Contractor of Supplies

James O'Hara resigned as Quartermaster-General in 1794, but he was asked to continue, resigning finally in June 1796. He was succeeded by Lt. Col. John Wilkins on the following day.  

As Private Citizen O'Hara, he became Contractor of Supplies for the Western Army and Forts on July 1, 1796, resigning in 1802. His contracts included "feeding and clothing the men, not only in the field, but also forts at Oswego, Niagara, Presque Isle, Fort Le Boeuf, Michillimackcanac, Franklin, Miamia, Massac, Chickasaw Bluffs, Knox, Rapids of Ohio, Hamilton, Kaskaskia, Natchez, etc."  

While O'Hara was concerned mainly with supplies for many years, he found time for many other things. In 1788, for instance, he was chosen as a Presidential elector for General George Washington, Federalist candidate.

This is a copy of the voucher for his expenses as a Presidential elector:

Reading, February 4th, 1789

Sir,

Please to pay Mr. James O'Hara on Order Fourteen Pounds and Five Shillings his Milage and Daily Wages for attending the Election on the part of this State (Pennsylvania) for choosing a President of the United States for which this shall be your sufficient warrant. Yrs,

(Signed) Edward Hand  President
to the Treasurer of the State of Pennsylvania.

149 Complete Army and Navy Registry of the United States of America, 1776 to 1887. Thomas H. S. Hamersly (self-published, 1888), 320-321: "At that time [30 May 1796] an Act passed authorizing among other general staff officers, a quartermaster general. The same act provided that the general staff should continue in service until 4 March 1797 and no longer. In consequence of peace with the Indians, the military establishment had been reduced in 1796 to 2800 men. On the following day, O'Hara having resigned, John Wilkins Jr. of Pennsylvania was appointed Quartermaster General under this act."

150 Darlington, 211.

151 Simon Gratz Collection and Letters of O'Hara to Wayne and others from the Wayne Manuscripts and Correspondence, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
On the Reverse side: (Signed) James O'Hara Received payment
(Signed) Febiger [O'Hara's brother-in-law]

In 1796, James O'Hara, in addition to his duties as Army Contractor, entered upon a series of careers in Pittsburgh: salt, glass, building and providing cargoes for seagoing ships, acting as burgess and treasurer, to name a few.

SALT

Salt was a bold and original project: to bring it from New York's Onondaga Works, at Salina, now Syracuse, New York. It was while he was Army Contractor that he decided not to return to Pittsburgh from Upper New York State with empty transports. He realized that salt could be furnished more cheaply from New York than from Baltimore and the east, if the transportation problem could be solved. In 1794, "it was an undertaking equal to the present day problem of transporting Pittsburgh's steel to Nijni Novgorod, Russia by way of Alaska and the Bering Straits."

So — James O'Hara had salt trade vessels built on Lake Erie, bought wagons, secured boats for the river carriage, hired men to make a real road to French Creek from Erie. He had army flour and provisions packed in barrels suitable for salt barrels shipped to Pittsburgh, reserving the barrels in his contract. When the provisions reached Onondaga, the barrels returned to Pittsburgh filled with precious salt to be sold at four dollars a bushel; later the price became $2.40 a bushel. And the salt pack trains over the Allegheny Mountains disappeared.

O'Hara continued to supply the Pittsburgh district with salt until about 1810, when Kanawha salt competed, and the War of 1812 cut off his New York supply. Eventually the opening of salt works on the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas brought salt once more down the Ohio.

GLASSMAKING

In 1795, James O'Hara bought a glass factory in the Reserve Tract (in what is now Allegheny). Progress was slow, marked by a series of delays. For one thing, O'Hara felt that wood fire was not hot enough for the glass process, and after an unsuccessful attempt to find a suitable vein of coal on the north bank of the Allegheny, he looked for another site — and took a partner, Major Isaac Craig. They found their site on the Monongahela River at the foot of

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152 Section on "Salt" from: (1) History of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, in Two Parts (A. Warner & Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1889), 774; (2) Craig, 272-273; (3) Killikelly, 120-121.

153 DA2.
Coal Hill, now Mt. Washington. They purchased land from Ephraim Jones and two adjoining lots from Ephraim Blaine. Their new glass house (where the Point Bridge now is located, according to Sarah Killikelly), originally consisting of one house on the river bank and another on the opposite side of the river road, was the first in America to use coal as fuel. Soon they erected a good-sized stone building. O’Hara and Craig’s manufactory was an eight-pot furnace, daily producing about eight boxes or three hundred square feet of window glass.154

Plant superintendent William Eichbaum was a German glass maker, who left the management of a Schuylkill glass works to come to Pittsburgh.155 Success came after a long series of capital-shrinking experiments; suitable clay for the pots had to be transported from New Jersey, since “Pittsburgh sand proved to contain too many impurities to be used in high-grade-work . . . .” 156 Margaret Scully commented, “Although this venture drew the eyes of the country, it is probable not even the most extravagant dreamer could visualize the Pittsburgh of one hundred years later as a world-noted glass center — its output of products exceeding $50,000,000 a year.”

Concerning the ultimate success of the glassmaking venture, Margaret Scully wrote, “It would have discouraged a less determined and confident man than O’Hara. Craig lacked his vision.” 157

154 Killikelly, 120-121.
155 Ibid., 121.
157 Craig, 266: “Major Craig, who embarked so promptly in the work, did not partake of its profits, the reason why has never been generally known. The extracts from his correspondence, . . . proves him to have been a man of energy and enterprise, and by his means, then very ample; but his brother-in-law, Presley Neville, by no means a man of business, became alarmed at the uncertainty of the result, and this alarm very naturally extended itself to his sister, the wife of Major Craig, and thus led to an abandonment of his interest in the glass-works, after a partnership of seven years.” Dorothy Daniel, in her excellent article, “The First Glasshouse West of the Alleghenies,” Vol. 32, 1949, WPHM, 97 on, states the difficulties pursuing O’Hara and Craig. Craig wrote that there was “an implacable enmity between Eichbaum, the manager, and Fred Wentz, the superintendent.” Then O’Hara was too frequently away on business, and the two partners finally were compelled to lease the works to Eichbaum and Wentz in December 1708, “an effort to satisfy Wentz or give Eichbaum a feeling of authority.” When Eichbaum left the factory, the new manager, Price from London, wanted more buildings and equipment requiring still more investment; Craig finally sold out to O’Hara in 1809. The next manager, Amelung, was too social. and finally left for a factory on the Delaware, and O’Hara wrote, was “employed in endeavoring to get my glass blowers to desert my works.” These difficulties add up to enough reasons for Craig’s buying out of the glass factory.
Eichbaum left O’Hara and Craig in 1800, bought a tavern, opened at “The Sign of the Indian Queen,” where he also conducted a small cutting shop. His chandelier for Kerr’s Tavern became a Pittsburgh showpiece.

Ironically, when O’Hara’s glass works began to make really fine white glass, too many others could also make it — the Bakewells, for one example. Furthermore, in 1812, O’Hara’s health began to fail. In 1818, he gave power of attorney to Denis S. Scully and Harmar Denny, to facilitate operation of the glass factory and of other business enterprises. Soon after O’Hara’s death, the glass works was leased and finally sold to Frederick Lorenz.158

A DUKE AND A CHAMPAGNE GLASS

James O’Hara found the visit of the Duke of Orleans and his entourage during the summer of 1797 a memorable one. A physical reminder of the royal visit is now displayed in the Glass Gallery to the right of the auditorium of The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. And a story . . . .

Margaret Scully’s notes for her O’Hara novel place the incident at a large party at John Ormsby’s. In her version of the story, she was uncertain at times about the location, Ormsby’s, and wrote “Semple’s?” in the margin several times. She took notes on the history of Semple’s Tavern: “. . . it was erected by Colonel George Morgan in 1764. It was considered quite pretentious, because it was the first house in Pittsburgh to be roofed with shingles. It was a double log house which had three rooms below and sleeping quarters on the second floor. In 1770 George Washington paid his last visit in Pittsburgh, and with his friend and physician, Dr. Craig, he lodged at Semple’s, describing it as ‘a very good house for public entertainment.’ ”

The confusion of names Dr. Leland D. Baldwin has cleared up in his Pittsburgh: The Story of a City, page 101: “Jacob Bausman in 1775 was licensed to keep a ferry over the Monongahela at the foot of Wood Street, and four years later John Ormsby was authorized to keep one at the foot of Ferry Street in connection with his tavern, once Samuel Semple’s.” The party for the Duke of Orleans had to be at Ormsby’s.

In her notes for her novel, Margaret Scully stated that O’Hara entertained Louis Philippe at the request of General Washington. The

158 History of Allegheny County (Warner), 555 (Part 1).
Duke, exiled after the French Revolution, was making a western tour of the United States, accompanied by French officers, and by his two brothers, the Duc de Montpensier and the Comte de Beaujolais. At the large party at John Ormsby's, the guests followed the custom of breaking glasses after a toast to royalty. After the party was over, O'Hara retrieved one unbroken glass from the ashes. The antique Belgian champagne glass passed from Anna Meluzine Spring, granddaughter of General O'Hara, to Henry Rees Scully, then to his daughter, Margaret Scully, who presented it to The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.  

**SHIPBUILDING**

Building ocean-going vessels was another of O'Hara's major projects, his shipyard located on the Monongahela near the northern end of the present Liberty Bridge. His ships cleared from Pittsburgh for Liverpool, South America, or the West Indies, with furs and peltries for England, flour for South America or the West Indies.  

Exactly how many ships O'Hara built at the Monongahela shipyard is not known. Margaret Scully lists the *General Butler* and the *Betsey*.

Even as far back as 1796, O'Hara and his brother-in-law, Christian Febiger, owned the schooner *Mountain Leader*; Captain Joseph Collins gave a bond of $10,000.

The *General Butler* had an interesting history. Built in 1805, she sailed for Liverpool, with glass for intermediate river ports, and with the furs and peltries mentioned above, plus cotton shipped on from Natchez, coming home via Philadelphia and New Orleans with goods for American markets taken on in Liverpool. Samuel Lake was captain, William Carson O'Hara, the General's son, the supercargo. General John Wilkins was the owner of one-fourth of the ship and cargo.

Captain Lake was not to take on board any stores, wares, or articles of any kind that could possibly be listed as contraband of war nor attempt to touch at any prohibited port. The ship was insured at Philadelphia for $10,000 with Joseph Carson, and the cargo, valued at $140,000, was to be insured in Liverpool. On account of the war,
Captain Lake was authorized to sell the ship in Liverpool.164

"We do not wish to sell at any considerable loss, but being engaged in building another and desirous to encourage shipbuilding at the place, we are willing to sell this without profit." It was not sold.165

On one voyage the General Butler brought from Liverpool a handsome dinner service of one hundred pieces, monogrammed "M," for Mary. The family always called it the "M" china.166

The General Butler, on May 3, 1807, again sailed from New Orleans for Greenock, Scotland, with a cargo of cotton. On October 3, 1807, she was captured by a Spanish schooner within sixty miles of Havana and taken into Vera Cruz.167

O'Hara and Wilkins built the Betsey for the river trade between Baltimore and the West Indies. She was consigned to John Jones, a merchant of Baltimore, who never rendered any account or answered letters addressed to him by O'Hara. It is not known what became of the vessel during the owner's life.168

Sailing ships, a picturesque early Pittsburgh industry, soon left the scene. The vessels were unwieldy for river traffic, and the Ohio and Mississippi had too many treacherous stretches, one of the worst at the Falls of the Ohio.

**Other Business Interests**

Salt, glassmaking and shipbuilding were O'Hara's major industrial projects, but he had interests in many local activities to improve community prosperity. In 1802, he became a leader in the Ohio Company of Pittsburgh, to stimulate exports from the region. When a branch of the Bank of Pennsylvania was opened in Pittsburgh in 1804, O'Hara was a director, and succeeded to the presidency of the bank in 1816 at the death of John Wilkins.169

In June 1806, a group of Pittsburgh commissioners advertised the opening of "A book for subscribers to the Harrisburg & Pittsburgh artificial road" at the store of one of their number, Colonel Thomas Baird, at the corner of Market and Fourth Streets. Other commissioners were Captain Nathaniel Irish, a Revolutionary officer, public official and storekeeper; Samuel Ewalt, first sheriff of Allegheny County; Adamson Tannehill, Revolutionary officer and tavern keep-

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164 Ibid., 216.
165 Ibid., 216.
166 DA2.
167 Darlington, 217.
168 Ibid., 217.
169 DA2.
er; and James O'Hara.170

O'Hara also owned the Pittsburgh Point Brewery, a sawmill, a tanyard, and a gristmill. And Margaret Scully, in another entry, added a salt mill in Allegheny City.

O'HARA'S LAND PURCHASES

Early in his life in Pittsburgh, James O'Hara began purchasing large pieces of land in Western Pennsylvania.171 First in 1773 were four hundred acres on Coal Pit Run. Then followed the purchase of large tracts of land on all sides of the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. Margaret Scully quoted him as saying, "The city will have to grow in my direction."

Instead of a salary as a quartermaster general, Margaret Scully noted, James O'Hara received land grants, chiefly outside of, and to the west of, Pittsburgh, in Ohio and present Illinois.

When Indiana Township was divided by court order in 1875, O'Hara owned most of the land named in his honor, which land he had bought from James and Tom Powers after they had acquired the rights to it, on May 27, 1796.

James O'Hara was without a doubt the largest landholder in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County in the first part of the nineteenth century.

MARY CARSON O'HARA AND JAMES O'HARA OF PITTSBURGH

So far, James O'Hara as the Irish-born hero of Margaret Scully's novel has experienced three radically different disciplines: school at St. Sulpice in Paris, training in the Coldstream Guards, and learning business procedures in a Liverpool Counting House to prepare himself for a business career in America. He has come to Pennsylvania, and

170 Ibid.
171 Ibid. Specific, important land purchases included that between Water and Marbury Streets, several blocks on Market Street, many lots in Allegheny Town, and on the South Side, a part of "Guyasuta Plain," above or near present Sharpsburg; a tract of ten lots in what was later to be known as Manchester, beyond Allegheny Town; he also bought a great tract from the Lawrenceville neighborhood across the present Oakland district in Hazelwood, according to Margaret Scully.

"O'Hara bought 47 1/2% of the 94 lots in 25 blocks bounded by the Monongahela, Smithfield, Liberty, and Grant Streets. In a 10 block area between Strawberry Alley and 4th Street, he purchased 31 of 40 lots surveyed, the equivalent to about 77% of the present-day area bounded by the First English Lutheran Church, the Grant Building, the Old Post Office, and Gimbels." From Charles Shetler, "James O'Hara's Land Holdings in Allegheny County," WPHM, XXXIV (1951), 23-33.
served first as an Indian agent at the frontier outpost of Fort Pitt, then as an officer in the American Revolution.

At the end of the war, the year 1783 introduced that helpful ingredient to a novel, his lifelong romance and marriage with Mary Carson of Philadelphia, known to her friends as "pretty Polly Carson." Mary had raven-black hair, in contrast to James' auburn. Mary was twenty-two years old, James, thirty-one. She was a fine musician, and had that "most estimable thing in woman," a soft, musical voice. Commented Margaret Scully, "The wisest person does not know why certain people love or do not love each other, but it is known that Mary and James remained lovers until the end of their days."

William Carson

Mr. William Carson, Mary's father, was the owner of an inn, "The Harp and Crown," at the corner of 3rd Street and Elbow Lane. Margaret Scully in a marginal note planned to introduce William Carson to his future son-in-law in the following manner: "William Carson opened the gate a few minutes later and walked up the path of his well-kept garden. By the Grape Arbor his astonished gaze fell on the determined back of a man in uniform."

William Carson's "The Harp and Crown," scene of many state functions, was popular among Congressmen. So well-liked was Carson that at his death, the Congress adjourned out of respect to his memory.

James O'Hara had a religious obstacle to overcome, since the Carsons were Presbyterians, but overcome it he did. He became a

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172 The Mary Carson O'Hara notes are in DA3, in a folder marked "O'Hara Miscellany, McLean, McCarroll, Murtland." (The O'Hara Miscellany contains "The Young O'Hara," first draft.)
173 DA2, From notebook marked O'Hara Pedigree, heading, "Carson." In her notes, Margaret Scully explained, "Tavern keeping was a respected and respectable occupation. Many a man of good family who had come to America unqualified for any other active business was able through his own excellent standards to manage an establishment offering the niceties of good living demanded by the time. Large entertainment was not given in private homes, and it remained for the inn-keeper to provide hospitality required by ladies and gentlemen. Taverns were accessible to townsmen and travellers, sessions of court, town meetings, lodge meetings, not to mention cultural and literary societies."
174 Margaret Scully quoted Henry Marie Brackenridge at this point: "The landlords or tavernkeepers are in reality the only lords we have in Pennsylvania: they possess a degree of intelligence and respectability of character which justly gives them influence dans la chose publique [the commonwealth or state]."
175 DA2, "Carson" in O'Hara Pedigree notebook.
Presbyterian. In 1784, he brought his bride on horseback to her new home in Pittsburgh.

THE TRIP TO PITTSBURGH\textsuperscript{176}

Since the chapter on the honeymoon trip exists in notes only, it will be developed by piecing together these excerpts from Margaret Scully's notes, to give an idea of how she intended her novel to proceed:

The great ridges of mountains growing in power and might as they approached them — the Tuscararas — The Chestnut — the Laurel Ridge . . . . Polly felt trapped between the towering hillsides in the steepness of the ascent — rock and forest, forest and rock — mighty and inexorable age — Rocks dark in color — riven in places as though by lightning of some primeval storm, and she turned to her husband for comfort and reassurance — when they reached the summit they saw stretched out below them the table land which was yet more forest, spread out like a fan — a mighty expanse of green and red and gold.

They felt the pale, cold breath of the dawning day, and watched the setting sun through a rose and amethyst mantle over the mountain ridges.

It was about a two weeks' journey over the high and beautiful Allegheny Mountains and must have been tedious at best. Their household possessions came by wagon, the only means of transportation . . . . Among the things they brought from Philadelphia were a pair of silver hurricane lamps and a clock.

The teamsters drove the ox-carts over hill and mountain with great care favoring the animals always, and never once did the carts overset — but it required skilled judgment to keep the animals looking well and in good spirits.

James talked on a thousand topics with Polly during the long hours of the journey, pouring into her willing ear a pent-up stream of thoughts and ideas, ideals, and desires, hopes and fears that can only be exchanged between lovers.

He had at last found some one from whom there need be no concealment, not that there was anything to conceal, before whom he could stand absolutely candid and naked-souled, assured of love and understanding as one who stands before his God.

The country upon which James O'Hara and Polly were now gazing — the woods and mountains, the little clearings where settlers had painstakingly established a tiny homestead and cornfield of their own was not merely a struggling new nation, but one of the last great hopes of the entire world — By some Irish instinct for freedom, he had known this, and had taken advantage of his opportunity. Europe was a prison and a charnel house — England was prostrated by war — exhaustion and the petulance and desperation of a sick man, was lashing out anew at his own beloved Ireland. Like most Irishmen James O'Hara was a great talker — He talked well and intelligently and was well informed upon a surprising number of subjects.

As far as York and Lancaster the roads were good and there were plenty of inns to choose from — Harrisburg on the waters of the Susquehanna — Strausburg — Carlisle with its orchards and farms — Chambersburg — Tannenburg — and over the third mountain through Fort Littletown and slept at an inn at the foot of Sideling Hill at Tates Tavern at Bloody Run — Scattered houses and clearings between the hills — The three mountains or Three Brothers were tedious climbing.

At Fort Bedford the Court was sitting. When they stopped at the Old Stone House by a river, gentlemen from different parts of the country surrounded them asking where they were from, where they were journeying to.

\textsuperscript{176} DA3, Book II, contains "The Young O'Hara," first draft.
(Amplify — Margaret Scull's reminder) Stages — two handsome carriages — gentlemen and ladies on horseback — travellers of all description — were gathered in the town —

At the foot of the mountain — convenient stage houses with lamps before the door — on the summit — a spacious double stone house — building by a never-failing spring — the best water they had tasted since they left Philadelphia —

Through Somerset between the Alleghanies and Laurel Hill, then the Chestnut Ridge — forty-two miles to Fort Pitt, but fair roads, they were told — and it could be made in two day's journey — It crowned all the hills for length and roughness — At the first tavern beyond the great hill Mary got a good dish of coffee and James saw to the comfort of the men and beasts.

The landlady told them she had known since her residence there full fifteen years — of teams returning from Ft. Pitt to be five days in rising the hill — It was indeed a tedious journey but — circumstances as they were, they vowed they would be willing to turn around and take it again —

This next section, completed by Margaret Scully, is called

THE NEW HOME

The autumn dusk was gathering fast and the sunset glow had faded from a thin veil of haze and smoke that hung over the straggling hamlet. Kilbuck's Island, which James pointed out near the Allegheny shore, now was barely visible. The river looked wide and deserted. The only one of a row of several foreign-looking houses which was lighted. A dog barked, and rushed out menacingly at them. Mary knew even before the little cavalcade came to a full stop that this was her new home.

She had thought that she knew what to expect, just what she was coming to. James had described it all so often that a vivid picture of the house and its surroundings was in her mind. But in spite of herself and the light and warmth of a great crackling fire, her city-bred heart sank terribly. The simplicity — yes, the actual crudeness of the little structure! It was all so different from what she had been accustomed to. She felt infinitely far away from her family, from Philadelphia! She was bitterly homesick. Only the depth and understanding of the love of her young husband could mitigate the agony of such a moment. . . .

As a matter of fact, the house was not bad at all, much more roomy and comfortable than many others in the village. Built of logs, a type of Swiss chalet, it was actually picturesque in appearance. It had two full stories, with a steeply-sloping roof. It was one of three now surviving, a row of buildings which had faced the Allegheny River, built by the French, the officers of Fort Duquesne. The King's Artillery Gardens, it was called, the original parade ground and gardens of the first stronghold denoting the occupation of the "Forks of the Ohio" by white men.

Margaret Scully left this section partly finished and partly in notes:

MRS. JAMES O'HARA 1783-84

She was a small, slight woman, delicately built, but out of her seeming weakness was to come great strength. She had been gently bred in Philadelphia,

177 DA3, Green Folder, Miscellaneous Drafts for "O'Hara"; also based upon an undated clipping from the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph by society editor, Patricia Pitt, interview of Mrs. Harmar D. Denny, Sr., "Pioneers Awed by Luxuries."

178 DA2.
famed for its lovely gardens, its roses and flower beds, its lawns and hedges, and now she was facing soil that had known only moccasined feet, the heels of the professional soldier, trappers, and adventurers. All the quiet comfort of her old life, the security of city ways lay behind her. But although small in stature, there was an indomitable look in her black eyes, and she had the firm square jaw of a born fighter. She had chosen love and the adventure of homemaking in a frontier town, and against the sacrifice she possessed the complete security and protection of her husband's love.

She was always gracious; she sailed on an even keel, and was usually able to smile, no matter how trying the circumstances.

James O'Hara was tough when necessary, except where Polly or women or children or hurt animals were concerned. Then he was gentle and kind and soft.

Polly was willing, in fact, preferred to stay in the background, and just be there when he needed her for the little time he had to relax in. She always tried to send him off with the assurance of her love and faith in him.

Sometimes when he was starting off on a particularly hazardous undertaking, she felt that she could easily go to pieces emotionally, out of concern for his safety. But she kept her fears and nerves under control. There was plenty to keep her busy. Her mind and hands were always occupied. She had much responsibility. Daily the demands upon her time filled every waking hour.

And Margaret Townsend Scully left these notes for 1784179, for her novel:

Polly O'Hara moved around the quaint little house in "Officers Orchard" creating the subtle air of order and graciousness that makes a gentlewoman's home, no matter how crude the setting . . . . She gave the door a firm push in order to close the hatch.

They were satisfied with unsophisticated pleasures and pastimes; not so taken up with the effort of entertainment that they failed to enjoy the act of living, and the realities of life.

All Soul's Day was warm and clear as only air washed by autumn storm can be. The sky was more intensely blue than upon any day in June. It was as if summer had come back for a brief hour reluctant to say goodbye. The witch hazels by the brook — contrary to the usual order of plant life and defying the frost — clothed themselves in a cloud of golden, star-like bloom.

1784—Richard Butler O'Hara

Mary with her first child was fulfilling all notions of a good mother — a woman with a headful of common sense, a heartful of love — and a stiff backbone with the additional qualifications of a strong right hand — and a ready laugh.

Outside, a crisp sharp moon shed its living, bright light over a snow-covered world.

Inside, a great fire roared and crackled in the wide chimney place — Fire wood was one of the few things to be extravagant with —

1785—With Mary his wife somehow good things seemed even better. Good friends seemed even closer this holiday season, old songs more tuneful, friendly greetings a bit warmer —

The great stone chimney rising to the roof beams — the scoured hearth —

1786—The birth of the O'Hara's second child, James O'Hara.

1787—Birth and death of Charles O'Hara.

179 DA2, all notes for 1784-1787 marked "for the novel."
The Birth of Charles O'Hara

In the writing of this episode of the O'Hara novel, Margaret Scully has made effective use of a moving letter from James O'Hara to his wife, weaving it into the narrative. The actual date of the letter was 1794; she used her prerogative as a novelist to transpose it to 1787.

It was evident that Polly O'Hara was not her usual composed self. Her pretty face was drawn with suffering and she laid aside her sewing with a little gasp of pain. Behind the cheerful glow of the candles on the table beside her, deep shadows lurked in the corners of the bedroom, where she was sitting, and rain beat heavily against the windows. It was an evening early in November with a cold wind blowing from the river and the first touch of winter in the air.

Once again she took up the letter that had come to her by special messenger from the Fort, that morning. And once again she tried to soothe herself with its reassuring contents.

"My dear Wife," her husband wrote, "I had the pleasure of writing you last from Cincinnati on the 19th of September" — Yes, and she had received it with pleasure, too. "on the 20th I left Ft. Washington (Cincinnati) and on the 30th arrived at this place with my convoy in perfect order, and very acceptable." How happy his success made her.

"The Army arrived here from Ft. Defiance, on the 17th of September, and the legion is now employed in erecting a Fort which will be strong and regular, a Garrison of three Hundred and fifty will be left, and about the 15th the remainder of the Army will return to Greenville and the business of my department being completed in this Quarter for six months, I shall from then on proceed to Ft. Washington. This will probably be about the first of November. I shall in the meantime embrace every opportunity of writing you."

She looked wistfully at the rain-covered window as though her eyes would pierce the darkness and discover his beloved presence. She was not at all a sentimental person but her husband's duties as Quartermaster General required him to be in the field much of the time, and she missed him sorely. If only he could be at home for Christmas!

But he had a long distance to come. "I see your curiosity to know how far we are from any place."

"I inform you that Recovery is one Hundred miles from Fort Washington, the General Course with 16 degrees West, that here the Army faced to the right and marched to Grand Glaize, where Fort Defiance now stands, seventy four miles, General Course north, 10 degrees East — and from that point the Army marched in the 13th Ult. ascending the Miami river forty eight Miles and a half, General Course South, 69 degrees West, and with the last Escourt, I kept the Old Course by Fort Recovery to this place which I reckon fifty four Miles, forming a kind of triangle, so you see my Dear, we are but 54 miles from Recovery, then 24 miles to Greenville, then 76 to Fort Washington, and about 500 to the home."

Yes, a distance of over 650 miles to cover by horseback and water, and up river at that. The expression in her eyes grew even more soft and tender as she read the closing.

"It gives me a great deal of pleasure to hear that my dear little boys are such clever fellows, and learn so well. I am in hopes my Butler will grow bold and strong with the change of the Season: —

God bless you and them and preserve you, the delight of your most tender

James O'Hara"

180 DA3, letter used in sketch, "The Birth of Charles O'Hara," in black notebook containing letters of James O'Hara in possession of H. E. H. Brereton, copied by Margaret Scully at Lake George. The sketch itself is in DA2.
Six long months had gone by without him.
Carefully refolding the letter, she put it safely away in a highboy drawer.
Then she descended to the first floor, and wrote a short note. McGrady was in
the kitchen, carving something with a little knife.
"Tell Melinda I want her come to my bedroom," she said.
"Lindy she done go next door to see Missy Kirkpatrick's cook," came
the answer.
"Well then, go take her my message and run down to Liberty Street with
this note at once. See that you put your greatcoat on, too. It's raining hard."
The house seemed very quiet and lonely. Slowly she retraced her steps up
the well-polished staircase, and went for a last look at the little boys. With her
hand shading the candle, long and tenderly she leaned over the bed where the
two golden brown heads lay so peacefully asleep on the same pillow, and again
over the small bed where little Richard Butler lay.
Later that night, young Charles O'Hara, her fourth son, was born.

O'HARA HOMES
In her novel notes for 1787, Margaret Scully wrote:

The O'Haras were now living in their house on Market Street. It was built
of a peculiar shade of brick made out of local clay, from the dismantled Ft. Pitt.
It was one of two lots that O'Hara had bought, running through to Wood Street.
In summer the family went to the house on a piece of land called the
"Springfield Farm" about one mile up the Allegheny River. The house stood on
a hillside and commanded a magnificent view of the river both east and west.
Their letters mention the remarkable beauty of the sunsets. Beyond the hills
the junction of the three rivers, where the pelucid current of the Allegheny
joined the more muddied waters of the Monongahela and flowed majestically on
into the Ohio.
In 1793 he built a large clapboard house on Water Street then called
Front Street, at the corner of West Street. This second house had a large yard
to the side and back, and a well-sweep that was famous throughout the neighbor-
hood. From this well, family tradition relates that Mrs. O'Hara directed their
faithful freed slave, Charles, to give water to the erstwhile mob, directly following
the inception of the Whiskey Rebellion, being diverted from destroying
the house in 1794.
Adjoining the house on Water Street was the residence of Major Kirk-
patrick who had opposed the Insurrectionists and was very distasteful to them.
After the mob had done considerable damage elsewhere, they advanced on the
house and were about to burn it to the ground when Hugh Henry Bracken-
ridge, then a rising lawyer of the town, made an adroit speech in which he
told the mob that General O'Hara's house adjoined the Kirkpatrick house and
that it would also be burned. If they must destroy the town, let them tear the
houses down and not burn the house of the gallant General who was in the West
fighting the Indians with General Wayne. This plea had the desired effect and
the mob melted away.

WILLIAM CARSON O'HARA MARRIED
Margaret Scully liked the reminiscences of Eliza C. Foster (Mrs.

181 DA3, O'Hara Miscellany, the notes about home on Market Street, the
summer home of "Springfield Farm," and clapboard home on Water
Street.
182 DA2, Brackenridge's saving the O'Hara home in folder marked "Notes
on O'Hara."
Edward B.), mother of Stephen Collins Foster, describing Mrs. James O'Hara in her middle years at the wedding of her son, William Carson O'Hara, to his cousin, Mary Carson, in Philadelphia, on July 9, 1809:

The portly but well proportioned figure of Mrs. James O'Hara filled the elbow-chair at the farthest extremity of the room. Her large black eyes spoke strong intellect and intelligence, the strength of which was frequently called forth in the deep tragedies of her life. The brilliance of that beautiful eye, the expanse of that smooth forehead, the sarcastic curl of her lovely mouth, the gracious turn of her well-formed nose, the dimpled chin, with a rich roll of fair flesh beneath and around it, told at once the splendor of her character. Her deep-toned voice breathed forth wit and elegance, whilst the queenly bearing of her person, commanded homage from all who came within the atmosphere of her dignity.

Fifty four summers had shed their dews upon the green hills since first she breathed the air.

Mrs. Foster described James O'Hara, Jr., at the wedding:

... stood before his mother, the facsimile of that mother, with the difference of his being a young and handsome man, and she an elderly lady.

He was full six feet high, with a broad prominent chest. The same forehead and eyes and nose. So like her, that the whisper passed around the drawing-room, "Did you ever see such a likeness?"

"My son," said Mrs. O'Hara, "Is your father in the next parlour?"

"He is, Madame."

"Tell him I would like to see him for a moment."

General James O'Hara at the wedding:

General James O'Hara was a fair specimen of an Irish gentleman. His bearing, fairness of his complexion, and the ruddiness of his skin, told that he was descended from a healthy stock. He was dressed in the aristocratic garment of seventy-six. His locks frizzed and powdered, and his long hair queued behind. A blue rounded dress-coat, a crimson velvet vest, and white breeches buckled over white silk stockings, with gemmed knee buckles, the same as those which fastened his highly polished shoes. His gold-headed cane was

183 Evelyn Foster Morneweck, *Chronicles of Stephen Foster's Family* (2 Vol.), (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1944, for Foster Hall Collection): Eliza Foster's "Sketches and Incidents" were copied by her son, Morrison Foster, from loose sheets left by his mother. It is written in the form of an old-fashioned, romantic novel, and the characters are all from Eliza Foster's own family, relatives, neighbors, and friends. Mrs. Foster started the sketches later in life. There are one hundred seventy-eight pages of closely written copy.

Margaret Scully obtained verification of the sketch:

DA2 — In a letter from Mrs. Evelyn Foster Morneweck, daughter of Morrison Foster and niece of Stephen Collins Foster, is this comment to Mrs. Marcellin Adams, February 9, 1937: "My grandmother Eliza C. Foster mentioned the Rev. John Taylor in her reminiscences. She was describing the wedding of William O'Hara and Miss Molly Carson on July 9, 1809. William O'Hara died two weeks later."

184 In copying this description of Mrs. James O'Hara, Margaret Scully had carefully deleted "sarcastic" and "roll of fair flesh beneath and around [the chin]."
clasped in a hand of milk whiteness, (shaded with a broad, thin cambric ruffle),
on the little finger of which he wore a jewelled ring.

The bridal party are coming! The bride supported by the arm of the
groom — William Carson O’Hara, a tall elegant young gentleman, twenty-six
years old, unusually handsome and like his Father uncommonly fair, with soft,
blue eyes and light reddish hair falling over his collar in glossy curls.

There was an ease in his movements and a gaiety in his countenance that
evincing a thorough acquaintance with the world . . . . The bride, (Mary
Carson) drooped upon his arm.185

ELIZABETH FEBIGER O’HARA DENNY

Elizabeth O’Hara,186 the eldest daughter of the O’Haras, sur-
vived every other member of her father’s family. She is the only
dughter about whom Margaret Scully has material. It is said that she
rode pillion behind her father to First Presbyterian Church of
Pittsburgh.

With other young women of various church affiliations she taught
at Adelphi School, the first free school in the city for the instruction of
poor children in reading, writing, sewing, and knitting; she was in-
defatigable in welfare work among the young people of the church,
as well as being a social leader and a general favorite.

She married Harmar Denny, son of Major Ebenezer Denny and
Nancy Wilkins Denny, on November 25, 1817.

From her obituary, Margaret Scully obtained the following
information:

“Mrs. Harmar Denny died on January 18, 1878, in her eighty-
third year, the widow of the Honorable Harmar Denny. She was
born in the old O’Hara mansion on Water Street, and was the
General’s daughter.

“Mrs. Croghan, mother of Mrs. Captain Schenley, and Mr.
O’Hara, father of James O’Hara, esq., of Allegheny, and Mrs. William
Darlington, of Sharpsburg, were sisters and brother of Mrs. Denny.

“In 1817 Elizabeth O’Hara was married to Harmar Denny, young
and rising lawyer of Pittsburgh. He twice, and very acceptably repre-
sented this district in Congress. He died in 1852 at ‘Springfield,’
just beyond the fair-grounds, which continued to be the Denny
Mansion until the encroachments of the railroad rendered the mansion
no longer desirable as a family residence. Of later years, her winter
home was in Penn Street, the family generally assembling their sum-

185 DA2, The happy occasion had an unhappy ending, for Margaret Scully
related that William Carson O’Hara died two weeks after the wedding.
His widow later married a Mr. L’Amy of Scotland and lived there.

186 DA2.
mers at Deer Creek, an extensive property about twelve miles up the West Penn Road.”

**The O’Haras and Pittsburgh Churches**

It seems clear that Margaret Scully intended to devote considerable space in her novel to the religious phase of the O’Haras’ activities. The O’Haras were devoted members of the First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, the General an elder, but were generous in their support of both Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches.

The General contributed regularly to the salaries of John Henry Hopkins, organist of Trinity Episcopal Church, and of the rector, the Rev. John Taylor.187

In the O’Hara home on Water and Front Streets, “the priest’s room” was always open for missionaries. The Reverend Peter Heilbron, for example, stayed with the O’Haras when in Pittsburgh.188

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187 DA2, From *The Life of John Henry Hopkins by His Son*: “In May 1806 arriving the first evening in Pittsburgh, they [Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins] accepted the hospitality of their dear friends the O’Haras and on Sunday went to the Presbyterian meeting with them as a matter of course. When the singular kindness of the O’Haras is remembered and the absence of all definite church principle it . . . will not seem strange that on his coming to live in Pittsburgh my parents went on Sundays to Dr. Herron’s Presbyterian meeting with seats in the O’Hara pew No. 90, and there they would probably have remained had it not been for one of those incidents which the world calls accidents — Mr. Hopkins was requested to become the organist of Trinity Pittsburgh church.”

188 DA2; and the *History of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania* (A. Warner & Co., publishers, Chicago, Ill., 1889), Part I, 396-397, a condensation: . . . Two other priests, Messrs. Maguire and Bodkin, spent the same winter at Pittsburgh. The people already began to talk of petitioning the bishop of Baltimore for a resident pastor, and of building a church. In 1798, the Rev. H. John Dilhet stopped for a short time; he wrote to the Bishop, presenting the people’s petition.

In 1789, a priest came to the spot now occupied by St. Vincent’s Abbey, near Latrobe, Westmoreland County, a spot then called Sportsman’s Hall; he did not visit Pittsburgh before 1798. About this time, the Rev. Patrick Lonergan, then at Sportsman’s Hall, withdrew with a number of families not far from Waynesburg. He visited Pittsburgh occasionally for about two years. The Rev. Peter Heilbron, at Sportsman’s Hall late in 1799, also visited Pittsburgh about once or twice a year till a resident pastor was appointed. He lodged in the house of Col. James O’Hara, who, although he had fallen away from the church to which he originally belonged, still favored it, and had a room in the house known as “the priest’s room,” for the occasional missionary. The Rev. Mr. Heilbron officiated for a time in a Mr. McFall’s home, at the corner of Liberty and Water streets, and later in other homes. The future prospects of the town were good, and it was felt that a resident priest would further the interests of the church.

In November 1808, the Rev. William F. X. O’Brien was appointed the first resident pastor of Pittsburgh. In his home on Second Avenue
James and Mary O'Hara donated land for the erection of the first Roman Catholic church in Pittsburgh, Saint Patrick's, at Liberty and Washington Streets.\(^{189}\)

**THE CHANDELIER**

A little more than a year before his death, James O'Hara gave a magnificent chandelier to the First Presbyterian Church, with this letter:\(^{190}\)

\[\text{Pittsburgh 25 August 1818}\]

\[\text{Gentlemen:}\]

A chandelier is presented to you for the First Presbyterian Church, in token of a glowing desire to promote the luster of this enlightened society.

\[\text{With sincere regard}\]

\[\text{By their humble servant}\]

\[\text{(Signed) James O'Hara}\]

A resolution of thanks was drawn up and a committee appointed,

\[\text{near Grant Street, he set apart a room for a chapel. About the same time,}\]

\[\text{"Old St. Patrick's," at the corner of Liberty and Washington Streets,}\]

\[\text{immediately in front of the present Union Depot, was commenced. Completed with difficulty because of the small number and poverty of the people, it was dedicated by Bishop Egan in August 1811, on his visit, the first of a Catholic bishop to Western Pennsylvania.}\]

The Rev. Mr. O'Brien also ministered to scattered families in all Western Pennsylvania beyond the limits of Westmoreland County, so that "the pastor of Pittsburgh has under his jurisdiction a parish nearly equal to ten dioceses, and is constantly engaged in visiting his parishioners." Broken down in health, he at length returned to Maryland, his native state, early in 1820, and died in Baltimore, November 1, 1831.

He was succeeded in March 1820, by the Rev. Charles Bonaventure Maguire.

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\(^{189}\) Lois Mulkearn and Edwin V. Pugh, *A Traveler's Guide to Historic Western Pennsylvania* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1954), 48: "St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, the first in Pittsburgh, was built in 1811 on land deeded on Nov. 6, 1811 to Phillip Gilleland and Anthony Beelen, trustees for the congregation . . . . It is said that 'its location is now the approach to the Pennsylvania Station, near the wall under Bigelow Blvd., between the station and the Panhandle tunnel.' . . . . It was destroyed by fire August 10, 1854. Later the congregation obtained a release from the O'Hara heirs permitting them to sell the property to the Pennsylvania Railroad. A new St. Patrick's was built on another site."

\(^{190}\) *Centennial Volume, First Presbyterian Church* (William G. Johnston & Company, Printers, 1884), 138.
composed of Messrs. Benjamin Page, Lyatt Sampson, Charles Scull, and James Ross, to "present the above vote of thanks to General O'Hara — to receive the chandelier for the church from the General, and to superintend the putting up of the same within the church." 191

Margaret Scully's jottings on the subject of the gift: "The elaborate light of the chandelier: 192 Sun setting over the unclouded hills — lighting of chandelier — silent streets — calm of the Sabbath evening — assemblies 'in early candlelight' 193 of congregation for the evening service."

MARY O'HARA AND FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

As a member of First Presbyterian Church, Mary Carson O'Hara

191 Ibid., 138. Also on 138: "... of General James O'Hara, whose chandelier was only one of his gifts to the church. The chandelier gift came at an auspicious time in the external affairs of the church. Improvements had just been made, and the offer of consolidation with the Second Church had just been received, and the quaint note of General O'Hara to the trustees deserves a place in this record as an indication of the brightness of the time."

192 Ibid., 230; Mr. William Little, a long-time member of the church, was asked to contribute reminiscences to the Centennial Volume of the First Presbyterian Church: "Archie was sexton of the church, to the great comfort of the congregation and afterwards to their intense amusement. I mean Archie Henderson. The church was in complete order; dirt and dust were strangers to the place but Archie did not like boys and dogs. He was the terror of all bad boys, but to dogs he had a particular aversion. Piously inclined dogs intruded their presence in church, to the great disgust of the sexton. Armed with a cudgel he would follow the unhappy canine all through the house, until an opportunity came to inflict corporal punishment, when down came the club, and loud rose the lamentations, whilst the congregation to their shame be it said — laughed."

193 Ibid., 231. The lighting of the chandelier was a never-ending source of delight to William Little, as it was to the boys, who often went to church just to see it lit up "at early candle light" (as Dr. Herron's announcements always were made for evening service).

"It was a very handsome affair, and it was a treat to see Archie light it up for service; each sperm candle had been previously tipped with turpentine so that as the torch touched it, it went off with a bright flame, and as the hundred candles were thus lighted one after another, in rapid succession, it was a source of never-ending pleasure to Archie and the boys, of whom it need not be said I was one." From Life and Reminiscences, William G. Johnston (William G. Johnston Company, Pittsburgh, 1968, 150th Anniversary Edition), 172-173, concerning the lighted chandelier: "From a central circle, thrice as large, and similarly adorned, hung an immense glass chandelier, the present of General James O'Hara. This was indeed elegant, rather too much so to be in keeping with the extreme plainness of all else surrounding. At night, when its double row of tall sperm candles were lighted, there was a dazzling brilliance from its myriad of crystals; and at a later day when gas was introduced, the effect was yet more striking. I was not alone in my admiration, for, judging from remarks heard, it was accounted as among the seven wonders of the world—more astonishing than anything seen by the Queen of Sheba when she visited Solomon."
was noted for her extreme tact and her quickness of wit. Margaret Scully related an incident\textsuperscript{194} that illustrated the qualities.

There was an epidemic of hysteria induced by religious preaching of the times, which affected emotional persons so strongly that they fell to the floor either in a faint or with convulsive motions — commonly known as "falling." Mrs. Abishai Way, \textit{née} Anderson, said that "upon one occasion the pew — so-called — which was really only a bench with a back to it, fell down, making quite a noise, and landed my mother on the floor. Mrs. O'Hara, who sat just behind, leaned forward and said in a kindly, low voice, 'Why, Mrs. Anderson, you are the last woman I should have thought would make a disturbance in church.' This made Mrs. Anderson smile, and relieved her embarrassment."

Mrs. O'Hara referred to a recent occurrence when a young woman from Washington County, who had been through some scenes of excitement in their churches when much "falling" took place, had dropped to the floor with moans and screams. Major Denny assisted Harris the bell ringer in carrying her out and throwing water on her face.

In 1834, shortly before she died, Mrs. O'Hara replaced the plain china bowl then used for baptismal purposes with one of silver belonging to her own tea service.\textsuperscript{195} This is still in use, "consecrated by countless associations and tender memories," Margaret Scully noted. The baptismal bowl was presented in memory of her son, William Carson O'Hara, who had died so tragically two weeks after his marriage in Philadelphia.

\textbf{James O'Hara's Last Days}

In 1818, the General's health began to fail. During the summer of 1817 he turned over the management of his business affairs to his son-in-law, Harmar Denny, and to Denis S. Scully. Harmar Denny received on November 10, 1819, power of attorney to facilitate the operation of the glass house and other industrial operations.

James O'Hara's last days were filled with desperate financial worry. Margaret Scully commented:

\begin{quote}
He was used to struggle. Life seemed to have been filled with situations in which he was required to give everything he had in order not to go under. But he had always been the master hitherto. Even the lean years directly following the War of 1812 finally gave way to prosperity, established business grew
\end{quote}
abundantly during the prolonged embargo on foreign trade. Now, suddenly by
unwise action of Congress, the country was exposed to competition of crippling
proportions. The Second United States Bank, barely able to hold up its head
above the swirling waters of bankruptcy, caused a panic which was the first
commercial crisis in the United States.

James O'Hara was "land poor." In Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois,
Michigan, his name was on more deeds than any Pittsburgher before
or since. Although he had several hitherto profitable businesses, par-
ticularly the glass factory and salt, he was nevertheless on the verge of
becoming a poor man. He sold a part of the Guyasuta property
to James Ross . . . .

DEATH OF THE O'HARAS

In 1819, General O'Hara died at his residence which fronted
on the Monongahela at the corner of West Street.

On a modest and dignified stone in the Allegheny Cemetery is
inscribed:

Here lies the body of James O'Hara who departed this life December 16,
1819 in the 67th year of his age. Born in Ireland in 1752 & came to America in
1772. Served in the War of the Revolution — was commissioned Quarter Master
General of the Army of the United States in 1792. As a pioneer he did much
to develop the vast resources of this country, and was highly esteemed by his
contemporaries for his sagacity intelligence and wit.

The General's beloved Mary rounded out her days pleasantly
enough, Margaret Scully stated, and death came to her on April 8,
aged seventy-three years, "puttering over trifles in the house as usual,
and with her flowers in the yard . . . . She had retained a surprising
degree of her characteristic youthfulness."