IT does us good to observe centennials such as the one we are celebrating here this afternoon, and to revive memories of Henry Clay Frick's boyhood and youth, and his brilliant achievements in the coal and coke industry—achievements rarely equalled in the saga of American business.

As we read of the distinguished careers of the Fricks and the Overholts, ancestors of the man whom we honor today, we are deeply impressed by their long and distinguished lineage. The Frick family, one of the noble families of Switzerland, dates back to the twelfth century. For more than four hundred years, their descendants lived midst the rugged mountains and rich valleys of that patriotic country.

It was in the early eighteenth century that members of the Frick family and their neighbors began to hear tales of far away America. They were especially attracted by the stories they heard of the Quaker settlements in Pennsylvania, where political and religious freedom equal to those in Switzerland were to be enjoyed by all who would come. Likewise they heard stories of the economic opportunities here in the New World that were open to those who were willing to work.

1An address delivered at the annual meeting of the Westmoreland-Fayette Historical Society, West Overton, Pennsylvania, on June 18, 1949, in the course of a program devoted to observance of the centennial of the birth of Henry Clay Frick, who was born at this, the old Overholt Homestead, on December 19, 1849. For a brief account of this commemorative event, see ante, 32:63 (March-June, 1949).—Ed.
It was in the year 1732 that the first family of Fricks landed in Philadelphia, and made its way to near-by Germantown. Let us remind ourselves that Philadelphia and her neighboring town offered a haven of refuge to all who would come and settle there. Here was the rallying point for many Swiss and Palatinate emigrants, especially those Mennonites who had been harassed in the Old World.

Soon another family, that of Martin Overholt, devout member of the Mennonite faith, from the Rhine Palatinate, also arrived in Philadelphia, and made their way out to Germantown. Like the Fricks, they, too, came to start life anew in a New World. Both families had sailed from Rotterdam, and now both families had arrived at the same destination in the New World.

All were members of the Mennonite faith, a deeply religious sect which was founded in their native Switzerland, in the early sixteenth century. This new sect spread rapidly throughout Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. In the late seventeenth century, great numbers of the Mennonites emigrated to America, and settled in Philadelphia and near-by Germantown, Pennsylvania. They ordered their lives on the strictest Christian principles, and were noted for their culture, honesty, piety, and charity.

Like the Quakers, the Mennonites were a peace-loving, God-fearing people. But they were patriots through and through. Indeed, it should be noted that it was Martin Overholt's son, Henry, who was first to join up with the Mennonite Militia of Bucks County during the opening months of the American Revolution. The Mennonites were pacifists in religion; patriots by nature.

Following the close of the Revolutionary War, this young nation of ours began to stir. Several of the troops who had been dispatched into this western country were attracted by its rolling hills, its navigable rivers, its beautiful valleys, its rich soil, its majestic forests, the abundance of game, and
wild life. And when they returned East, they told their friends. Also, troops from eastern Pennsylvania which had been ordered into these western counties were deeply impressed by the opportunities which they saw waiting for those who would come out here and settle. Many of them, after being discharged from service, came west, and took up land grants here in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Among the first to decide to come was Johann W. Frick. Gathering his family about him, he set out to cross the Appalachian Mountains, in search of the promised land. I wonder if we of this generation, blessed with smooth-surfaced highways, streamlined automobiles, cushion tires, fast moving air conditioned trains, airplanes that wing across yonder mountains in a matter of minutes—I say, I wonder if we can even remotely realize what it meant for those early settlers to pack up all their worldly possessions, load them in heavy wagons, and set out, determined to start life anew in what was then a frontier wilderness? Read Hervey Allen's latest novel, and you will hear again the story, the tragedy, the hardships that those first settlers experienced. Men, and women too, of courage, determination, daring—they were in truth our first builders of America.

But back to our story. The Fricks, and their descendants founded settlements at Port Royal, Adamsburg, Irwin—all here in old Westmoreland County. More about these later.

Now to the Overholts. Meantime, Henry Overholt, now advanced in years, was still living back in Bucks County. He and his devoted Mennonite family also were hearing about the promised land out here in southwestern Pennsylvania. He sold his farm, gathered about him some half-dozen families, organized a caravan of covered wagons, and started west. They arrived here in 1800. They acquired several hundred acres of land here in East Huntingdon Township and built the historic Overholt Homestead, later known as West Overton.
How clearly these two families typify pioneer America! Here indeed was their promised land. Here they would clear the wilderness, build their homes, plant their crops, set up sawmills and grist mills, establish schools for their children, and erect churches for their Sabbath worship. Here indeed, they carved out a new civilization.

These families planted their roots deep in the soil of Old Westmoreland. This was to be their home—forever. Others, not so determined, might become discouraged, give up, move on. But not the Fricks,—nor the Overholts, nor scores of other pioneers, whose grandchildren or great-grandchildren no doubt are here in this audience today. This was the promised land they had been seeking. Here they would live, work, worship, die, and sleep at long last in the earth they loved so well.

The marriage of John W. Frick and Elizabeth Overholt (daughter of Abraham Overholt), here at West Overton in 1847, marked a happy union of these two pioneer families.

The decade of the 1840's was a significant period in our nation's history; and likewise, in World History. In England, and on the Continent, people were stirring. England was passing through a great upheaval. On the Continent, revolutions were breaking out. The greatest migratory movement in history, up to that time, brought hundreds of thousands flocking to our shores.

And here in our own country, events of epoch-making importance were occurring one hundred years ago this very decade. This was the decade in which our young nation began to feel its strength, its power as never before. Washington Irving, through his Astoria, and The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, was turning the thoughts of America to the great expanses of the West—the home of a future empire. Walt Whitman's poetry, "shot through and through" with exuberant enthusiasm and the robust life of that period was beginning to be read. Longfellow, Emerson, James Fenimore
Cooper, and others were giving to an eager public a picture of this young nation's future.

The whole nation was swept along by these forces. The Oregon Trail, which led to the far Northwest, was alive with emigrants pouring into that region, destined to keep Oregon a part of the United States. The old Santa Fé trail to the Southwest was lined with covered wagons, carrying heavy loads of American goods, and exchanging them for the gold of Mexico. Over one hundred thousand Americans had poured into Texas, and although they had won their independence from Mexico, and had set up a republic of their own, yet they were clamoring for annexation to the United States.

It was not an accident, therefore that James K. Polk was elected President of the United States in 1844, on the platform—"54-40 or Fight, and the Re-Annexation of Texas." Hubert Howe Bancroft, the great historian of this period, was right when he declared it was the most stirring decade in American pre-Civil War history.

Here the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, one of the great doctrines in the history of American political thought, was born. It was a doctrine that, translated in simple terms, meant that the Americans of that generation came to feel that they were destined by Almighty God to carry the Stars and Stripes to the far Pacific.

Thou, too, sail on, O ship of State!
Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

Our hearts—our hopes are all with thee.
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee,—are all with thee.
“There,” declared Henry Clay—when pleading for the adoption of the Compromise of 1850, following the close of the Mexican War, “there on the shores of the Pacific we are destined by Divine Providence to plant our nation’s flag.”

Great and stirring as these developments were—there were still others, which in another field of activity were destined to shape the entire future economy of this young America.

I refer to the industrial, scientific, and technological awakening of that period. While it is true that the developments which we have just noted were probably more dramatic, and while they fired the imagination of the people as nothing else had done, yet they do not give the complete picture of that decade. In other words, not everybody was moving west. Back here in Pennsylvania, and in New York, throughout New England and the mid-Atlantic states, men were busy with new ideas, new projects, and new inventions that were destined within a generation to transform a rather crude agrarian civilization, a hand-craft civilization, into the greatest industrial civilization in world history.

Briefly, let me call the roll of some of the more important developments that were occurring a century ago this decade.

Charles Goodyear, after years of heartbreaking efforts, succeeded in vulcanizing rubber—and a new industry was born.

Joel R. Poinsett led a group of young scientists in establishing the National Institute of Science. James Pollard Espy had just persuaded Congress to establish a National Weather Bureau, and was signally honored by the British Association for the Advancement of Science for this remarkable achievement.

Samuel F. B. Morse, after years of patient research, had just invented the telegraph—one of the scientific achievements of all the ages.

It was also a century ago this decade that the world-famous Smithsonian Institution was founded, from a bequest of James
Smithson of England; perhaps the most unique gift ever granted by a citizen of one country to the people of another country.

Also, the Howe sewing machine, one of the ten most noted inventions in history, appeared a century ago this decade. Likewise, the Hoe Lightning-Press was developed in 1848, enabling printers to turn out two thousand newspapers per hour. This same year Cyrus McCormick, inventor of the reaper, sold 508 reapers, a fact which every history of agriculture notes as ushering in the age of mechanized farming. These, along with other epoch-making developments, caused that keen French observer, De Tocqueville, who was visiting here in the late 1840's to write: "Nowhere else have free men been able to cultivate the seeds of science, or to enjoy its practical results as in your free America!"

Truly, that was a great age in which to be born. And here it was that one hundred years ago, at the close of this significant decade, 1849, a child was born, and given the name of the then great statesman and leader of the Whig Party, Henry Clay—Henry Clay Frick. This lad carried on the usual childhood chores assigned to other boys of his station. He worked on the farm during the summer months and attended school during the winter months, here in West Overton. Later he attended the Mennonite school in near-by Alverton for a term; the Classical and Scientific Institute at near-by Mount Pleasant; and later, for a term, Otterbein College at Westerville, Ohio. At Otterbein he scored eight out of a possible nine points for high honors.

His early interest in education seems to have been typical of the boys of his age and background, with one or two notable exceptions. Either from inheritance or proper parental guidance, possibly both, he manifested an unusual interest in mathematics; and also, as one biographer notes: "He hated sloppy writing and messed up figures." Keep those traits in mind as we move into the later years of his life, and see
him become on the one hand, a severe critic of sham, of pre-
tense; on the other hand, a great patron and benefactor of
the best in the world of art.

At the age of fourteen he was clerking in his Uncle Chris-
tian's store in West Overton; soon he moved to a better job
in his Uncle Martin Overholt's "General Emporium," as the
big sign read, up at Mount Pleasant. Here he demonstrated
the same traits; neatness, accuracy, and the performance of
perfect penmanship.

He was elected to membership in various groups in the
Scientific and Classical Institute; became treasurer of one,
and business manager of another. I think it should be pointed
out that the near-by settlement of Mount Pleasant at that
time offered just about the finest environment anyone could
find in this whole countryside. According to Albert's History
of Westmoreland County, the people who settled in and around
Mount Pleasant were of a richer class than in some other
sections. They were stronger-handed, took up larger farms,
and built more sturdy sawmills and gristmills. They intro-
duced high-grade cattle and improved breeds of sheep and
hogs. They were settlers of quiet and good habits. They pro-
gressed wonderfully in the pursuit of agriculture prior to
the development of minerals and coal mines. A traveler, pass-
ing through here before the Civil War, would have been im-
pressed by the large expanse of wheat, corn, oats, and
meadows, "free from all tare and cockle."

Such was the environment in which Henry Clay Frick was
born and grew up.

While working in Mount Pleasant he took a very special
interest in the small library there, and decided it ought to
have more books. He went from house to house, begging books,
and carried them by the arm load to the library—here again
an early omen of his later interest in libraries. He found time
to read widely, especially books on biography and history.

The rapid climb of this young man in the many positions
he held here in this community, then later in Pittsburgh, and on up the ladder to the top of the nation's great industrialists—all of this we can read from the biographies that have been written, and from various corporation histories. I see no point in merely repeating those easily accessible accounts.

Rather, I suggest that, as we are assembled here at his old ancestral home on this one hundredth anniversary of his birth, we try to single out those dominant forces that early became a part of his life—forces that guided him from boyhood into early manhood, and finally led him to the pinnacle of fame in the industrial and cultural history of America.

First of all, he was born of sturdy ancestors—ancestors who for generations were noted for their loyalty, and love of country. They were deeply patriotic, and they were devoutly religious. He was reared here in a community noted for its sturdy people; men and women of courage, men who dared, who dreamed dreams of a greater America, and who were determined to help build that greater America.

I shall not trespass upon the addresses of other speakers on this program by enlarging upon Mr. Frick's successes in the industrial and financial worlds.

Rather, I prefer to leave with you, on this centennial anniversary of his birth, the portrait of a great American. A boy, born of stern yet loving parents, reared, schooled, trained, disciplined, here in the heart of a thoroughly American community. An American boy, who grew up in that stirring period of the mid-nineteenth century, and who was fired with an enthusiasm and a determination to do big things in a big way.

The coming of the railroad; the development of industries here in Western Pennsylvania, notably at near-by Pittsburgh; the opening up of the West; and the march of industry—all these stirred his imagination. The Iron Age was giving way to the Steel Age. The flaming furnaces of this new Industrial Revolution had to be fed, not with the customary
charcoal or coal, but with a finer fuel called coke. The inventive genius of this young man envisioned this new approaching industrial revolution. And it would seem as if he had almost been destined, ordained in fact, to step forward and become the pioneer of a new epoch in our industrial civilization.

Instead of sowing his native fields with seeds of grain and reaping the harvest in due season, he turned to those natural resources which the God of Creation had deposited under his feet. He tapped those rich coal deposits and the layers of limestone, and gave to America its first inexhaustible supply of fine fuel, and at a cost which everyone could afford. It was his skill, genius, and dogged perseverance which, more than that of any other man, ushered in the Steel Age in our nation's economy. That he succeeded, and achieved greatly, is not in my opinion the main lesson in his life story. Trained from youth in matters of thrift, frugality, hard work, and faith in the future of his country, he simply could not have done otherwise than to drive ahead.

But midst all his mounting successes, he never forgot those pictures that were stamped upon his youthful mind here in Old Westmoreland. These rolling hills, these sloping valleys, spoke words of beauty. The fields of waving grain, the flocking of birds, the blue mist of yonder mountain ranges—all these united to produce one of the greatest patrons of art in modern history. And here was this young artist, destined in later years to bring together one of the greatest collections of the Old Masters of all the ages.

In later years, when his many duties took him away from these local scenes, he never forgot. At one time he asked some friends to select the wildest spot in all the territory around Pittsburgh, a region of hills and forests, steep, primitive,—then he purchased it, and presented it as a gift to the people of that thriving, dynamic city. How typical of the man—he gave unto others as it had been given unto him.
But his gifts went far beyond that. A roll call of his benefactions to colleges, universities, churches, schools, for the establishment of scholarships and teacher traveling fellowships, to Newsboys’ Homes, the Home for Crippled Children, the Children’s Aid Society, the Association for the Blind, the Tuberculosis Hospital—these and scores and scores of other organizations would add up to unbelievable proportions.

Finally, I would have us remember Mr. Frick, on this the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, as the highest type of a pioneer patriot—in the true meaning of that word. Patriotism is born of the soil in which one lives. Probably the one nation of all Europe whose patriotism is most deeply rooted is that little mountain country of Switzerland. Poets down through the ages have sung the praises of that patriotic country, with people who for generations have become as much a part of her soil as her snow-capped mountains, her waterfalls, and her virgin forests.

The blood of those old Swiss patriots flowed through the veins of Henry Clay Frick. And like his ancient ancestors, he became as much a part of this community as the good earth which he cultivated, or as the seams of coal and limestone rock which he converted into man’s useful servant.

Too young to enlist in the Civil War, too old to take up arms in World War I, yet he was one of the first to write to President Wilson, pledging all-out aid for the cause of victory. Although of different political views from President Wilson, he wrote: “While I differ from you in politics, I subscribe without reservation to all you are doing.” President Wilson responded personally to that letter, thanking Mr. Frick for this generous offer, saying his example “would be an inspiration to other loyal Americans in your position.”

And throughout the war, he worked unceasingly, pouring out his great resources in support of all the bond drives, Red Cross drives, the Salvation Army, the Y.M.C.A., the Belgian Relief Fund, American Ambulance Hospital Units in France,
Disabled French Artists, and dozens of other organizations. His only son served in the Air Force, and his only daughter volunteered for Red Cross service and sailed for France.

When the French Mission headed by Marshall Foch and Premier Viviani came to the United States following our entrance into the war, to seek financial and military aid, Mr. Frick graciously offered them the use of his palatial New York residence for their headquarters. These are only a few of the many wartime activities in which he and his family engaged.

But here again, as in all his other activities, he was merely fulfilling those earlier dreams—a desire to serve, and an urge to defend the country he loved so much.

I am reminded here of that dialogue in Hugh Walpole's *Eternal City*. Durward and his friend are talking about patriotism and internationalism: "And do you know Durward, as he talked, I saw that Patriotism was at the bottom of everything. You could talk about internationalism until you were blue in the face, but it only began to mean anything when you'd learned first what nationalism is;—you can't really love all mankind until you have first learned to love one or two people close to you. You can't love the world as a vast democratic state, until you have learned to love your own little bit of ground, your own fields, your own river, your own church tower."

That philosophy symbolizes the simple, genuine, homely philosophy of the Henry Clay Frick as I have come to know him. He too believed in internationalism—yes. And he believed in being a friend to all the world—yes. But deep down in his heart, he knew, as Durward knew, you can't love all the world, until you have learned to love your own little bit of ground, your own fields, your own rivers, your own home, your own church tower.