AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLKER PAPERS

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EVERY student of history, however casual his interests may be, must frequently be reminded of Emerson's familiar statement on the lengthening shadows of men. Certainly the events of history, the founding of nations, the building of cities and the meeting of challenges at every turn in the road of progress, reflect the image of those individuals who stand prominently before the kaleidoscopic mirror of time's ever-changing pattern of circumstances.

Evidence of this fact is particularly abundant to the people of the Pittsburgh area in this Bicentennial year, just as it has always been known to the members of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh, as it exists two centuries following its birth, reflects the caliber of the men and women who, through the years, have carried forward the traditions established by those earliest of settlers who came to the land at the "head of the Ohio."

This writer, having been a member of the American steel industry for almost half a century, has had a natural interest in those early pioneers who laid the groundwork upon which Pittsburgh built its prominence in the production of iron and, a century ago, steel.

It was our pleasure, just prior to the beginning of Pittsburgh's Bicentennial year, to have the privilege of making the first comprehensive study of a collection of correspondence carried on between

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three of these persons—John Holker, William Turnbull, and Peter Marmie. These papers, now in the possession of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and known as the "Holker Papers," not only provided new information on the stalwart and enterprising men who constructed and operated the Alliance Iron Works, the first blast furnace erected west of the Allegheny Mountains, but they also gave additional support to a long held belief that the members of this partnership witnessed and played a part in many significant events in the early history of Pittsburgh.

It is pleasing, therefore, to have the opportunity by means of this article, to introduce these papers and bring together, as we have long believed should be done, significant portions of information previously published on John Holker, William Turnbull, and Peter Marmie. It is hoped, as well, that this opportunity will bring into sharper focus the three gentlemen who, heretofore, may not have received the recognition due them for their roles in shaping the past, present and future of the "Gateway to the West."

The question has occasionally been raised, for example, as to whether John Holker was a member of this partnership. Erasmus Wilson, in his *Standard History of Pittsburg*, listed Turnbull, Marmie, "and perhaps John Holker" as the partners.¹ The Holker Papers remove all doubt from this aspect of the Alliance undertaking.

John Holker came to America in 1777 as an emissary of the French government. His family, exiled from England earlier in the Eighteenth Century, had entered the textile industry in France, enjoyed success and gained wealth and prestige. John Holker’s mission in the Colonies, for which he was appointed consul-general at Philadelphia, was to supply French men-of-war in American ports.² His position in the Colonies and his friendship with the Founding Fathers is illustrated, in part, by the fact that his Philadelphia residence was rented to him by the Penn family and later became the Presidential residence of Washington and Adams.

It can be assumed from the task assigned John Holker by the French government, that he must have been a man of vision and imagination, the type of person to whom the great opportunities of America would appeal. Within a comparatively short period, therefore, he had adopted this country as his own and, with his personal wealth, established various business interests. From the letters

being here reviewed, we have learned that at least part of these interests were located in Boston and Philadelphia. He also owned land as far west as Illinois, and had an estate which his letters show to have been at “Millwood, Frederick County, Virginia.”

Of immediate interest, however, is the partnership which appears to have been formed by Holker, Turnbull, and Marmie at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. This brings us to the second member of the group, William Turnbull, who was born in Scotland in 1751 and came to Philadelphia about 1774 where he became a merchant. He served as a commissary to the Pennsylvania troops of the Continental Army and, in 1806, pioneered in bringing the first anthracite coal to Philadelphia.

An indication of Turnbull's character, and certainly evidence that he was no ordinary individual, is found in additional facts concerning his family. In The Histories and Antiquities of Roxburghshire, Scotland and Adjacent Districts, Volume II, the Turnbull family is referred to as being prominent in Scotch history, with William of Rule having gained the surname of Turnbull by saving Robert the Bruce from an attack by a wild bull.

Turnbull’s second wife (the first presumably having died) was the daughter of the Reverend Charles Nisbet who came from Scotland to serve as president of Dickinson College at the time of its founding in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1783. The oldest child of this union between Turnbull and Mary Nisbet was named William and graduated from West Point in 1819. As an Army engineer, he constructed the Potomac Aqueduct across the Potomac River at Georgetown, one of the first important works of American engineering.

Many of the details concerning the life of the third member of the partnership, Peter Marmie, would appear to have been lost in antiquity. It has been said that he came to America as the private secretary of Lafayette. The Holker Papers shed no additional light on this matter, but they do give insight into the character and later life of this little-known historical figure. Marmie’s mar-

7 Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, 14 op. cit., p. 209.
riage in June of 1792 to "a Miss Rachel Gardner whose Parents lives about four miles from the (Alliance Iron) Works" is mentioned, and whatever the circumstances surrounding the wedding, it prompted Turnbull, in writing to Holker on June 29 of that year, to remark, "I think he was under no obligation to marry such a character."

In any event, Marmie's own letters of the early 1800's disclose that his later years were lived in a somewhat penurious condition, with perhaps no income except that gained by watching over the land holdings of John Holker in western Pennsylvania. Although he suffered greatly from a variety of physical ailments, the Holker Papers prove false the legend wherein it is said that Marmie took his own life by throwing his dogs into the Alliance Furnace and jumping in after them. The collection contains letters written by Marmie as late as 1814, some ten years or more after the Furnace went out of blast.

These, then, are the three men who recognized the tremendous potential of Pittsburgh in the years following the Revolutionary War and undertook a series of commercial ventures in this area.

To launch their undertakings, they joined forces with two prominent residents of Pittsburgh, Major Isaac Craig and Colonel Stephen Bayard. It will be recalled that the first land sold by the Penns from their holding in what is now Downtown Pittsburgh was conveyed by deed, dated December 31, 1784, to Major Craig and Colonel Bayard.8 It consisted of thirty-two lots in the plan which had been laid out at the request of the Penns earlier in that same year, "all the lots between the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, and Marbury and West streets, and included all the land occupied by Fort Pitt."9

Major Isaac Craig, of course, is well-known to all who are familiar with Pittsburgh's history. His distinguished military career, which included crossing of the Delaware with General Washington and action in numerous other engagements during the Revolutionary War, brought him to Fort Pitt in 1780, and he remained in the Pittsburgh area until his death in 1826. His son, Neville Craig, informs us10 that Major Craig entered the mercantile business in 1783 with Colonel Bayard, equally well-known for his later boat-building efforts at Elizabeth, Pennsylvania.

9 Ibid.
We also learn from Neville Craig that "In June, 1784, Craig and Bayard formed a partnership with William Turnbull, Peter Marmie, and John Holker, merchants of Philadelphia, and went into the distilling business." This partnership was called Turnbull, Marmie and Company, and various sources reveal that aside from opening a distillery at the Point—such business, of course, being a respectable and necessary enterprise in those early days—the firm engaged in real estate, began a saw mill up the Allegheny River and endeavored to launch a salt works in the vicinity of Youngstown, a project that appears not to have been successful.

The *Pittsburgh Gazette* during the spring of 1788, moreover, carries advertisements by Turnbull, Marmie and Company offering "several Kentucke Boats" for sale. On August 15 of that same year, that first newspaper in Pittsburgh contained an advertisement saying "cash given for good Ginsang by W. I. Miller at the store of Turnbull, Marmie, and Co. in the new store location at Second Street." There is reason to believe also that together with David Duncan and John Finley, they may have engaged in trade with the Indians.

While this partnership was no doubt moderately successful, the record reveals that it was dissolved in March of 1788. The public notice of this dissolution also advertised for sale the original land holdings which had been purchased from the Penn family, as well as additional properties including a tract "on the Coal-Hill opposite Pittsburgh containing about 25 acres, with a ferry and suitable buildings. Two tracts of land on Squaw Run and the Allegheny River, about nine miles from Pittsburgh . . . Two tracts of land in the new purchase near the Allegheny, upon one of which is erected a saw mill." This sale was held in July of that year, and its purpose was undoubtedly to enable Holker, Turnbull, and Marmie to secure the working capital they needed for the project that was to engrave their names indelibly in the history of western Pennsylvania and the American steel industry. And so it is that we come to the first of the so-called Holker Papers, a letter written by William Turnbull to John Holker on September 24, 1788, the same day, incidentally, that the Pennsylvania legislature passed an act author-

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13 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, April 12, 1788.
izing the formation of Allegheny County out of portions of Westmoreland and Washington Counties.

In this initial letter, one of the most interesting of the entire group, there is mention of General John Gibson, one of the earliest recorded residents of Pittsburgh who settled in the vicinity of Fort Pitt as a trader in 1763. General Gibson, or Judge Gibson as he is sometimes called in view of his having served in that capacity when Pittsburgh was considered to be a part of Augusta County, Virginia, was a member of the convention which framed the constitution of Pennsylvania, and is particularly remembered for his part in passing along to Lord Dunmore, as recorded in Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on Virginia*, the speech given by the Mingo Indian chief, Logan.

It will be recalled that General Gibson possessed the first brick house in Pittsburgh. While the writer has never been able to determine when this house was erected, it is known that Turnbull, Marmie and Company came into possession of a portion of Fort Pitt in the fall of 1785, dismantling the walls for the bricks therein. They used some of these bricks to build an addition to Bouquet’s Redoubt. This addition and the Redoubt were occupied for a year by William Turnbull and, following that, by Major Isaac Craig. Neville Craig was born there in 1787.

The possibility arises, of course, that the brick for General Gibson’s home also came from the walls of Fort Pitt. In any event, we find mention in Turnbull’s letter of September 24, 1788, of a suit brought against General Gibson for payment of a debt, and it would appear that Mr. Hugh Brackenridge served as attorney for Turnbull, Marmie and Company.

Of particular importance, of course, are the details contained in this and subsequent letters from William Turnbull to John Holker concerning the Alliance Furnace. It was not by accident that these enterprising pioneers had turned to this project, almost to the exclusion of their other ventures in the Pittsburgh area. They had been on the Pittsburgh scene for some four years. They had dealt personally, through their mercantile business and in the construction and sale of “Kentucke” boats, with these other hardy individuals who were coming to Pittsburgh, securing provisions here and pushing westward by way of the broad Ohio River.

15 *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 5, op. cit., p. 110.
They knew from their own experience the high cost of transporting supplies from eastern areas, even from Carlisle where western Pennsylvanians secured their iron in those days. As businessmen, they recognized that here was the perfect site for the establishment of the manufacture of iron, an industry basic to the needs of eighteenth-century pioneers. No doubt they realized, as well, that the increasing demand for iron would bring others into the field quickly, as later proved to be true.

It is for this reason, we believe, that there is a strong note of urgency in Turnbull's letters to Holker during this period. In this initial communication, for example, he reports, "I have been to Jacob's Creek again, and found the Dam of the furnace in great forwardness. I have made an agreement for compleating the Mill Work and trunking the race which will be one hundred and five rods in length... The former will cost Eighty Pounds and the later three shillings per rod... the Dam I expect will be compleatly finished in about ten days from this time..."

Anyone familiar with the history of iron manufacture in western Pennsylvania is aware of the controversy which existed for some time as regards the first discovery of iron ore west of the Allegheny Mountains. It was originally believed that such discovery did not occur until some time in 1789 or 1790. While James M. Swank, the eminent iron and steel historian, disputed this in his well-known volume, *History of the Manufacture of Iron in All Ages*, and established the date at 1780, there is additional evidence, of course, in the efforts to establish the Alliance Iron Works as early as 1788.

Certainly, businessmen of the stature of Holker, Turnbull, and Marmie would not have contemplated such a venture without some assurance that a source of ore existed in the vicinity of their operation. It is interesting, therefore, to note Turnbull's comments on the ore situation, such as his having located "a very clever man to attend the digging of ore, who will have under his care 12, 15 or 20 hands according as I find I shall be able to comply in making up their Wages."

He further informs Holker: "I hope upon my return (to the Furnace site) to be able to give you full information respecting the certainty of sufficiency of ore, every appearance at present is favorable, but I shall not be compleatly satisfyed until I see more into

the bowels of the hill, and have at least two or three hundred Ton of ore dug." A satisfactory quantity of iron ore never appears to have been a problem at the Alliance Furnace. In fact, in 1793, after some three years of operation, Turnbull wrote to Holker of locating "a bank that had a good appearance about a mile up the creek above the mill . . . so much better that ten baskets will go as far as sixteen on the north side where we have mostly dug . . . I have no doubt but with twelve good hands, we shall be able to keep four Waggons going daily."

It is commonly recorded that the Alliance Furnace was blown in on November 1, 1790, and there is every evidence in the Holker Papers that this date is no doubt true. In the spring of 1790, Turnbull wrote that construction was moving along "as much as I could have expected; Stuff for the bellows house, Pott house and casting house &c. all hawled and hewed, as also logs and plank for Dam ready on the ground—Hearth stones hawled also furnace wheel Shaft—Mill wright work in great forwardness, both head and tale race of Furnace dry (a very heavy job) Stones for inwall all cut and ready, Patterns for castings nearly compleated, Limestone quarried to make Lime Sufft. to compleat furnace."

We learn also from Turnbull's letter of May 15, 1790, that iron "of a very good quality" already was being made from local ore in the Bloomery. The bands for the furnace shaft were made from this locally produced iron, and Turnbull describes them as "much better than those made of Eges Iron for Shafts in the forge." This reference to Ege no doubt means Michael Ege who was a prominent ironmaster in the Carlisle area17 and one of the principal suppliers of iron to western Pennsylvania before local furnaces were constructed.

It is necessary, of course, that one read the Holker Papers in their entirety to gain full comprehension of the scope and variety of the problems encountered in building the Alliance Iron Works. Financing then, as now, was a constant problem, made even more difficult by the different currencies which existed. The partners appear to have had certain debts outstanding from their previous enterprises and, at the same time, had difficulty collecting from some of their own debtors.

Beyond this, there was the problem of finding competent workmen in an area that was not well populated. To circumvent this

17 Ibid.
dilemma, it appears that craftsmen were brought to the Furnace site and provided with room and board and this also brought moments of crisis, since the supply of food depended upon the whims of nature, and a drought, such as occurred in 1790, could wreck the best-laid plans. Added to all of these obstacles were the unsettled conditions of the new national government and the ever-present danger of trouble with the Indians.

It is little wonder that Turnbull called the Alliance project the "most arduous task I have undertaken." The letters reveal, however, that he must be given tremendous credit for the part he played in the over-all accomplishment. He served, in a manner of speaking, as chief engineer and head geologist, at the same time that he fulfilled the responsibilities of what we call today the personnel director, purchasing agent and sales manager. In addition, Turnbull accepted the task of paying the men and suppliers when money was available and bargaining for terms of credit when it was not.

The Alliance Furnace, as frequently befalls every pioneering venture, was plagued by many problems throughout most of its operation. Turnbull reveals that "alterations to the furnace wheel and Pitt" were necessary during the first year. He also wrote Holker on December 12, 1791, that "The saw mill giving way had been a very great drawback." The dependence of the Works upon water power lessened or halted production whenever summer droughts occurred, as Turnbull notes in his letter of June 29, 1792, or when Jacob's Creek would freeze in winter.

One can only conjecture, however, on the actual reasons for the relatively short life of the Alliance Furnace. From the view of Holker and Turnbull afforded by the Papers being discussed, it could easily be assumed that, as enterprising men in an era of vast opportunities, they found the iron industry less profitable than they had anticipated and, accordingly, shifted their interests to other areas. There is no question, of course, that the venture proved the feasibility of producing iron in western Pennsylvania, with the result that a number of similar enterprises were begun.

We personally have read of at least a dozen furnaces and forges which came into existence in this area between the date of the first heat of the Alliance Furnace in 1790 and the probable date when it was taken out of blast, 1802. The effect of this competition is apparent in later letters from Marmie, when he wrote of the inability to locate a party to operate the Alliance Works because "Iron is a
mere drug here . . . the low price it commands at Pittsburgh so low indeed that you may buy Dorsey's Iron at 100 Dolls. per tun . . . there is so much forced into the market from the numberless forges in Bedford, Huntington & these parts . . .”

In view of the long gaps occurring in the correspondence, it is not possible to pinpoint the exact time when the Alliance Furnace produced its last iron. Swank, who was mentioned earlier\(^{18}\), has placed the date at 1802, and it would appear that this is fairly accurate. The first letter in the Holker Papers following 1802 is one dated July 20, 1806. It was written by an S. Hughes, and whether this is the Samuel Hughes mentioned frequently in Maryland history, we have not been able to determine. In any event, his letter written in Hagerstown mentions to Holker, “As to going to Pittsburgh selling the works at Vendue and proceeding down the river to the Illinois . . . you are the best judge. Surely the works produce no benefit at present and anything you can do with them is better than to be as they are.”

Later correspondence indicates that Holker did not sell the Alliance property. One Larkin Stinchcombe wrote to Holker the following year and endeavored to rent it for a period of three years. A second letter from Stinchcombe advised against selling “the Forge” separately. “The property,” Stinchcombe wrote, “which is only desirable with the name of Iron Works . . . was valued at Sixteen thousand dollars two years ago, & a turn may take place before many years to make it valuable again.”

While such a turn does not appear to have taken place, it was not because of lack of Holker’s venturesome spirit. Marmie mentions in a letter of September 18, 1812, that “Salt is becoming such an object in this Extensive country that several attempts have been made in opening several licks. Col. Meason has one on Yough . . . I am told of one of the neighbors within two miles who is going to try one upon his land. You have one upon Jacob’s Creek . . .”

The enterprising John Holker evidently needed no further prodding. A series of letters are found in the collection, beginning with one dated June 12, 1813, describing the boring for salt water by an individual by the name of Micajah Crupper, whom Holker seems to have hired for the undertaking. The drilling operations continued for several months, and while each of Crupper’s letters expressed confidence that salt water would be reached, he finally

wrote on October 3, that “the depth of the hole is 165 Feet and it is really mortifying to me that I cannot say we have met with more salt water ... I shall not bore deeper than 200 Feet.”

Finally, in late December, the faithful Marmie felt it necessary to advise Holker that Crupper had disappeared, leaving the driller and his assistant with three months of unpaid wages. The only word anyone had received from Crupper consisted of orders he sent to the postmaster at Connellsville to forward to Wheeling “whatever letters might have come to his adress.” Two further communications from Marmie indicate that the drilling was carried to almost 195 feet, and while water was struck at this level, the correspondence ends here, with every indication that this final undertaking at the Alliance Iron Works met with failure.

The importance of the role played by the Alliance Furnace in helping to launch the industrial greatness of Pittsburgh is not to be assessed, perhaps, by the tonnage of iron which it produced. It is true that from the Alliance Works came cannon shot, ordered by Major Isaac Craig in 1792 for the guns of Fort Fayette, to protect Pittsburgh and its people from Indian attacks. Marmie indicates in one of his last letters that the Furnace may also have supplied large quantities of iron for the boat-building trade along the shores of the Youghiogheny, Monongahela and Allegheny rivers.

History's perspective of the Alliance undertaking is considerably broader than its products. The Holker-Turnbull-Marmie partnership blazed a trail that successive generations of Americans have followed. In an age when freedom of enterprise had yet to prove its value, they provided convincing evidence of both its purpose and its potential.

But more than this, in the story of this Furnace and the men who built it and operated it, there is written the story of the American spirit of ingenuity and determination, the spirit that has formed the foundation of greatness for western Pennsylvania and the nation. This was an enterprise that proved, if proof was needed, the permanency of Pittsburgh as a vital link in the settlement of the west and the development of the nation. These were men—men of vision and ability—who played substantial roles in forging that link into one of the strongest in the chain of circumstances which have contributed to our country's rise to prominence among the nations of the world.

19 Neville B. Craig, History of Pittsburgh, p. 199.
While considerable space has been devoted herein to the details which the Holker Papers reveal concerning the Alliance Iron Company, it would be erroneous to create an impression that they deal with this subject exclusively. On the contrary, being part of a regular correspondence between men in different sections of America in the years immediately following its birth, the Holker Papers allude to many individuals and events familiar to historians.

This writer recalls having read, in an old edition of Western Pennsylvania Historical Society's magazine, a reference to William Turnbull's position in the community during his residence in Pittsburgh from approximately 1794 to 1798. Turnbull was described as "a prominent citizen . . . noted for the lavish manner of his entertainments." The article went on to quote, from the diary of Major Samuel S. Forman of New Jersey, items relating to an "elegant" dinner given by Turnbull for the Major and his party during a brief stop in Pittsburgh.

The Holker Papers, and particularly the letters written by Turnbull, seem adequately to confirm that he was, indeed, a "prominent citizen." One finds mention in them of such familiar early Pittsburgh names as Brackenridge, Gibson, Denny, Semple, O'Hara, Harmar, Neville and others. Turnbull's letter to Holker of June 29, 1792, was carried to Philadelphia by "The Honorable Alexr. Addison Esqr." who was president-judge of the Fifth District and one of the most respected and competent members of the Allegheny County Bar.

William Turnbull's two-story stone house on Second Street was well-known to residents of Pittsburgh. It was occupied, at various times, by such persons as William Semple and General Daniel Morgan, and sometime following 1804, it became the location of the Pittsburgh branch of the Bank of Pennsylvania. This house is frequently noted on maps of early Pittsburgh—particularly the familiar map of 1794—as the residence of Presley Neville, the son of General John Neville and a distinguished officer of the Revolution in his own right, as well as a personal friend of George Washington. The Holker Papers reveal how this stone house became associated with the name of Presley Neville.

20 Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, 5, op. cit., p. 110.
The rental and possible sale of this house to Col. Neville is discussed by Turnbull in the letter to Holker which he placed in the hands of Judge Addison. From the phrasing of Turnbull’s communication, it appears that the house was originally owned by Holker. On May 1, 1792, it was rented to Neville (whose name, incidentally, Turnbull spells “Nevil”) for the sum of fifty pounds a year. At the same time, Turnbull advised John Holker that Colonel Neville was interested in purchasing the house by way of exchanging some farm property which Neville held in Virginia. The Virginia farm included slaves, and as Turnbull phrased it, “he cannot bring such property to this state.” Neville offered to give both the farm and the slaves, plus an additional twelve hundred fifty pounds, for the house on Second Street.

The mention of the Neville family brings to mind another incident out of Pittsburgh’s past which is to be found in the Holker Papers. It is the Whiskey Rebellion, in which General John Neville played a prominent role on the side of the government. It will be recalled that the excise tax imposed upon “spirits distilled from grain” by the Congress in January of 1791, was opposed by western Pennsylvanians from the very beginning, even though the insurrection itself did not occur until 1794.

The distillery owned by Turnbull, Marmie and Company near Fort Pitt was possibly still in operation at that time, for on December 12, 1791, Turnbull wrote to Holker, suggesting “the Idea of having some conversation with Mr. Finlay in congress and some others of influential characters respecting some amendments in the Excise Law. As it now stands,” he continued, “it is very exceptionable . . . and obnoxious. That it bears particularly hard on the honest part of the Community, That Perjury must prevail as it now stands, and that will injure the morals of the People, that it would be easier executed and more satisfactory, and fewer officers would be necessary was it laid on the measurement of the Stills annually, it would therefore be impossible for the distillers to avoid the Law. This amendment I think would take place was a few forcible members to take it up, and the one I have mentioned, if he is of the same opinion would be a good one.”

Whether Turnbull disagreed with the amendments which already had been made in the law in October of that year, he does not give us any clues. His familiarity with Brackenridge, Addison and other legal minds of the day in Pittsburgh, however, suggest the possi-
bility that the idea he advanced to Holker was not one that was quickly conceived and lightly taken.

Perhaps one of the most interesting references to a historical event in our nation's early history is found in this same Turnbull letter of December 12, 1791. This writer has saved it to the last, because it seems to sum up the impression created by the Holker Papers that Turnbull, at least, was among the leading citizens of Pittsburgh in the last two decades of the Eighteenth Century.

Readers with a familiarity with American history of this period will recognize the proximity of the date of Turnbull's letter to the date of General St. Clair's defeat at the hands of the Indians, an incident of vast significance to those residing on the American frontier in the 1790's. Turnbull wrote that an event of a "serious nature has taken place by the news of the defeat of our Army under Governor St. Clair the 4th Ulto. the particulars you must have had before this altho' not so minute as is just come to hand by the bearer, Major Denny who takes the official dispatches."

Realizing that the General's battle with the Indians occurred on November 4 and noting Turnbull's letter being dated more than a month following, it was our first impression that his mention of the defeat was little more than a passing reference. It was only after reading the Journal of Major Denny\(^{22}\) that we gained an insight into the significance of the phrase "the bearer" as used by Turnbull.

Major Denny records in his diary that following the battle, an illness had overtaken the General upon his return to Fort Washington and prevented the immediate preparation of the necessary dispatches to the Secretary of War and others in the government at Philadelphia. Accordingly, it was not until November 19 that Denny headed up the Ohio River, arriving at Wheeling on December 9.

His Journal contains the following entries significant to the letter in question:

December 10—Hired a boy and horses, took the road through Washington, and reached Pittsburgh on the night of the 11th.

December 13—In the morning leave Pittsburgh, and arrive at Philadelphia late on the 19th.

From this information, it would appear that Turnbull not only met and talked with Major Denny upon his arrival in Pittsburgh, per-

haps even in Turnbull's stone house on Second Street, but placed his letter of December 12, 1791, in the hands of the Major for delivery to Holker who also was residing in Philadelphia at that time.

Such an incident, we believe, provides adequate proof that William Turnbull not only had the confidence and respect of such important personages of Revolutionary times as Major Denny, but was also on an intimate basis of friendship with them. John Holker, as well, was undoubtedly a person of considerable consequence during the struggle for American independence, and if the information should ever be uncovered, it is possible Peter Marmie might be found to have enjoyed similar prestige.

The Holker Papers, in providing information and substantiation about what previously may have been only historical suppositions, gain perspective as provocative and important documents. They point up, moreover, the necessity of placing in the hands of recognized historical groups other letters, diaries and personal accounts which, though unimportant to the possessor, often can provide vital data to fill out the story of an era, a community or a nation.

Of one thing, however, we already are certain. Even in this early period, while the problems and obstacles of newness were yet to be solved, America was proving herself a land of unlimited opportunity. Here we have seen how three men came their separate ways from foreign lands, gave their loyalties voluntarily to America and within a short span of years, were engaged in a prosperous business association.

Beyond this, and certainly of equal importance, we have seen how they were recognized and accepted socially by those who first possessed, and then fought for, the American Dream of Freedom. In making revelations such as these, the substance and vitality of history remains unchallenged, for it is important to the citizens of this nation, so steeped in tradition and possessed of so stimulating a heritage, that we know why we have attained our heights of greatness.

And the answer, at least in part, lies in discovering the spirit of the men who knew America before its greatness and infused into her industries and institutions that spirit which William Jennings Bryan once described as "the spirit that prizes liberty as the heritage of all men in all lands everywhere."