ALFRED PARSONS' DIARY—
A BOATING HOLIDAY
Edited by CHARLES MORSE STOTZ

This happy chronicle, written almost a hundred years ago by Alfred John Parsons (1842-1890), has been preserved by his daughter, Mary H. Parsons of Ingram, Pennsylvania, who has kindly consented to its publication here. Miss Parsons is remembered by many, including the writer, for her lifelong devotion to music and piano instruction.

Exuberant, uninhibited personal records such as this, carry us back to the scenes and spirit of other days with a sense of reality lacking in formal historical writing. This is valid source material. One is immediately impressed in this article with two aspects of western Pennsylvania of which we are little aware today—the all but vanished canals and one-time popularity of rowing on the rivers.

The manuscript was accompanied by a drawing of the route and section through the canal. (See page 350.) I examined and photographed vestiges of the canals, ditches, and the stone lock chambers in the course of the Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey (1932-36) over most of the route followed by Parsons. Some of these may be seen today. A state historical marker on Route 19, just south of Meadville, calls attention to the ditch of the Feeder Canal, shown facing page 354, which was traversed by Parsons' crew from Conneaut Lake to the aqueduct over French Creek, six miles below Meadville. In the September 1960 issue of The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine there is a map which shows the Pennsylvania canal system with W. R. Rhoads' article, "The Pennsylvania Canal." Incidentally, this map omits the "Cross-cut Canal" that ran from Mahoningtown on the Beaver River to Akron and Cleveland. It is regrettable that much has been written about the canals but little or nothing done to preserve a record of their physical structure. The remarkable canal era is little remembered

Mr. Stotz, a trustee of the Society and a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, is author of The Early Architecture of Western Pennsylvania and co-author of Drums in the Forest. This diary was brought to the attention of Mr. Stotz by Mrs. W. W. Stoner, Jr., a niece of Miss Parsons.—Ed.
Route of the boat trip, from a sketch made by Parsons.

Typical section through Canal, as sketched by Parsons.
and within another generation all physical evidence will have been obliterated.

The Xanthe was one of many boat clubs organized by amateur Pittsburgh oarsmen. The Historical Society owns two large framed lithographs of the Undine Boat Club, and of the Eclipse Barge Club, both organized in 1856. The pictures show portraits of the members grouped about a drawing showing their boats on the river, one of which is reproduced facing page 355. The boats had picturesque names. Those in the Eclipse Barge Club were named Eclipse, Darling, Albatross, Frolic, and Embla. The Undine Boat Club, A. Nimick, President, listed the following records:

- Champion 1857 4 oars 3 mi. Time 21:35
- Champion 1859 8 oars 2½ mi. Time 16:15
- Champion 1859 4 oars 3 mi. Time 20:30

The Columbia Boat Club, with headquarters in a floating clubhouse under the Seventh Street bridge, remained active until the twenties. The best racing waters in the district, and among the best in America, was the Hulton Course on the Allegheny, between Verona and Twelve Mile Island. This course was well known throughout the racing world in the eighties and nineties when national and international races were rowed here, attracting such outstanding professionals as Courtney and Ten Eyck. Boat trains, with bleachers erected on flat cars, provided the means for spectators to follow the boats as they raced. Betting, which reached enormous proportions, proved the downfall of professional rowing on the Allegheny. Racing was abandoned in the nineties amid charges of corruption and scandal, tampering with boats and rigging the races.

Amateur oarsmanship had its last active days at the Oakmont Boat Club in the early twenties. In 1924 I bought a beautiful old shell from Mawhinney of the Columbia Boat Club and enjoyed the exhilarating sport on these beautiful waters for several years. At that time we had some forty oarsmen, most ex-college crew men. The leaders in this revival were Bob Roche, a member of Princeton's first crew, and the late Jim Graham, from Harvard. We had some 14 singles, 4 doubles, 2 fours and 1 eight-oared shell. The sport suffered with the increase in speed boats on the river, the waves from which could crack a shell in two if the oarsman did not have time to turn his boat broadside to them. The flood of 1936 carried away every shell and the clubhouse as well, thus ending the modern
revival of a sport which survives only in college crew racing and a handful of boat clubs throughout the country. The only relic of local rowing is now hanging in the Men's Grill Room of the University Club. This is the shell of Jim Graham, converted to use as a lighting fixture, when, at last, he reluctantly hung up his oars.

I hope someone will pursue the subject of rowing on the Pittsburgh rivers in the nineteenth century. Undoubtedly an enormous mass of material may be found in the newspapers and early photographs.

**Trip to Conneaut**

On Monday Morning, Aug. 16, 1869, while attending to business as usual at the counter of the Dollar Savings Bank I was glad to see my old friend Frank Rinehart come in to Shake Hands. Frank is Teller of the 1st National Bank of this City. [Pittsburgh] He appeared laboring under supressed excitement. When he asked me if I could or would or had taken my furlough for this Year. I told him I had taken all I was going to take for the present. "Oh Alf. You must go with us. We are going to have a good time. Jim Rinehart, Jim Bell, Jack Irwin, Syd Madiera, Dal Wilkins, Flor Means and I are going to Conneaut Lake and we want You Along. We are Going in the Eight oared racing Barge of the Xanthe Club, by way of Beaver Canal and French Creek and the Allegheny River about 300 miles of a Row. We are going mainly for our Health, Fresh Air, fine Scenery and a little Fishing. Come along. We will take a tent and provisions and a darkey to Cook for us and we will have a gay time generally."

I must confess the brilliant Picture overcame my scruples and partaking of Franks excitement in the anticipation of pleasure to be enjoyed, after thinking a moment, I replied, "Frank, I'll go if I can get off." "All right, Alf, we'll count on you," and off he went.

I had some trouble arranging matters at the Bank to get off but at last the Officers of the Bank told me to Clear out but for not more than 10 Days. I borrowed a gum Blanket and an army Blanket from Some Friends. After various preliminaries on Tuesday afternoon, patching the Boat which leaked, putting leather on the Oars, we got the provisions all down to the River ready to start. On Wednesday Morning After Breakfast at 8 Oclock we were all aboard and away down the Ohio. It was a pleasant bright Summer Morning and many bright thoughts flitted through our Heads. We
had not Gone ½ mile untill Frank who was pulling Stroke broke his oar. We all felt our spirits Sink at this unfavorable omen at the Start for we knew that we had a big undertaking before us and I, for one, had many misgivings that we would be able to accomplish it. But as the oar was broke only ½ through Frank turned the other side front and pulled ahead. We all being loth to turn back, we rowed on down the Ohio to Manchester where Dal was acquainted at Coulter's Boat House Where he got an extra Oar for us.

So fire away boys! We must encamp 5 miles above New Brighton on the Beaver River to night. A long pull and a strong pull! A race with the Railway train, many remarks to persons on the Shore who warmly cheered us, waving their Hats and handkerchiefs as we passed along. "How far is it to Sewickley?" "5 Miles." "Much obliged" from Dal. Much obliged came to be a bye word for every time we asked a question and got a civil answer, which was about every five minutes, "Much Obliged" would chorus out the Crew. As I write now, the dip of the Oars, the repartee, the gay shout and merry laugh come back to me and I feel once more amid the gay light hearted voyageurs.

"oh Say fellows, Stop Just a minute" came out in the treble of Jim Bell. A shout of merriment from the crew, "Jim You are giving out. Nary a stop, Jim!" "Jack, put Your oar in! No Sodjering!" "somebody bail out!" Pass along the sweet Oil." This was for the Hands to keep them from blistering. "I have got my first blister." "Oh My Back." "Oh Say Fellows, look at the ostrich on Horseback over in the foliage on the left Hand shore." cried Jim Bell, in the vain Effort to induce us to slacken our Efforts at the oar and give him a rest." "There is a Sand bar. Look out or we'll knock a hole in Her. Keep her to the left, Gideon" Gideon was our darkey, Cook and helmsman. "Oh I belong to Gideons Band." "There's a rock ahead. look out, Gideon." "Wie Geht es mit Ihren Gesundheit." "Should be Ihre Jim" "No it Shouldnt, Alf." Ill bet the Ice Cream on it." "Done. See you when we get Home." Around this bend is Shousetown. 10 Miles to Rochester and dinner. So we carried on, gay fine fellows.

We reached Rochester about two Oclock, had Dinner, and remained there untill about 4. We had gone about 30 miles from Pittsburgh in 6 Hours. We had to repair the Boat Some and rest ourselves. Heretofore we had been rowing down Stream. Now we leave the Ohio and ascend the Beaver which is much Harder
work than descending. After dinner we passed our boat through the first lock, of which we have still 69 to pass through. Then a beautiful pull of five Miles of Slackwater to New Brighton. We passed, I think, three or four locks here. Quite a crowd came to see us as we stopped and got some soda water. I wrote a few lines to the folks at Home. Then we started for our camping place. The scenery is very grand here and very wild. The forest for hundreds of miles is as wild as when trodden by the Savage, the only sign of civilization being an occasional canal packet creeping along the shore or a party of sportsman after ducks or fish. The woods resound to many a shout and laugh and song as we glided over the clear water of the Beaver.

At last about dark we espied a spot which we think will suit for our camp. We land, unload our little boat, pitch our tent and build our fire. Gideon gets supper ready. Good strong coffee, ham, eggs, etc and we all eat very heartily. Our boat has been leaking badly in the afternoon so we take it out on the shore, turn it upside down, put thick white lead in the cracks and nail holes and fix her up so as to be ready for the morrow. Our first night in camp was so sudden a change from the cozy feather beds and warm blankets of our city homes to the cold hard ground and rough army blankets that few of us slept much, if any. We all eat so hearty a supper and drank so much strong coffee and smoked so many villainous tobies that when we laid down to try to rest after our hard days labor, we found the blood coursing like fire through our veins. Sleep, though we courted her assiduously, refused to lend her gentle influence to recruit our wearied frames. The fun was fast and furious and lasted to the "we sma' hours aying the twal." If all the witty sayings and jokes perpetrated could be remembered they would make quite a book.

After laying a long time very quiet, trying to sleep, I felt so feverish that I thought I would get a drink of water. Seeing the shadow of a figure outside in the firelight I said, in a sepulchral whisper, "Gideon! Gideon!" "Well sah." "Gideon, will you please hand me in a drink. I cannot get up without disturbing the rest." "Parsons, aint you asleep?" Growled Frank. "I don't believe there is a man in the tent asleep." An investigation revealed the fact that the only one of the eight who was reposing in the arms of somnus was Dal. Dal is quite a boy, being yet a good way back in his teens. It is a fact I observed in the army that boys will sleep
FRENCH CREEK FEEDER CANAL—This photograph, made in October of this year, shows the Feeder Canal over which Parsons and his friends traveled. The canal in the foreground is nearly filled up with the inevitable bulrushes and marsh grass. The ditch may also be seen in the distance, curling off to the left between two rows of trees. The state marker is seen to the right of the picture, beside Route 19, some five miles south of the turn-off to Meadville.
much easier than those of more mature years under circumstances of this Character. For a while there was Pandemonium but at Last, all feeling the need of Rest to Prepare for the Labor of the Morrow, Quiet was restored.

After Breakfast we examined our Boat, filled all the cracks and nail holes with White Lead. As the sun was getting warm we were afraid she would be warped, so we put her in the water, packed our tent, Blankets and utensils aboard. Our Captain, when we are all in our places, gives the Command: “Now Boys, Strike her for Newcastle.” Off we glide, bidding good bye to our first Camp on the Beaver.

Soon the sun begins to beat down in midsummer fury. All of us, having lost so much sleep the night before, found that the exertion was beginning to tell on us. However, there was no flagging. All bent to the oars with a will and mile after mile fell behind us. If we had met with no obstructions we could have reached New Castle about Four O’clock, and not been very tired either. Our first hint of trouble Was from a Canal Boatman who asked us where we were going. When we told him he Said we could not get to New Castle this week for the water was out of the 3 mile Level and would not be in before Sunday. This was a disappointment for we did not like to lose the time as some of us had to be back at our places by Saturday week. As we passed the Mouth of the Connequenessing many wanted to go up there and fish until Saturday, it looked so very inviting and cool, the Foliage almost meeting in the Centre of the Stream. However our Captain (Frank) said “Push ahead, boys. We will go as far as we can and when we have to stop we will know better what to do.” We had to pass a good many locks. As the Beaver is all slackwater from its mouth we became quite expert in opening and closing the Gates. At first it was very awkward to us but by the time we arrived at New Castle we could do it as well as Canal Boatmen.

About 3 O’clock we arrived at the Mouth of Mahoning, or Mahoningtown as it is called, where Mahoning Creek unites with the Beaver. Here we found the Water all out of the Level on account of a Break in the dam. So we would be compelled to take our boat a long circuit up the Beaver which was very shallow, or wait until the dam would be repaired and the level full of water. After an animated consultation the Go Ahead American Spirit prevailed and we determined to risk the River. We had all along
Expected to reach New Castle in time for dinner and therefore we had not eaten anything since breakfast. We still cherished that hope and decided to push on, being told that it was only 5 miles by the river and three by the Canal to the town.

Had we known the hard struggle it would be with Swift Current, riffles, fish dams, etc. that was before us, we would have fortified our inner man before attempting it. Because of the hard labor of the last two days and the loss of sleep, we were ill prepared for the Severe and protracted Effort. Soon after we entered the River we began to encounter Sand bars over which the water was but a few inches deep. We had to doff our rubber garments, enter the water and lift the Boat over into deeper water. So it was about every Hundred Yards. In deep water we would Jump in and row to the next riffle where the water was running at about a Hundred Miles an hour. It took all our Power and endurance to lift and push the Boat over. None of us ever worked so hard in our lives before, nor will, I believe, ever work at harder or more disagreeable work again. The Boat was very fragile and we had to Exercise great care. If she had struck a Stone very hard we might have Knocked a hole in her bottom which is only ¼ of an inch thick and of the very lightest material. It was very tantalizing to ask some of the inhabitants how far it was to New Castle and receive an answer "3 miles" and then, after an hour's hard work, on propounding the Same Question to hear another Jakey say that it was Seven miles or five Miles. At last we arrived at the aqueduct where the Canal Crosses. We received positive information that it was but two Miles. We could Stand it no longer so we hired a wagon to take our luggage to the town. With the lightened boat we reached our Haven about Seven Oclock.

We were too exhausted to make Camp and, instead, stopped in a Hotel for Supper, Bed and Breakfast. I eat very little supper and returned immediately, as also did Jim Rinehart, to the Room. The day had been very Hot and our room, being on the Sunny Side of the Frame Hotel, was as Hot as a Bake Oven. I felt very miserable. From Jim's Expression I knew he was in like condition. I felt like having a drink of Milk and ordered a Pitcher full. Jim ordered two glasses of ale. When the order was given down Stairs it excited much merriment, as we afterwards learned. We drank our ale and milk and soon after we were in the land of dreams. My dreams were of Row Boats, locks, dams, riffles, etc. I awoke
in the morning much refreshed though the toil had pretty well worn me out. I was determined that I, at least, would not Row this dark Friday. We eat a Hearty Breakfast and lounged about the town till about 9 Oclock. Frank could not induce us to get into the Boat, the majority of the crew being in favor of remaining where we were for a Rest until Saturday. We lifted the Boat over the dam, put the luggage in and decided to cross the River anyhow. When we got over I got out of the Boat, determined I would not Row in the Sun as I felt decidedly unwell. My arms were very much swollen and blistered where exposed to the Sun. I left the Boat, telling the Boys I would see them at Sharon in the Evening. I am convinced It was the best thing I could have done under the Circumstances.

There was quite a crowd at the Bridge to See the Boys off. As I mingled in the crowd, I found myself quite an Object of interest. I looked like one of Falstaff's troop, I suppose, "Fat, Ragged and Saucy". I went up into the City and purchased a Chip with a brim about 4 inches broad. The crown ran into a Point, which I cut off, leaving the hat very much in the Appearance of a Haystack. The next day I was christened "Skinnewa", the Indian Chief, on account of it. I went over to the Railway Station and had a delightful ride to Sharon. We passed the Boat about five miles from New Castle. They were laying on their oars under a bridge, in the Shade. As I looked at them I had not the remotest Idea they would reach Sharon that day. At Sharon I went to a Hotel and told the Landlord to call me at 4 Oclock for Dinner. I had a good rest from about 11 till 3 Oclock when I got up, had dinner, and went to the Canal to watch for the Boat. But first, I went down town and bought a can of white lead, Judging that we would require it soon for the boat.

After waiting for a long time it began to grow dark and I was Just Going to the Hotel to Bed, walking along the Bank, when I stumbled across the Boys who had just landed. They looked pretty well used up. They all went to Supper and I took the Boat on and through the next lock, assisted by Jim Bell and the darkey. We went along the Canal and found a Camping place Several Miles from the City. There was only one House in sight. He wanted water very Bad as Canal Water is unfit to drink but were afraid to approach the House for the dogs of which there were many. We were compelled to Waken the people by throwing Small Stones
against the side of the House. The People were quite frightened until they discovered our Pacific intentions, and we got water for the Night. I slept under a Haystack with some others and was very comfortable. The Tent had been pitched on a hillside, there being no level Ground convenient, and it was almost impossible to lay it in.

In the Morning we were awake at daylight. The tent was Struck, the Boat packed and we were off, our Friends of the previous night gazing at us from a distance. We did not wait to Cook as our provisions were low and we determined to shop at the next Village we would come to for Breakfast. We went 7 or 8 miles before we arrived at an inviting looking place. We got Breakfast at a Private House for 25c apiece, a very good one too. At the call of "Oars" by our Captain we were all in our places. "Strike Her for West Greenville" today Was the Word. After an arduous morning we stopped for a rest under a bridge to get shelter from the Scorching Rays of the Sun and enjoy a Bucket of Milk. A Farmer proposed to tow us to Greenville for 5$, the distance being 19 Miles. We accepted his proposition. Hitching a tow line, we were soon going as fast as a Horse Could trot. We disposed ourselves in various luxurious reclining attitudes in our Narrow Boat and Enjoyed the Change very much. When about five miles from Greenville a Heavy Rain Cloud came up. In a few minutes we were drenched to the Skin. We pushed on in our wet clothes and reached Greenville about 6 Oclocak. We found the People very hospitable. They offered us a Warehouse in which to Store our Goods and did various Kindly acts which gave us a very pleasant impression of West Greenville. We took our Supper, Sleep, and Breakfast in a fine Hotel.

On Sabbath Morning, after considering our dilapidated appearance and our absence from Home, we decided to proceed on our Journey. We were soon ready and off, another day of the usual routine. We eat dinner about the usual Hour, 1 Oclocak, in a beautiful Shady Spot on the Bank of the Erie Canal about ½ Way between Greenville and Shermantown. We arrived at Sherman's Corners about dark and put up at a Hotel. We had Heard terrible stories of this place for 50 Miles down the Canal and Expected to find a den of iniquity but we found it a very beautiful little village, and apparently very quiet and orderly. We left there bright and Early Monday Morning and soon passed the Reservoir, a Small lake itself. We bid good bye to the Erie Canal. A row of 5 miles
brought us to Conneaut Lake, amid the Water Lillies and wild ducks. We felt repaid for all our Labor as we viewed the Glittering little lake in its nest in the Wild Wood. It is just as Wild to all appearance to day as when the canoe of the Savage glided over its water. We rowed to a Camping place by a Spring and pitched our tent. We prepared to Spend Monday and Tuesday, leaving for Home Wednesday Morning.

The air is very clear and bracing. The Lake is about 6 Miles long and averages about 2 Miles Wide. It is very deep in some places. Beside the Canal, it has but one opening, a little mountain Stream, clear and Cold. Sparkling, it is just like an immense aquarium, full of Fish which are very tame, that is the Small ones. The woods abound in Blackberries. . . . . Some of the Berries are as large as the end of ones thumb.

On Monday Evening we manned the Boat and rowed to Evansburg to get provisions. While we were in the Village a Squall Came up and nearly destroyed our Boat upon the Rocks. However Some of us hastened to the rescue. I got into the Boat and kept her off the Rocks with an oar, Jack taking the tow line. We soon had her behind the Bridge which broke the force of the waves and she was Saved. I got very Wet. Frank and Jim Rinehart insisted on going Back to Camp immediately. The rest of us, not feeling like risking our Necks in so frail a Craft on such rough water, walked about three miles to Camp. The Boat, being lightly loaded, rode the waves Safely. We found Frank and Jim in Camp on our arrival.

The People about the Lake are very Hospitable. We received visits from Many during our Stay. In The Evening the Lake and woods resounded to Song, many on the Party being the best singers in Pittsburgh's Church Choirs. We'er afloat, We'er afloat, In our little Boat was the favorite, appearing to Suit the circumstances, though almost Every one on the calendar received some attention. Some of us Fished, some went in Swimming, some washed their clothes and the time passed very pleasantly. . . . .

On Wednesday Morning, bright and early, we were up and off as the fresh Morning breeze was ruffling the surface of the lake. The hills resounded to the measured stroke of the oars as we Kept time to the Old Song of Homeward Bound in our little Boat. "Swift the Morning Breezes blow as o'er the Silent Tide we row, We row, as o'er the Silent lake we row." In a few minutes we entered the Canal. Soon the intervening hills hid from our view the beauties
of the Lake. We laid to our Oars, knowing it would take a long pull to cover the intervening 150 Miles which lay between us and the City of impending Smoke. We no longer had the excitement of the outward trip to infuse energy into our Muscles. As long as we expected Something ahead we looked expectantly forward and of course labor was only a pleasure in achievement. But now, after an hour or so, we begin to lay on our oars. Frank became disgusted. "Here boys, this won't do. We have almost 200 Miles to go by Saturday Night. Jerk her up. Put in your oars there, Jack." A little later and someone proposes that we tow her by turns, two at a time, while the rest lay in the boat and rest. So we take it two by two from that till French Creek, About twenty Miles. There we took the Boat out of the Canal and set her carefully in the Creek, about 50 feet of a Fall. Here we begin to go down hill. The former part of our trip was through 69 locks, up hill. At the lake we were about 700 feet higher than at Pittsburgh.

French Creek descends very rapidly and we found another Edition of the Shenango, ten times intensified, with this addition that as we are going down stream we cannot stop, but choosing the deepest water, let her rip, one standing in the bow to pole her off the rocks. In this position Jim Bell distinguished himself by his quick Eye and good Judgment. Having got so far with our frail Boat, all of us were becoming anxious to take her home safe. Whenever a rock rubbed her bottom, striking of course on the bow first and going her whole length, a groan would be wrested from the crew and a sigh of relief when we had passed Safely without getting a hole Knocked through her. We left the Canal at the Aqueduct 6 miles below Meadville, about 10 Oclock. We took dinner of cheese crackers and milk about 3 Oclock. After a short rest, we Shoved out in the Stream, intending to sup in Franklin on the Banks of the Allegheny.

About 4 Oclock, while Yet 12 miles from that city, a heavy thunder cloud came up. We were soon drenched to the skin. We thought our miseries now complete. We continued on after the storm abated and when about 2 miles below Utica, the river being somewhat muddy by the Rain, we run upon a rock and knocked a hole in her bow. She sank to the bottom of the River. We waded ashore and after a while dragged the Boat out to shore where we left it full of water. After getting our traps all out, we stood upon the shore and contemplated the situation. Frank's Heart was ap-
parently all Gone, his head Muddled, for his command was take
the ax and smash the d—d thing to pieces. To this there was a
decided rebellion and much argument. There we stood, wet &
dirty, with unkempt Beards, unshaven Faces, muddy clothes, shiver-
ing with cold on the Banks of that wild Stream 2 miles from any
habitation. Some one Shouted "150 Miles from home, Boys, and
a hole in the Boat." I thought I could Improve on it by adding
"and only 25 cents in my Pocket." At this there was a general
laugh and some others found themselves in the Same condition.
To explain the reason of this, we had made a general fund and had a
treasurer who liquidated all our expenses but, on examination, we
found that he had Exhausted the resources and was in debt. So
Each one was told to take care of himself. I borrowed $5 from
Jim Bell which sufficed until I got home.

Three of the Party went to Franklin, some 10 Miles distant,
while the rest of us went back to Utica to get accommodations for
the Night. We had many a laugh over the situation and soon re-
tired to rest, hanging our Clothes by the Fire to dry. We slept
very sound and next morning we awoke quite refreshed and de-
termined to patch up the Boat with tar and Canvass and take it to
Franklin anyhow, if not Farther, after breakfast. We procured the
necessary articles and walked down to the Boat, hauled it out on
Shore, turned it upside down, and applied the remedies. We soon
had the Satisfaction of seeing her afloat as dry as a Plank. Our
darkey became disgusted and left us here, going home on the Cars.
Dal also went home, leaving only Seven of us, determined to stick
by the Boat as long as she held together. As I thought, Four was
enough to go in the Boat, I proposed that the rest walk. They all
agreed to that but who was to walk? To settle the Matter I pro-
posed to walk to Franklin and, leaving the Boys in the Boat, I
started. About 3 Miles from Franklin I met the Train in which
were our three straglers, Coming back to meet us. They had to go
to Utica and walk the 10 miles down again.

I got to Franklin about Noon, went into a Barber shop, got
shaved and had my clothes cleaned. I bought a clean Collar and felt
better, though not a bit tired. I went back to the Bridge and had
the pleasure of seeing the Boat laying at the Shore Safe though
not sound. I joined the Boys for dinner. Some followed my ex-
ample and got cleaned up. After while along came the straglers
from Utica. Once more we are all together with the exception of
the defaulters, Gideon and Dal, who couldn't Stand the Pressure but went home on the Cars. We spent some time looking at the Oil wells which are very plentiful here in the Heart of the Oil Country. About 4 O'Clock we entered our Boat through our last lock. This let us out of the Venango, the Indian Name for French Creek, Into the deep water of the Allegheny.

Our difficulties are now past. From here to Pittsburgh there is fine water the whole 140 Miles. Steady pulling down the Rapid stream Should bring us to Pgh. in two days. I was quite surprised to find some of the Crew, among them our Captain, who wished now to ship the Boat on the Cars and go home ourselves on the Cars. The insurrection assumed formidable Proportions and was only quelled by Jack Irwin and myself proposing to take the Boat home alone and let the rest go on the Cars. We shipped most of our Baggage here on the Cars which lightens the Boat very much and makes it run better. We pull till dark, stop all night in a Farm House and Have a dance there with the Country Maidens. We had Some fine singing from our Quartette Club and Some fine violin playing by Jack Irwin who is one of the best amateur players in the City. The next Morning, before old Sol has shown his face, we are off and away in our little Boat. We row about 10 miles to Scrub Grass for Breakfast, to Emlenton for dinner and to Mahoning for Supper, Making about 70 Miles that day.

We stopped all night in the large Hotel where many Pitts-burghers are Stopping during the Summer months. We saw a good many Friends, among them Will McCandless and his Wife, distant connections of mine and very old Friends though we do not meet often. She is a daughter of Gov. Johnson, quite distinguished among the Fashionables in the Country. They are Known far and wide among those of their Kind. Will is a good Fellow, about 6 ft 2 in height, about 4 feet across the Shoulders, a herculean frame. He has Good Health and fine spirits and is fond of athletic Sports; such as, rowing, running, and anything that brings the muscular system into play. All the Young Men of this City, "renowned for its Men of 'Muscle'", who delight in athletic sports know Will McCandless on account of his fine Physique, Good Spirits and Gentlemanly deportment. He is a Kind of leader in that regard.

Our party next morning was increased by Will and his Nephew who Wanted to take a row before breakfast next morning. Saturday we were up as the first Streak of light Showed itself above the
Horizon. We routed all up for we wanted to get Home by this Evening. We Paid our Hotel Bills, got our traps and went to our Boat. Will Bailed out the Boat as the Crew sat on stones on the Bank or lay on the Green Sward. Will looked at us and Said, "Well, You are the most forlorn looking set I have Seen." What a contrast from 2 Short weeks before, when in Wills Office we had planned the trip with bounding Spirits and gay attire, for most of the Boys are very particular about their dress when at Home. Our City Manners and dignity stood out very strong when compared with our present appearance.

The Boat Was half full of Water and It took them some time to bail out as She was leaking very badly. However, when she was pretty dry, we got in for a 10 mile row before breakfast. The River was covered with fog and we had some difficulty in Steering Clear of Land and Rocks. As we had 8 "Nasty" oars in the Water and one boy to Steer, we made her "Skip". 10 miles soon flew behind us and we are at Red Bank. We land, order breakfast and haul our boat out on Shore. We turn her upside down and proceed to repair damages by covering almost ¼ of her entire bottom with tarred Canvass, backed around the Edges. On putting her in the water we find her almost as dry as ever she was since we entered her.

Now, boys, strike her for Kittanning! Major wants to Catch the up train to return to Mahoning. We have barely time to do it, the distance being 10 miles. Soon we get warmed to the work and lay to it with a will. The hard usage begins to tell on our frail Craft but lay to it, boys, we must catch the train and let Will get Home. Kittanning looms in view but far down the Stream is to be seen the Puff of the Locomotive of the up train. We Pull with redoubled vigor. It is very uncertain if we shall be in time. We row to shore where the water is very Shoal. Our two Friends Spring out of the Boat and wade about 50 Yards to Shore. As Will disappeared over the Bank he Shouted, "If we miss the train boys, weel see You down at the Bridge." We rowed leasurely to the Bridge, landed, Hauled our boat out again and doctored her to Keep the water out. Jack and I took a Stroll up through the City exciting much attention and comment from our appearance. No one could imagine who we were. Our apparel indicated the roughest kind of boatman but manners and Carriage something different. We got some Beer, bought some apples and returned to our Boat Mates. As we saw no more of Will we supposed he caught the train.
We got into our places and once more left Kittanning about 10 ½ Oclock. We left Mahoning about 6 Oclock and stopped at Red Bank about an Hour, so we rowed 20 miles in 2½ Hours. It is yet 50 miles to Pittsburgh. We pulled a long Steady stroke now for if we have no delays we can reach home tonight Easily. About one Oclock we take dinner in a Farm House. About 3 Oclock a heavy Shower coming up, we are compelled to land and wait till about 5 Oclock, so we can’t get to Pgh tonight. After the shower we reenter the Boat and row to Freeport where we stop in a Hotel for the night. Next Morning, Sabbath, we start about 8 Oclock and reach Pgh at two, Rowing very leisurely. Our trip is over and we excitingly say “we have done it.” One of the biggest rowing excursions that ever left Pittsburgh, that City which is renowned over the Civilized world for its Oarsmen, for haven’t we Jimmy Hamill and Dick Coulter the Champion Oarsmen of America?

A Word in regard to the Whole excursion. One of the best features is that it don’t cost much. Being our own propelling force, all the Cost is for Eatables and Quarters at night. Having our Tent along, if our boat had not sprung a leak, we would have Camped out all the time and it would have cost less.

It furnished Physical Change and recreation of the very best Kind. I could write a chapter on this Head but, as You are not a disciple, I will not inflict you with it. The vigorous exercise of the arms, back and chest makes the lungs take full inspirations, filling Every air cell to its fullest Capacity at Every inhalation and in like manner Exhausting them at Every Exhalation. This, Continued for two weeks in the pure Mountain Air, renews and purifies the Blood, for all the blood in the Body passes through the lungs every three minutes. The muscles, under the guidance of Generous Nature, answer Every demand upon them by increasing their resources so when we return we find that our hard work has only made better Men of us Physically. I have gained About 8 Pounds since my return. There is no enjoyment in the world like it— I mean Physical Enjoyment. Every fibre of the being appears to be in the hight of enjoyment. . . . . . . All the Feelings of a Man are stirred to the bottom. It is arduous but it is glorious sport, and has a very good Effect both Physically and mentally, although I was sorry we were compelled to row on the Sabbath but could not avoid it. Opposition was useless.

The Scenery was Magnificent the whole route and we revelled
in all the joy of which a being is capable. Fine Scenery, Good Health, plenty to eat, Plenty Of Change and Excitement, Just Enough hardship to give it a spice. We did not undergo any more than is the usual lot of Boatmen, except the Steady Rowing. But the Change from our Sedentary life in the City made it seem difficult and arduous to us. I have not told \( \frac{1}{2} \) of what might be said in connection with the Excursion. I only Give outlines and one must Imagine the Rest.