

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOTES

On January 6 the society held its annual open house to representatives of organizations of like interests, and as usual the program was devoted to an aspect of western Pennsylvania history of special interest to one of the visiting groups—in this case the history of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this region. Mrs. Marcellin C. Adams discussed "The Early History of the Church," and Dr. Cortlandt W. W. Elkin, secretary of the society, spoke, with slide illustrations, of "The Church from the Founding of the Pittsburgh Diocese in 1865."

At the annual meeting, on January 27, Dr. John W. Oliver, head of the history department in the University of Pittsburgh, spoke on "The Role of the Local Historical Society in Times of War," and the Hon. James H. Gray presented, on behalf of a committee previously appointed for the purpose, a memorial to the late Judge Ambrose B. Reid, a vice president of the society. At the business meeting preceding the program the annual reports of the treasurer and the director were presented, and vacancies on the council of the society were filled by election as follows: Judge Gray, already a trustee and member of the board, was chosen to succeed Judge Reid as a vice president; Mr. Charles M. Stotz was elected a trustee in place of Judge Gray, and Mrs. Marcellin C. Adams, a trustee in place of James Gregg, Esq., of Greensburg. Mrs. William Reed Thompson and Miss Lily Lee Nixon, whose terms as trustees had expired, were re-elected for five-year terms.

February 27 found the society again in regular session and listening to papers on "Ephraim Douglass, Early Western Pennsylvania Statesman," and "General Edward Hand." The first was presented by Mr. David W. Rial, principal of the Brashear and Spring Lane Schools, Pittsburgh, and the second by Mr. Lawrence A. Orrill of Mt. Lebanon.

An interesting variation from the usual type of program was arranged for the meeting of March 31, designed principally to interest teachers in the public schools. Dr. John A. Nietz, of the University of Pittsburgh, opened with a liberally illustrated lecture entitled, "An Excursion through Old School Textbooks," and this was followed by a panel discussion of "The Teaching of Western Pennsylvania History in the Public Schools," led by Dr. R. O. Hughes, director of social studies in the Pittsburgh schools. Members of the panel were Dr. Alfred P. James of the University of Pittsburgh; Miss Hilda Noble, supervisor of elementary education in the Pittsburgh schools; Miss Lily

Lee Nixon of Peabody High School; and Miss Ruth C. Lewis of Fulton School. A general discussion of the subject followed, and impressive emphasis was given to its importance when attention was called to a communication published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* the day before, in which the writer recalled, as "A Voice from the Dead," the following passage from a recent address by the late lamented superintendent of schools, Dr. Ben G. Graham.

"Isn't it high time that in our high schools we should devote our whole program to a positive approach to American history and to our American way of life so that every boy and girl will come to realize that what we have accomplished could be accomplished only under our Constitution of a free government and the Bill of Rights? Let us teach so that our American youth will go forth with courage to defend the American way of life to the end that they will die upon their feet before they will consent to live for an hour upon their knees under the slavery of a dictatorship."

An illustrated lecture on "The Newly Unearthed Remains of Fort Pitt," by Mr. Wesley L. Bliss, the archaeologist in charge of the current exploratory operations at the Point, was the opening feature of the program at the meeting of April 28, which concluded with what was originally intended to be a panel discussion of "How the Historical Society May Best Serve the Public," led by Dr. Sylvester K. Stevens, Pennsylvania state historian, and participated in by historical society leaders from various parts of western Pennsylvania. Dr. Stevens was prepared to discuss the subject fully, and his remarks were supplemented by an account of outstanding recent activities of the Blair County Historical Society, given by its director, Mr. Floyd G. Hoenstine, but war-time traveling limitations prevented other members of the projected panel from attending.

Apropos of the subject of Mr. Bliss's address at the meeting of April 28, it should be recalled that it was the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania which five years ago launched and vigorously promoted the movement now resulting in this scientific search for and discovery of a number of intact stretches of the actual foundations of old Fort Pitt. At a meeting of the society on April 27, 1937, Mr. Frank C. Harper offered a resolution upon the adoption of which the president, the late John S. Fisher, appointed a "Point Park Committee" to promote the establishment "of a national historic park at The Point, including the sites of Fort Duquesne and the Blockhouse, with such monuments as would be proper." As chairman of this committee, and

later of a city-appointed Point Park Commission, Mr. Harper called many meetings and conducted numerous interviews designed to interest and secure the co-operation of all agencies concerned, city, county, state, and federal—notably the National Park Service. The latter became decidedly interested, but its full approval and co-operation could not be counted upon unless through local efforts it could be shown that an *authentic* restoration of Fort Pitt is possible, and unless, among other requirements of the national historic sites act, the necessary land were transferred to the government without encumbrance. It is the first of these obstacles that is at last being attacked under the direction of the City Planning Commission and with the aid of WPA labor.

At the closing meeting of the season on May 26, the annual "University of Pittsburgh Night," two recent graduate students of the university were introduced by Dr. John W. Oliver, head of the history department, and each presented some of the results of his or her research as follows: Miss Catherine E. Reiser, Ph.D., of Westmont-Upper Yoder High School, Johnstown, read a paper entitled "Pittsburgh: the Hub of Western Commerce, 1800-1850," and Mr. Edward G. Baynham, principal of elementary schools in Crafton, a paper on "Henry Kleber, Early Pittsburgh Musician." In the business session preceding the program the society adopted an amendment to its by-laws whereby teachers, students, and clergymen will henceforth be admitted to "educational membership" at three dollars a year. At the same time the society received at the hands of Mr. James I. Marsh, president of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, and on behalf of that organization, a bound, typewritten record of the graves of Revolutionary soldiers in Allegheny County and adjoining areas, compiled by a committee of the chapter under the chairmanship of Mr. Thomas H. Swartzlander.