Iffly is a name that still applies, among a few old residents of the district, to a detached group of five frame houses on the Noblestown Road, about one-eighth of a mile west of the Rennerdale School in Collier Township, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. There, the hard-surfaced highway makes an abrupt turn northward and the unpaved "old road" continues southwesterly down across the railroad and Robinson Run and over the hill to rejoin the concrete highway north of Gregg Station.

These houses were once the homes of members of the Hays and Walker families. Following the old road in the direction indicated, we pass the ruins of one or two dwelling-house foundations within a couple of hundred feet of the railroad. One of these is in plain sight on the upper side of the thoroughfare. It was probably that of a building connected with a coal tipple, also long since vanished, and so does not concern us here. Near the foot of the hill at the bridge over Robinson Run, where the willows skirt the roadway and border both sides of the winding stream, we are on the site of the old ghost town of Iffly. The spot even now is beautiful in summer, although the ravages of Time would call for much lifting of Dame Nature's face were her features ever to be restored to their former attractiveness. For instance, the Run would have to be restocked with fish once abounding here. That was in the days before mine-drainage, crude oil, and other pollutions all but spoiled the swimming at the big bend a little farther down stream. Gone with the fish are also all traces of the fish-eating "Paddy Irish" who gave the spot its name and color in the years before the Civil War.

Iffly was born when the railroad started through here about 1852.

1 The Reverend Mr. Allison, a native of Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, and a descendant of Col. Joseph Noble and John McDonald, pioneers in Robinson Run valley, presented the substance of this article in a paper read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on October 25, 1938. At that time he was treasurer and field secretary of Knoxville College, Knoxville, Tennessee, with an office in Pittsburgh. At present he is pastor of the Coalbrook Presbyterian Church at Neffs, Ohio.—Ed.
Then work was begun by the Pittsburgh and Steubenville Railroad Company, incorporated on March 24, 1849, to construct a railroad from Pittsburgh to the Virginia state line.² Even in 1852 the site of Iffly was not without historical interest. Seventy years had elapsed since this place was the scene of one of those dastardly border episodes in the War of the Revolution which has heaped deserved infamy upon the name of “Headhunter” Hamilton, the British commandant at Detroit, and his savage red-men allies. The farmstead before us, across the bridge to the south, with buildings to the southeast of the roadway where the ground rises from the floor of the valley, was the property of Gabriel Walker. The event which that name recalls is well known through the accounts of local historians. The written versions of the story find source largely in a “Narrative of the Walker Family,” by Isaac Walker III, now in the possession of Mr. Charles M. Ewing, a descendant of Colonel James Ewing, who in 1772 brought his family and slaves from Cecil County, Maryland, whence a goodly number of our Western Pennsylvania pioneers migrated. Colonel Ewing took up land on a Virginia certificate at the mouth of Robinson Run, which flows into Chartiers Creek. This holding of his was separated by that of Robert Boyd from that of Isaac Walker, whose lands, in turn, bordered those of his brother, Gabriel Walker, on the east.

Much of the “first settler” lore in lower Robinson Run valley concerns the Ewings and Walkers who became related by intermarriage. Colonel Ewing, it may be remarked in passing, built the first gristmill and distillery on Robinson Run. It stood below his house, which still (or at least its original stone chimney) stands on the hillside about five hundreds yards west of the macaroni factory at Ewingville. The property (now reduced to an acre or two) is flanked by the railroad on the south and Noblestown Road on the north. The burr-stones of this old mill, according to Mr. Charles M. Ewing, were covered when the road was graded at the railroad crossing below the house, and are buried there today, about three feet beneath the surface of the ground.

² Guarding against too great digression at this point, the writer eschews the temptation to make use of a very informative body of notes relating to the various corporate changes undergone by this railroad before reaching its present form as the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad. These notes were furnished him by his neighbor, Mr. Andrew Cunningham of Rennerdale, Pennsylvania, whose work on the corporate history of the Pennsylvania Railroad System was done under the direction of Colonel Samuel Harden Church.
On the James Ewing property, also, stood the stockade mentioned in the following recital of occurrences in that vicinity:

In September, 1782, a party of Indians, about twenty-five in number, approached the cabin of Gabriel Walker, and concealed themselves near by, with the intention of surprising the family while at dinner. In the meantime two hunters approached and entered the house, and as they were well armed the savages thought best to defer the attack until their departure. Visitors at that early period were not frequent, and the hospitalities extended them required a long time in the discussion of current events. And so, immediately after dinner, the younger members of the family, including William Harkins, an indentured boy, were sent to the field, while Mr. Walker entertained the guests. Several hours passed in this manner, when the latter finally departed. The Indians rapidly closed in around the unsuspecting family, but their movements did not escape the practiced eye of Mr. Walker. He called to his children in the field to run, which they did, but only Harkins escaped, and the five others were captured. Hearing the alarm, Mrs. Walker seized the two children who were with her in the house, and concealed herself until she could safely proceed to the fort. Mr. Walker also escaped. After pillaging the house and burning it to the ground, the Indians killed the two youngest of their captives, and set out with the three that remained, two young women and a boy. They then started out in a northwesterly direction, stopping that day long enough to burn the cabin of a Mr. Breckenridge. When the course of a stream coincided with the direction of their journey, they waded its channel; when a fallen tree lay in their course, they walked its trunk, making their prisoners do the same.

Harkins, after making his escape, alarmed the family of Isaac Walker, and they also made their way to the fort, which was situated a short distance above the mouth of Robinson's Run. On the following day a body of men numbering forty or fifty gathered at the scene of the massacre. Under the leadership of John Henry they set out in pursuit, and overtook the Indians as they were crossing the Ohio river. The captives were taken to a British post in the northwest, and returned upon the cessation of hostilities in 1784.3

The land of Hugh H. Brackenridge, known by the classical name of “Parnassus,” lay northwest of that of Gabriel Walker and also of the tract jointly owned by Isaac and Gabriel Walker, on the north side of Robinson Run across from “Richland,” by which name the Iffly farm

3 As given in the History of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 2:27 (Chicago, A. Warner & Co., 1889), which apparently in turn quotes the above-mentioned “Narrative of the Walker Family,” by Isaac Walker III.
was known. Apparently it was Hugh Brackenridge's cabin that was burned by the Indians on their trek toward the river. The Ohio was crossed, according to the traditional story told to the writer by Mr. J. J. Walker of Rennerdale, a descendant of Gabriel Walker, at what is now Stoops Ferry, a short distance below the south end of the Sewickley bridge. According to this same tradition, which the writer believes to be correct, it was at the river bank, when the several canoes were being loaded, that the murder of the two youngest of the captured children, a boy and girl, occurred. There was not boat-room for all of the captives and the intention was to tow the youngest girl through the water by her hair. The little brother came to her defense and both children were slain and scalped. Their bodies were found at the riverside by the pursuers.

According to Mr. J. Scott Walker of Walker's Mill, a descendant of Isaac Walker who lived there, the farmhouse at Iffly was built on the site of the original Gabriel Walker cabin, and the capture of the workers in the field occurred somewhere in the bottom lands of the present-day farm, now crossed by the railroad due east and west, but then skirted by Robinson Run which there makes a long bend to the north.

The distance of this spot from the western borough limits of Carnegie has been variously stated. Mr. Sipe refers to the scene of the tragedy as "not far from the present town of Carnegie." More specifically, the place is about four-and-a-half miles west of Carnegie. The "bound boy" Harkins is reported by Mr. Sipe to have run two miles to Ewing's blockhouse, but following the course of the stream the distance is at least three miles. The boy's route was probably roundabout, through the woods, and consequently a longer distance.

The Ewing blockhouse or stockade, as the case may have been, stood on the edge of Robinson Run directly across from the weather-boarded log house with lean-to kitchen that stands at the foot of Lick Hollow to the left of Noblestown Road as one goes east after crossing the concrete culvert nearest Hudson's Crossing on the railroad at West Carnegie. This log house was occupied by Mr. Charles M. Ewing's father, a son of the Colonel Ewing mentioned above. The grandson once

4 Henry Houck, Pennsylvania Secretary of Internal Affairs, comp., Warrantee Atlas of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 28 (1914)—showing the original landowners in North Fayette Township.
5 C. Hale Sipe, Indian Wars of Pennsylvania, 671 (Harrisburg, 1929).
told the writer that his (Mr. Ewing's) father, as a boy of fifteen or sixteen years, removed the last remaining logs of the old fort from that spot, at his father's orders, to make of them a pigpen at the top of Lick Hollow where another of the Ewings lived. The house that replaced the original Gabriel Walker cabin was owned by one of the Walkers when Iffly was in flower in the 1850's and '60's. At that time the barn was in good condition and the spring house had already seen many years of service. The house was burned to the ground about 1912—to be succeeded by the flimsy cottage that stands there now.

In Iffly's "palmy days" this farm in the valley was tenanted by Samuel Kennedy and his family. One of the children, Nancy Jane, the writer's mother, was born there on July 26, 1849. Both parents were natives of northern Ireland; the husband of Belfast and the wife, nee Lilly Ann Hamilton, of Londonderry. The latter was a direct descendant of the Captain Hamilton who figured in the defense of the city at the famous siege of 1689-90.

Social life in Iffly was pitched according to middle and lower class conceptions in Ireland. The Presbyterian Hays, Walkers, Gettys, Greggs, Boyds, Ewings, and Kennedys, members of Old Montours or the Associate Reformed Church (Seceder) at Noblestown, and farmers in average circumstances, were pretty much "landed gentry" in the eyes of the Fagans, Learys, Grogans, Faheys, and Duggans—to use fictitious names for this group. The latter, admittedly "Shanty Irish" squatters, were poor and doubtless exploited folks employed as laborers in railroad construction at pitifully low wages. Eight dollars a month for a driver and cart was good pay among them. This element, comprising the "submerged nine-tenths" of Iffly's population, held many gold nuggets, as the refining process of American life eventually revealed. It was not long before some of them were property owners in Mansfield and other towns near by, and their descendants now occupy positions of influence in business and the professions, as well as on police forces and aldermanic benches, and have attained, to their credit, undisputed social standing. But the poor "Paddy Irish" of those yesteryears, and every vestige of the shanties that sheltered them, are long since gone from the settlement whose very name is but a memory.

To the shanty dwellers the Kennedy family occupied the "manor house." The "lord of the manor" and "his lady," Lilly Ann, were looked
to by their near neighbors, newly arrived "fresh and green from the ould sod," as the latter were wont to look to their erstwhile landlords or "first men" of the village in Ireland.

The thirty or more rough-boarded, dirt-floored, "stable-doored" shelters, strewn along both sides of Robinson Run and on the bottom land next to the railroad, constituted the landlord's "desmesne," and the two hundred or less tatterdemalion inhabitants were his unsought body of retainers. Some of these were of rather dubious liege loyalty until encroachment upon Kennedy's rights brought the offenders, usually newcomers, to a realization that a master lived in the house up the road. His word was law in the camp, and his warning, unheeded, brought swift judgment betimes. When Kennedy took notice that a new shanty had sprung up overnight in too close proximity to his potato patch, he would come civilly admonishing the new neighbor against pilfering his crop. "Shure an' we have our own praties comin' on" was the invariable retort, referring to an inadequate planting at the corner of the shanty. At the first undeniable offense came Kennedy, with his ladder and crowbar, and down came roof and walls in short order. In impish glee the demolisher kept whistling the "Boyne Water" and other Orange airs, while he carried his punitive work to completion. Although the irate dispossessed vented their wrath in vitriolic oaths and implored the help of all the saints known to them, their initiated neighbors raised no formidable objection. These had learned their lessons beforehand and the latest offender had to be content to take his lumber and pitch his shack on some other available spot in the settlement.

In due time the subdued one, with the others, found his way to the farmhouse, for it was well known that the same arm that had torn their houses down about their ears would lift their loads when their burdens were grievous. Milk, buttermilk, side-meat, and vegetables were given freely to the needy, with home remedies and nursing for the sick. No person was turned away from Kennedy's door without helpful consideration. The shanty folks loved the determined little Presbyterian, heretic to them though he was.

Hygienic conditions were doubtless abominable in Iffly. What with cholera, dysentery, smallpox, and the like, we wonder how they lived "at all, at all." The death rate, in spite of the toughness of the Hibernian physique, was high. Ignorance, drunken brawls, and occasional murders helped to maintain a deplorable situation. All this added to Ken-
nedy’s responsibilities, for he was the general provider of things pertaining to death as well as to life. On wet days he would make neat plain coffins of planed white pine, purchased for the purpose, to be stored in the loft of his wagonshed awaiting use. Then these would be taken down and painted, black if the deceased were adult and white if under age. Out of her produce money, obtained from her regular sales of butter, eggs, and cheese to the Monongahela House in Pittsburgh—a top-notch customer for a farmer’s wife in those days, the worthy mistress of the farmhouse bought muslin by the bolt and lined the coffins and made the shrouds. According to the writer’s mother, all this service was rendered gratis.

Because embalming was not much practiced in those days, the period of “laying a corpse” was brief. When the services of a priest were at all available, extreme unction was given. A candle stuck in the neck of a bottle burned throughout the night in anything-but-lonely-vigil. No person has ever characterized the Irish “wake” as a ghastly silent kind of affair. At break of dawn those astir and partially sober (whether with heads broken or unbroken) usually agreed that “a good time was had by all.” It was not uncommon during the wake to invite the corpse to join in all the drinking to his own health. Mr. Beinhauer, the well-known West Liberty Avenue mortician, whose grandfather was summoned hurriedly one night to Limerick, tells a side-splitting tale in point. Grandfather Beinhauer galloped his horse that night to the rescue of a corpse from several bibulous wake-keepers who had their deceased host down by the riverside trying to make him “down” a quart of gin. An exact analogy to this episode does not form a part of the Iffly tradition, but then the “history books” never do have all the facts.

With morning come, and all the edibles in sight devoured, an Iffly burial party would set off on its long trek to the cemetery, Old Brodhead Churchyard, known to modern readers as St. Phillips, Crafton, a good eight miles away. Mr. Kennedy, who came to the rescue with his team of horses and market wagon, headed the procession. The chief mourner,

6 Limerick is another ghost town whose shades someone ought to conjure up for the fun of it. As old-time Pittsburgers may remember, it was located along Carson Street between the Point and the Smithfield Street bridge.

7 At that time this was probably the only Roman Catholic burying ground between Pittsburgh and Steubenville; even then it was considered to be overcrowded, but, be that as it may, interments are still made there.
a near relative or close friend of the deceased (self-appointed or otherwise), sat gravely atop the casket. The rest of the party followed afoot.

The burial over, the wagon was made to carry as many of the bunch as could crowd aboard, within the limits of the driver's patience. Mansfield, now Carnegie, was the nearest town which provided a stop for bar refreshments. Because of this all-important pause, the driver (likely the only sober member of the group) drove his wagon back into Iffly with a heavy cargo of "dead drunks." Alighting at the first shanty at the edge of the settlement, Kennedy began to assort and deliver his passengers. Shortly, each fellow in turn would be dragged out by the heels and dropped like a pitpost in the roadway before his shack. While the driver walked behind the wagon, the horses would repeatedly start and stop again until all the mourners were returned each to his own door. Then, climbing aboard, Farmer Kennedy drove up the road home and called it a day.

Being Irish, the corporate disposition of Iffly was normally sunny and lively. Of evenings the fiddle, the flute, and the accordion furnished music. Jigging and singing and cards and dice whiled away the hours up to nine o'clock. But no matter how light-hearted the temperament, poverty and squalor, ignorance and quarrelsomeness characterized the life of Iffly. Something like modern black-hand conditions prevailed among these humble folk. There were marked men and resulting murders. One of the writer's sainted mother's earliest childhood recollections was of the fear expressed by the "Paddy Irish" school children of her own age who dreaded sudden attacks and raids by members of other construction camps. These gangs from other camps bore such unsavory names as "the bloody far ups" and "the bloody far downs," according to their relative location in the valley. Many a night, for fear of sudden invasion, the Ifflyites, men, women, and children, slept in the woods on the hillsides back of Kennedy's house. Early next morning they were seen hurrying down from their hiding places carrying their dirty ticks and bedclothes.

Educationally, life in Iffly was on the look-up. Illiterate themselves, these Irish immigrants, like most newcomers to our shores, were eager to have their children go to school. In those days the curriculum of the "little red school" provided not only instruction in the famous "three R's," but also had room for a fourth "R," which stands for Religion—the first essential in true education. That many of our rural Western Pennsyl-
vania schools, because of the type of religious instruction furnished, gave good grounds for their being dubbed "Protestant parochial schools," cannot, the writer believes, be gainsaid. The Walker School, attended by young Iffly of whatever religious faith, was no exception to the rule. There, the department of religious education bore a strongly Presbyterian complexion. The majority of the pupils brought their "questions," as they termed the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. Roman Catholics, however, in the period set apart for religious instruction, were not denied the privilege of reading whatever they had of catechetical or other material agreeable to the Papist Confession. Needless to say, the poor Catholic children were not flush with prayer books and catechisms.

But no matter how tolerant and free from controversy the aim of the curriculum and the air of the classroom, the atmosphere out of doors on certain days seemed electric with misguided religious zeal. At times the orange and green ribbons, worn by the youngsters for mingled loyalty and spite, had a way of flaring up fiery red, inciting the little codgers to combativeness when going to and from school; and the Irish wars of the seventeenth century were on again. Victories were no doubt variously reported at home. Young Jimmy Hays, Orangeman, told his mother a rather confused story when he tried to explain the variegated hue of Danny Duggan's swollen eyes, when Danny showed up at the Hays supper table one St. Patrick's Day evening. Morning frays were over and "gone with the wind."

The Walker school, still recalled by former pupils, the youngest of whom are now in middle life, stood on the east side of the new Pinchot road, about two blocks north of the Noblestown Road, on the McKown property. On their way to school the Iffly children left the Noblestown Road at the foot of Walker's lane (now the post-office corner in Rennerdale) and followed the lane (now Sunnyside Avenue) up through the orchard. Then they trudged northeast across the field (passing within sight of the old Walker family burying lot, where the murdered children of Gabriel Walker were buried), and emerged at the road near the Walker spring house. The site of this structure is now a depression in the ground whence the abandoned spring still flows. Almost directly across the road, in what is now a small grove of maples, they arrived noisily at the frame schoolhouse. There remains only the barest trace of it. Many of the amusing incidents told about the school life that flour-
ished here for several generations could be made into good script for Kaltenmeier's Kindergarten. Near by stands the former home of James T. Kerr, one of the forty-five claimants to being the founder of Flag Day, and perhaps the spot that should be marked as the birthplace of that holiday.

It is the writer's purpose in presenting this account, as well as one of the projects of the Chartiers Historical Society, to preserve and perpetuate information about places and people in the Chartiers valley and its branches. That region has been "home" to some of us continuously for six, seven, and (in the writer's case) eight generations. Historical record—like charity—might as well begin at home. Why not? The short and simple annals of the poor, though these be very short and very simple, might as well be set down in print. These were our own poor and their own annals. Then, too, history, as you know, is always in the making, even though the material used be neither of great events nor of distinguished people.