One of the exceptional items of spontaneous Americana is embodied in the memoirs of Andrew Sherburne, born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1765. The printed edition of William Williams of Utica, New York, 1828, has become so rare that it is seldom exposed in the sales rooms.

Andrew had an adventurous career in the Revolution serving on several privateers and being taken prisoner by the British at Charleston. His account of his unsavory sojourn on the British prison ship Jersey in New York harbor gives us an excellent picture of the frightful conditions which obtained. Following this, our narrator served another term as prisoner of war in the Mill Hall prison at Plymouth, England.

These episodes give a gossipy picture of the life of an American privateersman of the period. However, the interest of the narrative wavers in later pages when Mr. Sherburne gets religion and becomes an itinerant minister traveling all over New England, lower New York and Pennsylvania. He was in Reading in Pennsylvania for a night at least and also gives us an interesting, though short, account of the town of Lancaster.

Sometime, about the year 1815, it would seem, while preaching in the county of Bradford, Pennsylvania, he heard of a fertile missionary field in the new townships along the upper Ohio River. We can get an idea of the diversity of his religious career from a paragraph written when he was apparently first debating the matter of his removal to Ohio.

"On the second of July, I assisted in the ordination of elder Levi Baldwin in the state of New York not far from Owego Village; and on the Fourth of July assisted in the ordination of elder Benjamin Ovett at the court house in Spencer, Tioga County, state of New York. Proceeding westward I arrived at Angelica in Allegheny County, visited Olean Point and coasted up (down?) the Allegheny River twenty-five miles into Pennsylvania, then northerly to the headwaters of the Cattaragus and westerly down that river to Lodi within eight miles of Lake Erie. I then took my old track to Tioga and Bradford and coasted up the Susquehanna to Chenango Point. I then considered myself off missionary

* J. Bennett Nolan, Esq., of Reading, Pennsylvania, author, lecturer and member of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, addressed the Society in 1939 on "Benjamin Franklin in Scotland and Ireland." Several of Mr. Nolan's books are in the Society's library. —Ed.
ground and made my way home arriving about Christmas having been absent from my family and friends almost eleven months."

The old leaven of adventure which had lain dormant in the ex-privateersman since he had adopted a religious vocation, now asserted itself. He was a New Engander, born and bred, but western horizons beckoned. Moreover many of his old neighbors had removed to the Ohio Valley and wrote of the exciting life out there under the setting sun.

"For several years last past, while my wife was in health, I had felt strongly inclined to go to the state of Ohio. Under the impression that the land was cheap and good, and having but one son, and he but a feeble thing, I was very desirous to procure and leave a little inheritance for him; if, in the order of divine providence, he should survive me.

"When I returned from my missionary tour, I found that Mr. Kezer had removed to the state of Ohio, and settled himself in the town of Batavia, in the county of Clermont, about twenty miles from Cincinnati. I immediately wrote him, and shortly after received a very friendly and pleasing answer. I was resolved to follow him.

"The next summer I sold my place, paid my debts and procured a span of good horses and a new waggon and got ready to start for Ohio on the twenty-fifth of August, 1818."

Fortunately for posterity, Mr. Sherburne kept an excellent record which survived to be published after his death. Too many similar odysseys were burned or discarded or are still lurking in garrets.

"Before I set out on this journey, I had designed to have kept a journal, but I had so many other cares, and was so fully employed, that I never wrote a single line in my book. Although my memory is very treacherous, yet the most important occurrences are still fresh in my mind.

"At this time the tide of emigration was sitting strongly to the west. When I was at Olean Point, in the summer of 1817, I was told that more than three hundred families descended the Allegany in the spring freshet, and I think it highly probable that as many went into the western states by the way of Pittsburg and along Lake Erie.

"Mr. Krezer informed me that he saw two rafts of boards lashed together, from Olean, on which were thirteen families, their waggons, and part of their horses. He also mentioned an instance, in which a raft from Olean bro't down more than one hundred persons.

"It cost some of those families all their property to move into that
country, and indeed many set out who were almost destitute of property when they started. The emigrants generally furnished their own provisions, and paid a certain rate at taverns for the use of cooking utensils and table furniture; and in most instances carried their own beds to sleep on. In many instances they were not very welcome guests at taverns, as there was not much to be gained by such customers. Wherever we put up at a tavern, we hired our lodging. Whenever I could make it convenient, I put up with my Baptist brethren.

"When I got on to Rushford, in the Holland purchase, I struck on my old missionary track, where we were courteously received and entertained by Messrs. Freeman, Going, M'Call, and Benjamin. We tarried with these friends a week or ten days, in which time I visited Olean, and they would have had us tarry longer. We were now within thirty miles of Olean, but the water was not sufficiently high for boats to descend the river.

"Judge M'Call advised me to go on farther, but I had set my face to go to Ohio, and to Ohio I must go.

"When I was at Olean the year before, I had made my principal home at judge Brooks'; and he engaged, that in case I should move my family, he would take me into his house, and accordingly did so. There were probably a hundred families now waiting for the water to rise, that they might descend the river; and the number daily increasing. Many of them could obtain no other habitation than their waggons, until they could procure boards or slabs, to build what they called a shantee. They would, with boards, stakes and withs, build a sheep's pen, and cover it with boards or slabs, frequently without any floor but the ground, and sometimes two or three families would camp together in those shantes.

"In this little village, situated among large smutty pine stumps, were five or six taverns, three or four stores, and probably twenty or thirty other houses. It was a place of real speculation. Among the emigrants were characters of almost all descriptions:—some very rich, and others extremely poor. Speculators were there from various parts of the country, for the purpose of buying up horses from the emigrants, who were frequently glad to get rid of them, at almost any price, as horse keeping was very high. They could seldom sell them for cash, but were obliged to take goods at an extravagant price. Olean Point was denominated
the 'jumping off place'; as frequently persons in desperate circumstances would 'clear out,' (as it was called,) and hasten to this place, step or jump on board the first boat in which they could obtain a passage, and be off. Sometimes, however, they were overtaken by a wife, or a creditor, before they had opportunity to embark. A small unfinished room would rent for a dollar a week, and there were many erected for that purpose.

"Provisions were very dear; flour at six dollars per hundred; bacon and butter at twenty-five cents per pound, and other provisions in proportion. We were detained seven weeks in this place, before there was a sufficiency of water in the Allegany for boats to descend. My horses cost me one hundred and forty dollars, but I did not sell them for more than half that price.

"One major Shepherd, with whom I had some acquaintance at Tioga point, the year before, had built a convenient boat to take his family down the river. He offered me a passage for ten dollars. I took my family on board on the second of December, in the afternoon, and in company with several boats pushed off for Ohio; having on board several passengers, who boarded with major Shepherd."

Now follows the part of our narrative which has the greater interest for the Pennsylvania reader after all these decades. Up to this point Sherburne may be said to be going through the stage of preparation for a perilous enterprise. Now he pushes off into the great unknown.

"We had already been almost four months on our journey; and our long detention at Olean—the excessive high price of house rent, and provisions—together with the approach of winter, and the probability of the fall of the river in a short time—all conspired to induce us to hasten on our journey.

"I was much pleased on pushing off into the channel of the Allegany, in company with four or five other boats. Imagination could scarcely paint a more pleasant scene. It was perfectly calm; the river about fifty yards wide in this place, and beautifully overhung on either side with majestic and spreading trees. The gentle current, sloping banks, and serpentine course, presented such a beautiful prospect as could not fail to elevate the mind of any one possessed of sensibility.

"I had now once more launched out upon this delusive and treacherous element, which had heretofore, in so many instances, proved so disastrous. I scarcely anticipated any further difficulty, until we should have arrived on the pleasant banks of the Ohio. As we were thus
securely gliding down the stream, without the least apprehension of
danger, at about the going down of the sun, we ran upon an old log in
the middle of the river, and stuck fast. To my shame I would speak it,
I did not apply the admonition of Watts' in the following lines, while I
was feasting my fancy:

'We should suspect some danger nigh,
When we possess delight.'

'We immediately got out our setting poles, and found the water
to be about ten feet deep, and the log elevated from the bottom at an
angle of about forty or fifty degrees. We could wheel our boat round
and round on the log, but could not get her off. It was indeed appalling
to be thus fast moored, and see the other boats of our little fleet all pass
by and leave us.

'We were in league with a Mr. Abbott, who had his sons and sons-
in-law, and daughters and daughters-in-law with him, in a boat about as
large as ours. They having gone on about a mile, and finding that we
did not come on, were faithful to their engagements, landed, and came
back to our assistance. But it was now nearly dark, and we had no skiff
or canoe, and lay fast in the middle of the river, in ten feet of water.
There was no alternative for us but to remain where we were until
morning, although in imminent danger of filling and sinking; for the
bow of our boat was already six inches higher than our stern, and the
river was falling and the more the river fell the more our danger
increased. As might be expected, our women were much frightened;
and if the men were equally so, they kept it to themselves.

'We having on board a Mr. S. a freewill baptist preacher and a
deacon M., a presbyterian, as might be expected, we had prayers that
evening. God was graciously pleased to preserve us all until morning,
and our comrades came early to our assistance. They cut two or three
long poles, and lashed end to end, so as to reach us. We caught the
poles and chained them to our boat, and the men on shore, by my direc-
tion, rigged what sailors call a 'Spanish windlass,' and shortly drew us
off the log. To our great joy, we rejoined our comrades, and went on
pleasantly;—but alas! there were yet troubles ahead.

'We shortly came in sight of several boats which were fast upon
the ripples, and the men out in the water endeavoring to heave them
along with handspikes, and it was shortly our lot to be in the same pre-
dicament. We all succeeded however in getting over; and passing on a
few miles, found ourselves in a similar condition, and we had repeated
scenes of this kind that day, and at night stopped at the head of Jemmi-
son’s islands, which were dangerous to pass. The channel was narrow
and crooked, and the water very rapid, and there were some dangerous
obstructions in the way. On the morning of the third day, we found
ourselves surrounded with ice. We lay in a cove where the water was
still, and the ice was about an inch thick. We broke away the ice and
pushed into the stream, and descended the rapids without injury.

“Hitherto my age and infirmities had exempted me from exposing
myself to the water, but I was now obliged to assist, for sometimes it
took two or three boat’s crews to get one over a ripple. I was thus
exposed two days in succession, sometimes in the water half an hour at
time, and sometimes up to my middle. On the fourth night after we
started, there came a heavy rain, and raised the river five feet perpen-
dicularly. The storm terminated with snow, which was five or six inches
deep. The velocity of the current was now much increased, which
greatly facilitated our passage to Conawango creek. Here were a num-
ber of large rafts of boards and timber ready to set off. Their owners
were depending on men who might be coming down in boats, to help
them work their rafts. It was moreover an advantage to a boat to join
a raft, for they got along much faster, and the raft men had the privi-
lege of cooking, and sleeping under cover, in the boat.

“A Mr. Woodworth had two large rafts, with which he was bound
to Maysville, Kentucky. Mr. Abbott’s boat joined to one of those rafts,
and our boat to the other. It was Mr. Woodworth’s design to join all
together when we got into the Ohio.

“Our pilot had the misfortune to run our raft on to Deadman’s
ripple, fifteen miles below Pittsburgh, about an hour before day light.
The other raft was at that time some distance ahead. Our raft was
swung round by the stream and completely shut our boat in on the head
of the island. The water was fast falling, and it was with difficulty we
got off our boat. After some hours labor, we proceeded on and came up
with Woodworth’s raft and Abbott’s boat, at Beaver creek, thirty miles
from Pittsburg. The Ohio had fallen ten feet since the last rain, and the
ice was increasing very fast. Two young men, who were going down in
a skiff, very gladly joined our raft, and their skiff was of great service
to us. By the time we got to Steubenville, seventy-three miles from Pitts-
burg, the river was almost covered with ice. I was under the necessity
of landing at Steubenville, to purchase a book called the navigator.

“The river was so much obstructed with ice we had some difficulty
in landing, and much greater in coming up with our raft again, which we did not effect in some hours. Our raft at length became entirely unmanageable in despite of all we could do, it would turn about in the river, and the broken ice would pile up two or three feet thick upon the raft when it swung around.

"At length we were driven on the Kentucky shore, in the night. We were all very much alarmed at the terrific rumbling of the raft against the ice and the shore. The ice was in many places piled three or four feet thick on the shore, and sometimes the large sheets of ice, containing three or four, and sometimes even ten acres, would rush against the raft with a tremendous crash. Fortunately for us, the boats were frozen fast to the raft and the ice on the side where the boats were, was much firmer than elsewhere.

"In the morning we succeeded in making fast to the shore, but were soon broken away again by the ice. At length Mr. Burke, a lawyer, came down to the shore, and advised us to fall a large sycamore tree into the river, a little above our raft, in order to turn away the ice. In this we succeeded, and had a safe harbor, where we lay several days until the ice had chiefly ran out of the river. By this time the raft had grounded; we then took our boats, and in about three days we landed at New Richmond, twenty miles above Cincinnati, and ten miles from Batavia, whither we were bound."

Here ends the part of the Sherburne narrative with which we are concerned at the moment. We might, did space permit, follow him through his Ohio sojourn until in January 1823 he commends himself to God and begins the long trek back home to New England. He returned again to Ohio for a brief visit in 1826.

Our diarist lived on until 1831, dying in his native New Hampshire in the sixty-sixth year of his age. He was an excellent example of our early church militant, could pull an oar, wield an axe and was an adept with the rifle. But he was perhaps most at home in the long-room of some frontier tavern expounding to a group of trappers and emigrants the beauties of those gospels in which he found his greatest satisfaction.