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THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF 1858
IN PITTSBURGH

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The historian, whether he be professional or amateur, who approaches the lesser events of past ages does so at no small disadvantage, forasmuch as ancient minutiae, or even the facts just beyond the memory of the "oldest inhabitant," have very often escaped exact chronicle and are, thereby, the prey of rapid oblivion. To posterity, the nose of Cleopatra is better known than the whole life of a slave in Alexandria and it is easier to call up the glory of Caesar than to discover what his steward had for breakfast. Like the Kingdom of Heaven, the House of History has many mansions and within it are not only great places but an infinite number of silent corridors and dusty corners which the historian cannot forbear entering on occasion, either for duty or for delight. The resurrection of these neglected cells, these unimportant pockets of the past, although attended with various hazards of reconstruction, may enliven or pleasantly footnote the graver preoccupations of the guardians, or even the devoted visitors, in History's vast establishment.

Occasions of public commemoration like the Pittsburgh Bicentennial of 1958 usually produce many such visitations and renovations, much dusting and illumination of forgotten chambers and closets. It is just such a small enclosure that we would visit now—

*As an historian, Mr. Van Trump has given over his preoccupation with the buildings of Pittsburgh for this excursion into local social history. As a writer, he is presently interested in the revival of the essay as a neglected literary form.—Ed.
the events pertaining to the celebration of the Centennial of the evacuation of Fort Duquesne by the French in 1758 and the taking over by the British forces of the land on which the city of Pittsburgh now stands.¹ The Centennial festivities, if one may call them such, took place on a single day—Thursday, 25 November, 1858—and exact preparations for them were limited to little more than a month. It was a festival, it must be said, quite lacking in any large lustre, any compelling glamor, but one of some importance in its distant day and one which local piety of place commends to our attention.

Even such a minor excursion into this local wing of the great historical house, warrants our calling upon the Muse of History for guidance and leadership. Courtesy demands that we do not consider her merely as docent in her own domain and it would be an impertinence to ask a personally conducted tour for so minute a journey. Possibly we should not hazard the actual voyage and it would be better to request a magic lantern view of our small occasion, now so sunk in the past, but which is not vanished beyond all recovery. The lantern, that cherished toy and fountain of illusion, so beloved of the Victorians, is, we may assume, the proper instrument of our pilgrimage and by its light we shall be conducted to the past.

We take our seats in a forecourt of the historical house, the lantern is brought in and properly lighted and, the Muse presiding, we begin our voyage. At first the light flares uncertainly, there is a little difficulty in focussing the image, but slowly there appears before us, against the screen of Eternity, the Pittsburgh of only a hundred years ago, the spires and chimneys of which have now utterly vanished. Only the basic landscape remains unchanged, but in our 1858 view, the broadness of undisturbed water and the depth of wilderness which characterized the aboriginal land of 1758 has quite disappeared; the hills rolling down to the muddy streams have long since become brown and naked, as smooth as the skins of the red men who have died or sought refuge in the West. Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt have flee away like dreams and the color and drama, the ceremony and the blood of the heroic 18th century are only memories. The war whoop has ceased to sound over the rivers and the sword or the musket is no longer lifted in the forests.

¹No one will deny that this was one of the important occasions in American history, but it is no part of our purpose to describe it here. The writer assumes that the reader has some acquaintance with North American history of the 18th century.
The image from the lantern is focussed more clearly and we are now closer to the city, although the view is still obscured by great clouds of smoke—black, grey and saffron—which are so eminently the badges and the colors of the 19th century. The Industrial Revolution overtook Pittsburgh almost before it had ceased to be a frontier fort and the scenery of Industry with its peculiar chiaroscuro—the dense shadows and the grey pallors touched with flame—constitute the picture of the Victorian city. In the magic lantern, of course, all movement is fixed and frozen and, since we cannot expect too much from the good offices of the Muse, we shall have to use our imaginations to supply whatever activity there may be. In 1858, sound rose up, too, as well as smoke, and even though there was a great deal of it, we shall have to listen with the ear of the mind to the large pervasive murmur of the town . . .

For the 1858 city did “bustle”—in that Centennial day it was well on its way to becoming the “workshop of the world”—and there was constant movement in the cobbled streets and on the wharves. Steamboats swept grandly along the rivers, and locomotives darted sharply here and there, adding their smoke to the general and region cloud. And always, in the shops and forges, one heard the clangor and the noise of manufacture.

It was soft coal which was responsible for that huge cloud of smoke which gained for the city, until recently, an unenviable reputation. The great coal beds of Western Pennsylvania had been notable factors in attracting Industry to Pittsburgh and thereby increasing the resident population. From 1850 to 1860 the population of Allegheny County had increased from 138,200 in 1850 to 178,831 in 1860 and Thurston estimated the number of persons living in the city proper in 1857 as 138,534. By 1858 Pittsburgh had completely recovered from the great fire of 1845 which had devastated a large

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2 Around 1850, William Schuchman, a lithographer active in Pittsburgh at that period, published a lithographic panorama of the developing town, whose harsh sepia pallors and bone-like barrenness convey forcibly the mid-century tone of the city.

3 Although there was a brief period of relative cleanliness dating from the mid-1880's, it was not until the smoke abatement laws of 1946 were enforced that the pall was, to a large degree, dissipated.

4 Thurston, George H., *Allegheny County's Hundred Years* (Pittsburgh, 1888), p. 56.

section of the Triangle and which had caused $10,000,000 damage. There had been a financial panic in 1857, but no banks failed in Pittsburgh and whatever other effect it may have had on the city is not apparent in the accounts of the celebration. The excitement and prosperity of the Civil War period had not yet arrived, although Pittsburgh was at the time of the celebration already conscious of the part she might be called upon to play in the conflict. The Centennial took place in an atmosphere of mounting national tension, but the events to come cast no too obtrusive shadow before them.

Architecturally the city had still, to some degree, the appearance of an 18th century town and many of its buildings were low-lying, simple and Classical in tone. The Greek Revival style with its simplicity and heavy elegance was still the dominant architectural note in the urban scene and it provided very eminently a quiet backdrop for the commerce and clamor of the cobbled streets. The Classical steeple of the Third Presbyterian Church at Third and Ferry Streets soared above the warehouses and the factory chimneys in the lower part of the city; on Grant’s Hill the low dome and the rugged Doric portico of the second Allegheny County Court House provided a monumental background for the commonplace shops of the Triangle. The Bank of Pittsburgh with its Ionic porticoes, between Third and Fourth Streets, provided a splendid foil for the more sober compact bulk of Burke’s Building nearby. The French and Italian ostentations of the High Victorian style were, as yet, little in evidence, although the Gothic Revival was much to the fore with St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, at Grant and Diamond, St. Paul’s R. C. Cathedral at Fifth and Grant and the new Christ Methodist Church at Eighth and Penn. The architecture had to

8 The Court House (completed 1842), the Bank (1836) and Burke’s Buildings (1836) were all designed by John Chislett (1800-1869). The Third Church (built 1838, destroyed by fire 1863) was almost certainly by Chislett, who was the city’s most famous early architect.

9 St. Peter’s (1851-52) was designed by John Notman of Philadelphia, St. Paul’s (1853-55) by Walsh of New York and Bartberger of Pittsburgh and Christ Methodist (1855) by J. W. Kerr.
provide the stage scenery for the Centennial procession and there was a certain consonance between the sobriety of the background and the subdued tenor of the occasion.

Amid the spires and porticoes, the chimneys poured forth their smoke, and the ill-paved streets grimly hummed with business. Early and late, steamboats whistled on the rivers, there was the sound of locomotive bells on Liberty Avenue and the drays rumbled ceaselessly over the cobbles. The Industrial Age was unmistakably here and Pittsburgh was determined to be in the vanguard of Progress. The Scotch-Irish residents, the most important and influential group in the city, who had been among the earliest settlers in Western Pennsylvania, set, with their industry and Calvinistic sobriety, rather eminently the tone of the place. Pittsburgh was passionately devoted to business and it had become—forgetful of the forest and the forts—a monochrome paradise for business men, veiled almost perpetually in the smoke which, morning and night, rose from the altars dedicated to commercial advancement.\(^\text{10}\)

This intense devotion to commerce might argue a corresponding indifference to public rejoicing or municipal ceremony of any kind and there is abundant testimony in the newspapers of the period to show that this was the case. When we consider the lengthy preparations which preceded both the Sesqui-Centennial of 1908 and the Bicentennial of 1958, the haste with which the earlier occasion was "thrown together" at very nearly the last minute testifies to an indifference on the part of citizens of the time to a most important event in the city's history. The *Commercial Journal* commented\(^\text{11}\)—"We think the tendency of the times is towards extreme barreness in all those things that appeal to our more generous sentiments. We are so deeply immersed in business and money-making that it is well to break up this constant tendency to the material in man and remind us of the sentimental and spiritual." It would be foolish, of course, to expect the smallest manifestation of the carnival spirit in Pittsburgh, but even our processions and pageantry have always had a certain sobriety and quietness. In keeping with the spirit of the place, this is as it should be, but even when this has been said, the lack of interest shown by the citizenry of 1858 is

\(^{10}\) Thurston, in his *Pittsburgh As It Is* devotes only four pages to the city's cultural activities.

\(^{11}\) 26 November.
something to remark. To be sure, the municipality was not nearly so well organized then as later and it had still the quality of the frontier settlement that it had been not so many years before. In the end, though, when the Centennial committees did get to work on the project, they did the best they could by American standards of the time; they organized a celebration consonant with the resources at their command and not unworthy to rank with other American pageants of the period. The Chronicle Telegraph of 8 March, 1889, referred to it as one of the earliest of American historical centennials and it would, therefore, have a certain interest on that score alone.

The Pittsburgh newspapers for the year 1858 are the chief sources of information on the Centennial celebration and it is to them that we must look for material concerning preparations for the occasion, since, apparently, few other records of it were kept. Considering the business-like tone of the city, it seems most appropriate that the advisability of celebrating the Centennial was first mentioned in the Commercial Journal where a lengthy article on the early history of the city concluded with an appeal to Pittsburghers to honor the events of 1758. On 14 September, 1858, the same paper in an article on Major Grant's defeat, again appealed to the citizenry—"We would suggest to our citizens, generally, that some arrangement be made to celebrate in some appropriate manner the 25th of November. It would do us good to spend one evening looking back." On 24 November the Journal asserted that several Philadelphia papers had copied its article, accompanied by historical notes of their own and suggesting that if Pittsburgh did not celebrate the event, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia should do so. The writer of the editorial had interviewed Neville B. Craig (whose pupil in historical matters he claimed to be) in

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12 This view was expressed at the time of the Allegheny County Centennial of 1888.
13 Press, 23 October, 1908. Even at the time of the municipal Sesqui-Centennial records of the earlier event were hard to come by.
14 8 May.
15 In September 1758 while General Forbes was at Raystown, Colonel Bouquet at Loyalhanna sent forward Major James Grant with a force of about 800 men to make a reconnaissance of Fort Duquesne. Grant, however, engaged the garrison at the Fort with the result that he was defeated and captured and a number of his men killed or taken prisoner.
16 Craig (1787-1863), who was born in one of the redoubts of Fort Pitt, was an eminent early Pittsburgh lawyer, editor and historian. He is chiefly remembered for his History of Pittsburgh (1851).
regard to the best means of celebrating the occasion. The *True Press* of 26 November, 1858 says that the Centennial was talked of in the city early in October and that the first suggestion concerning the Centennial came from the Mayor, the Hon. Henry A. Weaver, who contributed largely to the success of the venture. It seems probable, however, that the Mayor took action only after consulting with interested citizens.

The *Gazette* in its account of the Celebration put forth the theory that the occasion had been suggested by the Rev. George Duffield of Philadelphia, who had written a letter concerning the matter to the Rev. Henry Kendall, pastor of Pittsburgh's Third Presbyterian Church, who showed the Duffield letter to the Editor of the *Gazette* in the hope of giving it local publicity. The *Gazette*, however, was busy with the coming Elections (which occurred on 12 October and which, due to the uncertain national situation, were of great interest) and nothing was said about Rev. Duffield's communication. Eventually, Rev. Kendall wrote to the *Gazette* giving Rev. Duffield's views on the subject and this final effort was published after a little delay. The Pittsburgh public was thereby informed that the subject of the anniversary had been under consideration in the Presbyterian Historical Society at Philadelphia and that it was generally conceded that Pittsburgh ought to have a celebration. Later, in commemoration of the Western Pennsylvania event, Rev. Duffield caused to be published in the *Presbyterian Magazine* of Philadelphia a sermon delivered on 6 December, 1758 at Carlisle, Pennsylvania by his great-grandfather, another George Duffield (1732-1790) on the occasion of the taking of Fort Duquesne.

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17 Weaver (1820-1890) was a local business man who was elected mayor of Pittsburgh in 1857.
18 *Commercial Journal*, 20 October.
19 26 November.
20 Rev. George Duffield (1818-1888) was the third clergyman of that name (the succession constitutes a sort of minor clerical dynasty in the Presbyterian ranks) in the Duffield family. At the time of the Centennial he was living in Philadelphia but moved to Michigan in 1861. Rev. Henry Kendall was pastor of the Third Church 1857-1861.
21 The Republicans won on this occasion—an early test of the local strength of the party which had been formed in Pittsburgh in 1856.
22 *Gazette*, 15 October. The Kendall letter is dated 6 October.
23 *Presbyterian Magazine*, v. 8 (November 1858) pp. 504-511.
After the celebration had been held the Commercial Journal accused the Gazette of advancing too liberally the Philadelphia cause in the matter of responsibility for the Centennial. Was the great city in the East so loaded with history and honors to have all the credit? To the Journal it seemed "too bad" to rob Pittsburgh of its "one little ewe lamb" to enrich the "overburthened possessor of flocks and herds to the East." The Gazette, not to be outdone in local piety, abandoned the Philadelphia claim, stating that Pittsburgh should have "its ewe lamb, yea, the whole sheep!"

At any rate, the Centennial movement began to gather impetus after the middle of October. The magic lantern now begins to flicker more rapidly and a series of small monochrome tableaux is presented to us. At the instigation of the Mayor, a meeting was called for the afternoon of the 20th of October, but the attendance was extremely poor and it was adjourned until 22 October. A much larger body of citizens attended the second meeting at which Mayor Weaver presided. Mr. Weaver read a letter from George Bancroft, the historian, declining an invitation to the Centennial, and Mr. Hilary Brunot declared that a committee of the Mercantile Library Association was in correspondence with Edward Everett with the view of procuring him as the speaker. At this session the various committees who were to have the celebration in charge were formed. On 26 October another meeting was held for the purpose of arranging a program for the event and at this time subcommittees were appointed to see if the Duquesne Depot—the great new freight station belonging to the Pennsylvania Railroad—could be procured for the occasion and to enquire if the railroads would be willing to issue excursion tickets to visitors. It was reported that Pittsburgh citizens, who were beginning to enter into the spirit of the undertaking, had hunted out relics of the past and the Mayor's office was converted into a sort of museum where all kinds of old publications, swords and other objects were exhibited. On 27 October the Evening Chronicle announced a tentative Centennial program, particularly the composition of the parade which was to be held on 25 November.

*Commercial Journal, 27 November and Gazette, 29 November.
*Evening Chronicle, 21 October.
*Commercial Journal, 22 October.
*Evening Chronicle, 26 October.
On 28 October the *Evening Chronicle* also carried an account of the festivities attendant on the celebration of the seven hundredth anniversary of the founding of Munich, which took place on 27 September, 1858. This had been an elaborate affair with a richly costumed procession and the writer of the *Chronicle* article felt that any ceremonies held in Pittsburgh should be worthy of the occasion and the community. Pittsburgh had experienced other celebrations in 1858 and parades of a minor sort were not uncommon. On 20 August, the jubilation in connection with the successful laying of the Atlantic cable had been fairly extensive. The annual firemen's parade had taken place on 4 September with all the men in uniform and the engines decked with wreaths of flowers: on 14 October a torchlight procession was organized to celebrate the victory of the Republicans in the Elections. It would seem, therefore, that Pittsburghers did not mind parading. On 5 November a prominent Pittsburgher, General William Robinson was appointed chief marshal of the procession and on the following day the names of his aides were announced.

The Committee on Arrangements was at work trying to secure a speaker and since Everett could not be procured, Governor Packer of Pennsylvania was suggested, but the final choice fell upon Andrew Williams Loomis, a Pittsburgh attorney noted for his eloquence, indeed, he was known as the “Demosthenes of the West.”

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28 For the writer's account of this event, see the Historical Society Notes in this issue, p. 170.
29 *Commercial Journal*, 6 September.
31 *Evening Chronicle*. General William Robinson (1785-1868) held his title by virtue of a commission in the Pennsylvania State Militia. Largely interested in commercial and manufacturing pursuits, he was the first mayor of Allegheny (now Pittsburgh's North Side) where he owned much land.
34 *Commercial Journal*, 28 October. Loomis (1797-1873) came to Pittsburgh in 1839 and, until 1866, practised law in association with his cousin, Orlando Metcalf.
Judge William Wilkins\textsuperscript{15} was to conduct the proceedings at the Duquesne Depot which was then the largest enclosed space in the city and which was estimated to hold 10,000 to 15,000 people.\textsuperscript{36}

The few days before Thursday 25 November were filled with bustling activity unconnected with the usual commercial "hustle" of the town. The newspapers carried the program of the day and the order of the procession\textsuperscript{17} in their columns which were also full of notices concerning final meetings of the participants in the parade (a local wag inserted an advertisement in the \textit{Dispatch} of 25 November asking the Modern Order of Wife Beaters to march with the other groups). Most of the city's industries were to be represented, the military organizations, literary and benevolent societies, and firemen—in short, all organized social groups in the city who had any reason for parading. Visitors began to come into the city from all over Western Pennsylvania,\textsuperscript{38} including important personages from neighboring counties who were taking part in the proceedings. There was much sewing and painting of banners, and colored sashes and badges with views of the Old Redoubt (the Blockhouse) were sold in the shops. On the day before the parade, the cobbled streets along the route were washed and scraped but all the water in the rivers could not have sweetened those mud-haunted avenues.\textsuperscript{39} There were gloomy prognostications about the weather which for the past week had been something less than pleasant.\textsuperscript{40} This was no city, nor was it the season, for the hanging of garlands or the scattering of flowers, but flags and bunting were displayed

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Gazette}, 11 November. Judge Wilkins (1779-1865), jurist, U. S. Senator, diplomat and Secretary of War in President Tyler's cabinet, had become by 1858 rather the "Grand Old Man" of Pittsburgh and one of its leading citizens.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Dispatch}, 25 November.

\textsuperscript{17} Typical is that of the \textit{Evening Chronicle}, 22 November.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Gazette}, 24 November—"Tomorrow will be a gala day and our city will be full of strangers. We are more surprised at the apathy of the public in not having taken advantage of advertising their goods than in anything else."

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Dispatch}, 24 November—"Our streets and side walks have rarely been in as wretchedly filthy and impassible a condition as at present. They are overshoe in mud of the greasiest, stickiest and nastiest kind."

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Gazette}, 25 November. Judge McClure when he was discharging a jury because of the celebration remarked that the day was sure to be unpleasant. "If," remarked the judge, "the French had only had sense enough to have left Fort Duquesne in May or June, there would have been some sense in celebrating it; as it was, however, we would be obliged to take it as it came." Alas, in November, Pittsburghers have always had to take it as it came!
on shops and houses, and banners were stretched across the sombre streets.

At last the magic lantern shows us the great day itself—Thursday 25 November . . . November and March are the dreariest months in the Pittsburgh year and the weather of this particular year was, as usual, indeterminate—it was cold but not cold enough to freeze the pervasive mud. As the Gazette of 25 November said—"The weather was exceedingly impopitious—rain and snow falling all day. This is no joke in Pittsburgh. When it rains or snows here, there is an equal quantity of soot in solution, so that smoke, soot and rain held high carnival." Had anyone been inclined to sleep late on that morning, it would have been difficult since the new brass field piece of the Duquesne Greys began firing at 5 o'clock. Crowds began to appear at an early hour and by 9 o'clock it was estimated that 50,000 people were about in the streets; every available window along the route of procession was filled with women and children and the sidewalks were crowded to the curbstones in every direction. Among the spectators were reporters from two Philadelphia papers, the Evening Bulletin and the Evening Journal, and all the local papers had their men on the scene.

Although the parade was scheduled to begin at nine or nine-thirty, the marchers who "formed" on the side streets between Penn and Liberty were a little slow and the vanguard did not move off from Penn and Wayne (now Tenth Street) until ten o'clock. At the head of the line were the local veterans of the War of 1812 in

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41 The Dispatch of 26 November said, "The day, for the season of the year was very favorable—a slight sifting of snow from morning till night, a bracing air, and as passable a footing as could be expected." Which newspaper d'you read?

42 The Greys, possibly the most famous of the local volunteer regiments of the 19th century, was formed in 1831 and saw service in both the Mexican and the Civil War, but after 1878, it was merged into the new National Guard of Pennsylvania.

43 Evening Chronicle, 23 November. At least one national magazine had made arrangements to get illustrations for an article on the Centennial—see Harper's Weekly II, No. 101 (4 December 1858) pp. 773-774. For the cut of the Duquesne Depot on p. 773, (reproduced for this article) the engraver had used a photographic view made by John Rogers, a local photographer and proprietor of the Star Daguerreotype Gallery on Fifth Street.

44 Since all local papers carried accounts of the celebration, it would be tedious to footnote every statement with several references. References to any specific account will be made only when necessary.
carriages and next came General Robinson looking very handsome mounted on a white horse and flanked by Brigadier-General J. McK. Snodgrass on his right and Major General Joseph Markle on his left. Two regiments of cavalry, the Pennsylvania Dragoons and the National Lancers cantered at the head of the military contingent which included the Jackson Independent Blues (Captain Alexander Hays), the Pennsylvania Infantry (Captain Negley), the Washington Infantry (Captain Rowley), the Monongahela Blues (Captain Blackburn), and the Allegheny Rifle Company (Lieutenant Gang). The Gazette reported that the “sappers” belonging to the latter regiment “with their fine uniforms, bearskin caps, white leather aprons, axes, etc. were greatly admired.” The rear of the military division was brought up by the Duquesne Greys (Captain Campbell), some seventy men strong, who with their new cannon “made a splendid appearance” according to the Gazette. Lines of marching men in uniform are always the chief interest in any parade, together with the rumble of drums and the blaring of brass instruments. The concerted precise footfalls, the swinging arms, the smooth elegance of cloth and leather, the martial feather and the gleaming eye were the sure glamor of that occasion as they always are of any day of procession . . . “What a brave lad was I when the drums were going by! . . .”

As if to remind the spectators of the arts of peace, the farmer’s delegation came next and then a long line of thirty-one carriages bearing the dignitaries of the day. In the first carriage, drawn by four horses wearing plumes, was William Wilkins, A. W. Loomis and Mayor Weaver. After these vehicles, paraded the firemen of the city with their engines (no parade of the time would have been complete without the colorful fire equipment), followed rather incongruously by the Pittsburgh and Allegheny literary societies.

Minutes Book of the Association of Soldiers and Sailors of the War of 1812 in possession of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Joseph Markle (1777-1867) who held his title by virtue of a commission in the Pennsylvania Militia was a prominent business man and soldier of Westmoreland County.

Alexander Hays (1819-1864) was a graduate of West Point who had served in the Mexican War. He gained the rank of Major General in the Civil War and was killed at the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864.

These quasi-intellectual, quasi-social societies appear to have had rather a vogue in Pittsburgh during the mid-19th century. The Dispatch of 23 November has a list of these groups with the dates of their formation.
The attendance in the latter group was rather meagre, possibly because the "intellectuals" may have shrunk from the public clamor, the mud and the cold. The benevolent societies of the city made a better showing with their members attired in sashes of colored velvet trimmed with silver lace and fringes. Next came the Turner's Association followed by the Dead Rabbit Barge Club with its barge (mounted on wheels) drawn by two horses and manned by a crew of boys in checked shirts.

Large delegations from the factories and mills of the city were a prominent feature of the parade and men from the Juniata Iron Works, the Duquesne Iron Works, Sheffield Steel Works and other industrial establishments marched in large numbers. The Gazette commented especially on an elaborate car or "float" belonging to the Novelty Works which attracted some attention, since the parade was not particularly notable for this sort of thing, although the local brewers paraded a series of wagons which displayed the whole process of making lager beer. The printing establishment of W. S. Haven had a wagon illustrating the improvements in the art of printing since the time of Benjamin Franklin, and from this cart copies of the Centennial Keepsake were distributed. Sixty-five men from the Fort Pitt Glass Works wore glass helmets in various styles over colored skull caps and carried wreaths and goblets made of glass.

An incongruous note on such a cold day was the parade of Walker's ice wagons, but they were overshadowed by the turn-out of the Pittsburgh Gymnastic Association (fifty-eight mounted men) which attracted as much attention as the military. The interest which these young men aroused was only another instance of that growing interest in athletics which was a salient characteristic of the later 19th century and paralleled so curiously the development of the Industrial Age.

Starting from Penn and Wayne (Tenth), the parade moved down Penn to Marbury (now Stanwix), up Marbury to Liberty, down Liberty to Water, up Water to Smithfield, up Smithfield to Liberty, up Liberty to Wayne, down Wayne to Penn, up Penn to

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40 The Centennial Celebration Keepsake (Commemorating the Evacuation of Fort Duquesne, November 25, 1758) printed by W. S. Haven, book and job printer, sold by Hunt and Miner, Pittsburgh, 25 November, 1858, p. 4. This pamphlet contains little information on the Centennial of 1858.

41 The present nomenclature of the streets is convenient but lacks the older variety. The City Council must have thought that here there was safety in numbers.
Mechanic (Sixteenth), across the Mechanic Street bridge to Chestnut Street in Allegheny, up Chestnut to Ohio, down Ohio to Federal, down Federal and across the river again by the St. Clair Street bridge, along St. Clair (Sixth) to Liberty and down Liberty to the Duquesne Depot. The procession did not reach the Depot until one o’clock in the afternoon since it was two miles long and took two hours to reach a given point. The cavalry remained outside the building, but the marching regiments and delegations enfiladed through the hall, followed by a large group of spectators.

It was eminently characteristic of the Pittsburgh of the time that a large freight station should have been built on the city’s most historic ground. Popularly it was said to have been erected on the site of Fort Duquesne although Neville B. Craig proved conclusively that the structural remains disclosed during the excavations for the place were those of Fort Pitt. Legends have an enormous vitality of their own, quite beyond the admonition of scholars, and for the average Pittsburgh citizen this station was constructed where Fort Duquesne had stood and that was that! For some strange reason, Fort Duquesne has seemed, even to later Pittsburghers, more remote, more romantic, than Fort Pitt—possibly just because it was French.

This huge wooden structure, 664 feet long and 110 feet wide had been built in 1854 for the accommodation of freight trains and it was not eminently suitable for use as a public hall. A great truss roof of a single span arched over the huge interior space which, on this Centennial day, was decorated with flags and evergreens and lit by flaring gas jets. Halfway down the hall, a platform had been erected for the speaker and distinguished guests, and across from it was another stand for the singers and musicians. The Centennial

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52 See the writer’s “Pittsburgh Railroad Stations Past and Present,” The Charette, XXXVII, No. 12 (December 1957) 21-22.

The Duguehue Depot, a large freight station near the Point and the scene of the Centennial Celebration.
crowd was noisy and the acoustics of the place were so bad that it was difficult to hear the speakers.

When some kind of order had been established, a salute was fired from the Point by the Duquesne Greys, and Mayor Weaver introduced the President of the Day, Judge Wilkins, who made a few appropriate remarks and then presented the Rev. Dr. Francis Herron who delivered a short but eloquent prayer. Wilson McCandless, the Secretary of the Day, then read letters from the President of the United States, James Buchanan, and Governor Packer of Pennsylvania, expressing regret at their inability to be present at the celebration and sending their felicitations to the city. Historically, the President's letter is of considerable interest, not only in regard to the Centennial, but also for the glancing light that it throws upon the gathering darkness of the pre-Civil War period and it merits being quoted in full.

Washington, 22d November, 1858

Gentlemen:

I have had the honor to receive your invitation to be present, on the 25th instant, at the Centennial Anniversary of the capture of Fort Duquesne; and I regret that the pressure of public affairs, at a period so near the meeting of Congress, renders it impossible that I should enjoy this privilege.

Every patriot must rejoice whilst reflecting upon the unparalleled progress of our country within the last century. What was, at its commencement, an obscure Fort, far beyond the western frontier of civilization, has now become the center of a populous commercial and manufacturing city, sending its productions to large and prosperous sovereign states still further west, whose territories were then a vast, unexplored and silent wilderness.

From the stand-point at which we have arrived, the anxious patriot cannot fail, whilst reviewing the past, to cast a glance into the future, and to speculate upon what may be the condition of our country when your posterity shall assemble to celebrate the second Centennial Anniversary of the capture of Fort Duquesne. Shall our whole country then compose one united nation more populous, powerful and free than any other which has ever existed? Or will the confederacy have been rent asunder and divided

Dr. Herron (1774-1860) was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, 1811-1850.

McCandless (1810-1882) was a local lawyer and judge in the U. S. District Court. He was a member of the Pennsylvania Electoral College in the presidential elections of 1844, 1852 and 1856.

The version here given is that of a copy preserved among the Buchanan papers in the archives of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. The Pittsburgh newspapers (with the exception of the Evening Chronicle) published the letter in their accounts of the celebration. The writer has collated the newspaper versions with that given here and he has found that they are all substantially the same except for an unimportant word or two. Dr. Robert E. Carlson of the University of Pittsburgh was kind enough to supply the writer with a typewritten copy of the Philadelphia letter.
into groups of hostile and jealous States? Or may it not be possible that ere the next celebration all the fragments, exhausted by intermediate conflicts with each other, may have finally re-united and sought refuge under the shelter of one great and overshadowing Despotism (sic)?

These questions will, I firmly believe, under the Providence of God, be virtually decided by the present generation. We have reached a crisis when upon their action depends the preservation of the Union, according to the letter and spirit of the Constitution; and this once gone, all is lost.

I regret to say that the present omens are far from propitious. In the last age of the Republic it was considered almost reasonable to pronounce the word Disunion. Times have since sadly changed, and now Disunion is freely prescribed as the remedy for evanescent evils, real or imaginary, which, if left to themselves, would speedily vanish away in the progress of events.

Our revolutionary fathers have passed away, and the generation next after them, who were inspired by their personal counsel and example, have nearly all disappeared. The present generation, deprived of these lights, must, whether they will or not, decide the fate of their posterity. Let them cherish the Union in their heart of hearts; let them resist every measure which may tend to relax or dissolve its bonds; let the citizens of the different States cultivate feelings of kindness and forbearance towards each other; and let all resolve to transmit it to their descendants in the form and spirit they have inherited from their forefathers; and all will then be well for our country in future times.

I shall assume the privilege of advancing years in referring to another growing and dangerous evil. In the last age, although our fathers, like ourselves, were divided into political parties which often had severe conflicts with each other, yet we never heard, until within a recent period, of the employment of money to carry elections. Should this practice increase until the voters and their Representatives in the State and National Legislatures shall become infected, the fountain of free Government will then be poisoned at its source, and we must end, as history proves, in a military despotism (sic). A Democratic Republic, all agree, cannot long survive unless sustained by public virtue. When this is corrupted and the people become venal, there is a canker at the root of the tree of Liberty which must cause it to wither and to die.

Praying Almighty God that your remote posterity may continue, century after century, for ages yet to come, to celebrate the anniversary of the capture of Fort Duquesne in peace and prosperity, under the banner of the Constitution and the Union, I remain,

Very respectfully, your friend,
James Buchanan

To Russell Errett, J. Heron Foster, James P. Barr, Charles McKnight, J. G. Backofen, William M. Darlington and T. J. Bigham, Committee of Invitation.
Copy of my letter of 22 Nov: 1858 to the Committee on the Centennial Anniversary of Fort Duquesne
From Wm. Alfred Sanderson, Feb: 13, 1864

As the Gasette of 26 November said, “the President’s greeting was received with questionable applause” inasmuch as the Democratic Buchanan was, to say the least, unpopular in Republican quar-
ters in Pittsburgh. There were other letters of regret from such men as William H. Seward and Stephen A. Douglas, but there was not time enough to read all of them. Most of them were, however, published in the newspaper accounts of the celebration.

The magic lantern shows the great tenebrous interior of the Depot and the harsh light of the flaring gas jets falling upon the faces murmured and shuffled its feet to keep warm; every sound begot an echo in the roof and there was a continuous rumble of noise. In this acoustical confusion, Mr. Loomis delivered his speech which was a standard specimen of mid-Victorian eloquence; although it was not the best of its type, it was well constructed, rhetorically

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86 The Morning Post of 26 November called it "a noble and patriotic letter," but the Gazette in an editorial of 27 November asks why the President is so afraid of disunion and concluded that "his hysterics were the result of his own madness and folly." The Gazette also took the President to task for his allusion to the use of money to carry elections—"we regret to say that what Mr. Buchanan had to say was in such wretched taste that an effort at a cheer after it was read ended in most undoubted groans and hisses." The Dispatch of 2 December says, "The President's letter to our Pittsburgh Centennial Committee attracts much attention and calls forth some sharp comment in the newspapers abroad. 'Occasional' of the Philadelphia Press mentions its appearance on a recent morning in the National Intelligencer and says 'Our town is in a broad grin about it. What is the worst of it is that it looks like an attack on the Cabinet who have been spending oceans of money to re-elect Lecompton Congressmen and the President writes as if he didn't know it all the time!'" It is obvious that President Buchanan should have considered the state of his own house before making such a statement, whatever the merits of the question. The "Lecompton Congressmen" were obviously those Democratic members of Congress who had supported the Lecompton Constitution of 1857 which had been such a bone of contention in the national slavery question and so potent a cause of discord in "bleeding Kansas." President Buchanan had himself supported that Constitution which was one of those minor fuses which led to the national explosion in 1861. We have no space to discuss it more fully here, however. The Buchanan letter was also used, to some degree, as a "point de départ" for Republican Congressman John Covode's investigation of "corruption" in the Buchanan administration—a subject which has been recently treated by Edward W. Chester in a paper, "The Impact of the Covode Congressional Investigation," read before the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 21 May, 1958.

87 True Press, 26 November.

88 The oration which took about an hour to deliver was published later—Oration Delivered at the Centennial Celebration of the Evacuation of Fort Duquesne by Hon. A. W. Loomis, Pittsburgh, November 25, 1858. Pittsburgh: Printed by W. S. Haven, corner Market and Second Streets, 1859, p. 38. W. S. Haven was also to have published a commemorative volume of some two hundred pages on the celebration—see the Gazette of 1 December. The material was put into the hands of Solomon Schoyer who had been selected to compile the record, but the book was never published, possibly because interest in the event abated rapidly after it was over.
florid, and, by modern standards, dull. It was, however, the sort of thing Loomis' contemporaries were used to hearing from both pulpit and platform and many of his listeners would have been edified or even charmed if only they could have heard it. As it was, the golden sentences disappeared into the thunderous frozen air almost as soon as they were uttered.

When the applause which greeted the end of Mr. Loomis' speech had subsided, it was the turn of the musicians who were waiting patiently on the other side of the hall to perform their choral duties. An ode called One Hundred Years Ago, written by Florus B. Plimpton, a reporter on the Dispatch,\(^5\) set to music by Henry Kleber,\(^6\) was sung by members of the Frohsinn and Teutonia Societies "assisted by American amateurs."\(^7\) The instrumental accompaniment was provided by a large brass band conducted by Kleber himself. Although the musicians had to compete with the audience, they did manage to be heard rather better than Mr. Loomis and the effect was described as "fine".\(^8\)

The sound of the music died out in the last rounds of applause; cheers were given for Mr. Loomis, Judge Wilkins and Mayor Weaver. About three o'clock, the sound of the Duquesne Greys' field piece, firing from the Point, heralded the end of the proceedings and the great company dispersed, leaving the hall to silence and the imminence of more freight on the morrow. The celebration continued unofficially at the theatres and other places of resort. Gradually the dusk came down and with it more snow flurries; the

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*Plimpton, a local littérateur, was also Corresponding Secretary of the Third Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1858-1860. His ode was printed in several of the newspaper accounts of the Celebration, and Fort Duquesne: An Historical Ballad, another of his poems written "after the manner of Macaulay's King Henry of Navarre," was published in the Evening Chronicle of 25 November. Both these poems—florid, provincial and bombastic though they are—display a certain mediocre competence in verse making.

*Kleber (1816-1897) was an important figure in Pittsburgh's musical life of the 19th century. He kept a music store, was organist and composer and a friend of Stephen C. Foster. See Baynham, Edward G., "Henry Kleber, Early Pittsburgh Musician," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, 25 No. 3-4 (September-December 1942) 113-120. At the present time, it is not known if Kleber's score for the Centennial Ode still exists, although it is possible that a copy is extant.

*Evening Chronicle, 23 November. The Frohsinn Society (founded 1850—disbanded about 1918) and the Teutonia Society (founded 1854 and still in existence) were German singing associations.

*Dispatch, 26 November.
lights went up in the houses, the hotels and the theatres. There were some citizens—probably not those belonging to the more "solid" element—who found it difficult to settle back into the usual routine of existence. According to the True Press of 26 November—"A number of fights occurred in various parts of the city yesterday afternoon. So far as could be ascertained none of the combatants were seriously injured—they were drunk."

However, the respectable, the responsible Pittsburghers took their pleasures more sedately, and on that Thursday evening in November, there were several theatrical and social diversions open to them. A "grand ball," or, to be more accurate, a large public dance, was given that night at Lafayette Hall under the auspices of thirty or forty of the town's most popular citizens and those who liked to dance undoubtedly enjoyed the lights, the movement and the music. At the Masonic Hall in Fifth Street was to be found Jones' Grand Panorama of California and the Overland Route which had two showings at 2:30 and 7:30 on the Centennial Day. As an advertisement of the time put it—"For twenty-five cents you have comfortable seats and a journey to California without being exposed to the perils of starvation or being frozen to death in the ice-bound mountains." To many a weary Pittsburgher who had been on his feet all day, the prospect of vicarious travel and remote hardship undoubtedly seemed attractive.

Joseph C. Foster, manager of the New National Theatre on Fifth Street, had exerted himself to provide fitting entertainment for the Centennial night. A play called Fort Duquesne or Pittsburgh One Hundred Years Ago had been "got together," one might say, since no author's name seems to have survived in connection with it, except that of Mrs. Tannehill, one of the actresses in the company, who composed an ode which she, in the character of the Goddess of Liberty, declaimed as part of the grand finale of the performance. A synopsis of the play reveals it to have been a head-

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64 Commercial Journal, 24 November. Lafayette Hall was an L-shaped building opening on both Wood and Fourth Streets. The first convention of the Republican Party was held here in 1856.

65 Commercial Journal, 24 November.

66 Published in the Post of 23 November and the Dispatch of 24 November. See also Fletcher, E. G., Records and History of Theatrical Activities in Pittsburgh From Their Beginning to 1861 (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), 2 v., I, pp. 290-295. This unpublished doctoral dissertation also contains much information on the New National and the Pittsburgh Theatres.
long and confused melange of all the Romantic literary cliches of the period, so arranged as to have some topical significance. The *Morning Post* of 27 November proclaimed it a great success.

At the Pittsburgh Theatre (which was sometimes referred to as the Old Theatre) also in Fifth Street there were other entertainments which ventured to commemorate the historic past. Messrs. Porter and McFarland, the lessees of the theatre, had commissioned a James Ross of Philadelphia to write a play called *Fort Duquesne or Pittsburgh As It Was and Is.* The *Morning Post* of 26 November said that it was “well received” along with an “address” written by another Pittsburgh author, Dr. W. H. Denny, which was “greeted by frequent applause.”

As the magic lantern calls up again the provincial brightness of those vanished theatres, the applauding and good humored crowds, the declamations and the mock heroics among the canvas scenery and the flaring gas jets, we might consider that Pittsburgh’s Centennial was an occasion not unworthy of such a brash new industrial city and that the celebration had a homely bourgeois charm all its own . . .

Our magic lantern tour is almost over, the theatres empty, Lafayette Hall is deserted by the dancers and now we can scarcely see that vanishing city—the Pittsburgh of a hundred years ago. The clouds fly and a wind gathers in the frozen streets, blowing dirty copies of the *Centennial Keepsake* down the gutters. In the sound of the wind there is the echo of band music and the murmur of crowds which mocks the unlit windows and the desolate commercial vistas. The town is retiring to sleep, as one by one, the lights go out. Somewhere a child, almost asleep, says that tomorrow will be Friday; a merchant turns at the top of his stair to speak of war, for things cannot go on this way much longer; in an intimate corner a young mill worker breathes that love is everything, that there is no death; and in the harsh emptiness of the streets, a forgotten drunkard, a column of misery, a bundle of rags, wails hopelessly that life is hard and there is no love. We would stay, we

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*William Henry Denny, (b. 1796) was a member of a prominent Pittsburgh family, a physician, and treasurer of the Second Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. The “address” which was really a ballad of forty-nine quatrains called *Suc-co-tash* was read by the stage manager on the Centennial night. It was published by W. S. Haven in 1858 with a liberal supply of footnotes to explain the many local historical allusions.*
would listen, for these surely are the important things, much more important than the golden periods of Mr. Loomis which no one will remark or remember even on the printed page. But here are no considerations for the Muse of History, who has other and more eminent business elsewhere. The light in the magic lantern vanishes abruptly and the house lights go up; we have had our minor excursion into the past and we must return again to our own world.