It will be remembered that upon the completion of the specially-financed, five-year Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey, in 1936, the society found itself with facilities and services greatly expanded, but with depleted financial reserves and an annual income but little larger than that received for many years prior to the survey. When, therefore, the society undertook to continue in its own employ a small part of the survey staff, in place of a single caretaker, it did so in the belief that somewhere in the community would be found the additional funds needed for the support and improvement of the services so maintained. So far that faith has been justified, to the extent, at least, of support for the advance thus undertaken. But that advance was admittedly a recession from the point of view of services developed and opportunities revealed under the survey, and the society may be said to be only holding its ground, financially, on a level merely approaching one it occupied for a time and hopes eventually to regain and overtop.

The society entered the year 1937, the first full year of the present regime, with less than half of the funds in sight that would be needed to support its work on the new scale throughout the year. By midyear all available funds were exhausted, but members of the council contributed generously toward meeting the immediate emergency, and a special committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Gregg L. Neel undertook to raise the rest of the funds needed. A circular appeal, drafted by Mr. Neel and sent to the members and to a select list of nonmembers, resulted in the collection of approximately three thousand dollars, which met the need for that year. The same situation arose in 1938 and was met in much the same way and with the same result, though in this case it should be added that a third of the three-thousand-dollar special fund raised was contributed by Mrs. William Reed Thompson. The society faces the same situation this year and is likely to do so indefinitely unless

1 Report of the director of the society read at the annual meeting on January 31, 1939. Ed.
it keeps on the alert for additional regular sources of revenue that it is hoped improving times will open up.

The ultimate effect of the raising of the minimum membership dues, beginning with the year 1938, remains uncertain. It will be remembered that, in the belief that most members would willingly contribute more in the form of dues for the regular support of the society's work, the dues of annual members were raised from three to five dollars, and those of associate members from one to two dollars. The immediate effect was to increase the total revenue derived from dues, but actual and prospective losses of members, from this and other causes, will wipe out that advantage if the present trend continues.

The membership fell from 651 at the beginning of 1937 to 536 at the end of 1938, with practically all of the losses in the class of annual members. Moreover, 54 of the remaining 536 are on the point of being dropped, under the by-laws, for nonpayment of dues, and the paid-up membership is therefore but 482. Of members definitely lost during the year, 19 were removed by death, 36 by resignation, and 34 because of nonpayment of dues. The enrolled membership of 536 on January 1, 1939, included 2 honorary, 1 corresponding, 14 institutional, and 520 active members. Of the active members, 10 were life, 6 contributing, 51 sustaining, 443 annual, and 10 associate members.

The conduct of the headquarters activities of the society—the administration of the library and the museum, the editing and publication of the magazine, the planning and conduct of meetings and the tour—has continued, much as before, in the hands of a full-time director and three assistants, two of them part-time, with some slight but none the less welcome clerical help from NYA students assigned to the society through the University of Pittsburgh, and with much appreciated assistance, on occasion, from members of the Federal Archives Project housed in this building. Unfortunately for the continuity and effectiveness of the society's work, the "turnover" among the director's assistants has been high and is likely to continue so until full-time work, adequate pay, and better assured futures can be offered. Mr. Harpster resigned in September to accept a position as an instructor at the Erie
Center of the University of Pittsburgh, and Miss Marybelle Pierce, who was thereupon employed to take over parts of both his and Mr. Sessa’s former duties, found a better position within two months, being succeeded here by Miss Dorothy English, the present part-time office secretary and reference assistant. Mr. Sessa and Mrs. Sellers continue to render devoted and efficient service, the former, now, as both librarian and curator.

In the matter of collecting materials and building up the society’s library and museum, a predominantly receptive attitude, merely, has perforce continued to prevail, yet it has been possible to take the initiative on occasion and the collections continue to grow in random fashion through spontaneous gifts and loans.

Because additions to the library and museum collections are fully reported in the magazine, it will suffice here merely to recall some of the more important or typical acquisitions. The bulkiest and not least significant addition is a mass of noncurrent archives of the city of Pittsburgh, including a series of over a thousand folio-size volumes of original assessment or valuation records for the years 1872 to 1901, officially deposited here for safekeeping and use. To the Methodist Collection, deposited here by the Historical Society of the Pittsburgh Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, have been added the five-volume manuscript autobiography of John Wrenshall, the founder of Methodism in Pittsburgh, and over a hundred volumes from the library of the late Dr. William F. Conner of Pittsburgh. Numerous other significant additions are in sight, as a result of the activity of the Methodist society and particularly of its historian, the Reverend Wallace G. Smeltzer of Trafford.

Among permanent acquisitions of manuscript materials may be noted: Mr. Theodore R. Parker’s gift of photostats of a considerable number of documents in the archives of the Quartermaster Department, United States Army, relating to transportation on the western rivers in the first years of the Civil War; a group of original documents relating to the early history of Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, from Dr. Richard T. Wiley of that city; and a bound transcript of the early records of Trinity
Episcopal Church, presented by the Allegheny County committee of the Colonial Dames of America, through Mrs. Marcellin C. Adams.

The museum collections were augmented by the addition of 79 gifts or loans comprising 264 items. The largest is a relic of horse-and-buggy days in the form of an old surrey, placed here on indefinite deposit through Mr. Neel. Most valuable intrinsically, and important in other ways, is the framed oil portrait of James Ross purchased by an anonymous donor from the Denny Estate. Among rarities should be listed framed lithographs of the Pittsburgh Fire of 1845 and the Johnstown Flood of 1889, the gifts of Mr. A. C. Robinson, and among unusual acquisitions may be noted a collection of Civil War hard-times tokens presented by Mr. Edwin S. Fickes, a mounted series of Pennsylvania automobile licenses, 1906–37, from Mr. Merton J. Deyo, and a mattock used in throwing up earthworks about Pittsburgh in 1863, from Mr. John Grounds, Jr. Captain Elmer Craco, a retired Pittsburgh fireman, contributed a number of pieces of former fire fighting equipment, and Mr. Thomas Mellon II was, as formerly, a frequent contributor of both museum objects and library materials.

Every effort has been made to put these incoming materials into usable shape, though in the case of books and pamphlets and large lots of manuscripts or newspapers, the lack of a full-time, trained librarian makes it impossible to keep the library up to standard for reference, research, and developmental purposes. In the case of books, all that can be attempted is to accession additions and shelve them alphabetically by author or subject apart from the library proper, thoroughly classified and cataloged as the latter was in the days of the survey. If it were otherwise, and the society were in a position to offer for all time to come more definite assurance of the best of care and the maximum of usefulness for materials intrusted to its keeping, it is reasonably certain that many more important historical materials, particularly manuscripts still in private hands, would find sanctuary here.

Service to readers and to inquirers by mail or telephone continues to be one of the major activities of the staff. It is difficult to keep an exact count of readers in the library or of visitors to the museum, because no
single member of the small staff can be kept at one post continuously, but it is estimated that upwards of five hundred readers used the library, some of whom would naturally visit the museum also, and that a like number (not including those in attendance at meetings) visited the museum only. In the latter, from time to time, in connection with meetings or other special occasions, were to be seen special exhibits such as the following: Pennsylvania Indian artifacts; letters and other materials relating to James Ross; materials and equipment illustrative of the reproduction of books and documents by microfilm; currently published works of the survey; and current accessions of special interest.

Another major activity is, of course, publication of the quarterly magazine, which normally includes sections devoted to articles, notes and documents, book reviews, historical society notes, and general news and comment, although one or more of these departments is occasionally omitted for want of space or of time in which to prepare them. A feature of last year's series was the publication in the March number of a history of the society, accompanied by related documents and lists, a generous supply of reprints of which was provided through the kindness of Mrs. Thompson. Contributions of articles by two distant scholars are also to be noted, and the book-review sections reflect an unprecedented local output of Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania history, as the products of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey continued to issue from the University of Pittsburgh Press—Dr. Ferguson's Early Western Pennsylvania Politics, the Guidebook to Historic Places, and Mr. Harpster's Pen Pictures, and as other works, such as Dean Tarbell's Carnegie Tech, Mr. Eavenson's The Pittsburgh Coal Bed, Mr. Reynolds' In French Creek Valley, Dr. Wiley's Monongahela, and Mrs. Kussart's Allegheny River, appeared to help fill what may well turn out to be a five-foot-shelf of up-to-date Western Pennsylvaniana.

Six regular evening program meetings, a downtown luncheon meeting, and a rally of representatives of the society's affiliated organizations—all held in the course of the year—usually attracted good audiences and were invariably interesting and stimulating. The annual tour, conducted jointly by the society and the summer session of the Uni-
versity of Pittsburgh, visited Wheeling, Moundsville, Parkersburg, Blennerhassett Island, and Marietta, and was one of the most enjoyable though not the most heavily attended pilgrimage of the series. The society participated in the preparations for and the conduct of the celebration, on August 6, under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies, of the 175th anniversary of the Battle of Bushy Run. To the celebration of Allegheny County's sesquicentennial, in September, the society contributed in various ways, including the preparation of a chronology of outstanding local events for use in the planning of pageants and parades, the lending of museum exhibits for downtown displays, and the contribution, by a member of the staff, Mr. Sessa, of a chapter of the Sesqui-Centennial Review published by the county in book form. Again, on November 25, the society joined with the Aluminum Company of America in the erection of a tablet at the site of the birthplace of the aluminum industry on its fiftieth anniversary.

Officers and staff members have made a number of addresses on historical subjects over the radio and at meetings of other organizations, and two of the society's special committees have been commendably active in promoting projects, the very launching of which places the society in line for wider recognition as well as for larger service to the community: one, Mr. Frank C. Harper's committee appointed to promote the establishment of a national park at the historic Point; the other, Mr. William M. Duff's committee concerned with the preservation and suitable marking of what is left of the Indian mound at McKees Rocks.

The society continues its liberal policy with respect to the use of its facilities by representatives of institutions and agencies of like purposes. Its auditorium has been used for a session of the annual history conference of the University of Pittsburgh and for a number of meetings of patriotic societies; working space continues to be provided for the staffs of two government-supported historical enterprises, the Federal Archives and the Federal Writers' projects; office space continues to be reserved for two members of the history department of the University of Pittsburgh; and of late Mrs. Marcellin C. Adams has been similarly
accommodated for her work in the field of genealogy—to the advantage, it may be added, of the society’s activities in that field.

It is hoped that, considering the society’s limitations of resources and personnel, there is some cause for gratification over these, the society’s principal direct and indirect contributions to the cultural life of the community. At the same time such gratification ought not to become or be mistaken for complete satisfaction with results achieved. The society has obviously yet to measure up to its opportunities, if not, indeed, its duties, particularly as an actively developing center of research. In a word, it has yet to function on a scale commensurate with the wealth, population, historical importance, and cultural needs of the community that it, more singly than any other agency in its field, attempts to serve.

Franklin F. Holbrook