THE HISTORICAL TOUR OF 1938

AGNES LYNCH STARRETT

Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages

To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes.

More than one hundred enthusiastic western Pennsylvanians participated in the seventh annual historical tour, July 15 and 16, 1938, sponsored jointly by the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and the University of Pittsburgh Summer Session. Fifty automobiles left Pittsburgh, Friday, July 15, visited places important in the early history of westward expansion in Pennsylvania’s Washington County, the West Virginia Panhandle, and the Upper Ohio Valley (specifically, Moundsville, Wheeling, Parkersburg, and Blennerhassett Island) and ended the tour in Marietta, Ohio, headquarters for the 150th anniversary celebration of the opening of the Northwest Territory.

Bedecked with red, white, and blue streamers the motorcade pulled away from the Historical Building about 1:30 P.M., escorted by Pittsburgh motor police. The procession rolled out of the city through Schenley Park to the Boulevard of the Allies, across Liberty Bridge and through the Liberty Tubes, along West Liberty Avenue through Dormont and Mt. Lebanon onto Washington Road, gazed at curiously by less privileged cars that waited for red lights to become green.

Three miles from the Washington county line Mr. John Harpster and Mr. Stanton Belfour, leaders of the tour, pointed out a mansion with a two-story portico, more than a century old, unrecorded but interesting for its old style of architecture. In Washington County, cre-

1 Written with the assistance of a preliminary draft prepared by Miss Leah Hauser. Mrs. Starrett is assistant professor of English in the University of Pittsburgh and the author of Through One Hundred and Fifty Years. The University of Pittsburgh (1937). Ed.
ated in 1791 from Westmoreland County, historical sites and points of interest were pointed out continually by the driver in each car, while passengers read the notes on each particular site or object from printed itineraries that had been distributed before the cars left Pittsburgh. The Chartiers (Hill) Presbyterian Church, established about 1775 by the Reverend John McMillan, was noted. In the adjoining cemetery many tombstones are dated the eighteenth century—one in fair state of preservation reads 1783. Here lie Dr. McMillan and his wife, many professors of old Jefferson College, and other pioneers. A cottage, once the manse of the church, and formerly the home of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Wilson, father of Woodrow Wilson, stands near the church. Across the road from the church and cottage is the McMillan monument, bearing the following inscription:

Reverend John McMillan, D.D. Born November 11th, 1752, died November 16th, 1833. Pioneer, Preacher, Educator, Patriot. Lies buried in this Churchyard. Served 60 years in the ministry. Leader in founding Western Theological Seminary, Jefferson College, Jefferson Medical College. His missionary labors resulted in the founding of Chartiers, Pigeon Creek, and many other Presbyterian Churches in this region. With his faithful wife, he shared untold trials and privations that the kingdom of God might be established here, on this rugged frontier.

Three miles farther on, our attention was called to the William M. Quail house, built in 1832 with a two-story porch, suggestive of a familiar Virginia motif, somewhat unusual in this district. A short distance past this house is the D.A.R. memorial to the many Revolutionary soldiers who lie buried in Washington County. Just beyond this memorial we entered the city of Washington, founded in 1782, and named for George Washington. Little time was spent on the many points of historic interest here, as the historical tour of 1933 had included them. Red lights, up-and-down-hill streets, and the week-end traffic rush parted the motorcade in several places as it wound along the edge of Washington onto the Old National Pike or Cumberland Road, now known as U.S. Route 40. Congress chartered this road in 1806, contracts for its construction were let in 1811, and by 1818 stages were running over part of the pike. Originally the road connected Washing-
ton, D.C., and Wheeling, Virginia. A new coat of white paint makes the concrete reproductions of the milestones indicating distances along this road easily legible to the tourist.

Five miles from "Little Washington," on the right, stands the Miller house, a stoutly built red brick structure, formerly a tavern. On the left is the site of Wolfe's Fort, erected about 1780 by Jacob Wolfe as a retreat from danger of Indian ravages. About one mile farther stand similar structures, greatly changed from their original form, known as Stricker's Blockhouses; they were originally built by Laurence Stricker in Revolutionary days. Then the motorcade crossed a creek on a modern road bridge built beside part of the picturesque old stone S-bridge of the National Pike, which is now preserved by the state. On the next hilltop we saw Caldwell's Tavern, another popular hostelry of pike days. Then we passed through the little town of Claysville, once important as a stage center, founded in 1781, and renamed for Henry Clay who was a great advocate of the pike. Some three miles farther west an old toll house still edges up to the road and commands attention.

Leaving the National Pike at West Alexander the expedition turned left to visit the McGuffey Memorial erected by Henry Ford on a hillside of the Blayney farm. Here we made a ten-minute stop, read both sides of the memorial, and listened to Dr. John A. Nietz, associate professor of education at the University of Pittsburgh, collector of old and rare school texts, speak briefly about William Holmes McGuffey, and how the homely virtues of his Readers were an important contribution to American education. Leaving a daisy field dusty behind us we traveled back to Route 40, passing slowly through two covered bridges, quaint and cool.

Returning to West Alexander and turning westward, the motorcade continued along into Ohio County, West Virginia. This county was formed in 1776 from West Augusta, and bears the Indian name which means "Beautiful River." Here in 1782 the last Revolutionary battle was fought. Ohio County boasts of visits from La Salle, Céloron, Gist, Washington, and later explorers. A unique milestone marker of the old pike is here, giving the distances to and from such places as
"Penn's" and Wheeling; "Virg'a" and Cumberland; "Virg'a" and West Alexander. We crossed Little Wheeling Creek and the road to West Liberty, first organized town in the Ohio Valley, where several famous frontiersmen are buried. A little farther on a marker indicates Joseph Ray's birthplace. Ray's celebrated arithmetic and algebra books, first published in Cincinnati in 1834, launched many a man on his third "R" and its consequent struggles. About two miles past this marker the motorcade stopped at the Old Stone House for refreshments and a much appreciated stretch. At this same substantially built tavern, during the old pike days, many weary travelers, famous and otherwise, alighted to revive their strength and spirits with food and rest. An Old Trails Marker erected by the D.A.R. marks this building.

Two miles farther we came to Triadelphia, founded in 1780 and named for three friends whom the Indians tomahawked. Across another old stone bridge is the site of Fort Shepherd, still marked by the mansion built in 1798 which once housed Lafayette, James K. Polk, Andrew Jackson, and the good supporter of the National Pike, Henry Clay. Here the motorcade left Route 40 and traveled on Route 88 into Marshall County, formed in 1835 from Ohio County, and named for Chief Justice John Marshall. Continuing on Route 88 to the crest of the hill, we were delighted with the excellent view of the Panhandle area. Here, in this region, many centuries before the American Indian and the white man, lived an unknown race, the Mound Builders, whose Grave Creek Mound at Moundsville is still a notable curiosity. Through the little town of Sherrard we went to the junction of routes 250 and 88 where a state marker reads:

Fort Wetzel. John Wetzel and his sons, Lewis, Jacob, Martin, John, and George, came with the Zanes in 1769 and built a fort. The Wetzels became famous as scouts and Indian Fighters. In 1787, the elder Wetzel was killed by Indians at Baker's Station.

Traveling from here, on Route 250, down a steep hill, we came into Moundsville, noting an old cemetery, the Fostoria Glass Company, the United States Stamping Company plants, the celebrated Moundsville playground and recreational facilities costing about $175,000, the site
of Joseph Tomlinson’s cabin, the Marshall County Courthouse, and the West Virginia State Penitentiary, established in 1867. Coming to a stop on Tomlinson Street (Tomlinson built the Indian fort here) the motorcade was met by the Moundsville escort of courteous police, and by friendly residents of Moundsville. Up a steep, winding pathway we climbed Grave Creek Mound, the largest conical mound in America, 900 feet around, 70 feet high, to its flat clay-hardened top. Panting after the climb we found comfort on benches or in the shade of oaks and maples growing along the sides of the mound. Mr. Clarence B. Allman, assistant superintendent of schools for Marshall County, author of Lewis Wetzel and His Times, and graduate student in history at the University of Pittsburgh, spoke informally on historical events and sites in Moundsville and Marshall County. He told of the Grave Creek Mound excavation, made about three years ago, which revealed several rooms in which members of this prehistoric race were buried with many of their personal effects, similarly as people were buried by the ancient Egyptians. An inscribed stone, reputed to have been found in this mound, as yet undeciphered, and safely lodged in the Smithsonian Institution, leaves the ancient race inhabiting this particular valley in the New World still a mystery to historians. The visit to this mound, aside from its historical interest, afforded twenty-five minutes of mingling with our state neighbors and admiring their wooded hills and pleasant valleys.

Hurried into their cars and admonished with news that they were already a half hour late for dinner, the group headed north to Route 250 and sped along the Ohio River to Glendale, noting the plant of the Triangle Cable and Conduit Company, and a little farther down, across the river, the smoke-belching town of Bellaire. Soon the state marker of the Forman Massacre was seen. Here in “the Narrows,” on September 27, 1777, Captain William Forman (or Foreman) with his Hampshire County troops, who had joined the garrison of Fort Henry (Wheeling) in protecting the settlements on the Ohio against the Indians, were mercilessly ambushed by Indians. Continuing on routes 250-2 the motorcade passed through McMehen and Benwood, famous for
their iron and steel works, and sighted the town of Bridgeport on the opposite side of the river. Ohio County was reentered on the outskirts of Wheeling, where the motorcade met the most exciting of all their dashing police escorts. With screaming sirens the traveling expedition was escorted at high speed round about and into busy, manufacturing Wheeling. The sound and fury drew the aroused townspeople to doors and windows and made history, the travelers were sure. Not even the hullabaloo at the ride of John Gilpin could surpass this entry into Wheeling. At the McLlure Hotel doormen rushed to carry bags and baggage, and to inform the visitors that dinner would be about one hour later than scheduled so that they might have time to freshen up. Promptly an hour later the whole group and many genial Wheelingites filled the dining room of the Hotel McLure, hungry for food, and avid for history.

Mr. A. B. Brooks of Ogleby Park, presided, first introducing Judge Frank Nesbitt who extended the history-makers a cordial welcome as neighbors. Mr. Franklin F. Holbrook, director of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, responded for the tourists in his usual warm, friendly manner. Mr. Brooks then introduced the speaker of the evening, Dr. E. Douglas Branch, research professor of history, University of Pittsburgh, who spoke on "Wheeling and Western Pennsylvania."

After introductory pleasantries about Wheeling's having been founded by "discontented Western Pennsylvanians," Dr. Branch referred to the imaginative re-creation of the past throughout the day's journeying. "We who are interested in history," he said, "have a double vision: we see the past translucent within the present—the little grist-mill within the great hydroelectric plant, the clayed ruts beneath the concrete. Today this speeding chain of motor cars has also been a caravan of stagecoaches lumbering along the Cumberland Road." Discussing the pictorial aspects of the old National Pike, Dr. Branch then elaborated upon the common elements in the history of Wheeling and of Pittsburgh, from the primary phases of a vital interlinking with the wilderness into the eras of industrial rivalry. Concerning the saving and
carrying forward of the arts and sciences in each region, he recalled the pioneer lawmakers, physicians, and publishers of the two settlements. Upon the thesis that the development of both towns had largely been shaped by modes and problems of transportation, he cited the influence of the turnpikes and of the Ohio River as preliminary to a discussion of the competition between Wheeling and Pittsburgh in railroad enterprises. Amusingly acrimonious quotations from newspapers of the rival towns enlivened an account of the Hempfield Railroad, a project whereby Wheeling hoped to become the river terminus of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Dr. Branch concluded with an ardent wish for more widespread and productive interest in three primary sectors of each region's history—industry, transportation, and the human spirit.

About nine the following morning, a bright Saturday, the tourists left Wheeling via Moundsville and Marshall County, traveling southwest along the Ohio River. For eighty-eight miles the motorcade carried on the right "La Belle Riviere's" slow, easy curves, through a lovely pastoral countryside. Here lush meadows, cornfields, and gardens extended to the very edge of the river, and reflected their greens and golds in the clear ripples. The travelers passed the point where one cold February day General Zachary Taylor disembarked from an icebound steamer and took the National Pike stage for Washington, D.C., to be inaugurated twelfth president of the United States. Speeding across Pig Run where it meets the Ohio, one appreciative member of the motorcade suggested its name might appropriately be changed to Running Pig. A short distance beyond, the Baker Station marker designated the site where Captain John Baker built a blockhouse which became a rendezvous of the Ohio Valley scouts who traveled along the Indian warpath from Muskingum Valley into Virginia. Captain Baker and the famous scout John Wetzel lie buried near by, both killed by Indians in 1787. Just past the little town of Creasaps, was seen another marker, pointing out the location (five miles east) of Rosby's Rock. On December 24, 1852, at Rosby's Rock the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad finally joined Baltimore and Wheeling, making the first continuous railroad from the Atlantic to the Ohio. That road was a real engineer-
ing feat, 11 tunnels and 113 bridges; it was, at the time, promise of prosperity to Wheeling and bitter disappointment to Pittsburgh. In that region, also, are the Ohio and Great Kanawha rivers which George Rogers Clark surveyed and explored, and there planted and harvested a crop, to see his men through the winter of 1772. This region, too, produced many crack riflemen and daring scouts who were important in opening up the Northwest Territory.

Near United States Lock 14, on the Ohio, the land is changed a little in formation because of the piling up of prehistoric glacial ice. Eons ago the Ohio Valley streams flowing northward into the Great Lakes Basin were dammed by this blockade into a lake a little north of this lock. In time the Ohio River broke through these highlands, forming an outlet to the Gulf of Mexico. The tour passed through numerous little towns which had a look of prosperity—painted houses and barns, new schools, and well-kept lawns and gardens. The answer to the prosperity we discovered to be shiny tanks perched on the near-by hill. The valley has produced much gas and oil. Here in Tyler County, named for the father of the ninth president of the United States, "Big Moses" produced, in 1894, 600,000,000 cubic feet per day—the greatest gas producing well, at that time, in the world.

Before entering Pleasant County, the heart of the oil and gas producing territory in this region, we took a short respite from traveling in Sisterville, which was named for the seven sisters of Charles Wells who settled here in 1776. Besides refreshments the Wells Hotel offered a cool lounge, two perky Pekingese, a fifteen-year-old bulldog—blind and deaf, and a display of several handsome candlewick spreads. Leaving Sisterville the group eagerly expected to see at Ben’s Run the remains of ancient stone and earth ruins, the most extensive, of a prehistoric race of this continent. These ruins extended over four hundred acres and were once enclosed by two parallel circular walls. Despite anxious craning from the auto windows the seekers saw no evidence which they were able to interpret. Itinerary notes explained “these works are very obscure!” With easy motion the travelers passed through several more small hamlets, and St. Marys, built on land granted to a Revolutionary
soldier and the site of a once famous Ohio River tavern; also Vaucluse, which was named for the French town made famous by the poet Petrarch. In Salama the Henderson family settled about 1798, and one of them, a bright young seaman, brought peaches from Portugal to flower here in the wilderness.

Near Parkersburg was a marker of Lord Dunmore’s Camp, the site where his army train camped on their way into Indian country. Nine miles farther, where the Little Kanawha joins the Ohio, forming a point similar to the one at Pittsburgh, Parkersburg warmly welcomed the travelers. The autos conveniently parked in a lot across from the Chancellor Hotel, the visitors invaded the hotel. The lobby was specially decorated—huge sand-brown jardinières filled with shiny green laurel and bowls of fresh, delicately colored gladioli and petunias. Upstairs were a private lobby and dining room where, after a cool luncheon, Mr. J. S. Dunn, superintendent of Parkersburg’s schools, welcomed the tourists. He gave a short description of Parkersburg, touching particularly upon its historical background, its fine collection of local Indian relics, its 98% Anglo-Saxon population, its excellent, progressive schools, its advantages as a modern city in which to live and work. A hearty response to this welcome was made by Dr. John W. Oliver, head of the department of history, University of Pittsburgh.

Mr. H. W. Piggott of the Braden-Piggott Company and first vice-president of the Parkersburg Board of Commerce introduced Major Will G. Peterkin, who for several years has been an authority on Parkersburg history. His address, “Early History of Wood County and Blennerhassett Island,” particularly stressed the romance and tragedy of this island, which lies in the Ohio River, two miles southwest of Parkersburg. Major Peterkin told of Harman Blennerhassett, the wealthy, learned gentleman who in 1798 bought the island and there established a mansion for his beautiful wife, and for himself a quiet retreat to scientific study. But in 1806 the charming Aaron Burr entangled Blennerhassett in his plans to conquer the southwest territory, there (so the story has it) to establish an empire. Blennerhassett superintended the building of boats at Marietta and the recruiting of men for this expedi-
tion. Rumors of these happenings became accusations of treason. The Ohio governor ordered the militia to seize the boats and supplies stored on the island. To escape arrest Blennerhassett left the island, which a few days later the militia invaded with riot and disorder. Colonel Phelps, sent to arrest Blennerhassett, had left his men on the island while he went to intercept Blennerhassett at the mouth of the Great Kanawha River. Left alone, these militiamen invaded Blennerhassett's wine cellar, stuck bayonets through priceless paintings, and trampled the grounds. Blennerhassett, after his arrest, was acquitted for lack of evidence, but his beautiful home was no more, and none of Blennerhassett's future financial ventures was successful.

The group's next adventure was, appropriately enough, a visit to Blennerhassett Island. They had expected to proceed to the island by barge but Mr. Art Oliver of the Parkersburg Automobile Club, under whose guidance the motorcade autos had been safely and easily parked, had three small launches waiting at the Parkersburg wharf. Into and on top of these they crowded, heading for the island. A twenty-minute ride brought them to the lovely, tree-shaded island in the center of the blue Ohio, comprising between two and three hundred acres of level green meadows, areas nicely wooded with huge old trees, and spacious sunlit groves of pines, oaks, and maples. Climbing up the steep shore they arrived at the site of the old mansion. A splendid sycamore, very old, and a few large foundation stones are all that is left of that glorious old home. Those thirsty drank from an old well, some wandered over the island, and then in a shady spot the group listened to Dr. Alfred P. James, professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh, speak briefly on "Aaron Burr Turns Westward."

Dr. James presented several interesting facts: that in his opinion Burr was a man of great ability, but lacked character; that Hamilton made every honorable effort to avoid the fatal duel, regretting the responsibilities he would leave his wife; that Blennerhassett and his island home were but dramatic and romantic incidents in Aaron Burr's western venture. Professor James stated that no one then knew and no one today knows, really, what the adventurer had in mind; that he probably
had no one plan, but changed his designs according to developments; that it was impossible for Thomas Jefferson and has remained impossible for historians to pin anything definitely upon Burr, who was both unscrupulous and opportunistic. The speaker also indicated that the records seem to show that Burr dallied with the British minister at Washington, D.C., for aid against Spain in Latin America; that he dallied with the Spanish minister there for aid against England and possibly the United States; may have plotted the secession of the western country; may have hoped to lead westerners against the Spaniards in the New World, a plan thought of by Hamilton himself in 1798; and that he may merely have wished to take up vast land grants in Spanish America, after the manner of Moses Austin and Stephen Austin two decades later.

The launches returned their passengers to Parkersburg where the party resumed their journey, crossing the river into Belpre, Ohio. Hence, led by a gallant Ohio state police escort, the motorcade traveled sixteen miles along the beautiful Ohio into Marietta.

Marietta, lying on both sides of the Muskingum River where it flows into the Ohio, was named by the Ohio Land Company for Marie Antoinette. The tourists entered on the west side of the Muskingum, at the site of Fort Harmar, built in 1785 as a military base. Beyond was noticed Harmar Hill with Lookout Point, from which one can look directly down upon Marietta, at the confluence of the Ohio and Muskingum rivers, and far out over the hills of West Virginia and Ohio. Crossing the Muskingum into the east side of Marietta the party made a rapid tour of the town’s leading historical sites, pointing them out so that those interested could easily locate and revisit them at their leisure that evening or the following day. Some of these places of interest were Muskingum Park, particularly a monument in the park by Gutzon Borglum erected by the Federal Commission for the Northwest celebration; the home of Return Jonathan Meigs, Jr.; the landing place of the first families, 1788; the Ohio Company’s Land Office, the oldest building in the Northwest Territory, where early maps were made, surveys planned, and the sale and allotment of bounty lands trans-
acted; the site of Governor Arthur St. Clair’s home; the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society Museum, built on the site of Campus Martius, once a fortification, 180 feet square on each side, with blockhouses at the corners, housing two to three hundred settlers during the Indian raids; remains of several earthworks of the Mound Builders used by them for civil and religious ceremonies; the Mound Cemetery, where many Revolutionary officers and soldiers and many early settlers lie buried, and which is built around a once moat-fortified mound, Conus, the burial place of a prehistoric chief; and Marietta College and campus.

After this brief circling of the city, the visitors assembled at the Hotel Lafayette which is situated on the east side of the Muskingum where it meets the Ohio. This is also the place where the Adventure Galley landed on April 7, 1788, with its cargo of 48 “young, healthy men,” Marietta’s first pioneers.

At 6:30 the hungry crowd filled the hotel dining room and feasted on roast chicken and fresh corn on the cob. The pause between the regular meal and dessert was filled by a robust greeting from Reno G. Hoag, manager of the hotel, who like Harrie Baillie of old sang a jolly song as a gesture of hospitality for the historical pilgrims. Mr. George J. Blazier, librarian of Marietta College and historian to the Marietta Northwest Territory Celebration Commission, presided at the after-dinner meeting. He introduced the Honorable H. P. Griffiths, Mayor of Marietta. The Mayor welcomed the visitors, inviting them to partake of the already-apparent hospitality of his city. Response was made by Judge Robert M. Ewing of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania who spoke in place of the Honorable John S. Fisher, president of the society.

Mr. E. M. Hawes, executive director of the Northwest Territory Celebration Commission then gave the address of the evening, “The Why of Northwest Territory Celebration.” He said that behind all the celebration lay the hope that we today might honor and be inspired by the fortitude, the resourceful spirit, and initiative of those pioneer men
and women of the Northwest Territory whose ideal of democracy has made America a great nation. After the Revolution, many of the young men who had fought so hard for freedom were a little bewildered—they had no property, no money, no homes, nothing but the land beyond the mountains. Here they had cleared the forests and built homes, planted crops, and established democracy. Conceived by common men was their great Ordinance of 1787, adopted two months before the Constitution itself was presented to the people, and incorporating even more humanitarian principles. It provided for the abolition of slavery, freedom of religion, tax supported public education, equal division of estates among their heirs, the writ of habeas corpus, sanctity of contract, self-government, and eventual equal participation in the national government by colonial territory. The establishment of the Northwest Territory was real advancement for the nation, both physically and spiritually.

Mr. H. E. Schramm, executive secretary of Marietta’s Chamber of Commerce, then informed the guests that the water parade scheduled for that evening had been cancelled and in its place Marietta’s pageant spectacle, Stars for the Flag, would be presented at the Stadium. The party mingled and talked in the lobby or went off in little groups to see the town or to attend the pageant. Those who saw the pageant pronounced it a success. Elaborately staged by twelve hundred persons was the drama of the winning, settlement, and development of the Northwest Territory—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. There were Indians with camp fire, peace pipe, wigwam, and tomahawk; coon-capped traders, scouts, explorers; ox teams, covered wagons, settlers; and there were colorful costumes, magnificent scenery, and appropriate music. After the final applause a brilliant exhibit of fireworks lit up the dark sky. They were fired from barges in the Ohio River, each display more beautiful than the last, with a multi-colored map of the Northwest Territory and the American flag for the climax. Through the fantastic smoke clouds the yellow moon shone down on the beautiful river and wooded banks just as it must have shone.
150 years ago when the settlers arrived, or numberless years before that, when the Indians, perhaps the Mound Builders, performed strange rites of moon magic.

Such fantasies marked the end of the 1938 tour. Many of the participants stayed over Sunday to visit the museum and other historical treasures. Western Pennsylvanians, West Virginians, and Ohioans, the travelers all turned home, after the seventh annual historical tour, feeling that they had enjoyed an unusual opportunity to reach back to the days when their forbears carried, ever westward, into "green fields and pastures new," man's enduring hope, democracy.