OMAR SCOTT DECKER—A MEMORIAL

Our society suffered a great loss by the death on November 17, 1945, of one of our oldest and most valued members, Vice President Omar Scott Decker.

More than a hundred years ago his father, Solomon Decker, a native of Maryland, came to Pittsburgh to engage in the building business. Here, on June 13, 1844, he married Frances Hull, a granddaughter of John Hull, Sr. This maternal great-grandfather of Mr. Decker was sergeant major in the 13th Regiment of the Virginia Line during the War of the Revolution. He was at Valley Forge with Washington in the bitter winter of 1777-78 and shortly thereafter he was transferred to Fort Pitt, where he continued in the service until the end of the war. In 1783 at Richmond Governor Benjamin Harrison awarded Hull a state land grant for four hundred acres in the Virginia Military District of Ohio in consideration of honorable service in the Line for more than three years. This acreage Hull disposed of in 1797 and thereupon returned to Pittsburgh. Here, in Trinity churchyard he and his wife were buried; and here, he and some of his descendants have lived continuously. Thus taking into account his military service the Hull family is in point of time of Pittsburgh residence outranked only by the Ormsby, Morgan, Neville, Bedford, Stevenson, and Parker families—while the O'Hara, Craig,

1 Prepared and presented by Henry King Siebeneck, Esq., on behalf of a special committee consisting of Henry Oliver Evans, Esq., chairman, Gifford K. Wright, Esq., and the author.—Ed.
Denny, Brackenridge, Bayard, and other pioneer families are junior to the Hull connection.

Omar Scott Decker was born in Allegheny City on November 22, 1856, being next to the youngest of a family of eight children. Early in life he lost both of his parents. After attending the city schools he entered the iron business, and was for many years associated with the Pennsylvania Tube Works. In 1909 he established the firm of O. S. Decker & Co., iron and steel commission merchants and manufacturers' agents, in which he continued until his retirement about twenty years ago.

On October 20, 1891, Mr. Decker was married to Agnes L. Pitcairn, daughter of the late Robert Pitcairn, of this city. She died several years before her husband leaving no surviving children. Mr. Decker's nearest relatives were:—George C. Decker, Charles M. Decker, Omar D. Scott, Hugh M. Scott, and Donald Scott, nephews, and a niece, Fannie H. Decker.

Mr. Decker was preëminently a religious man. After his removal from Allegheny to the East End he became a member of the East Liberty Presbyterian Church transferring in 1897 to the Shady Side Presbyterian Church in whose membership he continued until his death.

At the age of eighteen he joined the Pittsburgh Young Men's Christian Association, and later became a life member of that organization. In 1917 he was elected president of the Pennsylvania Society, Sons of the American Revolution.

Mr. Decker's affiliation with the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania is almost coeval with the grant of its charter. Unfortunately no records of the society's activities during part of that period have been preserved. Director Holbrook, however, in his pamphlet, Our Historical Society, relates, basing his conclusions on scanty correspondence and recollections of some of our older members, that Mr. Decker was one of the faithful attendants at the meetings held while Father Lambing was president prior to 1902. In that year Messrs. Decker, Hassler, and Lyon projected the publication of an historical magazine: but their inability to secure an acceptable editor prevented them from carrying their project into effect.
In 1908 the society’s records begin again; they show Mr. Decker was second vice president in that year. In 1909 he was first vice president, and continued in that office until 1933, when the by-laws were changed and four vice-presidents “without grade” were provided for, Mr. Decker becoming one of these and so continuing during the remainder of his life.

Mr. Decker had an important part in the erection of our Historical Building, dedicated in 1914, and in its enlargement, completed in 1931.

Next to the successful management of its home, the issuance of a periodical organ is the most important function of an historical society. Mr. Decker was the father of our Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine. In 1918 he achieved the accomplishment of the project he had outlined in 1902. The magazine became an actuality with Mr. Decker as chairman of its editorial board and the late Charles W. Dahlinger, Esq., as its editor-in-chief. “By their fruits shall ye know them” is a precept as applicable to societies as to individuals. Not only has every member been able to keep in touch with the society by the continuous receipt of our magazine, but it has carried our name and fame to the libraries, learned institutions, and sister societies of the nation. Our magazine is the record of our corporate life. Its existence and its high standing are due primarily to the initiative and persistence of our departed fellow-member, Omar Scott Decker, to whom it is and will continue to be a lasting memorial.

Let us cherish the recollection of him and of his activities.