HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOTES
THE HISTORICAL TOUR IN MARIETTA

The roads were good, the scenery magnificent, and the weather perfect for the tenth annual tour of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and the University of Pittsburgh, in Marietta, Ohio, on Saturday, July 21, 1951.

Marietta, with its many points of historic and civic interest, was the single objective of the pilgrimage, for no attempt was made, as on previous tours, to travel as a motorcade or do any planned “site-seeing” along the way.

However, the route recommended to motoring participants, and the one followed by the writer and his party, was south on Route 19 to “Little Washington”; southwest on U. S. 40, the old National Pike, to the outskirts of Wheeling; south to Moundsville (biggest Indian Mound in the U. S. A.”); and thence down the south bank of the Ohio.

From this point to Marietta the Ohio Valley is almost as lovely as it must have seemed to the forty-eight pioneers in the Rufus Putnam party that left Pittsburgh in the spring of 1788 to found Marietta, first American settlement in the Northwest Territory. Gone—after Moundsville—are the mills and mines and railroad yards of the Wheeling and Pittsburgh areas. Broad and deep and green, the beautiful Ohio sweeps between its wooded hills, cutting through the ancient alluvial plain that lies first on the north bank, then on the south.

Here and there, of course, are towns, with occasional light industrial plants. Yet everywhere on the shoulders of the river hills and on the level bottom-lands are fertile farms. For mile after mile the sweep of green is unbroken, and the clean, open country of the great valley, the woodlands and orchards and meadows, run with the river to Marietta.

At St. Mary’s our party left West Virginia Route 2, to cross to the Ohio bank and U. S. Route 50; and here the prosperous, well-tended fruit and truck farms line the level highway, elbow to elbow, all the way into Marietta.

The Hotel Lafayette, on the Ohio bank near the mouth of the Muskingum River, was headquarters for the tour, and here the three-score pilgrims were welcomed by the Marietta committee on arrangements: Mr. Fred B. Goddard, Mrs. Sophia Russell, Mrs. Edith S. Reiter,
and Judge Vernon Metcalf—and by a most hospitable group of local history enthusiasts, prominent among whom was His Honor, the Mayor (of whom more later).

At luncheon in the River Room of the Lafayette, Dr. Robert L. Jones, professor and head of the history department of Marietta College, presided. The Hon. Joseph Hartline, mayor of the city of Marietta, and President Frank L. Christie of the Marietta Chamber of Commerce, vied in welcoming the tour guests, with His Honor gaining a slight lead through his official promise to revoke any parking tickets that might happen, through accident, to be acquired by the visitors. Ex-president Edward Crump, of the Historical Society, and Dr. John W. Oliver, professor and head of the department of history, University of Pittsburgh, responded for the tour group, in thanks for the hospitality of the Mariettans. Appropriately, the luncheon session ended with a thought-provoking address by John O. Marsh, curator of history and librarian of the Ohio State Museum at Columbus, on “The Second American Revolution.” Dr. Marsh emphasized the “restatement of the American ideal” in the newly-opened Northwest Territory—a restatement which was to be made again and again as the frontier moved westward, and which seems badly overdue today.

The tour of Marietta began at two o'clock and ended at five. It covered every point of interest in this beautiful and historic little city—monuments, homes, ancient elms, churches, wooded vistas, the original Land Office, the Campus Martius, the Putnam House, the River Museum!

At Marietta’s really remarkable historical museum Mrs. Edith S. Reiter, curator, gave a friendly, informal talk. At the prehistoric mound in the Mound Cemetery, Professor George Blazier, librarian of Marietta College, startled the visitors with the extent of the pre-Columbian mound-builder culture—and with his knowledge of it.

And at the Marietta College campus, President W. Bay Irvine (long a Pittsburgh district school man) charmed and delighted his cavalcade audience with his story of the college, past and present.

Perhaps the most memorable feature of the motorcade tour was the performance of Mayor Hartline, who conducted the entire sightseeing trip in person, from a police car equipped with a public address system. And public it was—for both the spell-bound visitors and the startled townsmen on the sidewalks shared in His Honor’s running commen-
tary. For the better part of the three hours this hospitable mayor spoke of the history, the topography, the geography, the industry, the economy, the ethnology, the background, the present and the future of—Marietta! Untiringly his voice rang out along the elm-lined streets of the city as the motorcade rolled past thirty historic points, across the lovely Muskingum, up hill and down. It was interesting; it was compelling; it was remarkable. In short, it was a tour de force—and no pun is even remotely intended. Never, on any earlier pilgrimage, has any official known his city so completely or told its story so well!

Dinner was at seven at the Betsy Mills Club, and it was excellent. Excellent, too, was the concluding event of the tour—an address on "The Meaning of Marietta" by Dean Merrill R. Patterson of Marietta College. The Hon. George White, former governor of Ohio, who had greeted the 1938 tour, presided; and Stanton Belfour of the committee on arrangements did the honors in thanking the Mariettans in behalf of the visitors.

The tour committee, Messrs. Belfour, Adams, Reynolds, and Lantz, and their Marietta colleagues, deserved—and received—the thanks of the tour group for a well-planned, well-organized, neatly-executed tour.

Allotted space grows short, but it is a pleasure to note here that among the three-score Pittsburghers were Mr. and Mrs. Royal Daniel and Mr. and Mrs. Alex Zehner of the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, Librarian George Seibel, Historical Society Trustees Nixon and Harshbarger, and probable future Historical Society President Wallace F. Workmaster, a senior at Mt. Lebanon High School, who will surely enjoy more tours and see more history than any other member of the Marietta tour of 1951.

This account now closes with a quotation from the gracious pen of Editor Frank B. McKenney—his lead editorial in the Marietta Times for Saturday, July 21:

"VISITORS FROM UP RIVER"

"As one old frontier outpost to another, just a relatively short journey farther back toward the eastern seaboard, Marietta today says, 'Hello, Pittsburgh.' We welcome the caravan of visitors who have come down from the head of the Ohio River (by the more hazardous overland route) to explore our town and hope they find the trip a worthwhile venture, just as did so many travelers of an earlier era who set out from the Allegheny-Monongahela Point."
“Marietta is the objective on the 10th annual tour sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh and the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. The tourists are having luncheon and dinner here today and a program of sightseeing.

“Looking back into frontier history, as they no doubt will in their discussions, they will note a strong historical connection between the town that grew up around the fort strategically facing the Ohio Country and the first permanent settlement in this inviting western territory. It’s good to take time now and then to renew old connections.

“It would be the proper thing for a group of Mariettans to repay the call. The visit should prove stimulating—if attention is paid particularly to the renaissance of the pioneering spirit evident in the civic planning currently being carried out in the city of iron, steel, and aluminum that once was Fort Pitt.”

C. V. Starrett
REVISED VISITING HOURS

The library, museum, and offices of the Society in the Historical Building at 4338 Bigelow Boulevard, Pittsburgh 13, Pennsylvania, are now open to the public from 10 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday, and from 10 A.M. to 12 noon, Saturday, the principal holidays excepted.