

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOTES

The society opened its 1938-39 season with a meeting on October 25. The Reverend Milton M. Allison of Pittsburgh, treasurer and field agent of Knoxville College, Tennessee, presented a paper on "Ifly—Ghost Town," a little Irish settlement in Collier Township, Allegheny County, in the days of railroad-building before the Civil War, and Dr. Russell J. Ferguson of the University of Pittsburgh followed with an address on "The Political Career of United States Senator James Ross." Special exhibits arranged for the occasion included Ross papers and a portrait of the senator that has since been presented to the society, as related below.

At the October meeting Mr. Gregg L. Neel, who had been asked by President Fisher to raise the considerable sum needed to carry the society through the current fiscal year, reported that some seventy-five members and friends had responded to his appeal, in amounts ranging from one to one thousand dollars, and that further contributions (some of which have since been received) would doubtless make up the full amount eventually. At the same meeting Mr. Frank C. Harper, chairman of the Point Park Committee, reported progress, and it was stated on behalf of Mr. William M. Duff, chairman of the McKees Rocks Mound Committee, that the latter had met and taken steps toward securing the preservation of the remains of the Indian mound in question.

On June 8 the director discussed briefly "Some Values in the Preservation of Historical Sites," as part of one of a series of Albert Gallatin—Friendship Hill programs broadcasted by radio station KDKA; on September 18 he contributed similarly to a program offered over the same station in celebration of "French Day" as part of Allegheny County's sesquicentennial observances; and on October 29, at the annual convention of the Pennsylvania Historical Association in Williamsport, he lead a panel discussion of the subject of historical societies' coöperation with other organizations.

The society's move for the preservation and perhaps the custody of certain noncurrent city archives, reported in these pages in December, 1937 (*ante*, 20: 299), has borne fruit in the transfer to its custody of the mass of records described below under "Additions to Collections." With the fullest coöperation of the city officials concerned, representatives of the society examined all

the records weeded out from a certain congested city-hall basement store-room; offered asylum for certain series that the city had use but too little room for; and assured themselves that there was nothing of conceivable historical or administrative value among the materials due for destruction. For the opportunity thus afforded, for the erection of the necessary shelving in the society's building, and for much of the work of transfer and installation of the bulky records there, the society is indebted to an historically-minded mayor and his coöperative department heads.

Mr. John W. Harpster, curator of the society's museum, has accepted a position as instructor in history and sociology at the Erie Center of the University of Pittsburgh, and his former duties have been assigned to Mr. Frank B. Sessa, who serves provisionally as both librarian and curator.

Elected to active membership in the society at the October meeting were: Mr. James O. Carr, Dr. Stanton C. Crawford, Dr. Ogden M. Edwards, Jr., Mrs. W. H. R. Hilliard, Miss Martha A. Jamison, Mrs. Agnes L. Starrett, and Mr. A. P. Weitzel, all of Pittsburgh; and Wade T. Kline, Esq., of Greensburg. Dr. Edwards and Miss Jamison were enrolled as contributing members, Mr. Weitzel as a sustaining member, and the others as annual members.

Members lost by death, since the last report made here, include: Mr. Francis J. Le Moyne, Mr. James H. Lockhart, Miss Emilie McCreery, Hon. James R. Macfarlane, Hon. William A. Magee, Eugene S. Reilly, Mr. George E. Shaw, and Mr. A. Leo Weil, all of Pittsburgh; Mr. Joseph T. Miller of Edgewood; Mr. Howard E. Bidwell of Pasadena, California; Dr. Elizabeth B. Demarest of Norfolk, Connecticut; and Mr. T. Lyttleton Lyon of Ithaca, New York.

The Westmoreland-Fayette branch of the society celebrated its tenth anniversary, as well as the centennial of the occupation of the Overholt homestead, now the branch's headquarters, at its annual meeting on June 18. Mr. Sylvester K. Stevens, historian of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, addressed the gathering; the Reverend Wallace G. Smeltzer of Trafford presented a paper on "Methodism in Western Pennsylvania"; and Miss Sarah Horner sang a number of songs, accompanied by Mrs. Charlotte Tattersoll. The Reverend Dr. William B. Hindman of Uniontown was elected president for the ensuing year.

The branch continues to publish and distribute inexpensive reproductions of interesting historical pictures, maps, and documents, each accompanied by

a mimeographed explanation of its significance. Among the latest issues are reproductions of a portrayal of the "Surrender of Fort Necessity, July 4, 1754," by David Shriver Stewart; a sketch-map of the site of that fort made in 1816 by Freeman Lewis, whose granddaughter, Miss Margaret Lewis of Uniontown, owns the original; and a map of Braddock's Road made by Dr. John K. Lacock in 1912, accompanied by a brief review of the history of the road by Mr. O. Ray Martz, who collaborated with Professor Lacock in tracing the old road and its camp sites. On the same sheet with the sketch-map of Fort Necessity are exterior and interior views of Historical House, or the old Overholt homestead, and of the near-by spring house, the birth-place of Henry Clay Frick.

ADDITIONS TO COLLECTIONS

A large framed oil portrait of James Ross, the first United States Senator from western Pennsylvania, has been purchased for the society by a member who modestly wishes his name withheld. The portrait, done from life by a native Pittsburgher, James Reid Lambdin, noted American painter, has long been a prized possession of the Denny and O'Hara families. It is expected that a reproduction of the portrait, together with Dr. Ferguson's account of Senator Ross's political career, will appear in a later issue of this magazine.

The city of Pittsburgh has intrusted to the keeping of the society over fifteen hundred folio-size volumes of original assessment or valuation records, containing the names and occupations of all owners of city property and descriptions and valuations of their holdings, for the years from 1872 to 1901. At the same time the society was permitted to preserve on its own account certain materials that the city was quite properly about to dispose of but that would be useful additions to the society's library and archives. Included among the latter outright acquisitions are correspondence, police dockets, samples of miscellaneous record forms that would be useless in the mass, and sets or occasional numbers of publications such as Pittsburgh and Allegheny plat books, city directories, street lists of registered voters, and the old annual *Municipal Record* of proceedings of the select and common councils.

Two noteworthy additions have been made to the Methodist Collection deposited with the society by the Historical Society of the Pittsburgh Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. One is a five-volume manuscript autobiography of John Wrenshall, the founder of Methodism in Pittsburgh; the other, a group of over a hundred books relating to Methodism and

its leaders from the library of the late Dr. William F. Conner of Pittsburgh. The Wrenshall autobiography is replete with comments on Pittsburgh Methodism in the years between 1796 and 1817, and it has had an interesting history itself: once the property of Wrenshall's granddaughter, Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, the manuscript was given by her to Dr. F. S. DeHass of Martins Ferry, Ohio, who turned it over to the Pittsburgh Conference historical society shortly before his death.

A tracing of Stobo's plan of Fort Duquesne, 1754, found among papers of Daniel Agnew, former chief justice of the state supreme court, has been presented by his granddaughters, the Misses Mary V. and Lucie H. Brown of Beaver. Justice Agnew was the author of important books and pamphlets on local and regional history, and he was a frequent speaker at meetings of this society in the 1890's.

Dr. Richard T. Wiley of Elizabeth has presented the following original documents relating to the early history of his community: a letter written by Isaac Harris of Pittsburgh to Samuel Walker of Elizabeth in 1818, and a bill of goods sold by Harris to Walker in 1822; a list of voters and other papers relating to a township election in 1820; a township assessment book of 1827; a petition addressed to the borough council for the purchase of a fire engine, 1838; and a petition concerning the town market, about 1845.

The society is indebted to Mr. George S. Wisecarver, district supervisor for southwestern Pennsylvania of the WPA Historical Records Survey, for a number of valued additions to its files. Two of the items are carbons considerably taken off for the society in the course of the survey's work of compiling and transcribing lists and documents for its own purposes: one, a list of the extensive holdings, both printed and manuscript, acquired by the Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary in its capacity as the official depository of historical records of the United Presbyterian Church; the other, a 27-page account of "Quakers of Fayette County" by Mrs. Sara M. Gourley of Uniontown. A third item, the personal gift of Mr. Wisecarver, who in private life is a collector of and dealer in antiques, is a large and detailed map of the *Connellsville Coal and Coke Region, from Latrobe, Westmoreland County, Pa., to Fairchance, Fayette County, Pa.*, published by John H. Campbell & Co. in 1883.

To the extensive body of transcripts of southwestern Pennsylvania records that is filed among the society's collections under his name, Mr. Jesse Coldren of Brownsville has added a typewritten copy of the published minutes of the

"Sixth Annual Session of the Ten Mile Baptist Association, Held with the Beulah Baptist Church, Greene County, Pa., September 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1864."

Mr. Harrison O. Phillips has presented the commission, dated July 5, 1866, whereby Dr. Joseph A. Phillips, who had served as surgeon of the Thirty-eighth Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, was made a lieutenant colonel by brevet "for faithful and meritorious services during the War."

Miss Louisa Miller of Blairsville has had copies made—for the Blairsville Public Library, this society, and herself—of an unfinished "History of Indiana County" that was published in the *Indiana Register*, the only known file of which is in the Blairsville library. The history was written and published serially, beginning in February, 1859, by Jonathan Row, the editor of the *Register*, and though his sickness and death prevented completion of the series, the sixteen installments that did appear covered much of the history of the county and supplied much of the data since published by others in book form.

G. M. Hopkins' five-volume *Atlas of the City of Pittsburgh* (Philadelphia, 1889-90) and his two-volume *Atlas of the City of Allegheny* (Philadelphia, 1890-91) have been received as gifts from Mr. H. A. Phillips.

A collection of sixty-nine issues of almanacs published in Pennsylvania and Maryland since 1864 has been presented by Miss L. Esther Geist. Included are one or more each of the *Farmers'*, *Comic*, *United States*, *Home*, *House-keeper's*, *Hooftland's Medical*, *Agricultural*, and *Hagers-Town Town and Country* almanacs.

From Mrs. Harmar D. Denny the society has received a copy of the *American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge for the Year 1834*, specially rebound for presentation here; *Rosecrans' Campaign with the Fourteenth Army Corps*, by "W. D. B." (Cincinnati, 1863); and a photograph of a daguerreotype of George Murray, born in Pittsburgh on March 17, 1762, and allegedly the first white child born there.

Other additions to the library include: *Smull's Legislative Handbook* (Harrisburg, 1871), the gift of Lee C. Beatty, Esq.; Dr. George W. F. Birch's volume on Claysville, entitled *Our Church and Our Village* (New York, 1899), from Mr. Robert J. Gibson of the Presbyterian Book Store; *From These Hills* (1938), a collection of works of present-day Pittsburgh poets compiled by Shirley Hershmann, presented by the publisher, Mary S.

Powell of Pittsburgh; and *The Pittsburgh Municipal Digest*, 1938, or *Digest of the General Ordinances and Laws of the City of Pittsburgh to March 1, 1938*, from the compiler and editor, Hiram Schock, Esq.

Among newspapers and newspaper clippings presented by Mrs. John Prichard of Glenside are a number of issues of the *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, 1863-66, which fill gaps in the society's file of that publication.

A pen-and-ink "Sketch of a Scene on Oil Creek in 1810," by J. Frank Waldo, and autographs and other mementos of Admiral George Dewey are among recent gifts of Mr. Thomas Mellon II.

The shovel used in 1912 to remove the first dirt from the "Hump" in Pittsburgh, and since preserved in the society's museum, was brought into action again on April 14, 1938, as one of the two shovels used to break ground for the Buhl Planetarium, and it has been appropriately inscribed by the city for the latter occasion through the medium of the Honorable Robert Garland.

A glass-encased scale-model of Independence Hall, Philadelphia, in red and white—one of those made by the Museum Extension Division of the Works Progress Administration—has been presented to the society by the Chamber of Commerce through its president, Mr. Frank L. Duggan.

A mattock used by his father in throwing up earthworks at the time of the supposedly threatened rebel attack on Pittsburgh, in June, 1863, has been presented by Mr. John Grounds, Jr.

Other recent additions to the museum collections include: a cornsheller from Washington's Mill at Perryopolis, presented by Dr. and Mrs. W. H. Lewis; a certificate of the Fort Fayette Patriotic Association, 1898, the gift of Miss Edna Schlegel; a mustache cup used in the 1870's, from Miss L. Esther Geist; an elaborately embroidered pair of shoes from the first lot sold by the now defunct McCreery & Company, from Mrs. Mary O. Giegerich; a druggist's bottle and a pair of early nineteenth-century spectacles, from Mr. Paul G. Urquhart; a frayed but welcome copy of the rare Currier lithograph of the Great Fire of 1845, from Ferd H. Phillips, Esq.; and photographs of two scenes along Duquesne Way during the flood of 1884, from Miss Eleanor E. Hamilton of Philadelphia.