The sixteenth annual tour of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and the University of Pittsburgh Summer Sessions was held July 20, 1957. The tourists left the Society building at 2 P. M. in five chartered buses of the Harmony Line. Over 200 traveled this way, a few by private automobiles.

The first stop was made at The Point, where on a mound overlooking the region, President McClintock welcomed the group and presented C. Stanton Belfour who described the geography of the area and related the successive events that had occurred at this place where was decided whether Anglo-Saxon or French influence should rule the Atlantic seaboard and the future nation. Mr. Belfour was followed in his description of the Point and Gateway by Charles Stotz, who has had much to do with the plans of restoration of the area. Mr. Stotz described much of what he had given in detail in a former address at the Historical Society on the five forts established at and near the Point. Then Mr. Stotz made particular reference to the near-by Block House, constructed in 1764, as an “after thought” of Port Pitt, from time to time repaired as needed but today essentially the same as when first built—the oldest and only standing block house of the region in which the British-French contest was waged.

The Block House was then visited and inspected, after which the buses carried the group to Grandview Avenue and Sweetbriar Street, on Mt. Washington where a magnificent view of the river valley and surrounding hills was obtained. Here, director Christie related in excellent detail the consecutive events that had taken place in this panoramic region, referring particularly to Celeron’s, Washington’s, the French and the English visits. Many later visitors have written and spoken of the unexcelled view of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Valleys obtained from this vantage point.

The tourists continued on via Route 51 through the West End, McKees Rocks, the Ohio River Boulevard to Logstown on the Ohio, below Ambridge. Here Lawrence Thurman, curator of Old Economy, described what the fort at this place was supposed to have been. (There was originally some dispute as to whether the fort was at this point or on the opposite west side of the Ohio.) Mr. Thurman referred
to the importance of Logstown as the meeting place for conferences with the Indians, of Celeron’s visit (he considered this rather than the Forks as most strategic), of Washington’s first visit here (1753), and of General Wayne’s use of the location for a drill ground. The place later became known as Legionville. After a view of the redoubt and revetments—the only vestiges of the settlement remaining—the tourists moved on to Old Economy.

At Old Economy the visitors were divided into two groups; one group was conducted through the various buildings while the second group had dinner served in the garden, following which the procedure was reversed. The tour of the buildings and grounds was conducted by Lawrence Thurman, curator of the property. Mr. Thurman related the story of how George Ropp, a lay preacher of Wurttemberg, Germany, and his pietist followers to the number of more than 500 came to America in 1803-1805 and settled at “Harmony” near the present Zelienople on a tract of over 5,000 acres. Here under Father Rapp and his adopted son, Frederick Reichert Rapp, the Society as a Communal working group, prospered, and after ten years sold their holdings for $100,000 and moved on to Harmony, Indiana, where on a 27,000 acre tract they prospered greatly. In 1825 they sold their holdings to Robert Owen for $190,000, and moved to the present Economy which was the central development on a 3,000 acre tract extending five miles along the Ohio. The Harmony Society was made up of skilled craftsmen and expert farmers. Their buildings and land attracted visitors from all over Europe and America. Economy was known as the American Silk-center in 1830-1840. Timber lands were bought and utilized; railroads were financed; boats were built; large vineyards were planted; music halls, churches, and buildings for production of special items were constructed. At one time 65,000 acres of land were held, worth 2 million dollars. Decline followed the death of Father Rapp. This decline was attributed to celibacy, unwise investments, litigation, damage suits, etc., so that in 1894 there were only 18 legitimate members of the Society left and only two remained when the Society was dissolved in 1905. Through the Commonwealth escheat proceedings and court action. The state of Pennsylvania received title to the Great House block and the property on which the music Hall stands and in 1919 the property was placed under the care of the Historical Commission. At present some 17 buildings make up the Commonwealth’s holding. Among those
visited on Mr. Thurman’s tour were the Music Hall, the Feast Hall, where were many exhibits of Economite construction, museum pieces from various parts of the world, samples of products from the looms, millinery, shoes, dairy implements and carpentry are on display. Also visited were the wine-cellar and the Great House a 35 room structure of hand-made red brick in which the furniture and equipment are gradually being restored.

In the evening in the beautiful gardens extending from the Great House to the Ohio River road and containing the garden temple and the Grotto, was presented a pageant, “Man Reach,” written by Gladys L'A. Hoover with a cast representing 26 characters, The Harmonie Players, largely local amateur players. In the beautiful settings of the garden, the Great House and the church, the running story of the Harmonists particularly through the lift of George Rapp, Frederick Rapp, and Gertrude Rapp, in Wurttemberg, Harmony (Pa.), Harmony (Indiana) and at Economy, was presented in a charming manner. The tourists then boarded the buses and arrived in Pittsburgh about midnight.

JUST OVERLOOK PITTSBURGH

ROBERT D. CHRISTIE

The abrupt hill which dominates Pittsburgh on the south is known as Mount Washington,¹ and because it bears the name of America’s most distinguished officer, it is often assumed that Major Washington climbed it before making his famous decision which ultimately resulted in the development of our city. It is unlikely that he did so on that occasion, though he may have done it on a later visit. He certainly does not mention it in the journal which recorded his activities here in detail.

The name of this hill in Colonial times was, “Coal Hill” and with the construction of Pittsburgh’s first bridge it supplied a steady procession of wagons with coal which helped to darken the sky above homes and factories. If one knows where to look it may still be possible to find evidence that this hill was tunnelled with digging. The writer, as a small boy recalls an impressive experiment, shall we say in physics,

¹ Some maps of Pittsburgh, which have been published in recent years, show thereon Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights. On these maps Sweetbriar Street is in Duquesne Heights.
which proved that there is such a thing as a bottomless pit, for bricks dropped down a particular hole near Bertha Street never seemed to end their fall, and lighted newspapers disappeared in complete darkness. Use gave rise to apprehensions as awesome as those which once attended the flushing of a snake down a modern toilet and left an indelible impression of the depth at which coal was mined.

The crown of this hill may be reached by car from the heart of the city in less than fifteen minutes, using a road of easy grade which ascends from the mouth of the Liberty Tubes. The road emerges on Grandview Avenue which runs along the crest both to the right and the left. A sign directs tourists to the left but there is no obligation to go that way.

There are three points at which large groups may view the city from this hill. (1st) Grandview Park, located almost directly above the Liberty Tubes, is reached by following Grandview Avenue beyond its eastern terminus to Beltzhoover Avenue via Bailey Avenue. This is a beautiful little park plainly marked on all city maps but one which few Pittsburghers have ever visited. It affords a fine view of the central section of the city. Marked by a huge water tower it beckons visitors with its close-cropped grass and benches. (2nd) A spot at the intersection of Kearsarge Street and Grandview Avenue marked by the Presbyterian Church and Carnegie Library offers a splendid view over an iron fence, or just beyond, from a tiny rustic look-out. It is to this spot that visitors are directed. It gives a close-up of Point Park development but the view of the Allegheny River is blanketed by buildings. (3rd) If, instead of turning left on entering Grandview Avenue, you turn to the right (West) and drive nine short blocks, stopping at Sweetbriar Street, you have reached the spot used by 190 people on our 16th tour to view historic Pittsburgh. Looking up from below it is just west of the controversial time board which flashes the hour at night. There is no fence here and it is not needed. The ground above the pavement rises about two feet to a luxuriant weed patch (not marijuana) through which a clearly defined path leads in both directions. The view looking far up or down the rivers is superb. It offers the ideal setting to visualize events of a little over 200 years ago.

One looks down from this exalted point on what the Scotch historian Thomas Carlisle described as that “admirable three-legged place,” his reference being to the three rivers. In 1796 Victor Collot, a
French engineer standing just east of this spot made a beautiful topographical map of what he saw, and if I may be permitted to paraphrase his comment slightly, he wrote, "The situation of Pittsburgh comes close to being one of the most picturesque on the continent." He took exception to the angle at which the Allegheny entered the Ohio River but we cannot do anything about that. The map he made has the distinction of being the first to show the actual location of coal mines in the Pittsburgh area.

French geography included the Allegheny River as a part of the Ohio which was also known to them as, "La Belle Riviere" (The Beautiful River). Not many years ago an old steel mill, operating in lower Allegheny, bore the name La Belle Iron Works. When it was dismantled a newspaper writer suggested that the name was doubtless inspired by romantic attachment of one of the owners for a beautiful Parisienne. Nothing could have been further from the fact. The mill overlooked the confluence of the rivers which formed the Ohio as we know it. The name was most appropriate.

The word "Ohio" is of Indian origin and may well be a fragment of a longer descriptive word. Scholars have some reason to believe the complete word may have meant, "The River of Whitecaps" or "The Main River" but your guess may be as good. The name "Monongahela" has been interpreted as, "The River of Falling Banks," a reference to the muddy color of its water. Among other characteristics it is one of the few rivers east of the Mississippi which flows north. Geologists tell us that the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers once drained into Lake Erie but upheavals from below and glacial deposits from above reversed their direction so that today the drainage to the south begins close to the shores of Lake Erie. It was this fact which made it possible for the French to make relatively short portages to reach water flowing to the Ohio.

The upstream waters of the Allegheny lead directly toward the heart of New France via French Creek or Chautauqua Lake and the Great Lakes to the St. Lawrence. On the other hand those of the Monongahela led toward the British Colonies via Nemacolin's Trail from Redstone (Brownsville) to Wills Creek (Cumberland) and thence by the lengthy Potomac River to what Washington called "our settlements." In brief, the rivers beneath Mount Washington were the general avenues over which the two greatest nations of the world converged.
in a rivalry to control the valley of the Ohio, and war was inevitable. This spot became the focal point of a conflict which lasted seven years, involving the armies and navies of the leading nations as it spread around the world. The British won but the terms of peace imposed on France were so harsh that she bided her time. At this point you are invited to scrutinize the composition of the forces which won the decisive battle of the Revolution, Yorktown. Just how do you account for the presence of 7,000 French troops and the French navy in that action? How do you account for the selection of Washington to assume supreme command of the Revolutionary army? Had he not been a farmer for 15 years prior to 1775? With these thoughts it becomes apparent that the events which took place near the Forks of the Ohio slightly over 200 years ago were important in the sequence of events which led this nation to the exalted position it occupies today.

In 1753 there was no evidence of man’s handiwork visible from this hill. Trees of a size which today tax credulity extended in unbroken forest far beyond the range of vision. Their density created a perpetual twilight in summer over the paths used by animals, Indians and traders. The foreground of the Monongahela slightly to the right showed a large island in times of low water. Near the far shore of the Allegheny just below the point there were two islands. One of them, known as Smoky and later as Killbuck Island, had an extensive pebbly shore which was ideal for burning soldiers without igniting the woods and many proved it. Today these islands have disappeared due to gravel-dredging and filling from the shore. With these changes in mind one can still get a picture which is not greatly altered by the addition of bridges, railroads and buildings.

It was once thought that LaSalle might have come down the Ohio during a time when his movements were unaccounted for but today that seems doubtful.

In 1749 Celoron, using Lake Chautauqua, came down the Allegheny and continued on down the Ohio, with a small force of about 225 men, of whom there were a few soldiers, Canadians and Indians. It has been said they were in 23 canoes. If these were ordinary canoes they must have been overloaded and we can understand why the paddlers could not look up when they passed the mouth of the Mononga-
hela, one of the great rivers of the world. If Celoron saw it he failed to mention the fact. Their mission was to warn all British traders to depart and to leave evidence of French claims to ownership, inscribed on plates of lead, which they buried at several places. As they passed the Forks their immediate objective was a place they knew as the Rocher Écrité or the Written Rock (McKee's Rocks) at the mouth of Chartiers Creek. Indians and traders were to be found there whose interest in the spot lay in the fact that Chartiers Creek, Miller's Creek and Cross Creek afforded a short-cut to the Ohio near Steubenville thus avoiding the long bend in the river via Beaver. If you look down the river you may see the towers of Western Penitentiary which stands across the river from the mouth of Chartiers Creek. It was at the Rock that the French assembled the Indians so that an officer might tell them that they did not own the land on the river, as it was owned by the King of France. When the import of this was conveyed through an interpreter an old chief was helped up to reply, and the gist of his remark was, “Why does someone not kill that man?” When this was made clear the French had urgent business further down the river.

In 1753 Major Washington, just 21 years of age but the leader of eight horsemen, approached the Forks from the general direction of the south-east riding along the south bank of the Allegheny to the Point. There he was met by canoes which had been borrowed at Turtle Creek to help him across the river. They had come down the Monongahela. It was now the turn of the British to issue a warning in the hope that it might deter the French who had landed in force at what is the site of Erie today. Washington's primary mission was to deliver this warning in a letter which was polite enough but on which they could sniff the odor of gunpowder, for it was obvious they intended to fortify the Ohio and they said so. Washington had a secondary mission in which he had a personal interest, namely, the selection of the site for a fort for colonization purposes. The choice was ultimately between a site previously favored at the mouth of Chartiers Creek or at the Forks. He therefore made a careful study of the ground before he “swimmed” his horses across the Allegheny. The chances are he made partial use of a ford available in low water, which extended downstream from the Point and turned north to one of the islands mentioned above. He

2 Fur-trade canoes might be 36 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 4 feet deep.
spent the night not far from the spot where the Manchester bridge terminates and continued on next day to study the site lower down. He decided in favor of the Forks and the decision was his alone. Pittsburgh was abornin'.

Five months later a little working party of about 50 English and a couple of Indians were just finishing a little stockaded warehouse at the tip of the Forks, referred to as Fort Prince George. Looking up, as they hung the gate, they must have been more than thrilled to see a vast flotilla of 300 canoes and 40 bateaux bearing down on them carrying over a thousand French soldiers and Indians. This was hardly a fair match. Without a shot being fired the English were permitted to withdraw. They departed with their tools up the Monongahela. The French force continued down the river to Logstown (Ambridge) where they had been ordered to build their fort, but finding no logs there they returned to the Forks, thereby confirming Washington's judgment and, using the timber already cut by the English, constructed Fort Duquesne.

For the next four years the British efforts to recapture this ground were stopped by the French before they reached the fort but soldiers of General Braddock, and Majors Grant and Lewis were burned to death within earshot of its occupants.

In November, 1758, General Forbes accompanied by his able field officer Bouquet and Colonel Washington, approaching the Forks to attack Fort Duquesne, found it in ashes and the French gone, some up and others down the rivers. It was Forbes who, in reporting its occupation, referred to his naming it Pittsborough in honor of the British war minister.

The British fort which next honored the spot, known as Fort Pitt, was completed in 1761. It was subjected to but one attack when in 1763 it was besieged by a hoard of Indians consolidated by Pontiac in an effort to wipe out all frontier forts. Detroit, Pitt and Ligonier alone withstood the attacks. It was this action which led to the subsequent addition of the Block-house, the only historic structure remaining today.

Washington by his writings of this mission, which was a foreboding of war, put this admirable three-legged place on the maps of every country of Europe. It stamped him as a man of judgment and determination. It set his feet in the path to fame. His other activities gave him experience and training which resulted in mutual respect of friend and foe alike. It qualified him as the man best fitted to assume command of the army of the Revolution.