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THIRTY DAYS OF PANIC

GEORGE SWETNAM

The summer of 1863 — particularly June of that year — is one of the most interesting and in some ways revealing periods of comparable length in the history of Pittsburgh.

Little has been written on it, however, and that little almost entirely on the physical fortification of the city, which was carried out in magnificent haste in an eighteen-day period beginning June 15. In our Magazine this appears to be limited to two articles, published in 1919 and 1944. (If this frequency is considered as intentional and appropriate, it would seem that I ought to wait until next year to finish this talk.)

The first of these was the publication by John P. Cowan of a timebook of Pittsburgh Coal Co.1 containing the record of employees who worked on the project, giving names, number of days worked, daily wages and totals. The second, by Henry King Siebeneck,2 takes up the history of claims later made against the government by Pittsburgh companies and individuals, principally for labor, but in some instances for materials or teams furnished for the work.

For those of you who have not read this interesting document lately, I should briefly explain these claims: They were brought by George H. Thurston, publisher of the Pittsburgh Dispatch, on behalf of 159 claimants who had prepared vouchers and endorsed them to

Dr. Swetnam, historian and magazine staff writer of the Pittsburgh Press, gave this paper before the Society on April 23 of this year.—Editor

1 John P. Cowan, "Fortifying Pittsburgh in 1863," WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL MAGAZINE (WPHM), II, 59-64. About half of this material is comment, some of it accurate.
him for collection. The ground of claim was that at a meeting on June 14, 1863, in the Monongahela House, they had been promised that the government would pay at the rate of $1.25 a day for any workmen supplied by Pittsburgh employers, on condition they would cover any additional rate necessary to keep men on the job. (The figure is that usually employed, although there are some variations.)¹ These claims were presented in 1866, and refused on the ground that in May of 1863, Pittsburgh leaders had sent a committee to Washington to ask that engineers be supplied by the War Department to superintend the fortification of the city; that nothing had been said about materials or labor, and that the Department looked upon the affair as a private matter carried on by citizens of Pittsburgh for their own protection and that of their property. Not to leave you hanging in suspense over the outcome, I may say that the claims, totaling over $73,000, were finally rejected after lengthy litigation, but many of them were paid about 1905 by the Congress through pork-barrel legislation.

Aside from these two articles and a page or so of mention in local histories, little if anything has been written except a few newspaper feature stories principally concerned with the locations and names of the various fortifications erected at that time. A contemporary map dated July 20, 1863, available in the Pennsylvania Room of Carnegie Library,⁴ shows the approximate location of more than thirty of these works, variously designated as a "fort," some twenty "redoubts" and some "batteries"; and the names of about a dozen have been recalled. Pictures of some of the earthworks, many of which were partially visible for half a century, have been preserved. This would make an interesting subject for investigation, but time does not permit further comment on them in this paper.

"Panic seemed to seize Pittsburg" [sic] during the last week of June in 1863, says Erasmus Wilson,⁵ who was having his own troubles with the war, as a soldier, and was not here at the time. But a check of contemporary materials — largely local newspapers — makes it clear that the panic lasted longer than he believed.

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¹ E.g. $1.50 for men and 62 cents for boys. In the United States Court of Claims, Charles H. Armstrong and 158 others, vs The United States No. 16,767. Mr. Siebeneck has repaged these records (see his note 14, page 7). According to his pagination this is Court of Claims, 17,767, p. 66.


⁵ Erasmus Wilson, Standard History of Pittsburg (Chicago, 1898). Wilson was editor of the work, but it cannot be accurately determined at this late date how much of it he wrote. The omission of the "h" from the city's name was frequent until 1890 and correct from then till 1911.
Pittsburgh has always suffered from the jitters in times of national danger or difficulty, it appears. During the American Revolution its people constantly feared Indian incursions and betrayal, and exercised pressure to force the aging George Croghan to live east of the Allegheny mountains during the conflict, thus losing the only person who might have made any real headway in dealings with the tribesmen. At the Christmas season of 1860, even before the Civil War had begun, the town raised a fearful fuss over the transfer of some cannon from the Allegheny Arsenal to forts on the Gulf Coast, and finally got the order reversed. Cowan quotes unnamed “map makers” (probably newspaper artists) who said that, “If Germany should win in Europe and the war were carried to America, ‘the decisive battle would be fought on the Allegheny River near Pittsburgh.’” And many of us here should be able to remember how during World War II most people unquestioningly believed that Pittsburgh would certainly be the first target of any bombing attack by Germany (or soon afterward, by Russia), utterly oblivious to the fact that far more important and available objects would certainly top the list compiled by any sane aggressor.

As Cowan points out, 1863 was a trying year for Pittsburgh. The early enthusiasm for the war had largely waned as time dragged on, and was succeeded by weariness and worry. Many Pittsburghers must have had guilt feelings over the supply scandals involving local business. An explosion at the Allegheny Arsenal the previous September had killed many boys, women and girls who worked there, and left a cloud of unwarranted suspicion. Thousands of volunteers had joined the war effort from Allegheny County, many thousands more from the surrounding area. Many had been killed, or died of wounds or disease, or were rotting in Southern prisons, or had come home, maimed for life. Some outstanding regiments, such as the 123rd and 136th Pennsylvania Volunteers, had recently disbanded at the end of their enlistments, instead of joining up again. The first military draft — scheduled for July — was causing fear and ill feeling, and “copperheads,” protesting the treatment of Vallandigham, held meetings openly in the district. Despite charitable work such as the arrangements for feeding soldiers in transit through the city, and the work of the

6 Nicholas Wainwright, George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1959), 300f.
7 Wilson, 544-549.
8 Ibid., 59.
9 Pittsburgh [morning] Gazette (PG), June 15, 1863, 4 (all following newspaper dates are 1863).
Christian Commission,\(^{10}\) it is evident that morale had reached a low point.

In May there had been much concern over reports of guerrilla raids in West Virginia and at Gallipolis, Ohio. Such reports were usually twisted and sometimes completely false, but they had left their mark. A meeting May 12 to plan for Pittsburgh's defense was called "because of the danger of raids by guerrilla or irregular cavalry." It resolved, among other things, that "the War Department be urged to establish a telegraph line from Pittsburgh to Washington, Brownsville, Uniontown and Frostburg, to Cumberland and Washington, with branches to Waynesburg and Morgantown." \(^{11}\) It was a wise, if hopeless suggestion. Pittsburghers and Pittsburgh newspapers knew much better what was happening on the fronts in Virginia and at Vicksburg, than they did of conditions in Cumberland, or just across the West Virginia line to the south.

In such a situation, Pittsburgh evidenced a childlike and almost pitiful dependence on Edwin M. Stanton. Born in Steubenville, he had demonstrated great ability as a lawyer, and for a decade prior to the outbreak of the Civil War had been one of the legal lights of Pittsburgh. He was a widower who had married a Pittsburgh girl just before going to Washington. Although originally an anti-South Democrat, he had become Attorney-General in Lincoln's first cabinet, and then Secretary of War. Apparently it was his mediation which had prevented shipment of the cannon in December of 1860.\(^{12}\) And on petition of frightened Pittsburghers he had placed a battery at the disposal of the city early in May 1863, and approved the organization of a regiment of home guard infantry and four companies of artillery.\(^{13}\)

If such actions had allayed the city's fears in any degree, the news on June 4 was sufficient to stir them up again. "Rumors of another raid," trumpeted the *Daily Evening Gazette*,\(^{14}\) reporting that Confederate cavalry were active again in northern West Virginia — as indeed they were.

"While we have no reason to be alarmed," it editorialized, "certainly it would be no more than a proper measure of prudence to put our community in a better state of defense. If Curtin\(^{15}\) will not grant

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10 For a discussion see Wilson, 593-99.
11 *Daily Evening Gazette* (DEG), May 12, p. 3.
12 Wilson, 544-49.
14 DEG, 2.
the necessary authority to make such organization as the case requires, we think it can be had from the General Government.” And a story on the following page commented that it was pretty certain that the enemy “has designs on Pittsburgh.” One rumor quoted a Uniontown source as saying that a force of two thousand to four thousand was moving on Morgantown. A refugee from that town stated that when he left, the “rebels” were within eighteen miles in very heavy force, and that they had split off six thousand cavalry to make a flank advance on Uniontown by way of Brandonville.

On Saturday, June 6, the Committee of Public Safety issued a warning “To the Citizens of Allegheny County: The present condition of the rebel government satisfies us that some desperate movement, such as an invasion, however temporary, of the Loyal States, will be resorted to by them, to revive the drooping spirits of their supporters. It is unnecessary, as it would be imprudent, to state the many reasons to believe that a raid may be projected, selecting Pittsburgh and its neighborhood as the section to be ravaged . . . We must be strong enough to prevent them accomplishing the injury we are satisfied they meditate.” 16 It urged the immediate organization of five additional regiments of infantry, twelve companies of cavalry, and four six-gun batteries.

On the same day John Covode of Westmoreland County and J. K. Moorhead of Pittsburgh, who was a candidate for governor, met with Stanton in the nation’s capital “in regard to making a new department in order to enable Pennsylvania to protect herself against rebel raids or the incursions of guerrillas.” They were given assurance such action would be taken, and that headquarters of the new department would be in Western Pennsylvania.17

On Monday a student at Iron City Business College was arrested as a spy, on the ground that after escaping from the South and reaching his home in Monongahela he had failed to notify authorities of his return.18

Up to this time little attention had been given here to the moves of Lee’s army, which had been regrouping since its pyrrhic victory at Chancellorsville in May. But on June 9 the battle of Brandy Station demonstrated that his eyes were turned north and west, towards the upper Potomac and the Mason and Dixon line.

The following day’s Pittsburgh papers, which reported the battle,

16 DEG, June 6, 4.
17 PG, June 10.
18 DEG, June 8.
also disclosed that General Moorhead had succeeded in getting the government to form a Department of the Monongahela, with headquarters here.19 "General [John G.] Barnard, an eminent Government engineer," the Daily Evening Gazette reported, "left today for Pittsburgh, to aid in constructing works of defense. The Committee seem to have succeeded beyond their expectations."

As Cowan20 and Siebeneck21 have both noted, for Lee to have attempted a move on Pittsburgh would have been not only unwise, but almost impossible. Yet Pittburghers viewing the events in the day's news put two and two together to the fourth power and got sixteen. Quoting a New York Tribune conclusion that Lee was planning an invasion of Western Virginia "and a descent upon this city," the Daily Evening Gazette expressed uncertainty as to whether Lee was really making any serious movement. "But if he is," it added, "he is probably intent on Pittsburgh in one direction, or Norfolk in the other. And though Pittsburgh is the more distant and less accessible, its capture, though but for a day, would so gratify the rebels, as well as replenish their scanty stores, that we shall not be surprised if it is attempted."

Next day Gen. W. T. H. Brooks, the new department commander, arrived at the Monongahela House. After a brief interview with him, Editor Samuel Riddle of the Evening Gazette wrote: "The Government is now fully aroused to the importance of this city as a 'vital Union point': the enemy so look upon it, and we are assured that they are determined to sack our city. We are no alarmists; but we have sufficient information in regard to current military events to fix the belief that our city is in imminent danger of a rebel attack, by a strong force of cavalry and artillery, under a bold and desperate leader." 22 This was followed by the quotation of most of Stanton's order creating the Department.

The basis of Brooks' assurance that the attack would be directed against Pittsburgh was evidently a telegram which Stanton had sent just before midnight, and which must have greeted him on arrival. It read, in part: "Intelligence received this evening of the enemy's designs make it certain that you cannot be too early or too busily at work as Pittsburgh will certainly be the point aimed at by [J. E. B.] Stuart's raid which may duly be expected, you should frankly inform

19 Ibid., June 10.
20 Cowan, II, 59.
21 Siebeneck, XXVII, 2-3.
22 DEG, June 11, p. 3.
the people of Pittsburgh that they must be at work." 23

About this time occurred one of those events which disclose the panic which had struck the city. It is difficult to reconstruct the exact timing from the materials now available, but it may have come to a head as early as June 5. Bits and snatches appear in various papers from time to time, but the only fair and reasonably complete account is that published in the Post on June 25. 24

Early in May someone had gone to Riddle with accusations that a number of employees 25 at the Allegheny Arsenal were disloyal and a public danger. Riddle went to the Arsenal head, Major R. H. K. Whiteley, with the rumor. At first Major Whiteley refused to take action on such thin evidence, whereat Riddle began printing denunciations in the Evening Gazette, but giving no names or facts. At length the editor appointed a committee, who held star-chamber sessions to take evidence. When it was pointed out that this was but hearsay, the committee had it sworn to before an alderman.

All this time the men involved had no idea they had been accused of anything. Their first notion of what was happening came when the commandant, under mounting public hysteria and Riddle's pounding, discharged "twelve or fifteen" of them from their jobs. On demand he refused to give them a copy of the testimony, but read it to them, and suggested it was up to them to prove their innocence. According to Wilson, 26 they made some attempt at this, and he seems to imply that they and their families were run out of town.

During his first three days here, Gen. Brooks appears to have marked time until his staff could be named and reach the city. Besides, as he made clear, he had no money, even to pay the soldiers of the volunteer units which were being frantically recruited. The government supplied what few guns it could spare, and he apparently hoped that the men would eventually be paid.

Meanwhile, the Evening Gazette fulminated against the delay. "It is not necessary that the rebel cavalry should be seen on the hills surrounding our city, or occupying Morgantown, to demonstrate an 'emergency' to intelligent and prudent men," Riddle wrote. 27 "The government will subsist the volunteers while in service, and the pay

23 U.S. Court of Claims 17,767, p. 15.
24 Pittsburgh Post (PP), June 25, p. 2.
25 The number seems uncertain, and apparently the list of the accused grew as the affair continued. Because of secrecy, the names, dates and definite accusations were suppressed.
26 Wilson, 577.
27 DEG, June 13, p. 2.
will be precisely the same as in the regular service.”

The subsistence and rate of pay had been specified in orders from Washington. But whether the government would pay the bill was dependent on a future action of Congress.\(^{28}\) Riddle recognized this, and urged that “while the volunteer contributes his . . . life and services, those whose families and property are protected should contribute liberally to reimburse him in part.\(^{29}\)

“It is therefore proposed,” he concluded, “that a fund be subscribed” by leading men of the city, who would advance the money “and trust to an appropriate action by the Congress to reimburse them.” He referred to such an advance as “a loan to the government until Congress meets.”

Anxiety continued to rise, and that same evening “a very large and enthusiastic mass meeting was held in the Diamond,\(^{30}\) Allegheny,\(^{31}\) for the purpose of stirring up a proper interest among the masses.”\(^{32}\)

The principal speaker was the state’s assistant adjutant general, Thomas M. Howe, a Pittsburgher. He warned that there was imminent danger, and stated that the “late raid to Morgantown was but a reconnaissance in force to prepare the way for a much more formidable movement.” He urged the enlistment of troops who would be “subsisted, armed and equipped by the Government. There was no appropriation by which the troops could be paid, but a committee of citizens had agreed to furnish half a million of dollars for that purpose, and await the appropriation of Congress.”\(^{33}\)

Leaping forward two days in order not to divide this topic, we see that on Monday, June 15, a paper was circulated among the principal men and institutions of the city, to provide this money. The original may still be seen in the vault of the central Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

Citing the formation of the Department of the Monongahela, its insolvent condition, and the fact that “the Sec’y of War has suggested the aid and cooperation of Citizens and incorporated instutions [sic] in supplying means; and

“Whereas certain Banks and Banking institutions in the County of Allegheny at our instance and request have agreed to advance a

28 PG, June 15.
29 DEG, June 13, p. 2.
30 Common designation at this period for the public square of any town in this area.
31 Now Pittsburgh’s North Side.
32 PG, June 15.
33 Ibid.
sum of money not exceeding $500,000 . . . we the undersigned, severally and not jointly or one for the others do hereby promise and agree . . . ."

The agreement was to pay to a representative of the bankers (his name is left blank) sums of $10,000 down to $500, to be held for the use of the lenders, in case Congress refused to pay them. If Congress repaid them (as it later did) the agreement was to become void. In essence, the paper is a bond, the amounts specified totaling $616,500. There were twenty-six pledges of $10,000, thirty-seven of $5,000, twenty of $3,000, thirty-three of $2,000, thirty-four of $1,000 and twenty-three of $500.

The paper makes it quite clear that this money was raised solely for the payment of soldiers.

Meantime absolutely nothing had been done in regard to the proposed fortification. And on Sunday evening, June 14, Gen. Brooks called a meeting of leading citizens and manufacturers at the Monongahela House, and read them the riot act.

Thomas Bakewell acted as chairmain, and George H. Thurston of the Dispatch as secretary. But if the secretary kept any minutes, they were never produced in the court actions.

"Gen. Brooks," he later testified,34 "... stated that he had called them together for the purpose of communicating to them an order that he had received — peremptory order was [sic] the words that he used — to put the city of Pittsburg in a state of defense against the invasion of Lee's army . . . . He stated that he had not a dollar of money nor soldiers by means of which he could obey that order . . . He . . . wanted . . . the manufacturers of the city of Pittsburg to furnish him with 3,000 or 5,000 men by daybreak . . . , that he wanted them to close their workshops and factories and order their men into the rifle pits . . . ."

He then described a long argument over closing. After this was agreed to, according to this account, there arose a question over how the men would be paid, and he quoted Brooks as saying: "I will pledge the Government . . . to reimburse any outlay you may make for this labor." Then, according to Thurston's account, someone pointed out that a large number of the men involved were making four to five dollars a day. At this the General stuck, but is quoted as saying: "I will issue proper vouchers to you and pledge that the Government will pay those vouchers at the rates as follows: $1.50 for men; 62 cents for

34 U.S. Court of Claims 17,767, 65ff.
boys..." The manufacturers then agreed, he said, to pay going rates, and be reimbursed only at the prices indicated.

Later in the same testimony Thurston stated that "after thirty years" his recollection of those things was "exact and distinct." 35

Contemporary accounts, however, don't indicate that his recollection was quite so accurate as he believed.

The following day's Post, 36 after reporting the time, place and organization of the meeting, says:

The object of the meeting having been stated, it was then resolved:

WHEREAS, Maj. Gen. Brooks has informed a meeting of manufacturers and business men [sic] held on Sunday evening, that there is an imperative necessity for two thousand men to commence work upon the fortifications of the city at 8 o'clock tomorrow (Monday) morning. [sic, except italics mine, as also in the next two paragraphs, except for the word "resolved."] Therefore, be it unanimously

Resolved, that all business be temporarily suspended, so that there may be a general rally of all able-bodied men in front of the Monongahela House, at 8 o'clock tomorrow (Monday) morning, for the purpose of placing the city and neighborhood in a proper state of defence against an invasion of the enemy, now hourly imminent.

Resolved, that Thos. Bakewell, Gen. Thos. M. Howe, S. F. VonBonnhorst and John Harper be a committee to urge the President to instruct Maj. General Brooks to declare martial law forthwith.

Resolved, that the manufacturers and business men hereby pledge themselves to stop their establishments to-morrow (Monday) and that they will obtain and place at the disposal of Maj. Gen. Brooks all the men they can from their different establishments, for the purpose of fortifying the city, and further, that they pledge themselves to the persons engaged at their respective establishments that they will keep an account of their time and pay at the rate of one dollar and twenty-five cents per day for said labor.

Resolved, that the directors of the Pittsburgh and Steubenville, Pennsylvania and other railroads be requested to transfer their laborers and implements to the orders of the Commandant of this Department.

Resolved, that those manufacturers present inform those not present tonight, of the action of this meeting, and desire them to conform to the resolutions adopted.

Resolved, that the proceedings of this meeting be published in the morning papers. Thos. Bakewell, Chair. Geo. H. Thurston, Sec'y.

The Pittsburgh [morning] Gazette of the same date published the identical account, except for minor typographical differences. The file of the Dispatch of this date is missing, but since no questions of accuracy were apparently raised, it would seem to have used the same official account prepared by its editor for the others. On Tuesday, in a story of "The Great Rebel Raid," preserved in a clipping file in the Pennsylvania Room at Carnegie Library, the Dispatch 37 gives a briefer, but not inconsistent account:

35 Ibid., 69-70.
36 PP, 3.
37 Clipping, hand designated, "Pgh. Dispatch, June 16, 1863." On a number of similar clippings in the same place, typography and internal evidence agree with this identification.
On Sunday night a meeting of leading citizens and manufacturers was held at the Monongahela House, at which resolutions were adopted for the closing of all manufactories and rolling mills, and the employment of the men thus relieved from work in the erection of fortifications.

The story shows an even heightened fear of invasion, rather than any relief. "The vague rumors and uncertainties respecting a northward movement of the rebel army in Virginia have at length grown into a certainty," it begins. "... Enough is known to show that both Wheeling and Pittsburg are seriously menaced. The excitement created by the reports on Sunday was most intense, and the people, now thoroughly aroused from their apathy, are hastily organizing those defenses which should have been provided months since." Lincoln's call on that day for one hundred thousand militia to meet an invasion, seems to have increased the tension.

The same clipping notes that "The general stoppage of work on Monday, and the small proportion of persons taken off for duty in the trenches, gave the streets quite a holiday appearance." The story goes on to mention that there were numerous "drunken frays," and considerable looting, both of stores, orchards and private homes.

Unfortunately there is no complete or accurate record of the number of men put to work. Newspapers published accounts from time to time, indicating that there may have been a minimum of four to five thousand men on some days, and a maximum of around eleven thousand on others. In the few instances where the Thurston claims evidence can be collated with newspaper accounts, the latter would appear to be somewhat inflated — perhaps by ten per cent.

A great deal of work was done, however, leaving evidence that could be plainly seen in many areas for sixty years to come. The city was frightened, but on Wednesday the fear became terror.

"The excitement in the City yesterday, was intense," reported the Dispatch, "particularly toward evening, upon receipt of intelligence, from a direct source, that the enemy had reached Cumberland."

At 3 p.m. a mass meeting took place at Lafayette Hall. Pressure for closing all businesses was increased, and all business and professional men were urged to form military units and begin drilling. Seventy lawyers immediately signed up for such a unit.

At the meeting a committee was appointed to wait on Gen. Brooks and once more urge him to declare martial law. This he wisely declined to do, as "the necessity had not yet arisen." He added that if it

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38 Similar clipping, Dispatch, June 19.
39 Similar clipping, Post, June 19.
40 Similar clipping, Dispatch, June 18.
did arise, he would not hesitate to declare martial law throughout his entire department. The General must have been getting pretty tired of such requests. Only two days earlier he had criticized those who clamored for him to declare martial law, telling them they didn’t know what they were asking.

On Thursday all liquor sales were banned (the order was not strictly followed) and morning, afternoon and evening meetings were held to promote the war effort. Word that the Confederate forces had abandoned Chambersburg was taken as proof that the raid there was only a feint to cover a major movement in this direction. There were more spy scares and arrests almost daily, although the ensuing silence in each instance appears to indicate all were without foundation. A speaker at one of the meetings urged that “if necessary, business should be suspended for months.”

There was no work on Sunday, June 21. Perhaps the frightened city felt it needed to pray as well as work. On Monday businessmen voted to keep their places of business closed through Wednesday. A Washington dispatch had the enemy in Grantsville, Maryland, marching on Pittsburgh. On the evening of that day citizens met again. Some places, it was reported, were refusing to close, or only pretending to do so, and committees were named to apply pressure. “The committee were also desired to wait upon gentlemen of leisure, fond of driving about, and ask their presence in the ditches.” Some employees had come to the meeting and were arguing for a reopening of business. At the end of the account, a writer added: “Allow the reporter to suggest that less interference by employees would have added more dignity to the meeting. Their presence and interference were not legitimate, and at subsequent meetings the exercise of a proper degree of modesty on the part of a few of them will be most becoming.” Later that evening Pittsburgh telegraph operators got a shock (which the press passed along to readers next day) when an enemy telegrapher cut into the Philadelphia line at McConnellsburg, and started an argument that kept the wires hot for half an hour.

On June 25, according to the Post, Lee was believed to be march-

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., June 16.
43 PP, June 17, p. 3.
44 DEG, June 18.
45 Cowan, 61.
46 Dispatch clipping, June 25.
47 Post clipping, June 22.
48 Dispatch clipping, June 25.
49 Ibid.
ing on Harrisburg. The whole country around Chambersburg was reported to be "full of rebels," and many thought they would sack the capital and turn westward towards Pittsburgh.

By the return of another Sabbath the fortifications were so nearly complete that apparently another day of rest was taken. Many of them were completed on June 27, it would appear, most of the rest by June 29, but a few went on to July 3. On June 30, the Evening Gazette was beginning to breathe easier, and exulted over the fortifications that "every pass is covered, every avenue of approach can be successfully defended." But there was still reason to be fearful: "The next work before us is to get troops to man them." For more than a week many companies had been training, and militia had been coming into Pittsburgh from all over the area. A foolhardy estimate might be that more than five thousand were on hand, including the reactivated 15th, 123rd, and 136th Pennsylvania volunteer regiments, nearly all veteran soldiers.

On Monday the Post quoted a New York Times article of June 26, praising Pittsburgh for its speed in fortifying. But on Wednesday the same paper was growling: "Instead of our being protected by the General Government from the incursion of Lee and his desperate fellows, we were told to protect ourselves."

By July 3 the opening of the battle of Gettysburg convinced Pittsburgers at last that Lee was heading in the other direction. They breathed easier, and celebrated Independence Day with fireworks from all the new installations.

It was unfortunate that the claims for repayment for work on the fortifications were not presented until 1866, some months after the government had abandoned the works here, and about two years after Gen. Brooks had retired because of wounds received before coming here. Nor does the record say when Thurston presented the vouchers for signature, but implies this was after the war had ended. Brooks took no sides, merely certifying that the work had been done.

Memories would have been better if the claims had been at least made up and filed at once.

And it would have been better if Mr. Siebeneck had approached his account of the claims controversy as a historian, rather than as a

50 None of the claims itemized in Thurston's suit (U.S. Court of Claims 17,767, pp. 25-52) show any work done on June 21 or 28.

51 P.E.G., 1.

52 Dispatch clipping, June 19.

53 P.P., June 29, p. 2.

54 Ibid., July 1, p. 2.
lawyer. His conclusions would have been considerably different, too, if he had researched the month of June 1863 — and somewhat earlier, too.

The principal ground on which the claims were rejected was a statement that "In May, 1863, the citizens of Pittsburg, being alarmed for the safety of the place, the rebel army under General Lee having invaded the State of Pennsylvania, and the rebel generals Morgan and Imboden in southern Ohio and West Virginia, appointed a committee . . . to wait on the Secretary of War and Maj. Gen. Halleck, and requested that skillful engineer officers might be detailed to superintend the works around their city. This request was acceded to, and Gen. John G. Barnard and Captain Craighill were assigned to that duty. Nothing was asked or said in regard to the supply of materials or the employment of laborers, it being understood that the movement by the citizens of Pittsburg was intended for their own personal protection and that of their property." 55

Pointing out that in May of 1863, Lee had not begun his move towards Pittsburgh, Morgan was still in Tennessee, and Imboden was supplying Lee, Mr. Siebeneck reaches the conclusion that there was no committee, and "The agreement was a figment of their imagination." 56

Yet though the circumstances were wrongly remembered in Washington, there was a hint in Wilson's history 57 that on May 12 there was a meeting in Pittsburgh "to devise means of defense."

One had only to consult the Evening Gazette of that day to find that the meeting was called because of the danger of attacks by "guerrilla or irregular cavalry," operating in West Virginia.

One of the actions was urging that the War Department establish the telegraph line mentioned earlier. But it was also resolved: "That a Committee of three citizens be appointed by the Chair to proceed to Harrisburg and Washington and consult with the proper authorities to procure and make arrangements for arms and ammunitions of war" for the city's defense. Next day, with an apology for omitting the names, the same paper gave the members of the committee: Ex-Governor William Freame Johnston, Hon. J. K. Moorhead, and S. F. VonBonnhorst.

Since Mr. Siebeneck appended to his paper a moral ("It is better

55 U.S. Court of Claims 17,767, p. 86f.
56 Siebeneck, 13.
57 Wilson, 577.
to forget all about a disputed claim against the government; it will
save you many a headache." and because the chief purpose of history
is to learn for the present and the future, perhaps it will be proper to
follow his precedent and moralize a bit.

First: There is little profit in going into any historical investi-
gation with your mind already made up. You’re almost sure to come
out just where you went in.

In any questions of apparently contradictory evidence, it helps
to remember that all men’s memories — including ours — can be
fallible. And on the other hand that a witness can be partly wrong and
still mostly right, or partly right and still mostly wrong.

Then, as historians, we will do well to employ the methods of
history, regardless of what other methods we use.

And when faced by difficulties, we may do well to recall that
panic can cause us to do some very foolish and expensive things.

In dealing with history, we ought to be sure we have the correct
facts, and all possible facts, in hand before making our decisions. And,
come to think of it, that isn’t a bad rule for life, either.