The forty-first annual historical tour was held on Wednesday, July 15, and consisted of a six-hour cruise (three hours up and three hours back) on the handsome Gateway Party Liner operating on the Monongahela River. Starting at 4:00 P.M. from the Allegheny side of the Point and returning after dark, it combined two cruises known as the Captain's Dinner Cruise and the Midnight Cruise which showed the city brilliantly lighted, although it was only 10:00 P.M.

Pittsburghers often lose sight of the facts which make the Monongahela unique and always important in the city's history. Its name, derived from an Indian descriptive word, means "The river with falling banks," which accounts for its muddy character. It is also one of the only two rivers east of the Mississippi flowing north. In Colonial days it was often referred to as the river leading back to the British Colonies, or specifically toward Wills Creek (Cumberland), the gap through the mountain connecting the East and the West. Its value to Pittsburgh is attested by the fact that it carries annually more tonnage than the Panama Canal.

Our notice announced we would forego the beauties of the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers for the industry of the Monongahela. On such a trip it is possible for pleasure-seeking passengers to conflict with industry, especially in the locks. That this trip is so seldom taken was shown when Mr. Franklin Von Briel who dates the cruiser trips stated that he had never taken it and had only viewed the thrilling industry above Clairton from the land.

Those who thought the Monongahela devoid of history or other interest were badly mistaken for this proved one of the most interesting trips we have ever taken by land or river.

We always hope for a warm sunshiny day, and as we assembled on the wharf below the Sixth Street Bridge, this was no exception; but we discounted the gathering clouds until a few big drops suggested action. The boat had not come but our cars were at hand. A few hesitated and took superficial cover but, as the rain increased, changed their minds, for those clouds released as great a volume of water as I have ever seen fall. People darted into any car available. Fortune favored us and few were soaked. The boat came as the weather cleared and we enjoyed good weather for the rest of the day.

We had 165 who walked up the plank. This was twenty-three less
than last year. Perhaps the weather predictions had something to do with that.

There was a brief word of welcome from Vice-President Stotz and, as we shoved off, some remarks of historical importance on the spot we were leaving.

As we rounded the Point the subject was not mentioned but it is history that high on Mt. Washington the Millerites had once prepared for the coming of Christ and the end of the world on a specific date. They built a platform and in the absence of white robes donned night-shirts, pinned on paper wings and sounded horns. They were the only ones to be saved, but nothing happened. The two authorities on this important event had been unable to attend.

Captain Fred Way of Sewickley had joined us and, with his vast store of river lore and his appreciation of how little city folks know about the rivers and navigation, entertained over the loud speaker for a large part of the time.

One of the first points of historic interest was Suke’s Run at Try Street where the first steam-powered river boat, the *New Orleans*, was launched in what was known as Western waters. In the shipyard there, between 1800 and 1810, more ocean-going vessels had been built than in any other port on the continent. This was due to the magnificent timber which then covered the entire area.

The tour led directly through the heart of the Carnegie steel industry which made Pittsburgh world famous.

We passed the Edgar Thomson plant, the first of the Carnegie properties to use the Bessemer Process and roll its first rails of heavy section. It absorbed the product of iron from the Lucy Furnace (site of the Sears Roebuck warehouse) and was the result of the genius of Tom Carnegie, Bill Jones, William Coleman and others. (It is not without interest that we had three Nimicks on board who are connected with William Coleman who did so much to further Carnegie’s interest through Tom Carnegie, brother to Andy.)

The Edgar Thomson plant is of special interest because it is located in the center of the battlefield on which Braddock met defeat. A brief history of that event was given by the writer as we passed the point where Braddock’s army crossed the river.

The extent of the Duquesne Steel Works as seen from the river was most impressive. It was the first company to process steel from ore to the finished product.

Homestead prompted thoughts of the troubles it had witnessed with labor in 1892, especially the efforts of the Little Bill to land the
Pinkerton detectives, and later the attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick.

All along the river there was the activity on shore which was indicative of the industry which makes Pittsburgh famous. While on the river we passed towboats pushing vast flotillas of coal and coke, some passing so close as to startle the observers.

With the knowledge that the Pittsburgh vein of coal had produced more wealth than any other single deposit of mineral and knowing that its development into coke had enabled the Pittsburgh blast furnaces to win the championship of the world in production of iron, one could not escape the feeling that this tour was at the heart of one of the world’s greatest industrial developments.

We did not go as far as Elizabeth but turned after three hours upstream and enjoyed a fine buffet dinner which included tender roast beef and Chef Louis Russo’s famous ham.

We returned to Pittsburgh after it became dark and the brilliantly-lighted city was most impressive. As we rounded the Point the lights of the new Three Rivers Stadium came on full and added a touch which was nothing short of spectacular. The return will not soon be forgotten.

We ran a small deficit but the trip was regarded as a great success as both unusual and interesting. There was some demand for a repeat next year.