ROBINSON RUN SKETCHES

MILTON M. ALLISON

II. The Nobles of Noblesburg

According to notations in the Rev. Dr. James Brown Scouller's Manual of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, page 155 (edition of 1881), the United Presbyterian Church at Noblestown was founded in the year 1792 as the Associate Congregation of Noblesburg, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. The organization of this congregation antedates by sixty-six years the creation of the United Presbyterian Church of North America. The latter body came into being through the union of synods of the Associate and the Associate Reformed churches at a meeting in the Old City Hall, Market Street, Pittsburgh, in May, 1858. At that time near-by Liberty Avenue, between Eleventh Street and Ferry Street and toward the Point, was the wholesale produce district, and trains of box cars on the newly installed Pennsylvania Railroad tracks were shuttling up and down the street, each with a brakeman ringing a dinner bell to warn unwary pedestrians and horse-drawn vehicles of the train’s approach.

A bronze tablet commemorating this union of churches is attached to the present Diamond Market House, built on the site of “Old City Hall” about 1910. Incidentally, the latter was the predecessor and for many years a contemporary of the later “Old City Hall” on Smithfield Street, which itself will have been razed by the time this article appears in print. The former was still standing at the turn of the century, along with Dimling’s restaurant, Gusky’s department store, Landau’s clothing store, Roman Staley’s secondhand bookstore, and the old Market Houses bridging Diamond Alley.

After indulging in a little day-dreaming about downtown Pittsburgh in 1900, we record the further fact that the Noblestown United

\[1 \text{ A paper read at the sesquicentennial of the founding of the United Presbyterian Church at Noblestown, Pennsylvania, October 7-11, 1942, here somewhat revised and brought up to date. Prior to 1835, the present Noblestown was known as Noblesburg or Noblesburgh, and the author uses these names interchangeably with reference to the particular period under discussion. For the first of these "Robinson Run Sketches," and a note about the author, see ante, 35: 93-102 (June, 1952).—Ed.}\]
Presbyterian congregation dates its founding only four years later than that of Allegheny County, which was established on September 24, 1788. At that time the village of Noblesburg had been a place of homes for at least twenty-one years, dating from the arrival here from Maryland, in 1771, of Col. George Vallandigham and his bride of a few weeks, née Elizabeth Noble. It is likely that either a military mission for Lord Dunmore, then governor of Virginia, or business having to do with bounty lands, emanating from the same service, had previously brought Col. Vallandigham to the region of "The Forks," and it is not improbable that his work as a surveyor of bounty lands (awarded by the colony of Virginia to veterans of the French and Indian War) brought the young Vallandigham into the district south of the Ohio and gave him an opportunity to acquire land on Robeson Run.2

Within a few weeks after coming to the new country the young couple decided that the wife should return, temporarily, to her parents' home in Prince Georges County, Maryland. This, because of fear of Indian outrages, with which the annals of the colonial frontier are replete, and because of the husband's necessary absences from home on business and surveying trips both as a practicing lawyer and a surveyor. But the next year, 1772, saw Mrs. Vallandigham back again on Robeson Run. With her came her parents, Col. and Mrs. Joseph Noble, who brought with them their younger, unmarried sons and daughters, and several of their negro slaves.

Of the first eight years of the Noblesburg congregation and its ministers, Dr. Scouller records nothing. Time has not dealt kindly with the sessional and congregational records, such as they were originally. Poor recording, dampness, fire, and neglect have destroyed much source material of value to the historian of the great majority, if not all, of the pioneer Protestant churches in western Pennsylvania. As an officially authorized investigator for the quondam Pennsylvania Historical Records Survey, under the Federal Works Progress Administration, the writer had access to the extant minute books of practically every pioneer church in Allegheny County, in the area outside of Pittsburgh. The records have been uniformly badly kept and poorly preserved, and the Noblestown church is no exception to the rule. The oldest record book in the custody of its officials is inscribed as the property of the Associate

2 A localism for Robinson Run.
Congregation of Noblestown, above date of March 15, 1849, and then of the United Presbyterian Congregation of Noblestown, above date of August 28, 1861. The book essays to cover the period from March 15, 1849, to May 21, 1870, but there are many omissions. Were I writing of certain other churches whose annals I have perused, I could feel safe in referring to deletions in these records as "glaring lapses," because of the kind of testimony customarily set down in the frequent and prolonged cases of discipline heard by church sessions prior to the Civil War. Recurring instances of charges of immorality, slander, and dishonesty make the reading resemble the reports of trials in a present-day small-town office of a justice of the peace.

Of the activities of this church at home and abroad, its memorable meetings and the like, during the first seventy-five years of its history, no accounts, with one known exception, have been preserved, unless these be in old Presbytery minutes falling within that period. The exception is a statement made, although not in a church journal, concerning a Presbytery meeting held in the Noblesburg church in 1816—of which more later. No comment is made herein, for lack of information, about the lay membership here during the years referred to. In fact, the only source material for the range of time covered by this paper consists of biographical data about some of the pastors of this church. This information has been compiled by Dr. Scouller and others and is available in the library of the Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary. Incidentally, this library is looked upon as the rightful repository of any original records of the Service, Canonsburg, Xenia, and Pittsburgh seminaries, of all of which institutions the Pittsburgh-Xenia seminary is the successor. Church sessions of the Presbyterian family of churches in this area, which do not have fireproof and damp-proof containers for the repose of their fifty-and-sixty-year-old minute books, should take advantage of the safe-keeping provided by the vaults at either the Pittsburgh-Xenia or the Western Theological Seminary. Such books, including some deeds and other papers, are in reality the property of the Presbytery and not private possessions to be passed on as family heirlooms.

Several of the early pastors of the Noblesburg church were trained at Service, the pioneer seminary founded in Beaver County in 1794 by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. Others were taught at the seminary in Canonsburg, the forerunner of the theological school at Xenia, Ohio. Incidentally, the old seminary building in Canonsburg is
now a dwelling, in a good state of preservation, on West Pike Street.

Prior to 1792, Noblesburg boasted at least one building set apart for public worship. Here, on the site of the present-day United Presbyterian Church edifice, Col. Joseph Noble, sometime during the eight years of his residence in this community (1772-1780) caused to be erected a log chapel for the use of worshippers, irrespective of creed. He called it “a house of prayer for all people,” according to his grandson, the Rev. Andrew McDonald, who was a frequent visitor in the Noble home.

Andrew McDonald, by the way, was graduated from Jefferson College, Canonsburg, on October 27, 1803. He studied theology under the Rev. John McMillan, the founder and first president of that college, and was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Ohio in 1806. To his credit was the establishment of three churches in the Presbytery of Pittsburgh, Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.: the Presbyterian Church of Sewickley (then known as Sewickleytown); the church at White Oak Flats (now the Mount Carmel Presbyterian Church at New Sheffield, Aliquippa); and the Sharon Presbyterian Church at Carnot. 3

But to return to the log chapel at Noblesburg—Col. Noble built it without any attempt to outpost his own denominational fellowship of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He saw that he was rapidly being surrounded by Presbyterians of at least three persuasions and may have thought a common meeting place to be within the range of possibility, although he and his family, including grown sons and daughters, are said to have become communicants of old St. Luke’s Protestant Episcopal Church at Woodville, upon their arrival in these parts. If his log chapel was indeed used for united worship by the local people, it furnishes, so far as the writer knows, this region’s earliest specimen of a “community church” in the modern sense.

The occupancy of this chapel by the group that developed into an organized congregation may have given rise to the statement in Scouller’s Manual that the founding of the Noblestown United Presbyterian Church was unique in that its first log church was not preceded by a “Tent” as a place for holding services. “Tent” was the name (deriving

3 Andrew McDonald’s interesting literary remains are the property of his great-granddaughter, Mrs. Helen Urling of Baden, Pennsylvania. The papers are listed by title and description in the libraries of the Western Theological Seminary and the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.
from the Biblical "tabernacle") given to the open-air meeting place on the frontier, because of the sheltering canopy, usually built of split logs, for the protection of the preacher, his Bible and pulpit, from sun and shower. Logs arranged in rows before the pulpit were for the seating of the worshippers.

The community to which the Noblestown church has ministered through the years first began to grow around the trading post established by Col. Noble when he settled here in 1772. Cabins and log houses, stores and blacksmith shops, a gristmill and a distillery came in the course of time. Ceiling prices at the tavern were likely fixed by law according to the order of the Yohogania County Court enacted October 27, 1778, to govern "Ordinary Keepers" as taverners were then styled.4

Col. Noble maintained trains of pack horses moving regularly between Hagerstown, Maryland, and points in the region south of the Ohio and Monongahela rivers, to supply the needs of a population constantly augmented by settlers coming from Maryland and eastern Virginia. He is recorded as trading at Fort Pitt. He may have had contracts for the transportation of the public salt stored at Alexandria, Virginia, for the carriage of which his friend Col. John Canon was commissioned by the court to make arrangements.5

For a number of years before the settlement of the Pennsylvania-Virginia boundary dispute in 1780, Virginia had exercised jurisdiction over this southwestern corner of Pennsylvania as part of her so-called District of West Augusta, comprised of three counties, one of which, called Yohogania, embraced parts of the present counties of Allegheny, Washington, Fayette, and Westmoreland. Its county seat was located on a bluff overlooking the Monongahela River above West Elizabeth, and its prosecuting attorney was David Bradford, a respected citizen of Catfish Camp (now Washington, Pennsylvania), and the much-maligned leader of the whiskey insurrectionists in 1794.

The settlers in the Woodville section of the Chartiers valley were accustomed to meet the Noble pack trains at the mouth of Miller's Creek on the Chartiers. This location was early designated "Between the Fords," and later was called "Between the Bridges." The place is

now known as Bridgeville. Noble's name did not attach to the trading post on Chartiers Creek, but his enterprise was built into the foundations of the thriving modern community that lies over the hills to the southeast of the village which by its name memorializes the founder of both settlements.

But Col. Noble, himself, never became entirely reconciled to life on the frontier. His great-grandson, Edward Noble Vallandigham, has quoted him as saying, in answer to a query as to where he lived: "I don't live at all; I breathe on Robeson's Run."

By the marriages of two of his daughters, Col. Noble is linked with two other near-by communities of the present day. His daughter Mary became the wife of Col. Joseph Beelor, Sr., whose stockaded farmhouse, at what is now the village of Candor in Robinson Township, Washington County, is listed as "Beelor's Fort" in the two-volume history of the Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania.6 It stood across the field to the southeast from the front of the Raccoon Presbyterian Church, near the western edge of the present manse property. The first man to be buried in the cemetery at Candor was shot down by an Indian on the site of the present coal washer, about a thousand feet southwest from the Kelso homestead. The scene of the murder was pointed out to the writer as a boy by his aunt, Mrs. Cornelia Allison Kelso, a great-grandniece of Mary Noble Beelor.

Col. Noble's youngest daughter, Martha, was married on April 28, 1778, to John McDonald, a native of County Fermanagh, Ireland; an erstwhile exporter of flax in Baltimore; and an immigrant to Robeson's valley who was destined to be one of the largest landowners in the region now occupied by parts of Washington and Beaver counties in Pennsylvania, and of Brooke County, West Virginia. The prosperous "Oil, Coal and Gas" town of McDonald, Pennsylvania, bears his name, and much of the borough has been laid out on property once owned by him. His wedding with Martha Noble took place in the little log chapel at Noblesburg, the first church wedding in the community, and the officiating minister was none other than the pioneer Presbyterian preacher and educator, the Rev. John McMillan.

It was in Fort Beelor that the aforementioned Andrew McDonald and his twin brother William were born to Mr. and Mrs. John McDon-

aid on May 10, 1779. Threat of an Indian raid into the upper part of Robeson Run valley, and the lack of militia protection for the McDonald home, had caused McDonald and his wife to travel the three or more miles through the woods to the shelter of sister Mary Beelor’s home. The twins were born the next day. In due time Andrew was educated for the ministry, and his brother William became active in the White Oak Flats Presbyterian Church. These twins inherited from their father’s estate the adjoining plantations upon which they had settled when they married, along the Ohio River at what is now Aliquippa. The “double log house” of the Rev. Andrew McDonald occupied a site near the present main office building of the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation, to which the McDonalds sold their lands.

Depredations by the Indians, such as the raids of 1779, were a source of great fear to colonists on the western frontier during the unsettled period of the Revolutionary War, in which struggle the people in the Robinson Run region had a part and saw local action. It was in September, 1782, that a band of about twenty-five redskins in the employ of “Head-hunter” Hamilton, the British commandant at Detroit, raided the Gabriel Walker plantation, “Richland,” near the present Rennerdale, about five miles down the Run from Noblesburg. These Indian marauders burned the Walker home and killed two of the Walker children. Two young women and a boy were taken captive and removed to a British post in the northwest whence they were returned to Fort Pitt upon the cessation of hostilities in 1784.7

Months before, the settlers in this region had addressed the following petition, dated April 5, 1782, to General William Irvine, then in command at Fort Pitt:

To the Honorable General Irvine, commandant on the western waters:
Your humble petitioners showing forth our situation since the year 1777, that we have lived in a state of anarchy. We were in great hopes that your honor would have supported us that we could have lived at our own homes; but lately, learning that the station is evacuated, we expect nothing else but that the Indians will be immediately amongst us. Therefore, we, the subscribers, have met this day at the house of John McDonald. At the risk of our lives and fortunes, with the assistance of Almighty God, we are determined to make a stop here the ensuing summer. We look upon it prudent to use the means as well as prayers. Therefore, sir, to you we look for aid and

7 For a more detailed account of this tragedy, see the author’s account of “Iffly—Ghost Town,” ante, 35:95 (June, 1952).
assistance, as we are but few in number, not able to repel the enemy. Therefore, we look to you for men, ammunition and arms.

We know that provision is scarce, therefore we will find the men that are sent to us, only allowing us rations—pay. The number of men we request is ten. McDonald, last Tuesday, waited on Colonel James Marshel, our county lieutenant, requesting him for some assistance of men, powder and lead. His answer was he could not furnish him with either.

Sir—We understand that George Vallandigham is to sit in council with you to-morrow, who was a sufferer as well as we, and has lately left his place of abode and took his refuge near Colonel [John] Cannon's. Pray, sir, ask of him our present situation. [Signed] Wm. Littell, Joshua Meeks, John Robb, James Littell, James Baggs, John Hull, Thomas Moon, John McDonald, John Reed, Wm. Anderson.

N. B.—The situation of McDonald's place is pleasant, lying and being on a knoll or advantageous piece of ground for any garrison. We the subscribers observing that the states must have receiving and issuing stores, it is our opinion that according to McDonald's promise, we think it the best place for said stores. McDonald's promises are that the states shall have, without cost, his still-house, hogsheads, his cellar under his new house, together with the lowest story of his spring house, without price or fee to the states. We have appointed Joshua Meeks and John McDonald to lay our petitions before your honor. April 5, 1782.8

A later reference to the same situation appears in the minutes of a meeting of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia on February 18, 1790, at which various claims upon the state were read and approved, including that of one "Joseph Brown, for one month's pay as a volunteer militia man while stationed at one M'Donald's for the defence of the frontiers of the county of Washington, in August, 1782, amounting to five pounds five shillings."9 It is to be hoped that Soldier Brown had other comrades in arms or was successful in training local sons for militia service. Perhaps John McDonald's son James, the heir to Primrose Hill, in later years earned a commission from such militia enlistment, since he was known as "Colonel" James McDonald.

McDonald's Fort, it would seem, was located near McDonald's home, as he had put the cellar at the disposal of the military authorities for storage. His home was called "Mount Pleasant." The same house, remodeled and still standing, was the residence of the late Mr. Edward and Miss Jane Craig McDonald, and is now the property of their

8 Consul W. Butterfield, ed., Washington-Irvine Correspondence, 298 n. (Madison, Wis., 1882).
9 Pennsylvania Colonial Records, 16:283.
younger brother, Mr. J. Nesbitt McDonald. It stands at the western edge of the town of McDonald. The writer's notebook contains an unverified statement, attributed to Edward McDonald (1792-1867), to the effect that “this Fort was located back of Merryman's house some distance, on or near the site of the old school-house. The Fort was built of logs, with a stockade around it for the protection of their cattle in case of a general alarm.” But exactly where Merryman lived is yet to be learned—perhaps from some scion of the Merryman or other pioneer Robinson Run family.

The village of Candor, where is located the Raccoon Presbyterian Church, was then at the western border of the widespread Noblesburg community. People mentioned in this paper went to church there, and prominent Noblesburgers are buried in its churchyard, including Joseph and Mary Noble Beelor, John and Martha Noble McDonald, George and Martha McDonald Allison, and others. Mention of this neighboring community in Washington County is deemed pertinent owing to the fact that Noblesburg was the mailing address for the Candor countryside, and when the people out thereabout talked of “going to town” they meant going to Noblesburg.

Periodically, Noblestown becomes a subject for feature articles in the Pittsburgh newspapers of today. The known age of this little place makes it attractive. Writers seem to feel that the prominent Noblestown Road, issuing westward from Pittsburgh, ought to lead to a habitat of at least erstwhile importance. A persistent tradition, moreover, claims that the village was deemed of enough consequence to be considered as a possibility for the new county seat when Allegheny County was organized in 1788. But this claim, as well as the one to the effect that some sessions of the Yohogania court sat here, is not known to the writer to be reliable. Reporters, generally, must be disappointed with the scarcity of memorials of the community's pioneer past. One such memorial commonly remarked upon is known as the "McClelland Bible." It was the property of Elizabeth Noble Vallandigham, the eldest daughter of Col. Joseph Noble and Martha Tarvin Noble. By inheritance it has of late years belonged to Ralph and Besse Allison of McDonald, who are both paternal-and-maternal descendants of the Nobles. It is now owned by Joseph Chapman of Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, who is also a descendant of Elizabeth Noble Vallandigham.

The following biographical notes, taken from the flyleaf of the Mc-
Clelland Bible, are quoted in both Everts' and Warner's histories of Allegheny County. In reverse order of their appearance in the original, these citations read: (1) "Joseph Noble was born in April in the year of our Lord 1715, and departed this life at his brother Francis Noble's in St. Mary County, Maryland on Sunday ye 24th day of September 1780, in the 65th year of his age"; (2) "Martha Noble was born in Charles County, Maryland on the 14th day of March in the year of our Lord 1724 and departed this life at her own house on Robinson Run in Fayette Twp., Allegheny County and State of Penna., on Saturday about one quarter of an hour after eight of the clock in the evening of the 30th of January in the year of our Lord 1796 in the 72nd year of her age."

The registry of births of Prince Georges County, Maryland, records Joseph Noble as the son of Joseph Noble, Sr., and his wife Mary Wheeler, and gives April 15, 1715, as the date of his birth—confirming and making more specific the cited notation in the McClelland Bible.

Col. Noble died while back in his native Maryland on business, and was probably buried in a private family burial lot among relatives. His widow, Martha Tarvin Noble, survived her husband sixteen years, and was buried on her own farm at Noblesburg. The grave of this pioneer mother is "with us unto this day." Interment was made on the little knoll across the deep meadow to the northwest, about five hundred yards from the old brick house, on the hill above the United Presbyterian Church. The house referred to—about which there will be more, later on—stands on or near the site of the log dwelling in which Martha Tarvin Noble died, as stated, in 1796. Her resting place is unmarked by a stone, and the grave-mound has disappeared, but through someone's care it was clearly discernible in 1887. It was visited on May 29 of that year by the sons and daughters of Alexander McDonald Allison and his wife, Susan Spencer Allison, upon their return from Raccoon Church Cemetery and the burial of their mother. The grave's location was known to the writer's father, Jesse Spencer Allison, at whose suggestion the spot was inspected by these descendants of Mrs. Noble in the third generation. Mrs. Martha Allison Lesnett (wife of Thomas Dell Lesnett, Sr., of Bridgeville), then in her twenty-ninth year, was one of the party in 1887, and, while the mound was still traceable, she again visited the grave with her daughters, Grace Allison Lesnett (later Mrs. Channing Shaw) and Sara Lesnett. In July, 1932, Mrs. Virginia
Davis Shriver and the writer were taken thither by the Misses Lesnett. Today the grave is shaded by a wild plum tree.

The old brick house on the hill above the church—a familiar landmark—was in its day the peer of the best houses on Robinson Run. It was built by William Henry Tarvin Noble, who inherited the farm from his mother, Martha Tarvin Noble. At about the same time his nephew, Edward McDonald, was building his home, Mount Pleasant, and Primrose Hill (later to become the home of Col. James McDonald) was also a-building. These two last-mentioned well-known houses have been remodeled, modernized, and kept up. They still remain without doubt the two best and most pretentious dwellings whose properties are contiguous to the right of way of the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, all the way from Pittsburgh to Steubenville.

The Noble house, unlike the other properties referred to, has had abominable abuse, and its present state of pronounced dilapidation is due to a combination of carelessness, poverty, and downright vandalism of a succession of owners and occupants. The graceful walnut balustrade that once lined the open stairway and fenced a balcony hallway on the second floor has either been installed in some other house or has been used for fuel by some "scroungey" tenant. The Herron family, who owned and occupied the place forty years ago, kept the house presentable. The name of its last owner is unknown to the writer, who has not searched title.

Because the notable Primrose Hill homestead has been mentioned, it may be said in passing, that the transformation that made it the house it is today was wrought in 1892-93 by the then owners, John James Cooke McDonald and K Noble McDonald. On their one-thousand-acre patrimony these men brought in the "McDonald Oil Field," upon which there were developed ninety-seven producing wells. Noble, the younger of these bachelor brothers, early adopted the letter "K" as a first name. Like Poe's raven, it was "simply that and nothing more," with not even a period to make it an initial letter. As the oldest citizens of Noblesstown will recall, "K" bred race horses and trained them on his private track above the bend of the road at Primrose. John James, quiet and affable, like his brother, was ever the gentleman beloved of all who knew him. The surviving widow of their relative and heir, Silas Gault, is Mrs. Lucy Mitchell Laughlin Gault, a great-great-granddaughter of Col. Joseph Noble.
Col. Joseph Noble and his wife were the parents of eight children, the following notes about whom have been supplied by the writer's kinswoman, Mrs. Robert Hays Shriver (née Virginia Davis) of Petrolia, Pennsylvania, who is an experienced genealogist of most painstaking thoroughness, and a great-great-great-granddaughter of Joseph and Martha Noble.

The Noble children were:

(1) William Dent Noble, born in Maryland on March 10, 1740, whose marriage (name of wife not given) and death dates were recorded in his mother's prayer book.

(2) Elizabeth Noble, born in Maryland on January 11, 1743, who became the wife of Col. George Vallandigham, as mentioned earlier in this narrative.

(3) Clement Noble, born in Maryland on February 24, 1748, who "Went to Sea" and of whom there is no further record.

(4) Joseph Noble, born in Maryland in 1749, migrated to Robinson Run valley, and enlisted in Capt. Alex. Peeble's Company, First Battalion, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, Militia. He became a sergeant in the same company. From his descendants Nobles Lane in Carrick, Pittsburgh, derives its name. His daughter Martha, born in 1770, was married on September 1, 1785, to Joseph Porter. In some records this Martha Noble Porter has been confused with her aunt, Martha Noble McDonald.

(5) Richard Noble, born in Maryland in 1750, settled at Redstone (Brownsville). He married Elizabeth Gough (also spelled Goe), a native of Maryland. After her death, desiring to marry her sister Eleanor, he became a Roman Catholic. His change of faith from Protestantism to Romanism is attributed to the ban placed by the canon law of the Episcopal Church upon the marriage of a deceased wife's sister to the surviving husband or vice versa. Among other heirlooms belonging to Richard's descendants is Martha Tarvin Noble's Episcopal prayer book.

(6) Mary Noble, the second daughter, came with the family to Robinson Run and married Col. Joseph Beelor, as mentioned earlier in this narrative.

(7) William Henry Tarvin Noble, the fifth and youngest son, came to Robinson Run with the family in 1772. He married Mary Elliott and had nine children. He remained to the end of his life on
the farm at Noblestown, a part of which is laid out according to his plan. Henry, as he is better known, died on April 3, 1819, and was buried in Robinson Run cemetery. His widow made her home with her daughter, Mrs. Aiken, and was buried in Allegheny Cemetery.

(8) Martha Noble, the youngest daughter and last of the children, was born in Maryland on April 17, 1761. She became the wife of John McDonald, as related above. She died in 1838 at the home of her daughter, Margaret McDonald Glenn, in Noblestown, and was buried at the side of her husband in the graveyard of Raccoon Church at Candor.

The American forebears of both Col. Joseph and Martha Tarvin Noble were among the early comers from England to the colonies of Maryland and Virginia. One such ancestor was Capt. Adam Thoroughgood (1602-1641) whose dwelling, built between the years 1636 and 1640 on Lynnhaven Bay, Princess Anne County, near Norfolk, is believed to be the oldest brick house now standing in Virginia. The place was made a shrine in 1921, and an address entitled, "Tercentenary of Adam Thoroughgood," was delivered by the Right Rev. Beverley Dandridge Tucker, D.D., LL.D., bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia. The published address bears no copyright restrictions, so the following quotation from it is included without permission of the author:

It is just three hundreds years ago, this year, that one Adam Thoroughgood, a youth of eighteen years, came as a Gentleman Adventurer in the Ship "Charles" to this extension of old England. He was the son of William Thoroughgood, Commissary of the Bishop of Norwich, and the great-great grandson of John Thoroughgood of Chelston Temple in Herefordshire. His brother was Sir John Thoroughgood, knighted by Charles the First, and a gentleman-in-waiting of Charles the Second. The young Adam Thoroughgood settled, first, in Kicoctan, which is Hampton, where he patented two hundred acres of land. In 1634 he moved to Lynnhaven Bay, and it was probably shortly afterward that this house was built. He acquired by Patent 5,350 acres, bounded on the north by the Chesapeake Bay (in the present Princess Anne County) 'granted unto him at the especial recommendation of him from their Lordshipps and others of His Ma'ties most Hon-ble Privie Counsell to the Governor and Counsell of the State of Virginia and also due for the importation of one hundred and five persons.' . . . Among the names of the new colonists [was] Augustine Warner, who built Warner Hall in Gloucester. . . . The importation by Adam Thoroughgood of Augustine Warner gave to America
and to the world, George Washington who was his great-great-grandson, and Robert E. Lee, a later descendant.

In due time a President of the United States would choose a wife from among the worthy women of Thoroughgood descent. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant married Julia Dent, a seventh-generation descendant of Adam Thoroughgood. Another feminine descendant of his, of the rank of eighth great-granddaughter, is Jean Taylor, wife of the Hon. James H. Duff, United States Senator from Pennsylvania. 10

In the minutes of the Virginia court held at Fort Dunmore, Pittsburgh, occasional mention is made of Joseph Noble and his sons. More frequent mention is made of his sons-in-law, Col. George Vallandigham and John McDonald (or "McDaniel" as the latter's name is often misspelled in transcript), both gentlemen justices of the court. A typical roster of the court's judges, for the session of November 21, 1775, presents such well-known names—familiar to students of early Pittsburgh history—as George Croghan; Edward Ward, who, as Ensign Ward, had perforce surrendered the fort he was building for the colony of Virginia, at "the Point," to the French and Indians who descended the Allegheny in overwhelming numbers in April, 1754; Thomas Smallman, for whom is named Smallman Street in the "strip" in Pittsburgh; John Canon of Canonsburg; and George Vallandigham of Noblesburg. 11

George Vallandigham, who figures largely in old Noblesburg annals, was born in 1736 near Alexandria, Virginia. He was descended from Michael Van Landeghem, a native of Landeghem, Belgium, who, with his wife Jane, emigrated to Stafford County, Virginia, in 1668. A younger Michael, father of George, changed the family name to Vallandigham in 1705. About 1770 we find George Vallandigham the principal of an academy in Prince Georges County, Maryland, where he married Elizabeth Noble in 1771. The newlyweds came to what was soon to be the Noblesburg sector of Robinson Run valley and purchased

10 Since this article was first written there has been published an exceptionally large and detailed genealogy, depicted in the form of a family tree, entitled, "McDonald and Allison Family Tree, Showing Descent from the Thoroughgoods-Fowkes-Dents-Tarvins-Nobles and Bradfords." This "tree" was drawn by James Edward Allison, distinguished American architect and senior member of the nationally-known firm of Allison & Allison, Architects, of Los Angeles, California, on the basis of data compiled by Virginia Davis Shriver, and printed in 1950. A copy is available in the library of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.
two thousand acres of land. As stated above, the daughter and her husband persuaded her parents to come here with most of their family in 1772. Vallandigham had become a surveyor and also a lawyer, and may have worked in this region before his settlement here in 1771. He was commissioned a colonel by Lord Dunmore in Virginia, after whom the fort at “The Point” was temporarily renamed in 1774. As late as 1795, Vallandigham maintained a surveyor’s office at Wellsburg, Virginia (now West Virginia). He was a far larger landowner in the new country than was his father-in-law, who may have purchased the Noble farmstead here from him. After the death of his wife, in 1801, Col. Vallandigham made his home with his daughter Elizabeth, who was Mrs. William McClelland of Noblesburg. He died there on October 4, 1810, at seventy-four years of age.

The late Mrs. John Dick (Martha McClelland) Allison of McDonald, a great-granddaughter of Col. Vallandigham, is the writer’s authority for stating that Clement Laird Vallandigham (1820-1871), prominent “Copperhead,” member of Congress (1858-1863), and history’s most unsuccessful candidate for the governorship of Ohio, was a grandson. This is corroborated in Rev. James L. Vallandigham’s book, A Life of Clement Laird Vallandigham (1872). Moreover, it is said that the Rev. Clement Vallandigham McKaig, pastor of the Raccoon Presbyterian Church at Candor from June, 1841, to December, 1865, was a descendant of our prominent early Noblesburger.

Coming back from our wanderings in the field of biography to within sight of the old Noblestown United Presbyterian Church, we wish to register the fact that the congregation was born in the stirring times of the Whiskey Insurrection—a series of protests and disturbances voicing the widespread opposition to the enforcement of federal excise laws in western Pennsylvania. During 1794 the movement threatened to be successful as an organized and armed revolt of such magnitude that President Washington commandeered fifteen thousand militiamen at Bedford and Cumberland to move, on order, into the disaffected region. That year a small force came into the insurgent area. It met with no armed opposition but acted unwisely as a punitive agency. Arrests were made indiscriminately. Prisoners were walked back over the mountains to Philadelphia for public exhibition and disgraceful trial.

12 See also, Dictionary of American Biography, 19:143-145.
The insurrection has been termed the "Revolution of 1794," and is histori
cally noteworthy as being the first real test of the ability of the fed-
eral government to enforce the laws of Congress uniformly. However, a
careful reading of contemporary documents, and of trustworthy second-
ary accounts, ought, with all due allowance for the hoodlumism of the
"lawless element," to leave us unashamed of our ancestors who did not
see eye to eye with the advocates of certain revenue measures of the
new national government.\footnote{Among the principal sources of informa-
tion about this uprising are Pennsylvania Archives, second series, vol. 4,
which is largely de-
} 

Throughout the four western counties of Pennsylvania—Fayette, Wash-
ington, Allegheny, and Westmoreland—considerable furore had been
evoked by the enactment of the first national excise law of March 3, 1791. This piece of legislation was fathered by the ill-fated first Sec-
retary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, who was very influential
with Washington. Opposition to this law, which practically nullified
its enforcement west of the mountains, grew out of the ingrained preju-
dice of the Scotch-Irish settlers against excise laws in general. Many of
them and their forebears had suffered injustice in connection with exci-
sce laws in Ireland. Then, too, Pennsylvania already had an excise
law which, while it was more easily enforced in the eastern counties
where there were large distilleries and more money, was very laxly ad-
ministered in the western counties where practically every farmer had
his still and whiskey was used in trade as common tender in lieu of cur-
rency. Local popular opinion had been against rigid enforcement of the
state excise law in the district mentioned, and the passage of a federal
excise measure was not approved by that same public sentiment. En-
forcement officers were intimidated by house-burnings, were none-too-
ceremoniously escorted out of their areas, and in some cases suffered
the indignity of tar and feathers.

The incident that brings the Whiskey Insurrection closest home, in
scene and sentiment, was the burning of the John Neville "mansion" on
July 18, 1794. General Neville was the chief revenue inspector for the Pittsburgh region, and his side of the story has been well publicized by Neville Craig and others. A bit of publicity emanating from the other side of the controversy, that of the “direct-actionists,” is the inscription on a tombstone in the Mingo Presbyterian Church graveyard south of Finleyville, Pennsylvania. It is that of the man killed at Neville's, in retaliation for whose death, it is claimed, the “mansion” was burned. It reads as follows: “Here lies the body of Capt. James McFarlane of Wash. Co., Penna., who departed this life the 17th of July, 1794, aged 43 years. He served during the War with undaunted courage in defense of American Independence, against the lawless and despotic encroachments of Great Britain. He fell, at last, by the hands of an unprincipled villain, in support of what he supposed to be the rights of his country, much lamented by a respectable and numerous circle of acquaintances.”

“The opposition to the excise law,” to quote from Donehoo’s history of Pennsylvania, “was not, in any sense, a movement among the ignorant and lawless element in western Pennsylvania. The most prominent, highly respected and influential men in the counties west of the mountains were opposed to this law, and they entered heartily into the movement in order to have the law repealed by legal methods. Many of them had no idea of the movement resulting in an armed resistance and an ‘insurrection.’ Among these men were William Findley, M. C.; Judge H. H. Brackenridge, Albert Gallatin, John Smilie, Edward Cook, John Canon, William Wallace, Benjamin Parkinson, James Marshall and David Bradford.”

The present writer purposely wishes to draw attention to David Bradford among his ranking associates. After the passage of the Uniform Act by Congress on May 8, 1792, which provided for uniform en-

14 The site of General Neville’s mansion, which until recent years was long occupied by a large and conspicuous frame farmhouse, is at the top of Bower Hill on a dirt road leading up from old St. Luke’s at Woodville. Its general location may still be observed in the distance from the front porch of the old Presley Neville house (latterly the Wrenshall home) at the junction of Tom’s Run Road and State Route 519, looking across Chartiers Creek to the east.

forcement of the excise law in all parts of the nation, the majority of the western leaders grew cold toward the opposition movement until Bradford, still outspoken, found himself the leader of it. He asserted his belief that the opposition had a cause worth defending, even with arms. Call his stand "treason" if you will, as the government undoubtedly did, and discredit him as a mere rabble-rouser, as those are apt to do who form their opinion of Bradford from The Latimers, Sim Greene, and other books of their character—the fact remains that in all the meetings for the voicing of public opinion he faithfully represented his constituency and did not let it down.

Bradford, who grew up at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, and lived at Peach Bottom in York County, Pennsylvania, before coming west, was a lawyer by profession and a man of breeding and education. As noted above, he had been the prosecuting attorney of the short-lived Virginia county of Yohogania, set up in these parts in 1774. His stone house, famous in its day for its solid mahogany staircase, still stands on Main Street, Washington, Pennsylvania, and is reputed to be the oldest residence in the city. In 1930 the house was the property of a great-great-grandnephew, Albert Allison, a local banker.

Bradford's sister Mary Jane was the wife of James Allison, a soldier of the Revolution, an associate judge of the Washington County Court, and the first clerk of session of the Chartiers Presbyterian Church, as well as the first president of the board of trustees of Jefferson Academy, and later, a trustee of the newly organized Jefferson College. Another sister was Agnes Bradford, wife of Hon. John McDowell (born September 23, 1736), who was one of the first elders of the Chartiers church, one of the first commissioners of Washington County, and one of the associate judges of the court of common pleas in that county.16

Neville Craig said of Bradford that he was "the bravest, and perhaps the best, among them," with reference, if I am not mistaken, to his erstwhile colleagues; but if Craig was comparing him with those who stayed by the insurgents—well and good also.17 When at length Bradford learned that amnesty was not to be granted to him, for one

16 The McDowell home has been rendered memorable as being the place where Dr. John McMillan preached his first sermon in this western country—as learned from the McMillan diary—on August 22, 1775.
thing because, aided by a friend, he had intercepted the mail and opened it in the old Black Horse Inn (on the site of the present post office building in Canonsburg), he forthwith made his way down to the mouth of Chartiers Creek opposite Brunot’s Island in the Ohio, and there boarded a flatboat bound for New Orleans, then in Spanish territory. It is said that on his way down-river some sort of an “Arm of the Federal Law” tried to board the boat in midstream, below Marietta, bent on arresting the fugitive, but that crew and passengers joined forces to keep the officer off the boat, and that further pursuit was abandoned. Arrived in Spanish territory, Bradford settled at Bayou Sara and spent the rest of his life there. One of Bradford’s sons married a sister of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, the old rebel blood continuing to run true to form.

It is likely that “ye old time” Noblesburgers and Robinson “Runners” had no particular love for “revenuers”—a la excise—for there were several distilleries or, more properly speaking, “stills” along the little stream. The rich virgin soil of the region was productive of bumper crops of small grains—rye, corn, and barley—which brought no price as food for man or beast. The only way for a farmer to get a little money was to convert his harvests into portable and, in this case, potable form for shipment over the mountains by horseback or down-river on flatboats. James Ewing built the first of the local stills near the present site of the Viviano macaroni factory at Ewingville, near the mouth of Robinson Run. He had come here with a group of seventeen families migrating, about 1771, from Presbyterian parishes in Cecil County, Maryland. A little farther upstream, the Walkers, Isaac and Gabriel, had stills on their plantations. Several other stills were no doubt operated along the six-mile stretch of the stream below Henry Noble’s gristmill and still located in Noblesburg on what may yet be called Mill Street. John McDonald, as we have already observed, and others had their “still-houses” farther up the valley. These manufacturers of hard liquor, for the good and sufficient reasons noted above, could hardly have favored an indiscriminate tax on whiskey. Their neighbor, Gen. John Neville, according to many accounts, had formerly been loud in opposing the excise, but by accepting the position of chief inspector of excise he doubtless became exceedingly unpopular with many of the residents of the Noblesburg district.

So much for the stirring times from which the Noblestown United
Presbyterian Church dates its founding. Its first notable pastorate was that of the Rev. William Wilson, who served here from 1800 to 1830. According to Scouller's Manual, Wilson was born in Armagh, County Armagh, Ireland, in 1770. He graduated from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, in 1792, and came to America that same year. On April 10, 1796, he was licensed to preach by the Pennsylvania Presbytery of the Associate Church, upon completion of his course as the first theological student to study with Dr. John Anderson at the Service Seminary. He was ordained by the same presbytery on May 14, 1800, and installed as pastor of the Flaugher'ty's Run, Montour's Run, and Noblesburg churches. He relinquished the Flaugher'ty's Run charge in 1819, and that of Noblesburg in 1830. He continued in the Montour's Run charge (now the Clinton and Robinson United Presbyterian churches) until his death in May, 1842. He had served as moderator of the synod of the Associate Church, first in 1812 and again in 1823.

In that period of its history to which the pastorate of Dr. Wilson and those prior to 1852 belong, the Noblesburg community was the chief trading center of Robinson Run. With the countryside rapidly being populated by reputable and progressive Scotch-Irish Presbyterian folk, retail merchandising flourished here. Three men of this community, John McDonald, Sr., his wife's nephew George Vallandigham, Jr., and his son-in-law George Allison (son of Judge James Allison and nephew of David Bradford, aforementioned) were members of the first board of directors of the Bank of Pittsburgh, chartered in 1813-14 and opened for business on November 22, 1814. John McDonald, Jr., was one of the early presidents of this venerable institution, which closed its doors in the great depression of the nineteen-thirties. Before the construction of the Pittsburgh-Steubenville railroad in 1852, conveyance in and out of Noblesburg was by horseback, wagon, and flatboat. Water-borne cargoes were floated down Robinson Run to Char-

18 Deed Book No. 1 in the Recorder's Office of Allegheny County contains much of interest as to the early real estate holdings of the Noblesburg community. Attorney James S. Kerr of Oakdale (whose father was the Rev. Dr. Greer M. Kerr, pastor of Raccoon Presbyterian Church, at Candor, for over sixty-two years) has authentically mapped much of the surrounding countryside according to original patents or early deeds. Mr. Kerr is a title-searcher by profession and is most expert in his chosen work, according to the unsolicited testimony of the late Samuel H. McKee, former president of the Title Guaranty Company of Pittsburgh, of which firm Mr. Kerr is now a vice president.
tiers Creek, thence to the Ohio River and the outside world. This was the era that gave rise to the legend of the ubiquitous "Mike Fink," that symbol of frontier roughneck realism whose exploits were recounted and embellished all the way from Noblesburg to New Orleans and back. As in the case of the Greek Homer, many places vie in claiming him as a native son. Among them is this town on the inland waters of little Robinson Run.

During the Wilson pastorate there occurred an event that has brought the name of this place into print in several books and encyclopedias in connection with the coming to western Pennsylvania of the Rev. Joseph McElroy and his friend the Rev. George Junkin. Several years ago the writer made research into the life of the former, whose first name, at the outset of the quest, was unknown to the searcher. He was my great-great-granduncle by his marriage to my great-great-grand-aunt, Mary Allison, in '1813. Her pastor, the often-mentioned Dr. John McMillan, officiated at the wedding in her father's home near Meadowlands. In a work about men of the Cumberland valley was found a biographical sketch of Dr. McElroy.19 In his time he was pastor of the First Associate Reformed Church of Pittsburgh, and the first professor of belles lettres in the old Pittsburgh Academy, forerunner of the Western University of Pennsylvania, now the University of Pittsburgh. The way in which I came into possession of a copy of Dr. McElroy's portrait from a friend in New York City, and the interest of University of Pittsburgh authorities in my finding, is a story apart.

The groomsman at Dr. McElroy's wedding was one George Junkin, who was also afforded a biographical sketch in the volume mentioned. Both were natives of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, and both were alumni of Jefferson College, Canonsburg, from which Junkin graduated in 1813. Shortly thereafter he set out for his home in Hope Mills, Pennsylvania, and later repaired to Dr. John M. Mason's seminary, forerunner of Union Theological Seminary, in New York. "He crossed the mountains on horseback," reads the chronicle, and of course there was nothing strange about that. While a seminarian he assisted in the organization of the first Sabbath School in that city. Upon his graduation from the seminary, in September, 1816, he and three other students—his lifelong friend Joseph McElroy and two others named Lee—set out

for western Pennsylvania in a two-horse wagon, and by September 15 "he arrived at Noblesburg in Allegheny County where the Presbytery of Monongahela (Associate Reformed) was in session." He was examined and presented all of his parts of trial which proved entirely satisfactory. His opinions on the qualifications for admission to participation in the communion were unsatisfactory, however, as he did not hold to "close communion." Because of his disagreement with the presbytery on that point, he was refused licensure to preach. He then asked dismissal so that he could put himself under care of the Big Spring Presbytery. Eventually he was ordained at Newburg, New York, as a minister of the Presbyterian Church, in which body he became a leader of the Old School party and a distinguished educator.

In 1832 Dr. Junkin founded Lafayette College at Easton, Pennsylvania, and served as its president until 1841. In that year he became president of Miami College, Oxford, Ohio, and continued in that office three years. He then returned to Lafayette College to serve again as its president from 1845 to 1848. It is reported that at Lafayette he spent upwards of ten thousand dollars of his own and his wife's money to meet the current expenses of that institution. In 1848 he moved to Lexington, Virginia, to assume the presidency of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University). He was an outspoken proponent of slavery but was opposed to secession. On account of his known sentiments he resigned as president of this college in 1861. He came north to Philadelphia, where he lived until his death in 1868. He did not, however, sever all connections with the South, as he left behind him there three married daughters, one of whom was the wife of Gen. Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson of the Confederacy. Dr. Junkin is buried in the Junkin-Jackson family lot, near the Jackson monument, in the cemetery at Lexington. His portrait was hanging to the left above the entrance to the alcove behind the pulpit, when I saw it there in 1938, in that famous shrine of the Confederacy, the chapel of Washington and Lee University. Also, within the alcove of the chapel, and directly above his tomb in the basement, reposes the celebrated recumbent marble statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee, the great Presbyterian leader of "The Lost Cause."

In this connection mention may also be made of two more men who had contact with this little Noblestown church and later had distinguished careers as educators: the late Rev. Dr. William Charles Wal-
lace, who served this church as stated supply for some time and later became president of Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pennsylvania; and the late Rev. Dr. John W. Hoffman, who was brought up in this town of his birth and, after serving a number of successful pastorates in the Methodist Episcopal Church, became president of Ohio Wesleyan University at Delaware, Ohio.

The next pastorate at Noblesburg, from 1831 to 1838, was that of the Rev. James Rodgers. A framed copy of the call presented to this minister is the property of the congregation. It was during this pastorate, in 1835, that the name of the post office was changed from Noblesburg or Noblesburgh to Noblestown. The change of name on the postmaster's stamp, made for some reason known only to the postal authorities, was the first indication to Noblesburgers, I understand, that their community was no longer a "burg" but had become a "town." No doubt life went on as usual!

James Rodgers was born in Ballynahinch, County Down, Ireland, on December 22, 1800. He received a liberal education with a view to becoming a civil engineer. In 1820 he came to the United States and settled in Crawford County, Pennsylvania. There he changed his plan of life and resolved to study for the ministry. He was graduated from the Western University of Pennsylvania in 1826 and studied theology at Canonsburg. In the summer of 1830 he was licensed by the Allegheny Presbytery and was ordained on October 20, 1831, by the Chartiers Presbytery of the Associated Synod and installed as pastor of the Ohio and Noblesburg churches. On June 12, 1838, after a pastorate of eight years at Noblesburg (latterly Noblestown), he became pastor of the Second United Presbyterian Church of Alleghenytown (now Pittsburgh's north side), serving there until April 4, 1860. He was a member of the board of directors of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and was superintendent of the Board of Publication from 1859 until his death in Alleghenytown on July 23, 1868. He was granted the degree of doctor of divinity, but when and by what institution our authority, Dr. Scouller, does not state. He was the author of lectures on Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" to the extent of eight published volumes.

The next recorded pastorate of the Noblestown church (with three years unaccounted for) was that of the Rev. John McClelland French, who served here from 1841 to 1843. He was born near Taylorstown, Washington County, Pennsylvania, on November 18, 1812. He was
graduated at Franklin College, New Athens, Ohio (now incorporated in Muskingum College, New Concord, Ohio), in the class of 1835. He studied theology at Canonsburg and was licensed by the Chartiers Presbytery of the Associate Church on July 8, 1840. He was ordained by the same presbytery and installed at Noblestown on October 22, 1841, continuing his pastorate there until his death on October 10, 1843.

The fourth recorded pastorate (with seven years unaccounted for) was that of the Rev. Fulton A. Hutchison, who served from September 16, 1850, to June, 1869. He was born on October 18, 1820, at New London, Chester County, Pennsylvania. He was graduated from Washington College (one of the forerunners of Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pennsylvania) in the class of 1844. He studied theology at Canonsburg and was licensed to preach on June 28, 1848, by the Philadelphia Presbytery. He was ordained "sine titule" on October 19, 1849, by the Presbytery of Southern Indiana. Some of his sermons were published during his Noblestown pastorate, as well as at least one lecture on "Evils" (a very broad and always current subject) delivered before the Beaver Academy in 1855.

An utter lack of soldiers' memorials at one's disposal prevents mention of the patriotic services rendered by members of this church in the wars of the period to which this account is limited. No doubt there were members who fought in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. As for other comments about the membership, especially about those who have gone into the service of Christ's Kingdom and Church at home and abroad, and about members of the boards of sessions and trustees during the years between 1792 and 1869, these must await the patient efforts of a future historian.20

20 At this point during the celebration of the sesquicentennial of the Noblestown United Presbyterian Church in 1942, the pastor, the Rev. Everett D. Gray, took up the narrative and reviewed the remaining seventy-five years of the history of the church up to that time.