PITTSBURGH, THE HUB OF WESTERN COMMERCE, 1800-1850

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Pittsburgh, fortunately located, aided by a rapidly growing market, and surrounded by natural resources which could be manufactured into articles in great demand, faced a commercial development with almost limitless possibilities in the first half of the nineteenth century. Today, Pittsburgh belongs primarily to Pennsylvania and to the East, but prior to 1850 the city was more united to the Mississippi Valley and benefited substantially by the connection. A huge local commerce extended throughout the valley and Pittsburgh's manufactured products were in demand throughout the West, because they were cheaper than eastern goods. The Appalachian Mountains, which so effectively separated Pittsburgh from the seaboard, were really a blessing in disguise, because the city's manufacturing development would have been seriously retarded had not the mountains acted as a sort of protective tariff.

By 1800 Pittsburgh had 63 shops, including 23 general stores, six shoe shops, four bakeries, and four hat shops. The general stores handled a great variety of goods and were usually connected with Philadelphia firms. But local manufacturing had already begun and in 1802 Zadok Cramer, one of the earliest advocates of home industry, made the following report:

In the town of Pittsburgh there is one extensive brewery; in its vicinity, there are two glass works, the third for the finer kind of glass in erecting; one extensive paper mill, several oil mills, fulling mills, powder works, iron works, salt works, saw and grist mills, boat yards...

Such, fellow citizens, is your spirit of enterprise. Your manufacturies are going up around you as the weeds growth in a rich garden. Your exertions cannot be too much applauded. And, though Europeans may be jealous of your

1 Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on its annual "University of Pittsburgh Night," May 26, 1942. Dr. Reiser is a teacher in the Westmont-Upper Yoder High School, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and her article is based on her studies as a candidate for the doctors degree at the University of Pittsburgh.—Ed.


covering the seas with your Allegheny and Monongahela ships of war, they will do you the justice to admire your adventurous dispositions exhibited in so new a country.\(^4\)

Although from this summary, manufacturing may seem to have been insignificant, a beginning at least, had been made. Pittsburgh started to manufacture out of sheer necessity, first, because it was isolated from eastern markets by the mountains; and second, because, like any other frontier post, it was poverty ridden, money was extremely scarce, and even money for taxes was hard to raise.\(^5\)

Self-sufficiency was a necessity and not an inherent virtue. In this simple frontier society where the population was limited, existence was the primary object and class distinctions were very slight. But as the starving period passed, society became more complex and its wants increased. Pittsburgh, having passed the hand-to-mouth stage of existence, began to have a surplus to send to market. Had the East been accessible, Pittsburgh’s history would probably have been just another epoch in the expansion of the Philadelphia market. Instead, Pittsburgh had a development of its own, and for some time afterward, it considered Philadelphia as a rival rather than an established fountainhead.\(^6\)

The isolation which had been a disadvantage during the period of settlement proved to be a valuable incentive to economic independence. Not that complete independence was ever desirable, but Pittsburgh was at least relieved from the sort of binding dependence that stifles and delays, and in the end destroys local industrial development. In other words, Pittsburgh was ready and eager for a place in the developing economic scheme. In a little over fifty years it had grown from a mere military post to a good-sized town; the frontier had moved West; and Pittsburgh was sufficiently strong to have well-defined economic aspirations of its own.

Along the banks of the Monongahela were deposited increasingly large quantities of products for shipment down the Ohio Valley, and after the invention of the steamboat more and more products were sent up the same route for sale or re-export to the East. On the north side of the town products of the Allegheny Valley, and after 1834 products of the Pennsylvania State System, were received. Heavily laden wagons from

\(^4\) Zadok Cramer, *Pittsburgh Almanack for the Year 1802.*


\(^6\) Cramer, *Almanack, 1802; Commonwealth* (Pittsburgh), September 18, December 11, 1805.
the East and from the West congregated on Liberty Street and made that district famous as a center of trade. From all angles, roads led into Pittsburgh, and goods of the region changed hands there. The entire area of Western Pennsylvania depended upon it for commercial facilities and trade goods. The early Pittsburghers were not slow to grasp the opportunities offered. The more industrious and enterprising citizens built up fortunes for themselves and at the same time made Pittsburgh an industrial and commercial center of enviable reputation.

Commercial procedure in 1800 was decidedly different from that of today. Strangely enough, the general retailing process did not change radically before 1850. The volume of business grew, but methods did not change until large-scale production and improved transportation made business a national instead of a local concern. Big deals were accomplished prior to 1850, it is true, markets were cornered and goods were bought and sold, but the speed, efficiency, and size that characterize the business world today were unknown. Business was small, restricted, intimate, and encumbered by numerous handicaps that were accepted as ordinary routine.

The entire process of buying and selling was not only extremely personal in those days before the telephone and the telegraph, but also was so closely interwoven with production that the two operations were inseparable. A large part of the independent local retailing originated in small "manufactories" where the producers sold their articles directly to consumers. Business had not as yet become standardized and goods were made to suit the taste of the consumer. Pittsburgh in 1802 boasted of 46 different classes of master tradesmen. These master craftsmen, totaling 163, offered to their customers a variety of products such as shoes, boots, trunks, brushes, cabinets, chairs, candles, clocks, watches, cloth, guns, hats, pottery, glass, nails, pumps, saddles, wagons, coaches, scythes, sickles, and other tools. In addition to these small factories and shops, there were 30 mercantile stores, 27 taverns, two printing offices, and one book and stationery store. No information is given as to what the mercantile store sold, but the newspaper advertisements give the impression that they handled primarily the products of eastern manufacturers. James McDowell announced to the public that he had just received a "fresh assortment of Dry Goods, Groceries, Queensware, Glass and Hardware" which he would sell for cash or country products. Joseph McClurg of-
ferred store goods from Baltimore and Philadelphia either "wholesale or retail for cash or approved produce." Thus, the merchants might be divided into two distinct classes; first those who were retailers, or shopkeepers, dealing primarily in eastern merchandise; and second, the small merchant-manufacturer who made a certain type of product and sold it directly. Both classes were important factors in Pittsburgh commercial history; both helped to make Pittsburgh a great commercial center, but the merchant-manufacturers were the more significant factors.

The importance and magnitude of commerce in Pittsburgh may be illustrated from a study of Riddle's *Pittsburgh Directory for 1815,* which listed the names of 1,314 heads of families and wage earners who made a living in Pittsburgh. Of these only 18 appeared without indication of occupation, and 16 others were listed as "Gentlemen." Many of the "Gentlemen" were men who had been engaged in trade and had retired or relinquished their businesses to their sons. Professional men numbered 82, and the remainder of the inhabitants were engaged either in commerce or in a combination of manufacturing and commerce.

Riddle listed 93 merchants, 17 commission merchants, 21 storekeepers, and two "traders" as doing business in Pittsburgh proper. The nature of their enterprises was not disclosed, but apparently they were general stores which sold both retail and wholesale. Specialty shops were not so numerous as the general stores; the largest group of these were the grocery and liquor stores, of which there were 20. Groceries and liquors were usually combined and only four shops specialized in liquor alone. Other types of specialty stores were the bakeries and confectionery shops, of which there were nine; two additional shops sold confectionery only. Special commodities were sold also by six lumber merchants, 21

7 James M. Riddle, comp. and pub., *The Pittsburgh Directory for 1815, Containing the Names, Professions and Residence of the Heads of Families and Persons in Business in the Borough of Pittsburgh, with an Appendix Containing a Variety of Useful Information* (Pittsburgh, 1815). John Taylor's *The Honest Man's Extra Almanac,* published in 1813, listed 141 names of merchants, manufacturers, and professional men, but Riddle's is the first complete list.

8 The "Gentlemen" were as follows: James Adams, Abner Barker, Joseph Barker, James R. Butler, Thomas Cromwell, William Graham, Alexander Hill, Nathaniel Irish, John Irwin, Joseph McClurg, Robert Simpson, Robert Spencer, Samuel Stirling, Adamson Tannehill, Samuel Thompson, and William Wusthoff. One "gentlewoman" was also listed—"Catherine Wilkins, widow."

9 Professional men included 12 lawyers, 8 physicians, 37 government employees, 20 teachers and ministers, 4 bankers, and one architect.
butchers, three shoe merchants, four milliners, and three druggists. Probably the unique commercial enterprise at this period was that of selling water. Riddle listed five water carters in 1815, and evidently the business, unlike many others, was a full-time job.\textsuperscript{10} The total number of residents who made their livelihood exclusively by selling products was 255, and the list included all grades of business enterprise from Archut, Rahm and Co., commission merchants, to Richard Freeman, "water carter."

Riddle listed 706 individuals as being engaged in some phase of manufacturing or form of craftsmanship. The largest group were the blacksmiths who totaled 35; boot and shoemakers comprised the second largest group.\textsuperscript{11} The number of weavers was 23, one of whom specialized as a "shawl weaver." Twenty-one "nailors" were listed, the majority of whom were probably employed by J. Whiting and Company or its rival, M'Donnell, Brown and Company, instead of being in business for themselves. The city was also well supplied with tailors and dressmakers. Riddle listed 27 tailors, of whom six were described as "merchant taylors"; 25 seamstresses and sewers; and two mantua makers. Three of the "taylors" even had shops separated from their dwellings; which was unusual because tailoring was well adapted to home production.

Seemingly every one in Pittsburgh who could make something or perform a service hung out a shingle and looked for customers.\textsuperscript{12} A shop in the yard or the front part of the house was adequate space for the majority of enterprises. Of the 35 blacksmiths in Pittsburgh in 1815 only four maintained shops not on the same premises as their dwellings; six of

\textsuperscript{10} With each of several hundred names were listed two occupations, and the combinations were often so decidedly different that one wonders about the results. For examples: John Baird, "taylor and porter bottler"; Joseph Brittingham, "nailor and violin maker"; Samuel Crow, "tanner and grocer"; William Earl, "carpenter, bellows maker and Chandler"; Oliver English, "machinery and blue dyer"; and Thomas Carter, "merchant and cordial distiller."

\textsuperscript{11} Boot and shoemakers totaled 23, not including the 21 classified only as shoemakers; if the two were combined their number would exceed that of the blacksmiths.

\textsuperscript{12} A surprisingly large number of women were listed as having occupations. Of 64 widows only one was listed as a "gentlewoman," and 21 were credited with some kind of occupation. Single "females" listed as having occupations numbered 53. The majority of the two classes were listed as seamstresses or sewers (25), washers (19), boarding-house keepers (12), storekeepers (6), milliners (4), and spinners and dyers (4). One woman was listed as a sausage maker, another a glover, one a soap boiler, and Mrs. Mary Mercer, widow, was keeper of the jail! No record was made of a married woman being in business.
the 20 boot and shoemakers had separate establishments; three of the eight tanners; one of the nine bakeries; one of the three druggists; and one of the two hairdressers. None of the storekeepers had a separate establishment; only seven of the 85 merchants and three of the 17 commission merchants had separate business establishments. Business had become separated to a greater extent among the so-called heavy industries which needed a large amount of machinery. The iron mills, foundries, steam-engine factories, and glass houses required space and specialized equipments, which did not conform to the pattern of domestic manufacturing. 13

The large majority of the less complicated manufactories continued to work in a part of the home and under the conditions best suited to them. Consequently, many more people were in business for themselves. The Triangle was filled with shops of all types and sizes. Signs informed the public where a particular shop or factory was located, although the signs themselves were more picturesque than informative. Strangers on their first trip to Pittsburgh must have been greatly confused, especially after the population had increased; but the situation remained the same until the 1830's when house numbers were introduced. No particular street had a monopoly of business houses, although the larger and earlier established merchants were located in close proximity to the Point. As the town expanded, business became more and more segregated, and by 1835 Penn Street was considered the residential section, although residences were not by any means excluded from the Triangle 14. Throughout the period from 1800 to 1850, the small shopkeepers flourished. The manufacturers were the first to grow full-sized, and they gradually deserted the retailing field. Pittsburghers meantime were doing a vast local business at the public market houses, of which there were three as early as 1800. Here the farmers of the surrounding country brought their products to sell, in order that they might get cash to buy Pittsburgh store goods. 15

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14 Ellen Blythe to John C. Green, June 9, 1835, in the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

15 It was announced in the Pittsburgh Gazette of October 4, 1794, that two fairs would be held each year now that Pittsburgh had become a borough. They were to last two days each and were scheduled for June 4 and October 27. The public square was designated as the place and all kinds of merchandise and animals were to be sold. Such a fair was announced for October 27 that year, but no further mention of it appears, and apparently the custom was inaugurated the following June.
The Monongahela and Allegheny wharves were also busy markets, and goods were sold directly from the boats at a slightly lower price. Flour and salt were items frequently exchanged at these places and the prices quoted were about twenty-five cents lower than the wholesale prices current.\textsuperscript{16} During the navigable season boats of all types and sizes were constantly loading or unloading. Goods were landed pell-mell on the banks and piled high waiting to be carted away; Pittsburgh goods were also waiting to be put aboard. Merchants argued with ship captains over freight rates and berated the captains for delays in pushing off.\textsuperscript{17} Steamboat runners, keeping an eye on prospective customers, vied with one another for trade. The wharf, like Pittsburgh's streets and alleys, was in dire need of paving and grading. The boats found landing satisfactory, but the drays and carts found the waterfront a difficult road. Traffic became entangled as business increased and men, horses, and merchandise seemed hopelessly involved in the rush. During low water in 1818 thirty vessels were lying at the wharf, loaded with three million dollars worth of goods.\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Advocate} described the Monongahela wharf during another rush season:

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Daily Pittsburgh Gazette}, April 7, 1836. The same newspaper reported on October 6, 1844, that commission merchants in St. Louis were circulating a paper for signatures of persons who would agree not to patronize boats which brought merchandise to sell on the wharf. The Pittsburgh editor remarked that the same situation existed there, especially in the salt trade, and he concluded that the practice should be stopped because "the legitimate business of all common carriers is indisputably confined to the conveyance of freight, and dealing in any article is clearly an aggression on the rights of merchants."\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} Ellen H. Blythe to John C. Green, July 22, 1834. One of the most irritating problems of the merchants was the lack of boat schedules. Captains would promise to start at a specified time, and then refuse to leave if their boats were not filled. Of them Mrs. Blythe wrote: "They stop frequently to receive fuel and other necessaries, or to take in freight. This is a provoking part of the business, for the delays are often long and yet the captains will flatter the passengers constantly with the hope of getting off in a few minutes. When we went down we stopped at Steubenville, where my husband begged the captain to allow him 15 minutes to see his sister Jane, who was within a few yards of the landing. The captain refused, on the plea that he must pass some miles below Wheeling that night. He proceeded to Wheeling, 25 miles from Steubenville, and there, notwithstanding his repeated promises and the solicitations of the passengers, he lay for 20 hours. We left him for one more accommodating; but with him we touched the bottom very frequently, and at last had the pleasure of striking a bar, on which we lay for ten hours when within 30 miles of our destination, and we had no way to better our conditions." Said the \textit{Daily Pittsburgh Gazette} on January 31, 1835: "It has been a sore grievance to travellers on the western waters, that there was no dependence to be placed upon any assurance that steamboats would start at any particular hour. The commencement of a daily line will at once remove this source of annoyance."

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Pittsburgh Gazette}, December 11, 1818.
The wharves present one of the most animated scenes we have witnessed in a long time. Twenty steamboats lie at the landing taking in cargo for Louisville, St. Louis, Nashville, New Orleans and "intermediate ports" as the phrase goes. The whole of our broad levee, from the bridge to Ferry Street, is closely dotted with drays and wagons, hurrying to the margin of the river from every point of access, burdened with the valuable products of our factories or with Eastern goods. Some half a dozen of the steamers are puffing away ready to start. The margin of the wharf is absolutely covered to the height of a man with freight in all its varieties, while higher up on the footwalks and streets the fronts of the great forwarding houses are blocked by piles of boxes, bales and barrels in beautiful disorder. Shippers, porters, draymen and steamboat clerks blend their hurried voices at once—one is actually deafened with their cheerful din and rush of business. Some idea may be formed of the magnitude of our manufactures from the fact that the larger iron houses have 800, some 1,000 and some as high as 1,200 tons each of iron and nails ready for shipment to the West.19

An attempt was made by the city councils to eliminate the confusion at the wharf by the ordinance of January 7, 1825. A wharfmaster was appointed to direct traffic, and landing places were designated for different types of boats. The ordinance also specified that fees collected by the wharfmaster were to be used for the improvement of the city's public landing places.20 Thus, guaranteed a source of income, the wharf was gradually improved.

Many of the goods that arrived at the Pittsburgh wharves and markets, however, were not accompanied by their owners or destined for the shelves of a specific retail store. The practice of sending goods to a market to be sold by a person who specialized in selling became more and more common, especially as business increased. The commission merchant was one of the most important pillars of a commercial town, and upon him rested the responsibility of building up the town's reputation for integrity and honest dealing. Probably the first local commission merchant was Thomas Cromwell, who, on October 19, 1805, informed his "friends" that he had opened a warehouse on the bank of the Monongahela River, at the "mouth" of Wood Street, and that he was ready to receive goods. Ten years later there were 17 commission merchants, three of whom were glorified by title of company. By 1833 the city supported 60 to 80 large wholesale establishments, successors of the commission merchants.21

19 Daily Advocate and Advertiser (Pittsburgh), May 18, 1838.
20 Pittsburgh Gazette, February 4, 1825.
21 Commonwealth, October 19, 1805; Riddle, Directory of 1815; Ebensburg Sky, October, 24, 1833. The 85 "merchants" listed by Riddle probably were also willing to do a commission if the occasion demanded.
Pittsburghers generally were concerned with business, and the local papers showed the town’s importance as a commercial center. The *Gazette* carried a regular column devoted to steamboat news. This service appeared for the first time on August 18, 1818, and the columns contained the dates of arrival and departure of boats and incidental information pertaining to the state of river navigation. Market reports, also, were given considerable space, and became increasingly more complete year after year. Today these reports tell the magnificent story of Pittsburgh’s commercial development. In 1801, fewer than 20 articles were listed for sale and these were all farm products except flour, the only manufactured item included. By 1815, the market reports consisted of a completely new list of articles, and the only products common to both lists were flour and butter. Another significant change was that the prices quoted were specifically designated “Wholesale Prices Current,” which indicated that business was being conducted on a larger scale.

Thus by 1850 Pittsburgh’s commerce had recovered from its growing pains and was well established. The city offered commercial opportunities and services comparable to those available to merchants on the seaboard. The “hit or miss” element had been greatly reduced, and business was conducted on a more even keel.

Compared with present conditions, pre-1850 merchandising seems to have been crude and wasteful. Business methods, however, were adapted to the needs of the times; they were adequate to meet the demands then made by industry and trade, and improvements followed slowly upon the heels of industrial growth. Merchandising, on the whole, did not change radically until after large-scale production, unionism, and government regulation forced an alteration. As transportation improved, as manufacturing developed, and as immigration extended beyond the Ohio Basin, the Pittsburgh exports increased the trade area beyond the range of personal contact. Pittsburgh was surging forward as a commercial city throughout the period; business was beginning to specialize and to achieve a certain measure of orderly procedure.

During the half-century the city had grown from a small isolated town of 2,400 people to a manufacturing and commercial center with a population of 46,001. Furthermore, by 1850 Pittsburgh was solidly established as the Iron City, and its economic activity was completely dominated by the fabrication of iron products. It was now able to supply iron products of all descriptions and sizes from steam engines to tacks.

*United States Census, 1850.*
It also manufactured wire, rope, tin and copper products, leather products of all types, a great variety of wood products, snuff, cigars, and liquor. Fahnestock valued “manufacturing and other business” at not less than fifty million dollars.\textsuperscript{23}

Every turn of the factory machine, every stroke of the hammer strengthened Pittsburgh’s commerce, and, year by year, as more goods were produced the trade area was aided immeasurably by the improvement of the channels of trade. Each decade further broke down Pittsburgh’s isolation, through mechanical improvements in transportation; each decade emphasized the importance of its favorable location. Pittsburgh, the City of Three Rivers, one-time Gateway to the West, was by 1850 naturally approached from all angles and securely linked with the financial and commercial nerve centers of the East. Improved rivers, roads, canals, railroads, and the telegraph had made Pittsburgh the center of a commercial wheel.

Improved channels of transportation radiating from Pittsburgh offered a wide choice of markets. The mighty Ohio River continued to carry off increasingly large amounts of manufactured products, not only to New Orleans, but to many parts of the rapidly growing West. As the immigrants pushed farther and farther westward, Pittsburgh merchants supplied them with iron products and manufactured goods. In addition to providing the West, Pittsburgh found the internal trade of the Mississippi Valley increasing, because the South was specializing in cotton culture,\textsuperscript{24} and the rivers facilitated exchange of the products of the two regions. Pittsburgh’s surplus products were now in demand at New Orleans, Memphis, and Natchez; no longer was she faced with competition from other argicultural communities. River trade had expanded beyond the wildest hopes of the merchants of the 1800 era. Consequently, freight rates were cheaper and western producers found the Pittsburgh markets satisfactory. Likewise, by 1850 the physical difficulties of river transportation had been considerably reduced, although much remained to be done.

Just as the Ohio River had become a better trade channel by 1850, so did the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers show improvements. The Monongahela and its principal tributary, the Youghiogheny, had both

\textsuperscript{23} Fahnestock’s Pittsburgh Directory, for 1850, 118 (Pittsburgh, 1850).

been slackwatered, and the coal and iron trades were greatly aided by
this improvement. The Monongahela Valley was thus a complement of
Pittsburgh. The same was true for the Allegheny, where trade had also
expanded and enlarged during the fifty-year span. The Allegheny River
and the Erie-Waterford Turnpike had made possible a satisfactory Lake
connection for Pittsburgh. This channel was another evidence of Pitts-
burgh's enlarging trade area.

Rivers were not the only trade arteries which had been improved by
1850. Pittsburgh's eastern connections had also undergone a complete
change. The Pennsylvania State System had considerably reduced the
freight rates and time between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and although
the System was out-moded soon after 1850, its beneficial effects for
Pittsburgh should not be belittled. The Pennsylvania State System had
contributed effectively to the breaking down of the trade barriers be-
tween Pittsburgh and the East. When Pittsburghers became aware that
the Pennsylvania System was no longer an adequate trade channel, they
began to campaign vigorously for railroad connections. After a bitter
fight, Pittsburgh was guaranteed such a connection in 1846 when a
charter was granted to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Through trains did
not arrive in Pittsburgh until 1852, but the road was assured at the turn
of the mid-century mark.

Along with these major trade arteries were numerous feeders radiat-
ing from the trunk lines. Local roads were improved, new roads were
opened, and all served to strengthen Pittsburgh as well as benefit their
own localities. Pittsburgh was more than ever the hub of the wheel, and
the spokes were considerably strengthened by 1850. Each factor had
worked mutually in strengthening the other; both were responsible for
the results. Neither factor, unaided, could work successfully. Manufac-
turing and commercial facilities were necessary before a substantial trade
could take place; the hub had to be strong to support the wheel. Trade
arteries were essential if commerce were to flourish; the spokes had to be
adequate to carry the weight of the burden. At mid-century Pittsburgh
manufacturers were established and the improvement of channels of
trade had kept pace with the development in manufacturing.

Thus by 1850 Pittsburgh was a commercial emporium with no apolo-
gies to make to the East or to the West. Its importance is illustrated by
the increased number and variety of stores. The general store of 1800
had disappeared although the modern department store had not yet arrived. A large number of these stores were definitely classified as engaged in either wholesale or retail trade. The dividing line was not absolute, but the tendency toward specialization and large-scale organization is evident. In 1850 Pittsburgh's business directory listed 33 wholesale grocers, commission and produce dealers; nine wholesale grocers and dealers in liquors; and four wholesale dry goods merchants. These 46 establishments were definitely wholesale. The process was further developed by the iron manufacturers who had warehouses in the Triangle or specifically designated commission agents who handled their retailing.

Probably a still more important change to be noted in the 1850 stores was the improvement in quality and size of their stocks. Goods of all descriptions, grades, and sizes were now offered for sale, and instead of a few bolts of cloth, a few barrels of sugar and coffee and a thin scattering of household goods, the shelves of Pittsburgh stores were loaded to capacity. The merchants carried eastern goods as well as local products. A. A. Mason and Company, wholesale dry goods merchants, advertised a “Great Arrival of New Goods,” among which were:

105 dozen French Wrought Collars and Caps
16 pieces rich Dress Silk
100 pieces Alpacas, from 20 to 50 cents per yard
5 cases De Laines, from 10 to 25 cents per yard
25 cases Merrimac Prints, all styles
5 cases Mourning Prints, from 10 to 12½ cents per yard
10 cases Checks, from 10 to 14 cents per yard
5 cases Gingham, good styles, at 12 cents

Also Sheetings, Shirting and Housekeeping Goods in great variety—all of which will be offered at extremely low prices.

A later advertisement by the same company throws additional light on the merchandising process in 1850:

Semi-Annual Sale of Dry Goods. At the One Price Store of A. A. Mason and Company will commence on New Years Day, 1850, and continue through the month of January during which time the whole of their immense establishment (including all their Wholesale Rooms) will be thrown open for Retail trade and their entire wholesale stock will be offered at retail on this occasion, at fully one fourth less than usual prices. The Shawl Salon [sic] contains more than three thousand Shawls, comprising every description of Long

35 Daily Morning Post (Pittsburgh), January 12, 1850.
and Square Wool Shawls, Cashmere, Broche &c. Also Vizettes, Cloaks, Mantillas, Sacks &c. at an immense reduction from usual prices.

Dress and Cloak Goods—their stocks comprising more than one thousand pieces, Thibet cloths, Merinos, Paramettas, Alpacas, Lyonese Cloths, Opera and Pelisse do. will be sold from 20 to 40 per cent, less than usual prices, also 300 pieces rich, plain, and fig’d Silks, reduced 30 per cent.

20 Cases Cashmeres and De Laines, entire new styles, also, White Goods, Mourning do., Embroideries, Laces, Ribbons, Gloves and Hosiery, Trimnings, &c.

20 Cases Flannels; 70 cases new style Calicoes; 70 bales Ticking; 60 cases Bleached Muslins; 100 bales Brown Muslins. Also Cloths, Casemeres, jeans, Cassinets, &c. at extremely low prices together with an immense variety of other goods making an assortment one of the most extensive in the country—all of which have been marked down at much lower prices than their extensive annual sale in January last.

They invite an early call, as many of their choicest Goods will soon be sold. The lowest price named first.26

Silks, opera cloaks, mantillas, trimmings, laces, ribbons, and vizettes were for sale at “one price” and “the lowest price named first” at a semi-annual sale! Strange shop-talk for a community brought up on “country produce taken in exchange” for such and such an article, and a promise of liberal credit. Equally modern innovations were the advertisements of ready-made clothing, and the frequently appearing “one price cash system.” Advertisements were also becoming more detailed, spectacular, and informative.

By 1850 Pittsburgh had 20 clothing stores, two of which were corporate enterprises and six were partnerships. The clothing stores had gradually appeared during the 1840’s, and a few establishments such as those of J. Boobyer, P. Delany, and William Leonard, had grown out of the tailoring shops.27 These merchants usually continued to make tailor-made clothes, and, in addition, they offered a new line of goods which had a great appeal due to their reduced price. The Pittsburgh ladies were not the only ones who were demanding more than a Sunday silk or wool and homespun dresses for work-days. The male population were also becoming better dressed.

Pittsburghers were not only dressing better in 1850 but they had also


27 Harris’ General Business Directory, of the Cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny, and also of the Most Flourishing and Important Towns and Cities of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Western New York, Virginia, etc. (Pittsburgh, 1841). This directory listed two ready-made clothing stores and eight clothing merchants.
begun to beautify their homes. Wall paper and carpet were frequently advertised; piano fortés and other musical instruments were also offered for sale, as well as modern and antique furniture for the *nouveau riche* who lacked proper heirlooms.

The ladies were being bombarded from all sides by tempting advertisements. By 1850 newspapers became so bold as to advertise cosmetics, but the appeals were subtle and cautious. Nevertheless, the ground was broken for later expansion, although the lady would probably have needed smelling salts to read the present-day advertisements. The advertisements in 1850 also used the present-day, over-worked, but never-failing health and beauty angles of approach. The Pittsburgh of that time was also flooded with patent medicines. If Pittsburghers bought all the remedies that were offered, they must have been constantly on the verge of epidemic diseases.

Had Zadok Cramer been living in 1850 he would probably have taken his quill and scratched off a scathing tirade against what he termed the addiction of the inhabitants to foreign merchandise. He predicted in 1803 that every hole and corner of this western land would be soon filled with foreign extravagances and he pleaded constantly with Pittsburghers to patronize their own local manufacturers. But times had changed since Zadok Cramer wrote and Pittsburghers could now trade on an equal basis with the East. Pittsburgh's iron, coal and glass products were in demand both in the East and in the West; its stores were visited by western merchants who needed supplies; its people had accumulated money, settled down, and wanted personal adornments and luxuries. During the half century the frontier had moved far beyond the Ohio Valley, Pittsburgh merchants and industrialists had capitalized on their favorable location and abundant natural resources, and had joined the ranks of the monied and industrial East.