SOURCES OF EARLY WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CULTURE
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I am part of all that I have met.—Tennyson's "Ulysses"

Each individual has a personality all of his own, which is explained by the psychologists as a product of his heredity and his environment. Just as no two leaves on a tree are alike, so no two individuals are the same. Since the metropolitan areas of our country are composed of individual persons, each city has its own personality.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with its "h," named by a Scotsman (John Forbes) and made famous by Andrew Carnegie, born one hundred years later in the same town (Dunfermline, Scotland), has a personality all its own. With its heterogeneous races our metropolis is the product of care given, sometimes unconsciously, to the early growth and development of transplanted germs of culture. Since its establishment Pittsburgh has been the representative metropolis of the culture of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Our civilization in this area contains a population of approximately one and one-half million people, representing a diversity of assimilated intellectual life. In considering this product, we do not judge the ordinary things. We are interested in the flowering of the early history of this area. To use the standard set by a theologian: we consider the rose as it is in all of its flowering beauty, and not the manure that fertilizes the roots. The culture of a group must be measured by group attainment and not by the trivial things in its background.

One author says that too often the picture of the early pioneer is painted by artists who work with primary colors. As a result the picture is too full of bright yellow from the burning cabins and

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torture fires; full of red scalps; and red Monongahela liquor; or the blue of the blue lips, bitten by extreme cold of winter.

The seeds of culture were planted by many different kinds of pioneers. Each was activated by some motive in coming to the West. There was the idealist, the visionary, and the romantic. Each was seeking the abundant life. Some came for economic reasons, as did the trader, the farmer, and boatman. Some came for religious purposes, as did the missionary to the Indians, and the circuit rider. Some came for social reasons, maybe to escape the law, or as redemptioners. A few were transients, and came not with the idea of remaining, but with intentions of leaving when their mission, purpose, or objective was accomplished.

In examining the cultural pattern there is a confusion of influences. No man passes that does not leave his mark. No day comes that does not bring significant events. Influences both internal and external become interwoven, producing a pattern which today is called the American way of living. The internal influences were the ideas and civilization which the pioneer brought with him. The pioneers were culture carriers with a wide variety of cultural heritage. The external influences were the things he found when he got here.

One external influence on pioneer culture was the Indian who lived here when the first white men came. The Indian left his mark in places, names, articles of food, customs and superstitions. The names of the rivers in this area are among the many Indian names. Allegheny—"River of the Alligewe"—is named for a tribe which may have been the first occupying the Ohio valley (the mound builders). Allegheny is a corruption of "Allikewe-hanna." 1 Monongahela, called "Menaungehilla" by the Lenape, means "River of Fallen Banks," or high banks. 2 Ohio was "Ohi- io" which in the Iroquois and Ottawa language means "The Beautiful River." 3

The pioneer was motivated by necessity to adopt from the Indian diet: squash, tomatoes, potatoes and Indian corn. The Indians taught the settlers to prepare hominy and succotash. The tobacco plant, a valuable commodity of new world trade, was being grown by the Indians when the first white settlers arrived.

The earliest white frontiersmen adopted an existence outwardly at least much like that of the Indians. They hunted and trapped extensively depending more on the chase than on agriculture; they wore the buckskin clothes of the Indians and some of them adopted the Indian method of warfare, even taking scalps and boasting about it. The emissaries of governments soon learned to conduct business in Indian fashion, to hold councils with lofty and figurative oratory, to give presents and belts of wampum and even to make reparation for the murder of Indians by sending gifts to the family of the deceased.

The simplicity of Indian culture made it extremely mobile, but it did not merge as a whole with the white man's culture. Indian culture wilted before the steady advance of agricultural settlements. The settler adopted only that Indian culture which met his demands for survival. He took whatever lay nearest his hands and fitted it to his needs.

It was the English trader, particularly the Pennsylvania trader in advance of the settlers, who appeared as a first representative of what was to become the established culture. Within the area west of the Forks lay the Indian trading centers, Logstown, Kuskuskes, Muskingum, Lower Shawneetown, Upper Chillicothe, and Pickawillany. Not many traders ventured west of the Monongahela and the protection of Fort Pitt until the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, 1768. This treaty removed the legal obstacle to migration.

The trader left his mark of culture upon the language, upon town sites, and routes of travel. The most important contribution of the trader was the service as a pathfinder. The traders' paths by which the settlers made their way to the west cannot be ignored. They were the only routes of communication between the old culture and the new, except the rivers which were dangerous. These winding paths over the mountains were almost the only entrance for men, materials and ideas entering the upper Ohio.

There were four main natural routes that were used during the colonial period.

4 Donehoo, History, 2:622.
6 Solon Buck and Elizabeth Buck, Planting of Civilization, University of Pittsburgh Press (Pittsburgh 1939), 488-492.
7 Charles A. Hanna, Wilderness Trails, G. P. Putnam's Sons (New York 1911). Map attached as an appendix to Vol. I is valuable for the location of Indian villages.
The Shamokin Path was one of the earliest. It led up the West Branch of the Susquehanna and Bald Eagle Creek and then cut across to the upper waters of the West Branch at Clearfield. The traveler could then cut across the low divide to the Mahoning, which flows into the Allegheny a short distance above Kittanning. At times canoes could go up the West Branch all the way to Canoe Place near the southwest corner of Clearfield County.  

The Nemacolin Trail crossed from Wills Creek on the upper Potomac to the Youghiogheny. It was laid out by Colonel Thomas Cresap, a member of the Ohio Company, and a friendly Delaware Indian, Nemacolin. This was the route used by Braddock's Expedition, the first military forces to cross the mountains. For half of its route, from Cumberland to Chalk Hill, it parallels what is today US Route 40.  

The Raystown or Trader's Path followed the upper waters of the Raystown Branch of the Juniata and then crossed over to Loyalhanna Creek, a tributary of the Kiskiminetas. This route was a horse path until 1758 when it was opened up by the Forbes Expedition to Fort Duquesne. The Forbes Road roughly parallels Route 30 across the mountains although it was at times more than 20 miles from today's highway.  

The Frankstown Path or Kittanning Trail, for some years the "main road to Allegheny," led up the Juniata and its Frankstown Branch, to Kittanning Gap in the Allegheny Ridge, and then across country by way of Canoe Place to Kittanning. This was the route chosen in 1834 by the Pennsylvania Canal and Portage System. This part of the path is primarily the route of the Pennsylvania Railroad today.  

These paths first of buffalo, and then of Indians, which usually were along the summits of the hills, the trader gave to us as a route of culture to frontiers. These roads contributed an institution of tremendous influence to the culture of western Pennsylvania—the tavern. The tavern was the center of group effort, where people

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8 Hanna, op. cit. 1:192-222.  
met for social and political reasons. In 1815 there were a score or more taverns in Pittsburgh.  

The seeds of culture may have been where one might not have looked to find them, in the knapsacks of the soldiers. If we had looked beneath the red coat, brass buttons, powdered wig, and clay pipe of the British soldier of the French and Indian War we would have seen not mere fighting apparatus; even to the soldier war was not the sole concern. "They like all the race, as individuals, were interested in getting along with other men,—and of making life richer and more lovely. The achievements of mankind in all these particulars are as significant to us as the exploits upon the battlefield, or compromises in the council chambers."  

We notice a certain cultural gain when armies fight side by side as allies. Each learns the good points of the other, and generally there results a mutual respect which is valuable. This was evidenced in the war tactics adopted by Colonel Henry Bouquet. After Braddock's defeat Bouquet decided with an originality of thought all his own that the system of European war tactics and principles of civilized war as practiced in Europe were unsuited to requirements of fighting in the dense wood against the fierce Indians. He was not slow in discovering that military excellence of a high order was latent in the wearers of homespun coat or hunting shirts. He realized that the soldier of the European type with cumbersome military boots was too slow and hampered in his movements.

Bouquet snipped off the long coat tails of his men, browned their shining gun barrels, cut their hair short and adopted the colonial foot gear. Bouquet also adopted frontier war tactics of not lining his soldiers up in old European military fashion to be targets for the hidden enemy. The English soldiers with these adaptations were an indirect factor in the eradication of Indian control, thus speeding up the spread of civilization.  

In general any gain to culture through the actual administration of war is incidental. Nevertheless, some gains are registered. Obviously one way that soldiers influenced culture in western Penn-

12 Leland D. Baldwin, Pittsburgh—The Story of a City, University of Pittsburgh Press (Pittsburgh 1933), 155.
sylvania is that they remained after the French and Indian War, or returned after the Revolutionary War as colonists.

The officers were almost always from the gentry, when not from the nobility. Their presence affected the deportment of the citizens in the area. Doubtless their polished manners did not always mean a regard for other people's lasting happiness, but at any rate their presence contributed some grace to social intercourse. Many officers who settled with their families in the shadow of Fort Pitt at the close of the Revolutionary War “brought with them the courtesy and social amenities of the most refined circles in the East, which in colonial times was an improvement upon the nobility of England.”

One of the first soldiers (and of a lineage of nobility) returning to civilian life in Pittsburgh was Major James O’Hara, a veteran of the French and Indian War and of the Revolutionary War. He and his wife, pretty Polly Carson of Philadelphia, built their log cabin in the “King’s Gardens” area of old Fort Pitt. They brought all of the luxuries that could be transplanted from the East in a wagon. Neighbors hesitated to walk on their carpets—the first carpets in the western country. O’Hara was an early benefactor of the village which grew up about Fort Pitt. He provided the village with salt; and established the first glass factory in this area; and helped to provision the western armies. He is currently referred to as a “Napoleon of Industry.” The fortune he amassed helps to perpetuate his name and the names of his heirs, the Dennys, the Darlingtons and the Schenleys.

Another soldier who brought culture in his knapsack (also of the nobility) was John Neville. He was sent in 1775 by the Virginia Provincial Convention as a commandant of Fort Pitt during the boundary dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania. He was also a veteran of the Revolution. His Bower Hill plantation was established Virginia plantation style, with eighteen slaves, although this was not the cultural pattern of western Pennsylvania. The public was very much aware of Neville’s presence when it became his duty to collect the hated excise tax on whisky. The “Neville connection” influenced political and civic activities. Neville, a man

15 Fletcher Hodges, Jr., “A Pittsburgh Composer and His Memorials,” Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine (Pittsburgh 1938), 21:84.
of moral courage, and a Federalist, was nationally influential in upholding the Constitution during this formative period.\textsuperscript{17}

Many officers of the army and their accomplished families settled in Pittsburgh prior to, during and just after the Revolutionary War. Among these were: Colonel Pressley Neville, Colonel William Butler, Colonel Richard Butler, Lieutenant Stephen Bayard, Major Isaac Craig, Major Ebenezer Denny, Major Edward Butler, Major Alexander Fowler, Major William Anderson, Captain Abraham Kirkpatrick, Captain Adamson Tannehill, Captain Uriah Springer, Captain George McCully, Captain Nathaniel Irish, Captain John Irwin, Captain Joseph Asheton, Captain James Gordon Heron, Colonel George Morgan, Lieutenant William McMillan, Lieutenant Gabriel Peterson, James Foster [the grandfather of Stephen Foster], Major Edward Ward, Captain John Wilkins, Quartermaster John Ormsby.\textsuperscript{18}

These were officers who no doubt set the standard for the culture dominating the little community, and by their civilian activities they raised the standard of living. No doubt there were soldiers who wore no brass who carried culture in their knapsacks also.

In western Pennsylvania there were evident the elements of conflict which appeared in the struggle for culture. There was the struggle of man against nature—the struggle with cold and hunger, with the great forests that hemmed in the little clearings so painfully made by human hands. Then there was the struggle of warfare—The French, the Indians, and then the English during the Revolutionary War. The new land was a land of promise, also a land of labor.

It was the settler who came and stayed who was the real culture carrier.

Western migration was begun as early as 1765, in spite of royal proclamation forbidding settlement upon Indian lands west of the mountains.\textsuperscript{19} Into this area poured settlers, first into the Allegheny and Monongahela valleys, and then into the Ohio valley west of Fort Henry (Wheeling). However, western migration was of little importance until after the French and Indian War. Before the victory of Mad Anthony Wayne, business in the village about

\textsuperscript{17} Margaret M. Felton, "John Neville." Thesis 1932, in University of Pittsburgh Library.
\textsuperscript{18} Fletcher Hodges, Jr., \textit{op. cit.} 21:83.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Pa. Archives} 1765, 49, 50, 70.
Fort Pitt was stimulated by supplying military needs. After the Greenville Treaty, 1795, the westward migration brought a volume of domestic commerce to the area. Pittsburgh was the last place where supplies could be obtained before going on west.

Even before the population could give permanent support, the doctor, the teacher, and the clergyman made their appearance.

Knapsack culture was the type carried by Pittsburgh's first doctor, Nathaniel Bedford. He resigned his commission as army surgeon to settle in Pittsburgh in 1775. His wife was Jane Ormsby, daughter of John Ormsby of (Southside) Pittsburgh. Their home is described as being "palatial to a degree." Dr. Bedford lived in the style of an English nobleman with a retinue of servants, a string of horses and hunting dogs. He laid out Birmingham (Southside) which was the first borough, and the first borough annexed to Pittsburgh. His name is perpetuated by a street named for him.20

The contribution made by the medical profession in time of war is a good example of war refunding a little of what it takes from civilization.

Life on the frontier demanded physical effort, and education was in no sense essential in the non-competitive society. Home life on the frontier provided a laboratory method of education. The teacher was often the first specialist. But one of the first concerns of the inhabitants of Fort Pitt was to provide for education. James Kenny, a Quaker merchant, who arrived in Pittsburgh on May 16, 1761, throughout his three year visit kept a little diary in which he wrote: "Many of ye inhabitants here have hired a school master, and subscribe about sixty pounds for this year 1761 for him. He has about twenty scholars, and likewise ye sober sort of people seem to long for some public way or worship, so ye schoolmaster, etc., reads ye Litany and common prayers on ye first days to a congregation of different principles (he being a Protestant) where they behave grave (as I hear) on ye occasion, ye children are also brought to church as they call it."21

There were various private schools. In 1808 there were twelve schoolmasters and four school mistresses listed in The Commonwealth. February 28, 1787, the first public school was established,

the Pittsburgh Academy. Pittsburgh had no institution of collegiate rank until 1819, when the academy was incorporated, becoming the Western University of Pennsylvania, and in 1907 it became the University of Pittsburgh. In 1826 the Associated Reformed Church founded a Seminary in Allegheny.

A story of early education in Pittsburgh would not be complete without relating some activities of Hugh Henry Brackenridge. The present generation thinks of him most often as an educator, since he was instrumental in obtaining the charter for the Pittsburgh Academy and taught in the Academy. He also selected the first Board of Trustees “because of their fitness and ability.” Brackenridge, however, contributed in many ways to the culture of Pittsburgh during his twenty years of residence here. He was trained at Princeton in theology and served in the Revolutionary War as a chaplain, but he forsook theology and came to Pittsburgh as a lawyer. From the Penns he procured “a charter for a church of Pittsburgh,” and the first church building, a small square log one, was built by the Presbyterians on this land. Brackenridge was one of the founders of Allegheny County, and a leader of the masses in their thinking and actions during the Whiskey Insurrection. He was instrumental in getting the first newspaper set up in Pittsburgh and he published in 1793 Modern Chivalry, the first book to be published west of the Alleghenies. He helped to weave the intellectual pattern for early Pittsburgh.22

Pittsburgh was not settled by a group of immigrants but grew up about a frontier outpost, and it came in contact with all types of immigrants. Families came singly and felt no ties between themselves and their neighbors. While the town gained immigrants of all sorts, it was largely Scotch-Irish of Virginia, South Carolina, Maryland, and New Jersey origin, with a strong leaven of German and Welsh. They were predominantly after the old school of Calvin with Congregationalists, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians and Catholics.

The first ministers were of two types: the itinerant preacher and the settled pastor. The clergy were the best educated men in the city and taught in the academy and in the university. They were the leading men, and they formed the minds of youths and in-

stilled the Puritan attitude toward the theater, literature and art.

One of the earliest and most influential Presbyterian ministers was the Reverend John McMillan, sometimes referred to as "the pope of western Pennsylvania." In 1772 he was sent on a missionary tour to the west and then settled here in 1778. He was a dynamic orator. A monument to his work is still standing in Canonsburg—"John McMillan's Log College." He established this school and taught in it. It later became the Canonsburg Academy, and survives today as Washington and Jefferson College.23

In 1819 in Pittsburgh there were eleven houses of worship: two Congregations of General Assembly Presbyterians, one Seceder, one Covenanter, one Associate Reformed, two Methodists, one Baptist, one Protestant Episcopal, one Roman Catholic, and one German Lutheran.24

There was a minimum of sect or denominational antagonism as is evidenced by the facts that 1. Hugh H. Brackenridge applied to the Penns in 1787 for land to build "a church" for Pittsburgh; 2. the Reverend C. B. Maguire, a Roman Catholic priest, taught Latin and Greek in the Pittsburgh Academy.

These two first institutions, the school and the church, scattered the seeds of culture until today there are numerous institutions and societies, and an intricate community life with many flowering intellectual activities.

Just as each community modifies the culture it receives so did Pittsburgh. The log cabins huddled around Fort Pitt housed a society of striking simplicity. A simple dignity arose from a general sense of moral equality. Eastern culture was shaped by the barbaric wilderness. To succeed in the struggle, to get on in the world, to acquire material possessions not for oneself, perhaps, but at least for one's children—this was the motivating force behind the axe stroke, the rifle shot, the plow thrust.

Each new wave of pioneers made permanent contributions, and the new West was an unrestricted battleground for the champions of new ideas and extravagant schemes. Rules of tradition hampered little, and the attitude of the spectators was not too critical. Frontier influences gave America many of its peculiarities, and account for

23 James M. Miller, *The Genesis of Western Culture in The Upper Ohio Valley 1800-1825*, The Ohio State Archaeological and Historic Society (Columbus)

24 *Pittsburgh Directory*, Riddle and Murray (Pittsburgh 1919).
many of the differences that mark off its society from that of Europe. Men were scarce and nature abundant; society was atomized. The permanent contributions exist today as a product of the seeds of pioneer culture in the form of living monuments and enduring landmarks. They are great routes of transportation; great intellectual institutions, such as churches, schools and hospitals; and above all our great American way of life.25

As a plant takes on new life when it is transplanted, so the transplanted predominantly English culture was invigorated. Free land gave the opportunity to establish the particular degree and kind of democracy that they favored. As a result of being segregated from the Atlantic Coast settlements, independence, acquisitiveness, physical strength, and practicability were the progenitors of individualism and the American way of life.

25 Anderson, op. cit.