WALTER LOWRIE (1784-1863), EDUCATOR, UNITED STATES SENATOR, AND SECRETARY OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

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I. EARLY LIFE
A Home in Butler County

One of the lesser-known men of Pennsylvania political history is Walter Lowrie. His feat of moving to the frontier of Pennsylvania at the opening of the Nineteenth Century and becoming, not only a well-educated man, but a public servant, is not paralleled in the annals of Western Pennsylvania history. Lowrie, a native of Scotland, immigrated to the United States at an early age and began his life here as a member of a poor, yet pious family.

Walter was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, December 10, 1784. He was the second son and fifth child of John and Mary (Cameron) Lowrie. Of his mother, Walter said, "I scarcely know an excellence of the female character she does not possess. Kind, affectionate and benevolent, with deep and uniform piety, the study of her life has been to make her husband and children happy."  

John Lowrie was a Scotsman from the lowland tribes; and, as his son described him, "My father,—a man of strong and independent mind, and, though only a common English scholar, during a long life

* Read at a meeting of the Society on May 18, 1953 by Thurman W. Hubner, a graduate student of the University of Pittsburgh. —Ed.

2 Memoirs, 4
he has acquired a great deal of useful information. In every place where he has resided, he has been respected and esteemed, and has sustained the character of an honest and religious man."

With the entry of the family into the United States, a permanent home was to be selected and Pennsylvania proved to be the place. At first, John Lowrie purchased a farm in Huntingdon County, near an early friend; there the family spent six years.

This farm was not the answer to John Lowrie's dreams, because in 1798, he left the farm and journeyed to the western portion of the state, which was being rapidly settled. He visited Allegheny County that year and along the Allegheny River, in what is now Allegheny Township of Butler County, purchased a farm, which was to become the permanent family home.

At that time, Allegheny County was a vast area extending to the northern and western boundaries of the state, including what is now Erie County, and all of the territory of the Counties of Butler, Lawrence, Mercer and Crawford, and parts of Armstrong, Beaver, Venango and Warren Counties. It was not a heavily populated area, and the land west of the Allegheny River was to be had "cheap."

The portion of the county to which John Lowrie went was outside the area of the Depreciation Lands and the Donation Lands granted the officers and soldiers of the Revolutionary War. The land was known as the "Struck District" and was offered for sale under the settlement law of 1792. These lands were sold to settlers after April 3, 1792, for $20 per one hundred acres.

The size of the original purchase made by John Lowrie is not known; but in later years, 429 acres were purchased from Simon Denniston, and 425 acres adjoining Matthew B. Lowrie's farm were purchased from John Field and Robert Smith in 1815. If land was considered wealth, John Lowrie was a wealthy man in later years. The size of his farm may well have been over one thousand acres.

Several trips were made in 1799 to this place to raise a cabin and plant a crop. The last of the year was approaching as the family pre-

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3 Ibid., 4
4 Ibid., 7
6 Deed Book C, Butler County, 359-360.
7 Memoirs, 6
pared to undertake the journey to their home.

An interesting account is to be found in Walter Lowrie's Memoirs of his journey to Butler County.

I was on foot, with the care of fifteen sheep and twenty-four hogs. The slow progress we made induced me, when half the journey was made, to insist that they should go on without me, and I would follow as the flock could stand the travel. With much reluctance they complied, and on the 9th of December, after crossing the Laurel Hill, they left me. My difficulties commenced the next day, in crossing Blacklock, a branch of the Conemaugh, on which there was neither bridge or ferryboat. I was obliged to wade the stream three times before I could get the flock over. This small river was twenty-five or thirty yards wide, and between two and three feet deep. The weather was excessively cold; in a few minutes my wet clothes were frozen, and it was two hours before I could reach a house of entertainment. On the evening of the 12th I reached a tavern, five miles from the Allegheny River. Early the next day a severe fall of snow commenced, accompanied with high and cold wind. With all the exercise necessary to keep the flock together, I could with difficulty keep myself warm, and it seemed sometimes that I must perish before reaching the river. When I came there, nothing could be seen but the snow, driven in every direction by the river, and, to my repeated calls, an answer was at last returned, that, until the storm ceased, they would not venture to cross the river. I was now cold and much wearied; the nearest house was five miles distant, and, in my chilled and exhausted condition, it was impossible in such a storm to travel back those long and weary miles. The snow was now twelve inches deep, much drifted in places and still increasing. The flock was abandoned to itself, for death now seemed to look me in the face. In this cheerless state I determined to make one more effort to warm myself, by running on the bank. Whilst thus engaged, during a slight lull in the storm, I discovered a side of a ravine, where I found an Irish family sitting beside a good fire. Their hospitality was extended to me with a cordial welcome, and the best refreshments of their frugal board was set before me. Having obtained this asylum for myself, my poor flock was next to be cared for. My host went with me, and with some difficulty we placed it in a small field, the only one he had. In the evening the snow ceased falling, but the river was so full of broken ice, that to cross was impossible. In the meantime my parents had reached home, thirty miles distance, but the storm had filled them with great anxiety on my account. My brother was sent to meet me, and came to the west side of the river, while I was detained on the east. Two days afterwards, with much difficulty and danger, we got the whole flock over in canoes. My kind host was fully compensated, and with many thanks.8

Much work had to be done on the farm, and Walter and his brother, Matthew, did the greater portion of it. Some of the land was cleared for the coming spring and plans were made for the enlarging of the house. His father, with the practiced eye of a Scotsman, saw the
need of a gristmill in the area and one was erected by the Lowries and a sawmill was built in 1802. It was this event that provided Walter with a visit to Pittsburgh. Winter employment for Walter was sawing wood. Transportation was the difficulty which lay in the path of a ready market for lumber in Pittsburgh, as this was the first of the many booms that Pittsburgh was to have. Indeed, in Walter's own words, . . . "in the winter I sawed wood to the amount of one hundred dollars, but did not get the raft to Pittsburgh, 60 miles distant, the only market, until the next fall."10

The farm, not to be located today exactly, must have been in the neighborhood of Little Scrubgrass Creek, a pleasant stream that joins Big Scrubgrass Creek and flows into the Allegheny River a short distance below the present day town of Kennerdale. From this point, Walter probably began his rafting trip to Pittsburgh, which is considerably longer than the sixty miles reported by him.

His Religious Call

With devout parents, it is only natural that Walter should be instructed in the manner of the Presbyterian faith, which was that of his parents.

The Presbyterian Church had been sending missionaries into the Butler County area, under the guidance of the Redstone Presbytery, for many years prior to the erection of the Presbytery of Erie in 1802. With the organization of that Presbytery, regular ministers were assigned to Butler County.

Found in the minutes of the Synod of Pittsburgh for the year 1802 is the following: "The Presbytery of Erie reported that . . . they have received from the Presbytery of Ohio one Licentate, viz., Mr. Robert Johnston, who has accepted a call from the united congregation of Scrubgrass and Bear Creek."11

Because of his devout nature and the fact that John Lowrie was a God-fearing man, he felt the need of worship and of a place in which to worship. He was one of the founders of the Scrubgrass Presbyterian Church. Its history is of special interest, as it was the only Presbyterian Church easily available to the residents of Northern Butler County.

8 Ibid., 5-6
9 Memoirs, 7; History of Butler County, 448
10 Memoirs, 7
11 Records of the Synod of Pittsburgh, 1800-1832, (Pittsburgh; Luke Loomis, 1852), 15
The organization took place in 1802 and the building was erected in 1803. A description of the building is given by the Reverend W. S. McNess in his book, *The History of the Butler Presbytery*:

"The groves were God's first temples." Then a platform a few feet square was raised a few feet above the ground for the minister as in Ezra's day, while the people sat on logs which had been drawn into place by oxen. The first church building was a small structure of round logs, clapboard roof, puncheon floor and pulpit, with a door and oiled paper for windows. It was reared in the northwestern part of the cemetery. . . . It was doubtless the work of a day by men skilled in the use of the ax and the community rejoiced over its humble house of worship. The awakening of a hundred souls the first winter soon compelled the congregation to take out almost one side of their building and add a shed. This building served for nearly a dozen years . . .

This awakening of the early Nineteenth Century had its effect upon Walter. Many reports of bodily seizures were to be read of these revivals. Indeed, if one is to believe the records, each meeting was one of physical torture. These bodily seizures were experienced by Walter during the revivals held by the Reverend Robert Johnston during the summer of 1802. Walter records the following account:

Every evening, after service, our pastor, the Rev. Robert Johnston, had a prayer-meeting at his own house. At one of these meetings, the exercises of my mind became extremely painful and distressing. Soon after the service had commenced I was struck with this extraordinary influence, as were several others about the same time. To convey a correct idea of this sensation to others is perhaps impossible. In an instant I felt that the will had no power or control over the muscles of the body. I fell backwards and suffered violent agitations, particularly of the arms, the muscles of the breast, and upper part of the body. There was no sickness, no pain, and the faculties of the mind were not the least obscured; if any change was felt, it seemed to be in an acuteness of perception, more than usual, as to everything around me.

For weeks following his physical and spiritual experience, Walter Lowrie remained in a depressed mood. If one were to attempt a psycho-analysis of his actions, it may be that he was then in the turmoil of a great inner struggle. This could have been his call to the ministry for he reported that after the relief of his mind, he felt a strong desire to study for the ministry, a desire which was never to be realized, although his life's work was later to be in the service of his church.

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13 Memoirs, 8
14 Ibid., 11
Education

The task of becoming an educated man in Western Pennsylvania was not easy during the early Eighteen Hundreds, it required many qualities, among which were perseverance, initiative, desire to get ahead, and the will to win.

It was the desire to study for the ministry that sent Walter Lowrie to the home of his pastor, Robert Johnston, who lived six miles from the Lowries. School hours were irregular; but generally from Monday to Friday was spent either working for, or studying with, the Reverend Johnston. Each Saturday, Walter would return home to aid his father and then return to his studies on Monday. In his Memoirs, he tells of his great desire for education, so great that although two other young men had commenced their studying a month earlier, by intense application, he was soon placed in the same class with them.  

The family must have suffered without Walter to aid them, for he remained but four weeks with the Reverend Johnston and then returned home. The reason given was, "On viewing the situation of my father, I was convinced that it was my duty to return home, and assist in placing him in more fortunate circumstances."

How Walter placed his father in "more fortunate circumstances" is not revealed to us. However, the task must have been accomplished, for the first of May, 1804, he once again returned to his pastor's home where he resumed his studies.

Again, Walter's determination to become educated was almost scuttled, but not because of any fault of his. The Reverend Johnston's charges were twelve miles apart; and, thus, much of his time was spent away from home. This did not help Walter Lowrie to advance in his studies; and with this in mind, he cast for a better situation.

Walter found more than an education when he moved to study under the Reverend John McPherrin, who was a finished scholar. It was there that he met his future wife, Amelia, the daughter of the teacher. Of his situation with the McPherrins, Walter wrote:

I now resumed my studies, with better hopes and prospects than at any time heretofore, and the most unremitting attention and diligence were bestowed upon my books. I went to bed between ten and eleven, and always rose at four in the morning. At five, Mr. McPherrin came to hear me recite. Excepting at breakfast and family prayers, I was not

15 Ibid., 14
16 Ibid., 14
seen out of my study-house until dinner-time, about one o'clock.\textsuperscript{17}

When Walter arrived at the McPherrin's, he found a crowded house; and, therefore, spent much of his time the first few weeks erecting a small cabin near the home in which to sleep and study.

Three years were spent under the tutelage of the Reverend McPherrin; and in March, 1807, Walter came to the decision that his formal education was ended. He was able to translate, at this time, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.\textsuperscript{18}

Thus, from a humble beginning at the knee of his mother, through perseverance and determination, he succeeded in becoming an educated man.

II. STATE POLITICAL LIFE

Entrance Into Political Life

As is the case of most young men when they have finished their education, Walter went to the nearest large town to seek his fortune. His first opportunity came when he was hired as a teacher in the school of Butler. Little is known of the school except that there were forty students to be instructed in the elements of an English education, and the charge per term was six dollars, payable in advance. Each student was to furnish his own books and the length of a term was November to May. As the teacher was permitted to keep the tuition fees, Walter Lowrie's salary was $240 per term. He records the fact that he found a suitable place to room and board for $10 per month, which included his laundry.\textsuperscript{1} Consequently, with the gaining of the teaching position in Butler, Walter's dependence upon his parents ended and his own life really began.

Teaching school was not to be the only job Walter was to have to occupy his time. As was the case with most towns, the need for competent personnel to run the government was great. Educated men, capable of writing, and especially of keeping ledger books, were needed. A logical choice of the county commissioners would be the local school teacher, who was capable of doing the necessary work; so a second job was offered to Walter Lowrie as clerk in the Office of the County Commissioners at a salary of eighty dollars a year.\textsuperscript{2} This appointment came

\textsuperscript{17} Ib\textsuperscript{id.}, 16
\textsuperscript{18} Ib\textsuperscript{id.}, 17
\textsuperscript{1} Memoirs of Walter Lowrie, (New York, 1896), 17
\textsuperscript{2} Brown, History of Butler County, (Chicago, 1895), 674
in October, 1807, and had a great influence upon his life.

It may have been, had Walter not accepted the position as clerk, that his ambitions would have remained in the teaching field, or, perhaps, turned to his prime objective, that of becoming a minister of the Presbyterian Church. Throughout his long and useful life, this desire was to regulate much of his work and influence. As it was, the appointment as clerk opened a wide horizon for Walter Lowrie. In the commissioners’ office was a logical place to meet people of all types—the politician, the public servant, and most important, the public.

Walter was not to give up his teaching for awhile, as the commissioners permitted him to be absent during the school hours provided the work would be brought up to date in the evening. Thus, two positions were Walter’s and both were positions that brought him before the public.

Marriage

One other phase of Walter’s life that was to bring him before the public’s eye was his bachelorhood. Throughout any frontier community, a bachelor was a prize to be captured by any means—fair or foul—and history records many bachelors that lost their freedom by means that may be considered foul. Even the County of Butler frowned upon the eligible male, who was still unmarried after reaching the ripe old age of twenty-one, for a tax of seventy-five cents per year was placed upon their unwedded bliss. Indeed, many a boy of sixteen or seventeen had assumed the burdens and responsibilities of a family, but it was not so with Walter Lowrie. He was busy gleaning an education and establishing himself during his boyhood years, but he was not so busy as to have overlooked the charms of his former teacher’s daughter, Amelia McPherrin.

One can easily imagine the hopeful mothers in Butler, inviting the schoolmaster to dinner, or a party, with the hope of their daughters captivating this very eligible and well-situated young man. Imagine, also, their disappointment when on the evening of January 14, 1808, Walter appeared in the office of a Justice of the Peace, Samuel Cunningham, with Amelia and several friends to have a marriage ceremony performed. The certificate of marriage reads:

This is to certify that on the fourteenth day of January, in the year of Our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and eight,

3 McKee, James A., 20th Century History of Butler County, (Chicago, 1909), 96
before me, Samuel Cunningham, one of the justices of the Peace of Butler County, Walter Lowrie of the county aforesaid, and Amelia McPherrin of the same county, were legally joined in marriage, each of them being of competent age, and declaring themselves free from prior engagements or other lawful impediments. In witness whereof, as well as the said Walter and Amelia, as I, the said Samuel Cunningham, and others, the witnesses present, have hereunto subscribed our names the day and year aforesaid.4

(Signed by the principals and 12 witnesses)

Thus, Walter escaped not only the tax on bachelors, but, perhaps, the urging of those mothers with their eligible daughters.

Married life must have added to the character of Walter Lowrie. Amelia gave him four sons and two daughters throughout their married years. John C. was the first child to arrive and Matthew S., Mary, Eliza, Walter M., and Reuben P. arrived in short order. His children proved to be both a joy and sorrow to Walter; for his youngest daughter, Eliza, did not reach the age of sixteen, while Walter M. and Reuben P. were later murdered by pirates in the China Sea. They followed their father in his devotion to the Presbyterian Church and became missionaries in foreign service. John C. also joined the ministry and labored two years in India as a missionary. His health, however, proved too weak to withstand the rigorous climate, and he returned home to serve in the United States. Mary became the wife of Samuel Baird, a merchant of Pittsburgh.5

Matthew Lowrie soon followed Walter to Butler and record is made of the fact that Lowrie Brothers operated a store on the west end of the square. Indeed, he was a man of many enterprises.

Public Life

Teaching, holding a clerkship with the commissioners, and running a store were not quite enough for Walter Lowrie. Found in the Pennsylvania Archives is the following notation: "The Governor this day (December 8, 1809), appointed and commissioned Hugh Henderson and Walter Lowrie, to be Justices of the Peace, in and for the County of Butler..."6

Teaching must have interfered with his other duties; for, by 1810, it is noted that Walter Lowrie is no longer mentioned as a teacher. However, another duty was soon to replace the former teaching position. Another civic position was added to his duties when in October,

4 Ibid., 139; Brown, History of Butler County, 67
5 McKee, History of Butler County, 139
6 Pennsylvania Archives, 2768
1810, he became a commissioner of Butler County.\textsuperscript{7} Joseph Williamson and James Scott formed the board of commissioners along with Lowrie. The principal duty of the board for the year was the taking of a census of cows, horses, mills, and stills for the guidance of the assessors. The budget was established for 1811 with total expenditures being fixed at $4800 for the year. Samuel Williamson was selected as the treasurer and his bond set at $6000. This bond was signed by John Negley and Samuel Deniston.

One source reports the work of the commissioners during the month of April was settling the bill with Alexander Hill, the builder of the court house, for $600. Apparently, banking facilities were nonexistent in the town of Butler, as a draft was given him on the Bank of Deposit and Discount at Pittsburgh.

James Scott resigned in October, 1811, and William Balph was elected to replace him as commissioner. Internal improvements were beginning to become a major problem in Butler County, as in other parts of the older frontier. Roads were being built and much of the time of the commissioners was spent letting contracts for the new State Road, which was to replace the old trail from Pittsburgh to Butler. Other roads were being built and probably the best known of these was the Mercer Road. The issuing of warrants occupied much of the remaining time up to December when the board settled with John McGinnis for finishing the work of the sheriff's office.\textsuperscript{8}

For many years, Butler County had been trying to find a satisfactory method of settling the accounts with Allegheny County, which were closed in 1803. In September of 1812, Joseph Williamson and Walter Lowrie visited Pittsburgh in another attempt to close the records, but were unsuccessful in their attempt and returned to report failure to the citizens of Butler County.\textsuperscript{9}

In October, after serving as a commissioner for two years, Walter Lowrie and Joseph Williamson resigned and were replaced by Robert Martin and Ephriam Harris.\textsuperscript{10}

Throughout the time Walter Lowrie was serving as County Commissioner, he was selected to perform several other duties at the same time. An Academy was projected by the citizens of Butler to insure an

\textsuperscript{7} McKee, History of Butler County, 98; Deed Book C, Butler County, 21-22
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 98
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 98
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 98
education for their children. The organization of the trustees was effected May 27, 1811, when lots were drawn to determine the length of service. John Mechling and Walter Lowrie drew one-year terms. A contract for the erection of a building suitable for educational purposes was awarded to John Purviance, the price being set at $798. Jacob Mechling was chosen treasurer and Walter Lowrie, Librarian.\(^\text{11}\)

State Senate

The year of 1812 was to prove a turning point in the career of Walter Lowrie. During this year, he was nominated for election to the State Senate. The electoral district was composed of the counties of Butler, Beaver and Allegheny. The following proclamation appeared October 9, 1812, in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*: "One person for senator of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in conjunction with the Counties of Beaver and Butler, in the room of Francis M'Clure, Esquire, resigned."\(^\text{12}\)

Throughout the various volumes investigated by the writer, several unfounded notations were discovered that made it appear that Walter Lowrie had served as an assemblyman during the years 1811-1813. Apparently, this is misinformation; as throughout the *Journal* of the House of Representatives for those years, there is no mention of Walter Lowrie being present at any of the sessions. Thus, it may be assumed that the first state political office Walter Lowrie campaigned for was the office of Senator in 1812. Indeed, one might say that the only office for which Lowrie ever campaigned was during this particular election.

The effect of the growing tension between the United States and Great Britain was felt throughout the area of Western Pennsylvania. Politics had degenerated into a simple issue—those for war on one side and those opposed on the other.\(^\text{13}\) Whatever reasons people may have had to vote for the various candidates in the previous election of 1812, the frontier was aroused by the cowardly surrender of Hull at Detroit. This event awakened the people living in the less developed area of the frontier states and Western Pennsylvania was still to be considered frontier in that respect.

\(^{11}\) Brown, *History of Butler County*, 353-354

\(^{12}\) Pittsburgh Gazette, Friday, October 9, 1812

\(^{13}\) Ferguson, R. J., *Early Western Pennsylvania Politics*, (Pittsburgh, 1938), 223
The people of Pittsburgh were inclined to the "peace" party, while those in the outlying districts turned to the "war" party as a means of expressing themselves against the outrages committed by the British against Detroit and other American possessions.

National politics was the major point of interest for the year 1812, with the state elections playing a less important, secondary part. The Federalists were strongly opposed to "Mr. Madison's War" and thought to end the war quickly by gaining the election and forcing a peace treaty. In the more settled areas of Pennsylvania, the Federalists held power, while the Republican strength sprang from the more remote areas. In the congressional race, Allegheny County was placed in the same electoral district as Butler County, and the outcome was decided by the majority vote given the "war" party from Butler County. Adamson Tannehill was sent to Congress and Walter Lowrie to the State Senate. The disappointment and ire of the Federalists of Pittsburgh are shown by the announcement of the election returns in the Pittsburgh Gazette:

The General Election in Allegheny County terminated in favour of the Peace and Constitutional ticket, by a majority of nearly 200 votes. It is our misfortune, however, to be connected in the election with Butler County, which has given a majority of 411 votes to the War ticket; of course Adamson Tannehill is elected to Congress; Walter Lowrie, State Senator; Joseph Reed, Wm. Marks, Junr.; George Cochran of Richard, and Jas. Scott, members of the Assembly. 14

The election of Walter Lowrie to the State Senate was following a national trend. As pointed out by Dr. R. J. Ferguson in his course of lectures on "American Political Parties" at the University of Pittsburgh, a younger generation was taking the reins of government from the older, conservative leaders. When elected to the senate, Lowrie was only twenty-eight years old, a product of the frontier, and a man enthused with the strength and vigor of that growing section of Pennsylvania. At heart, he was determined to strengthen the western area and to support those ideals of democracy which had become so much a part of him.

It was not long before he was put to the test; for with the taking of his seat in the Senate Chamber, he was given the task of studying the Governor's message relating to the improvement of roads and inland navigation. 15 No better person could have been selected, since his knowledge was firsthand and the need was great as he saw it.

14 Pittsburgh Gazette, October 23, 1812
15 Pennsylvania, Senate Journal, 1812-13, 35
The trans-appalachian land was open to settlement. Roads were needed to insure the movement of settlers to the West. Canals were later to perform the great task of delivering the necessary goods to these settlers; but where no canals could be built, roads and highways would serve the purpose. Many times throughout his term in the State Senate, Lowrie brought forth petitions for aid in the building of roads, or voted for measures that would lessen the difficulties of transportation.16

Early in his term, he proved himself to be in sympathy with those in need. Indeed, he may have remembered his many days of hard work to manage a living while still a young man in his teens, because his first act in the legislature, then seven days old, was to present the petition of a Revolutionary War soldier asking relief be granted him. This act he repeated time and time again.17

Another interest that remained with Lowrie after being elected to the senate was the education of youth. It is not impossible to imagine his mind recalling his own struggle to become educated, his teaching in a log cabin, and then working as a director of the Butler Academy. Butler, perhaps, meant to take advantage of the fact that they had a champion of education representing them. At any rate, Lowrie had not been in the senate long when he first asked aid for the Academy. His was a rare opportunity. He had been a county commissioner when the Academy was first planned, and even as he served as a senator, he was a member of the board of trustees.18

It was the practice in early Pennsylvania for the legislature to aid private schools, as public schools, supported by the state, were quite unknown. Thus, Lowrie outlined to the senate the work done by the trustees and that yet remaining to be done. From this speech, one may gather the manner of thought of this young senator; for in it, he states clearly his idea of social justice. His argument was that the government had collected much money from the sale of western lands. Some of that money could well be spent providing educational facilities for the same area.19

It must be remembered that Ohio, the first state to enter the Union from the Northwest Territory, had one section of land in each township set aside to promote schools. Lowrie may well have recognized the excel-

16 Ibid., 35, 75, 118, 124, 139, 290; 1817-1818, 6, 111, 113, 167, 208, 229, 267
17 Pennsylvania, Senate Journal, 1812-13, 51, 52, 53
18 Brown, History of Butler County, 353-354
19 Pennsylvania, State Journal, 1812-1813, 51-53
lence of this plan and wanted, in some small way, to correct this deficiency on the part of Pennsylvania. Indeed, he may later have wished to introduce a measure to this effect, but the western lands of Pennsylvania were already surveyed; therefore, any aid to schools would have to come through the legislature.

Walter Lowrie also cited distance and the general inability of the people to send their children great distances to school. In fact, many families needed their children at home to aid in the work and it may have been, with this in mind, he urged the building of many schools.20

Coming from the less settled portion of the state, it is only common sense that Walter Lowrie should become the champion of that region. His first year in the senate was one of working to gain advantages for the West. He introduced measures to make it easier to patent land, he voted for selling the remaining lots of the donation districts, and he worked constantly to reduce the price of land in the West. Internal improvements, he realized, would open the western lands, as little else would and his vote was cast each time in favor of erecting bridges, aiding turnpike commissioners and, in general, aiding in the settlement of the west.

When a man holds a public office and is re-elected without opposition, he must be doing what the voters expected of him. Such must have been the case with Lowrie, since in November, 1813, he was returned to the senate by the citizens of Butler, Allegheny and Beaver Counties.21

The wisdom and integrity of Lowrie was recognized by his fellow senators; inasmuch as in his second year of office, he was elected Speaker.22 It was a position of honor, as it was an interim office and little work was done during this short session. However, it was he who carried on the business of the senate until the next session the following December, giving writs of election and traveling throughout the state.23

National issues were reflected in the State legislature. Lowrie reported on the Governor's request for more troops with which to defend Pennsylvania in the event of attack. The war was not yet over, but was entering its dying phases, although none knew it at that time. Washington had been burned, Madison had fled the Capitol, and the bom-

20 Ibid., 53
21 Pennsylvania, Senate Journal, 1813-1814, 3
22 Ibid., 537
23 Pennsylvania, Senate Journal, 1814-1815, 3, 37, 38
The bombardment of Fort McHenry had resulted in the "Star-Spangled Banner." Tension was high in Pennsylvania. Little was known of the enemy's movements, and the invasion of Pennsylvania might be accomplished. Troops were necessary; but as Lowrie pointed out that Friday afternoon, the sixteenth day of December 1814, the militia could not organize quickly enough to repel an enemy force.\(^\text{24}\) The need of worrying about invasion was over, however, and when, a week later, a bill was introduced to enlarge the military forces, the senate never considered it because of the Treaty of Ghent being announced. Thus, the war ended and men were free once again to turn their attention to domestic affairs.

One of the items that came into prominence after the war was the inability of the courts to keep up with a number of cases on the dockets. Lowrie was appointed chairman of a committee to study ways in which the work of the judiciary might be improved. Several changes were proposed, the most important being to increase the number of judges in the Supreme Court, an additional court in Philadelphia, the districting of the state for courts, and the appointment of three judges to each district.\(^\text{25}\) Although these proposals were not put into effect immediately, the years proved their need and eventually these, and other changes, were made in the judicial system of the state.

A new capitol building was being planned during the session of 1816-1817, for Lancaster was no longer to be the seat of the government. With the move to Harrisburg, new buildings were to be erected; and Walter Lowrie was named to a committee to study the plans of the capitol.\(^\text{26}\) The influence of the West was being felt, since the site was selected as being nearer the center of the state thus cutting the distance from the western end of the state by nearly one hundred miles.

It is only natural that a man interested in books should be appointed by the senate to provide a means of caring for and increasing the State library. Previous to this time, little was done about the library; but Lowrie, from time to time, asked that certain books be added and records made available.\(^\text{27}\) With the move to Harrisburg, a chance came to provide library facilities and another duty was added to the many of Lowrie's.

One of the controversial items in national politics was the tariff problem. During the War of 1812, the United States made the discov-

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 49-50  
\(^{25}\) Pennsylvania, Senate Journal, 1815-1816  
\(^{26}\) Pennsylvania, Senate Journal, 23; 1817-1818, 11
ery that it could produce many of the items long imported from other countries. It was during this war that Pittsburgh had really begun the manufacture of iron in large volume. The woolen and cotton mills were rapidly learning the techniques of spinning goods and the manufacturers were interested in having a protected market. One year had passed since the ending of the war, and Great Britain was once again trading with the United States. Great volumes of manufactured goods were dumped on our shores; and with the high cost of production here in the United States, the manufacturers could not hope to compete with the low-priced British goods. Thus, began the cry for a protected market.

Previous to this time, a revenue tariff was the only tariff used in the United States. Hamilton's far-seeing program of paying our debts with the income from the tariff was coming to an end. The government needed money to pay its war debt and the manufacturers needed protection. A better reason need not have been asked and the tariff became a major issue in 1816.

It was only natural that the impetus for such a program should come from the state that was later to be known as the "Nation's workshop," and that the man who brought the problem to light would be a man acquainted with the problem. This man was Walter Lowrie.

Protection of manufacturers was not a new idea with Lowrie. He was, as most legislators do, expressing the desire of those he represented. Long before Congress had the opportunity to inquire into the question of protecting manufacturers in the United States, the movement had been launched in Pennsylvania. In the Pittsburgh Mercury, an advocate of protection declared,

Should it not, therefore, be the hope and the wish of every true friend to the genuine interests of our country, that the confidence manifested by our manufacturers in the government during the war . . . be misplaced and founded as it was, on the hopes they entertained . . . that . . . the constituted authorities would [extend] . . . relief, support, and patronage . . . by continuing the double duty on articles imported.28

So began the struggle for protection. The dissatisfaction of Western Pennsylvania with the tariff of 1816 was evident when the decline of manufactures continued. A depression was upon Western Pennsylvania, and the manufacture of glass and iron fell to lower and lower levels.29

27 Ibid., 18
28 Pittsburgh Mercury, October 21, 1815
29 Ferguson, Early Western Pennsylvania Politics, 236-237
Walter Lowrie was assigned the task of looking into the situation of the manufacturers of Pennsylvania, and his report had a very far-reaching significance.\(^3^0\) In this report, he took Pittsburgh as an example to show how people, even though they may be agrarian, profited by the increase of manufactures in the State. He pointed out several facts concerning supply and demand and the increase in the standard of living because of manufacturing. As he saw it everyone would profit.

In his report, he also pointed out the value of England's plan of mercantilism and the profit derived thereby. Such a plan was feasible within the United States only if the markets were protected from outside influence. His concluding remarks show that he was in favor of an increased tariff.

The citizens of this state have already embarked extensive capital in manufactures, particularly in iron and glass, woolen and cotton goods. But the large and unprecedented importation of foreign articles, has given a shock to our infant manufactures, unprotected as they now are, by discriminating duties.\(^3^1\)

His recommendation to the Senate was that the Legislature instruct the Pennsylvania representatives to Congress to take up the question and to have manufacturing protected in the United States.

During the six years Walter Lowrie served as State Senator, he was chiefly concerned with internal improvements and education. He aided in establishing the state library when the state capitol was moved to Harrisburg; he aided colleges, among which was Washington and Jefferson College, to obtain money grants. He served on the committee of the Militia to establish new training days and a better system of storage points for arms and ammunition. His ability and character were recognized by his colleagues for in 1818 he was elected to the United States Senate by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

One of his last acts as a state senator was to become a member of the commission for the erection of the state penitentiary at Allegheny, now Pittsburgh.

In 1819, Walter Lowrie joined his brother senator, Jonathan Roberts, in Washington, D. C., to be sworn in as the junior senator from Pennsylvania. He was appointed to the committees on Public Lands, Indian affairs, and Roads and Canals. His speeches proved his knowledge of government and proved his training in the state senate. He voted

\(^3^0\) Pennsylvania, *Senate Journal*, 251-256
\(^3^1\) *Ibid.*, 256
continuously for internal improvements and against unwise expenditures.

One of his lesser known acts was the establishing of the Senate prayer meeting group. This probably came as a result of his earlier desire to become a minister. He showed this desire in other ways as well. For example, in one speech he spoke about the possibility of rid-
ding the academy at West Point of the wiles of a public house near
the academy by purchasing the property and closing the tavern.

Perhaps the longest speech ever made by Lowrie was during the
struggle over the admission of Missouri and Maine as states. It was in
this speech that he proved his foresight by predicting the evils which
could happen by passing the compromise bill. He said, “That we are
drawing towards a very serious crisis; to save us from which all the wis-
dom of the present Congress, as well as the blessings of the Almighty,
will be necessary. But, sir, if the alternative be, as gentlemen, thus
broadly intimate, a dissolution of this Union, or the extension of slavery
over this whole western country, I, for one will choose the former.”

In 1824, Walter Lowrie refused to be considered as a candidate for
re-election and in 1825, the office of Secretary of the Senate was offered
to him. He accepted the offer and served in that capacity until 1836.

Walter Lowrie had never lost his desire to be of service to his
church and the opportunity came with his appointment to be the first
secretary of foreign missions of the Presbyterian Church in America. In
1837, Walter Lowrie moved his family from Washington, D. C., to
New York City. He lived and worked there until his death on Decem-
ber 14, 1868. He was buried in the crypt of the First Presbyterian
Church in New York City.

A little known figure in Pennsylvania History is Walter Lowrie,
but one who deserves much credit for serving his country well and in
many ways.