As a member of the board of commissioners of Allegheny County, and as a citizen, I do not believe I can attach too much importance to the 150th anniversary of our founding which will be celebrated this year in September. It is fitting to that approaching historic anniversary and proper to its significance that my remarks before this learned body be predicated on the eventful times in which Allegheny County was born, and that they chiefly concern our progress during the century and a half.

First, I am sure that in this particular day, when we no longer are satisfied with the common import of our words, perhaps it will be well to define my terms. So, in speaking of progress, I concern myself, and hope to concern you, with the spiritual, cultural, and material advance which has been made by the citizens of this county since it was founded. No doubt, the material side will largely dominate in any résumé, since modern civilization and economic progress have gone hand in hand.

We can realize readily enough that any change in our manner of making a living must necessarily affect our way of living itself. It is not hard to understand, therefore, the profound effect of material or me-

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1 An address delivered at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on February 22, 1938. Ed.
chanical progress, not only on our history but also on the point of view of our history.

Prior to machinery's displacement of handwork, history was a log book of the deeds of rulers and warriors and legislators; but, from the middle of the eighteenth century, with the growth of machine methods in the textile industry and the resultant rise of democracy, history began to take a larger view of mankind's story. The people themselves focused attention on economic, social, and cultural factors. From that time forward, it was the scientist and the inventor who made the most notable contributions to our history and to the history of all mankind; especially to our history, since we had begun in a wilderness of savages, with a raw, a new, a great, but altogether an uncivilized land.

Our writers, educators, artists, social reformers, composers, and other men of zeal and genius have followed in the swift wake of material progress. The men and women who labor continually to increase our control over the forces of nature have become the leaders of the new era in efforts to establish democracy among the peoples of the earth and to maintain it in our own land, seeking thus to record new conquests for the human mind against injustice, intolerance, and suffering.

This historic pageant of progress began in the gloomy days following the close of the Revolutionary War. The demobilized soldiery, not buoyant, but bankrupt in money and spirit, were making their weary journeys home. They faced the task of resuming life with determination, but they could not view the separation from the mother country and their own independence with the same jubilation as we view the event. They were too close to the picture, and the country was economically demoralized.

So, I am afraid that January 1, 1788, was not a very cheery New Year's Day. Throughout the thirteen colonies, then confederated, the people were free. So far as commerce and credit were concerned, they were far too free. They were entirely devoid of both. They were actually at loose-ends.

This would seem to be a strange state of mind for a nation which had lately won its freedom and which had given to the world one of
the most important political documents in its history, the Constitution of the United States of America. Yet it can truthfully be said that the somber state of the national mind was not in spite of this epochal event but rather because of it. The infant United States was a rickety child, loosely put together, and thoroughly depressed. He needed tender handling, much nourishment, and therapeutic treatments to strengthen his joints and sinews. He needed to exercise his corporate structure. He had plenty of room in which to grow but he needed time and the opportunity to do so. He needed protection in his extreme youth, and yet he had left the protective influence of a mother whom he had regarded as tyrannical, and he had not yet acquired an acknowledged father; for on January 1, 1788, George Washington was more than a year away from becoming the first president, a man yet to be publicly recognized for his political paternity.

Nevertheless the country was expanding westward and multiplying its agencies of local government. In the region about Fort Pitt, the increasing population, the waning power of the Indians, and the inconvenience of attending a court of law so far removed from Pittsburgh as Greensburg eventually combined to prompt a petition for a new county, and on September 24, 1788, the general assembly of Pennsylvania passed an act for the erection of certain parts of Westmoreland and Washington counties into a separate county. The resulting Allegheny County then embraced all the Pennsylvania territory north and west of the Ohio and Allegheny rivers and a large tract east and south of those streams. To it were later added another slice of Washington County, under an act of September 17, 1789, and the Erie Triangle, a tract of 202,187 acres that was purchased by the state from the federal government on March 3, 1792, for $151,540.25, or approximately seventy-five cents per acre.

Just how ponderously large Allegheny County was after that generous addition can be grasped from the contents of another act of the legislature. This particular bill was enacted into law on March 12, 1800, and divided Allegheny County. Consider what a domain we had previously represented: the act set aside 750 square miles as the present Allegheny County and divided the remainder of the land into
Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Mercer, Venango, and Warren counties as they now stand, except that parts of Beaver and Mercer counties later became Lawrence County.

Then bear in mind that in 1930 our 750-square-mile area had a population of 1,374,310, according to the census of that year, and that the population of Allegheny County outranks the populations of sixteen states and is equal to the combined populations of Nevada, Wyoming, Delaware, Vermont, and New Mexico.

No estimate of the population of Allegheny County, as it was following the yeoman-like reduction made by the act of 1800, is available, but the official returns of the tax collector that year show 4,024 taxables. From this we can deduce that Allegheny County probably had a population of about 20,000.

This, then, was the land whose people pivoted their activities around the Forks of the Ohio at Pittsburgh. This was one of the most westerly points of civilization, the port which for the most part was reached on horseback and by wagon. The more adventurous of these searchers for life and fortune would then push on by flatboat or canoe, down the Ohio, into the Indian country and beyond.

Mind you, George Washington was yet to take office as our first president; Benjamin Franklin was the head of the government of this commonwealth, being president of the supreme executive council. Poor Louis XVI of France was to be spared a while before losing his head to the guillotine in the cause of a French republic. The English had not yet withdrawn from several of the border forts, awaiting our compliance with the terms of the treaty which was signed in its final form on September 3, 1783. And it was from this date forward that the thirteen states were free and independent. Curiously enough, too, I want you to note that we have fixed the dates for our sesquicentennial celebration from September 3 to September 24, thus beginning on the official treaty day and closing upon the 150th anniversary of the enactment of the legislation which made us a great county and an historic political subdivision of a great state.

Now, the summer of 1788 came and passed with two of the original thirteen states still not having ratified the Constitution which had re-
placed the inadequate Articles of Confederation, the agreement which first joined the states in a friendly but loose alliance. It was not until over a year after the creation of Allegheny County that the sovereign state of North Carolina signed, and little Rhode Island, the pouter pigeon which had been missing from the Constitutional Convention, accepted and signed only after the new Congress held a suspension of trade over its head.

I have already made it clear that January 1, 1788, came to a country which was in a state of depression or recession far worse than that which exists in the country today. The currency situation was intolerably confused. Fifteen or twenty kinds of money were in circulation. No one knew the value of the paper tendered him. What little gold and silver of foreign coinage was actually in the country was hoarded by its possessors until the poor business man felt he was playing blindman's buff every time he pushed his goods across the counter. Even the budgets set up by the state authorities proved to be crazy-quilt patterns of financial fluctuation, and wholly out of line with conditions and the needs of government for which they had been appropriated. There is little need to dwell on other conditions of commercial intercourse, since the whole life of the nation was necessarily affected by the fluctuation of its currency. Life, like the currency, was unstable.

Here was a “pretty state of things,” indeed; taxes were higher than they had been under British rule and most of the people were delinquent. The “Letters to the Editor” departments of the newspapers were crammed in each issue with complaints about heavy taxation, about poverty and numerous mortgage foreclosures. Imprisonment for debt was legal in this as well as in every other state. The well-intentioned poor man, the gentleman, and the sturdy farmer often found themselves occupying vermin-infested jails in the company of rogues, footpads, thieves, and ruffians of every description. This condition was general. It was more prevalent in the closely populated East, but Allegheny County was no exception to the times and its customs and laws.

A striking example which will sum up our almost demoralized economic condition in those days is a letter from the hand of our immortal first president of the United States, written in January, 1788, 150
years ago. George Washington wrote that he had put off the tax collector three times but feared he would be forced to let the sheriff seize some of his land and sell it to pay his overdue taxes. But the spirit which produced a revolution could not be quenched by a recession, nor could George Washington be vanquished by a tax collector—although I am sure he found him much more annoying than the Indians.

While Mount Vernon was standing siege by the governmental power which its owner had fought to establish, here at the Forks of the Ohio the migrating soldiers brought news of closed shops and tax-ridden farms; but they found that economic depression, even on a wilderness frontier, travels faster than moccasin or shod horse or canoe.

The soldiers, the travelers, and the pioneer homesteaders saw the first display of the spirit which has made Pittsburgh and Allegheny County world-renowned. They found the settlers turning their backs on the East and looking to the West for lands and new opportunity.

Farming took its hold and has held an eminent place until this day. The building of boats, principally of the flat-bottom variety, the outfitting of adventurers for the voyage down the Ohio, harness and implement making, and the keeping of taverns occupied the people.

Iron ore made itself known, to light forges in the wilderness. The ringing hammer of the blacksmith or ironmaster came to replace the throb of the tom-tom. Its familiar note grew louder and louder in a crescendo which stirred the blood of our whole people. It was the audible pulse-beat of industry; it quickened the lives of our forbears; it beat steadily for 150 years. It has been heard in every phase of our commercial intercourse, and now in our sesquicentennial year of 1938, we have seen the great steel industry, responsible for our tremendous growth, return to its home, the city of Pittsburgh and the county of Allegheny.

This area's natural endowments were fertile soil, great forests, beautiful and useful rivers, wild animals which furnished food for the pioneers, and great hills which hoarded millions of tons of coal to fuel the furnaces and light the forges in which were consumed our own supply of iron ore.
The material advance recorded between our founding and our celebration of progress needs no words to delineate its vastness and its value. Every bridge, every mill, every great building, each speeding train, each library and concert hall and school bespeaks our progress with eloquence. Ours, therefore, is a sturdy record. I feel that it will stand inspection with that of any land and any people in the world. We did not make the utmost use of all our opportunities, perhaps, at least as we see them now in retrospect, but I am sure that those who went ahead of us and prepared the way strove to the fullest to utilize all that was possible from nature under the existing conditions, and in keeping with the thought and temper of the times. We were prodigal, no doubt, with our natural resources; but, at the same time, our rapid consumption and destruction of the existing supply of ores, minerals, forests, and a host of other valuable possessions of the virgin land also forced us to exercise our ingenuity to replace them with scientific substitutes; and this gave us our amazing technological heritage, our development of machines, laboratories, and methods, to replace the old slow work of arrow and axe and plow. The steam shovel, the gold-dredge, dynamite and hydraulic power; the airplane, the radio and streamlined trains have all come to America, and to Allegheny County and Pittsburgh. Many of these things were born here, the products of our laboratories and our flaming furnaces.

Our dependence for existence on a vast network of complicated technical processes in factory, in mill, in mine, and on our farms impels me to say that here, at the one-time geographic frontier of the nation, we must remember that our future frontiers will be products of the human mind. Our horizon will be bounded by laboratory walls, and the political, social, and economic life of all will be profoundly affected by each new triumph of technology.

I emphasize this phase of our development because I feel the trend strongly. We have been on this road for many years, and especially since the turn of the century. I am merely an interested citizen who has watched the stream of history flow steadily along our banks; one who has noted that the first third of this twentieth century saw 1,440,000
new patents in the United States, and who feels that among these, there will be new inventions which may determine the pattern of our lives as definitely and affect them as profoundly as do the telephone, the automobile, the motion picture, the airplane, and the radio.

I am convinced that technological progress will provide as sure and as swift a path to economic adjustment as it has to our present machine-made difficulties. In this readjustment, history will be repeating itself once again. In this, at least, I am sure history will follow the old pattern.

We know the conditions of our beginning, and we know what the years of our development brought to the people of this county as well as to those of other American communities.

I am afraid that I have dwelt overmuch on some details of our origin, but I am one who believes that the beginning of any movement, great or small, if understood, will give the most light with which to see later events which become more obscure as time passes. This is only another way of saying that we can understand our present and anticipate our future only when we are familiar with our past.