NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE HISTORICAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PRESBYTERY OF PITTSBURGH

EDWARD BURGETT WELSH

For many years the Presbyterians of western Pennsylvania were grievous sinners in their failure to preserve priceless records, or even to make them, and in their wanton destruction of the ancient landmarks. But in 1931 a standing committee was created by the Pittsburgh Presbytery to gather and preserve the records of its churches, and to prepare the way for the writing of a comprehensive history of the planting of the Calvinistic churches in this area, and of the spread of the Presbyterian church all the way across the country westward from this new fountain of its life at the headwaters of the Ohio.

Professor Gaius J. Slosser, head of the department of church history in the Western Theological Seminary, has from the beginning been the chairman of this committee and the prime mover in all its undertakings. Among its most active members have been the late Major Robert M. Ewing and Mr. Gregg L. Neel of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, and the Honorable John R. Haudenshield, genealogist of the Sons of the American Revolution. The committee has been working along a number of lines:

First, it has been assembling and cataloguing, in the Western Theological Seminary library, the original records of this presbytery and its constituent churches, and also those of neighboring presbyteries.

Second, it has been making typed transcripts of the most important of these, and indexing them, so that they will be more easily accessible. There have thus been transcribed and indexed all ten volumes of the minutes of the Ohio Presbytery, which covered this area from 1793 to

1 Offered by way of preface to the foregoing address on "Some Presbyterian Backgrounds of the Declaration of Independence."—Ed.
1870. One set of these, substantially bound, is in the seminary library, and another in the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia.

Third, the committee has carried on a campaign of education among its churches on the importance of keeping full and accurate records, and of protecting them forever against loss and fire. Very few of the older churches have any records of their earlier years, and scarcely any have complete records of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths.

Fourth, efforts have been made to awaken a popular interest in this church's history by conducting pilgrimages to old churches and churchyards throughout this region. These, attended in some cases by as many as four hundred people, have done much to further this purpose. Eight such pilgrimages have so far been organized.

Fifth, the committee has conducted a wide correspondence with other presbyteries throughout the country, especially in the Middle West, encouraging them to form similar committees, and inquiring among them concerning records and documents that may bear on western Pennsylvania Presbyterian history. Ninety-two presbyteries now have such committees, and at least forty of these were formed in response to the Pittsburgh committee's appeal.

The collection at the Western Theological Seminary now includes manuscript records or printed material, or both, concerning 208 congregations and 14 presbyteries.