Pennsylvanians, because the relatively small county is bounded on its entire eastern side by Pennsylvania and to the north and west by the Ohio River. It lies in the angle where, at a point beyond East Liverpool and Wellsville, the stream which begins at Pittsburgh leaves its westerly course and turns southward.

Sections of the text are devoted to discussions of pre-history, Indian history, the French and English explorers, first settlers, and early Ohio Valley history in general. These materials provide interesting background, but they are perhaps disproportionately extensive, because relatively few of the items treated can be related directly with