THE DEVELOPMENT OF PITTSBURGH AS A SOCIAL ORDER

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Urban history in the United States is undergoing currently a major transformation. In previous years it was the custom to focus on the dramatic events and personalities of the city and to draw largely from the newspapers which recorded those events and personalities. More recently, however, an interest has developed in a broader context, one which includes all the city's inhabitants and their day-to-day activities. There is an extension in perspective from event and personality to society — an attempt to reconstruct the entire social order of the city, its people and their relationships with each other, and the changes in these over a long period of time. Along with this change in focus, interest has declined in the study of a single city in isolation, the "urban biography," as it is called, in preference for a study of urbanization, of the common characteristics of cities.

All this means that urban history is becoming more systematic, and a greater emphasis is developing on the patterns of human activity and relationships throughout the entire city. This requires several innovations. First, it means that materials for historical research need to be different. No longer can we rely upon the personal manuscripts of famous people or the lead stories of newspapers. Instead we need to gather information about all the people in the city. We need to know about individuals and families and communities, about ethnicity and religion, about the physical growth of subcommunities, about workers and middle-class and upper-class groups, and we need the kinds of historical records which will enable us to reconstruct these social characteristics. We need manuscript census data; city and social directories; church records; membership lists of organizations; family genealogies; legal records of the courts, the police, and the law; tax, voting, naturalization, and real-estate records — a host of materials which reflect the day-to-day activities of people as they live, work, play, join with others in common activities, become involved with legal processes in government, or participate in church, school, and leisure activities.

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Second, it means that we have to develop ideas which are consistent with the perspective of the city as a set of social relationships. Most of our ideas about the city's history are concerned with sensational and unique aspects: the first for this, the biggest for that, the best for something else. We think in terms of individual and distinctive, and as a result we don't think about the city. We need to develop ideas which will enable us to describe and write about hundreds of thousands of people at once. We cannot talk about each person singly; that is physically impossible. But we can develop ways of describing many people in a few simple ideas. We can no longer imply that the prominent people and events, the so-called "major" orators, writers, and politicians in some way reflect the society at large. We have to develop ideas — social concepts — which will enable us to describe that society and the way it changed over a long period of time.

These changes have deeply affected the new views of urban history. Much of that history is still in the old framework of urban biography, but much of it is in a newer vein. The most significant signs of change are the choice of subjects for doctoral dissertations. Throughout the nation, doctoral dissertations in urban history in the past five or six years have been focusing on urban society. There are studies of the subcommunities of the cities, their ethnic and racial groups, the development of their school systems, changes in the structure of urban government, patterns of upper-class development, working-class women, the social bases of urban leadership, migration and vertical mobility within the city — a host of new types of historical problems which a decade ago were not being explored. All this is evidence of a major departure in urban history toward a more systematic urban social history.

The history of Pittsburgh is not immune from these changes. Historical writing about the city has been very limited. One might well argue that there is less written about the history of Pittsburgh than of any city of similar size or more in the United States. For the most part, until very recently the focus on the city's past was on the pre-

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1850 period, and much of this even on the eighteenth century. Few historical materials were available for research in the period of industrial growth through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and there were very few records about the city's ethnic and religious groups. One suspects that a considerable amount of such records still exist, tucked away here and there, but not deposited in a usable archive or organized for research. A major roadblock in writing Pittsburgh's history, then, has been the lack of source materials.

What has been written about Pittsburgh, moreover, is largely in the older vein of dramatic event and personality — from Fort Duquesne to the Renaissance. One thinks, for example, of the overriding image of Andrew Carnegie in the city's history. Yet, as a recent study of the iron and steel families in nineteenth-century Pittsburgh indicates, Carnegie was not at all typical and, in fact, was vastly different from the large majority of iron and steel leaders in the city. While most of them had inherited their wealth, Carnegie was one of the few self-made men and most of the others were in his firm. The study implies that if one wishes to understand the city's iron and steel entrepreneurs one should focus not on Carnegie but on the others. And I would suspect that there is hardly another iron and steel leader of the period, save for Henry Clay Frick, who is known to the great majority of Pittsburgh historians. This is only typical of the kind of history we have written; about the dramatic personalities and events and not about others in the city. The ethnic and religious groups, the communities, the working-class families, and even the middle-class families have not been brought into the context of the city's history.

We are now in the early stages of correcting these deficiencies. In the past decade or so we have begun to collect a more adequate set of historical materials and to undertake a more adequate program of research. Some ten years ago the Archives of Industrial Society was organized at the University of Pittsburgh. Located in Hillman Library, the archives has gathered significant records which have already been extensively used for research. Some of these consist of the traditional personal manuscripts of political leaders, but much of it pertains to more extensive social data, such as the city records of Allegheny before it merged with Pittsburgh, the county's voting and tax

3 For a partial list of holdings in the archives see Archives of Industrial Society, "A Descriptive Checklist of Acquisitions, 1963-1968 of the Archives of Industrial Society" (1969), Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh.
records, records of churches, and information about students enrolled in Pittsburgh high schools between 1854 and 1930. Materials long kept in storage rooms of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania are now being unearthed and catalogued. At the Social Science Information Center at the University of Pittsburgh the manuscript census for Pittsburgh and Allegheny for 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880 is being computerized so that it can be used to retrieve individual data if one is interested in genealogy or biographical information and also to reconstruct the social characteristics of the city. All this is only a beginning, but an important beginning which, hopefully, will expand over the coming years.

At the same time, at both Carnegie-Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, a considerable amount of research has been undertaken on the city’s history. Most of this has been in the form of seminar papers which number now over one hundred; about a dozen doctoral dissertations have been completed or are in various stages of completion. A recent one is a study of working-class women in nineteenth-century Pittsburgh, not their work in factories, for there was little of that for women in the city, but their work in the home; it contains an account of the daily tasks of women and how they were affected, or not, by both community improvements and household technology. A dissertation under way will deal with the German community of Allegheny and its various subcultures. And research has been undertaken by others located elsewhere, such as the study of Pittsburgh politics in the 1850s by Michael Holt and Leon Marshall’s current doctoral dissertation on the city’s Polish community.

The full history of Pittsburgh is, of course, yet to be written, but the research and writing of the past decade has pointed to some of the directions which such a history might well take. Work already done suggests ideas as to how that history might be put together so as to include more elements of its social order. The major task of this paper is to outline some of these concepts. For the most part they do not deal with matters distinctive to the city of Pittsburgh, for they have been


5 Kleinberg.

found to be major themes of urban development throughout the United States. They reflect the fact that urban history now focuses on patterns and processes which are common to many cities. Nevertheless, their description here rests upon investigation into Pittsburgh’s own past, and they constitute the patterns of our city’s history.

One overriding context for the history of Pittsburgh is its physical growth and development and the human activity connected with that growth and development. It is not enough to speak of this in terms of overall numbers of people and levels of wealth; it should be understood in terms of human activity, of people undertaking physical development, and especially of the sequences of development. There was a constant process of new replacing or being added onto the old in the city’s physical growth and a constant difference in outlook between the new and the old. The old was preoccupied with maintaining the city as it was; the new with creating the city as it was becoming. Within the city there was a marked difference in perspective between those involved in the old and those involved in the new. Each looked upon the city in a different way, defined it differently, engaged in different activities, and had different preferences. The social structure of the city involved this distinction between different groups of people, differently bound up with the old and the new.

The city council proceedings of the nineteenth century are an excellent source from which to become introduced to the overriding concern with the city’s physical development. An enormous amount of the council’s time was spent with such private and public services as street paving, sewers, water, and railroad crossings and overpasses. One of the preoccupations of councilmen concerned street lighting as each made sure that his own district got its share of gas lamps; another was the bothersome problem of railroads in the streets and the way in which they disrupted the pattern of community life.

Physical development of the city had two important aspects that are worth stressing. One was the way in which physical improvements did not come uniformly to all areas of the city at once, but rather first to the more affluent sections and only later to others. Such matters as paved streets, water, and sewer lines were not considered in the nineteenth century to be improvements to which every neighborhood was entitled to be paid for from public funds. They were an obligation of the abutting property owners. This meant that they came first to those

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7 See Kleinberg.
sections of the city that could pay for them, or where the tenants had sufficient clout to persuade landlords to pay for them. In the 1880s the more affluent sections had sewers and water piped into their houses and paved streets while the less affluent — around the mills, for example — did not. Today we are extremely interested in the way in which public-service benefits are unequally distributed; when public improvements first developed in the city in the nineteenth century they were carried out with considerable inequality in benefit.

A second aspect of physical development was the way in which conflict arose between the older sections of the city, already established, and the newer sections. This was a persistent sequence of relationships, for areas once new soon became old and still newer sections developed on the more distant periphery of the city. Suburbanization is not a twentieth-century phenomenon but has been a series of outward thrusts since the city began to expand in the early nineteenth century from its original four wards west of Grant Street. Each case of development on the periphery raised the question of who should pay for public services. If it were done through taxation then the older city would be paying for development in the newer. The older city opposed this and argued that newly developing areas should finance their own services. Urban history is filled with this kind of disagreement. A classic case is that of New York City when in the mid-nineteenth century lower Manhattan Island residents opposed public expenditures for development in mid- and upper-Manhattan, arguing that the city had reached its desirable physical limits.8

Annexation of outlying areas produced other kinds of conflicts between older and newer sections. Land annexed was usually undeveloped and had been assessed previously as agricultural land at values far lower than the more-developed areas of the older city. The newer areas wished to continue to pay taxes on the basis of agricultural assessments. However, the city councils frequently looked upon these areas as sources of additional revenue, both to pay for the current city expenses and to extend physical improvements. Those who lived in the older city argued that to keep their assessments higher, while those in the outlying areas remained lower, was discrimination. Pittsburgh went through this conflict as the residents of the area within the city known as Minersville took the lead to equalize assessments after the East End was annexed shortly after the Civil War.

8 Seymour Mandelbaum, _Boss Tweed's New York_ (New York, 1965), provides some insight into this problem.
The distinction between the older and newer, the more central and the more peripheral parts of the city, brings out a variety of implications. One student, for example, examined the difference between the people who developed the newer part of the city — the bankers, contractors, builders, real-estate developers — and those who were engaged in the same kinds of activities in the older city.9 Bankers, for example, could be sorted out into three groups: central-city banks of very large assets, concerned with the physical development of the larger, more profitable, and larger-scale aspects of the city's center; those in the periphery, residential communities, much smaller institutions and concerned with home building; and those in between, regional in orientation, involved with developing regional sectors of the city, such as Oakland and East Liberty. Each of these banks could be arranged on a scale in terms of their assets and the scope of activities in which they engaged.

One aspect of the study concerned the ethno-cultural backgrounds of the three groups of bankers. Those in the central-city bank involved in central-city growth tended to be the old Pittsburgh Scotch-Irish families. But those in suburban developments tended more to include the German and Catholic-Irish businessmen representative of newer immigrants who came to the city after 1840. These men found their development opportunities not in the established center city and the larger manufacturing enterprises, but in the "frontier" opportunities in real estate, building, banking, and economic development on the periphery. Newer development in the city gave rise to new opportunities for people from newer ethno-cultural groups to become economically successful. Old and new wealth, in this case, was closely connected with development of the older and newer parts of the city.

This distinction between old and new wealth has other implications involving relationships between the old Scotch-Irish upper class and the newer German and Irish upper class that began to emerge in the late nineteenth century. A recent study has sought to understand this by comparing and contrasting several of the city's upper class social directories about 1905.10 There were three of these: the Red Book, the Social Register, and the Blue Book. The Red Book con-

10 George Bedeian, "Social Stratification Within a Metropolitan Upper Class: Early Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh as a Case Study," seminar paper, 1974, U. of Pitt.
tained the smallest number of entries; they were the oldest families, derived from the iron and steel upper class of the last half of the nineteenth century who had, in turn, come from earlier Pittsburgh wealth. The Blue Book was the largest; it contained far more Germans and Catholic Irish than did the others. A comparison of the two groups in the Red Book and the Blue Book indicates that they came from different geographical areas in Western Pennsylvania, were of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and went to different colleges. All this reflects two parallel upper-class groups, representing old and new wealth and with important ethnic and religious differences.

There were political implications to all this as well. As new areas of the city developed they injected new interests into urban politics. An example of this was the very first stage of transition from the older to the newer areas of Pittsburgh. The old city, the first four wards west of Grant Street, developed from the early growth of Pittsburgh as a commercial center for the Ohio Valley. The city's leadership reflected that fact. Until about 1833 councilmen were primarily merchants, and the people who supported them were the old-style artisan workingmen in their shops in the old city. But after 1830 activities began to develop on the periphery of the city. Here were new economic ventures, the expanded manufacturing enterprises. Some had begun in the old city and, now needing new space with new technologies, moved out to the periphery, for example, along the Monongahela River; others were started in such areas for the first time. These industries were larger-scale, heavy industries, hiring factory wage earners, producing manufactured products. The old artisans produced primarily consumer goods, while the new factory workers produced industrial and heavy goods. A new group of political leaders emerged in the city, industrialists rather than merchants, and a new group of followers, factory wage earners rather than artisans. This even involved a shift in political party loyalties from Whig to Republican, as the Whigs tended to represent the old economy and the Republicans the new. Both leaders and voting support shifted as the economic patterns shifted. New areas of the city brought new development and new political groups, values, and approaches.

All this suggests, then, that much of Pittsburgh's history can be put in the context of the physical expansion of the city, not just in

12 This transition is suggested also by evidence in Holt, 175-219.
some aggregate way, such as total population growth, but in terms of the relationships between the older and newer sections, the more developed, and the less developed. It had important implications for the economy and its leaders, economic and social opportunity for newer immigrants, and impulses in political life.

A second large and fundamental aspect of Pittsburgh’s history is the degree to which it displayed a drama of people in constant motion. Cities were hardly static. This involved both geographical movement, in and out and within the city, and vertical mobility, movement up the ladder to a higher economic and social level. The degree to which human movement was a constant theme of urban growth is reflected in a recent study of Boston entitled, “Men in Motion.” The writers stressed that urban growth involved not merely an increase in numbers, but, in fact, a constant series of movements both into and out of the city far in excess of that growth. Population increase due to migration was a net growth of in-migration over out-migration. In the decade 1880-1890, in fact, a net migration increase of 65,000 involved a total in-migration of 790,000, or over twelve times as many people. All this creates the impression of people in constant motion within the city.

There was also persistent upward movement from one economic and social level to another, either within the lifetime of a single person or from parents to children. This, too, involved net mobility, as some moved up and others moved down, the end result being net upward movement. Each city involved a hierarchy of occupations, incomes, and standards of living, with some in the bottom third, some in the middle, and others in the upper third, for example, and with a constant process of movement among the layers. The city was a giant escalator in which people came in at the bottom, got on, and went up — not all of them, for some fell off. All this adds up to the impression of


the city's people constantly changing places of residence and of circumstances.

These processes can be observed especially sharply in the evolution of ethnic and religious groups. The initial settlement of any people into Pittsburgh usually involved the transfer to the city of social patterns from previous communities. German immigrants transferred their German culture to a section of Pittsburgh such as the North Side area, known as Dutch Town. Here they re-established their religious, cultural, and educational institutions and developed their own stores, banks, real estate, and construction businesses. So it happened with each new group in the city. There was a transfer of the old to the new setting by Germans, Irish, Italians, Slavs, Polish, Jews, and blacks. Migrants to the city retained many of their previous patterns of life; they brought the old to a new setting.

One historian has argued forcefully that this transfer of culture led to its reinforcement.\(^\text{15}\) The new environment, so the argument goes, was strange and different, one in which the newcomer felt most uncomfortable. Here were not just older migrants to the United States, now called "natives," but also all kinds of people from Europe they had never come into direct contact with before: Italian Catholics with Irish Catholics, eastern European Jews with German Reform Jews, devout German Catholics and Lutherans with secularized migrants from German cities. Here were all kinds of customs, religions, and shades of belief and disbelief. As one immigrant described it, "Here you change your religion as easily as you change your hat." This was especially disconcerting to people for whom religion was established, both in the sense that it was so traditional that one could not think of it being held lightly or in the sense that it was state-supported. In the midst of this fluid mobile society, full of change and motion, migrants hung onto the past, re-emphasized it and, in fact, re-created as much of it as they could. The transfer of institutions tended to reinforce the past; the first-generation migrant was conservative in the desire to hold onto the old and familiar.

With time, however, these traditional cultural patterns began to erode. Children in the second generation began to move out of the old communities of first settlement into the suburbs where life was more cosmopolitan and where people began to tolerate others of different ethno-cultural backgrounds more than they had in the first generation. Movement and variety were more accepted. This same second gener-

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ation moved not only out, but also up the ladder, modifying the initial community and giving rise to distinct vertical layers within each ethno-cultural group.

In these new communities tradition was not nearly as strong. Even the importance attached to differences in tradition became dim in the memories of the younger generation. A recent study of Jewish students in one university, for example, revealed that only a handful knew anything at all about the controversies between the Orthodox Eastern European Jew and the German Reform Jew in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{16} The decline of traditional loyalties can be seen especially in marriage where the barriers of tradition began to decline. Among the first generation it was rather difficult for parents to accept a marriage between a Galician Jew and a Lithuanian Jew. Or in religious matters, a German Catholic would have earlier considered it improper to attend a Catholic church of a different nationality, while in later generations in a suburb attendance at a mixed nationality Catholic church would not be frowned upon.

These patterns of movement gave rise to social distinctions between those who moved out and up and those who remained behind. Such distinctions had not existed in the communities of initial settlement because social differentiation had not yet taken place within the ethno-cultural communities. But once that differentiation had taken place in the form of outward and upward mobility, the Irish, for example, who remained behind looked with disdain upon those who had moved out as "lace-curtain" Irish and as "Protestantized," while those who moved out used the term "country Irish" to describe those they had left. And so it was with each group, as terminology specific to that group reflected the impact of differential movement on the ethnocultural community.

All this involved constant human movement from the place and social condition of initial settlement. I have called this a differentiating process, one in which people became different from the way they used to be or from the customs of their parents or others of the same traditions. The important point is that not all people in the city were mobile in the same way or to the same degree. Some moved out and others did not; some moved up and others did not. As a result, in every ethnic and religious group differences began to arise growing out of where people lived, their occupational and educational levels,

their changing values, all of which in turn involved differences in a wide range of values, attitudes, and mutual conceptions of each other. All this constituted a sorting out process: the creation of a variety of Irish communities, a variety of German communities, a variety of Slavic communities, a variety of black communities, each reflecting a pervasive process of motion and social differentiation.

One example of this process is found in a study of the urban black population in the United States in 1960.17 A series of circles were drawn around the center of the city at one-mile intervals, each a mile farther from the city center. The black population of 1960 was located within these different concentric layers from the center outward and the characteristics of each layer then determined. The pattern which emerged indicated that as residence was located farther from the center, the occupational, educational, and income levels were greater. None of this is especially surprising in view of earlier work by sociologists that found the same pattern for earlier migrants to the city — the Germans, Irish, Italians, Polish, and Jews. Outward movement and upward movement went together as a constant process in growing American cities.

There are a number of important implications in these changes. One is that the communities within the city and its suburbs varied enormously. People sought out communities where others were like them, with similar values and patterns of living. Because many people sought a community which did not stress the old ethnic traditions but was a bit more cosmopolitan, such a community was created. Or if one chose to live near people with more education or income, then that choice helped to create a community of people with those characteristics. Usually all this was described by the community's physical features — the housing and open space. The community was thought of by the people moving there as a "nice community," with a host of personal and community values being implicit in the word "nice." Choices such as these produced a wide variety of communities. The larger cities became, the greater the variety; social differentiation produced community differentiation.

As people moved out of old communities into new ones they did not immediately and completely forget the place of former residence. It often provided positive memories for the migrants. Usually those who moved were younger and those who remained older. Migrants

were drawn back to the older community to visit parents or to buy in stores where they had traded as children. With time, however, these ties diminished; parents and relatives passed away and the reasons for returning decreased. This process can be observed in church history. Frequently more and more church members would live out and return for services. But as loyalties to the old community declined many members would think about moving the church out instead of constantly commuting in. These began to outnumber the members who still lived in the old community. At some point a decision was made to move the church. Migration within the city can be examined in the migration of institutions like the church or the settlement house; in each one there came to be a "tipping point" in which the majority favored relocation to the suburbs.

Outward movement in the city had major consequences for government and politics. Until 1833 the Pittsburgh City Council involved city-wide representation; each councilman was elected at-large, originally in town meeting and later by voters. But as people moved out into new communities beyond the original four wards, they began to develop identities with the communities they lived in and considerable pressure arose to change all this to a ward system whereby each community would have its own representative in City Council. This was adopted in 1833. As each new area was added to the city, later new wards were created. Each ward elected a councilman to both the common council and the select council. Council now had a great variety of members from a great variety of communities, each reflecting the desires of the people in those communities. The formal political system had become decentralized.

This change had considerable effect on the kinds of people elected to City Council. Before 1833, when all councilmen were selected at large, the council was dominated by merchants and the city's economic, political, and social establishment. After the ward system developed, a change gradually took place in which councilmen tended to be very similar to the people in the community they represented. A working-class community selected workingmen or perhaps a storekeeper who was a well-known figure in the working-class community. Grocers, confectioners, druggists, and bakers were common among ward councilmen because as retailers their stores were often the main centers of contact and communication within the community, and they,

themselves, became well known. In upper-class wards, on the other hand, the typical city councilman was a banker or lawyer or some professional who was closely tied in with the dominant economic and social groups of those communities. They represented their communities in the same way that the grocer represented the working-class ward.

In the early twentieth century, reformers objected vigorously that some city councilmen were saloon keepers. They attributed this to some kind of immoral and illicit relationship between liquor and politics. However, the reason lay in more elementary aspects of community and social organization. The saloon was often the center of social life for men, and the saloon keeper knew more voters in the community than did anyone else. Saloon keepers were only one example of a more general fact that many councilmen were retailers of consumer goods and especially food products; they were less numerous as councilmen than were grocers. The common role of all such retailers in ward political life was the degree to which they were the center of networks of social interaction and thus well known as potential candidates for local office.

I have stressed the physical development of the city and the resulting conflicts between old and new areas and the constant motion of individuals with the distinctions between people who were more mobile and those who were less. A third overriding impression of the city is that of the constant centralization of institutions, the process whereby a society that was once very decentralized and composed of a great number of small institutions in religion, economics, welfare, and government, came to be highly centralized.19

Pittsburgh before 1850 was composed of relatively autonomous communities; the ward political life described earlier reflects that. At that time, for example, schools were organized by ward; each was run by a school board elected by the ward’s voters. Small scale community life dominated the educational system. A considerable number of governmental institutions were ward-focused. There were overseers of the poor, aldermen who played important roles in welfare matters or settlement of community disputes, and supervisors of weights and measures regulations — all selected by the ward’s voters. Police and fire services were decentralized and community oriented. Fire com-

19 For further elaboration of this theme of centralization and decentralization see Samuel P. Hays, “The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America,” Journal of Urban History 1-1 (Nov. 1974), forthcoming.
panies were run by people in the community. Only later and gradually did a city-wide fire and police force develop. All this creates a sense of a very heavy focus on ward community life; the political system of ward representation reflected the dominant community focus in human experience and social organization.

Today the situation is very different. Almost every major aspect of urban life is organized city wide, or even on a larger scale. Fire, police, and welfare are city-wide. Councilmen are elected at-large; the school board is a centralized, city-wide body, and the neighborhood grocery has been replaced by the regional supermarket and shopping center. In the early twentieth century there were many neighborhood grocery, drug and confectionery stores, and bakeries of which now few remain. At that time each immigrant group had its own distinctive consumer wants and its own ethnic stores which sold meat, sweets, bakery goods, or groceries. As these ethnic markets declined with ebbing ethnic loyalties, large-scale retailing developed to replace them and consumer-goods marketing became far more impersonal. All this helped to destroy the pattern of social interaction which supported ward representation in the nineteenth century. Changing patterns of economic organization had a profound impact on patterns of social and political organization.

The development of Pittsburgh throughout its entire history can be understood as a constant interplay or tension between localized and centralized forces within the city. Some people were involved in the creation of city-wide institutions in social, economic, and political affairs, while others organized and maintained institutions of smaller scale in various subcommunities of the city and its suburbs. These different activities gave rise to different perspectives of the city and different ideas as to what direction private and public affairs should take. The dominant historical tendency from the early nineteenth century to the present day has been toward increased centralization rather than decentralization. Whether it be business enterprise, welfare activities, or governmental affairs, a marked shift has steadily taken place over the years from institutions organized on a smaller scale to those organized on an increasingly larger scale.

The political ramifications of systematization have been profound in Pittsburgh. The shift to at-large representation in the city council and the centralization of the system of school government are excellent cases in point. Both took place early in the twentieth century. Historians have usually looked upon these so-called reforms as a case
of the triumph of honest government. The old, ward system of representation, it is argued, was simply a corrupt system, and reformers merely wished to bring about more honesty in public affairs. But there was far more to these changes than corruption in government; they were, in fact, an aspect of systematization throughout the city. Those who wanted to centralize the school system and city government were people who wanted to centralize institutions, public and private, throughout urban life. Reformers were involved in such matters in their private affairs, their business institutions for example, and wished to make similar changes in municipal government. Two groups, the Civic Club and the Municipal Voters League, were at the forefront of city and school centralization; their members were not a cross section of Pittsburgh's people but were from the top levels of the city's business and professional affairs. They sought to reorganize the city so as to reduce the influence of smaller-scale institutions at the ward and community level and enhance the influence of more centralized systems.20

The city's educational system is an important example of this change. In 1854 a high school was established in Pittsburgh.21 This was an innovation, called Central High School because it was the only one and drew students from primary schools all over the city. The high school provided a focus to education in the city that was city wide, from which over the years developed a series of centralizing influences that gradually drew all the schools into a single administrative system. A major force for this were the professionals, both teachers and administrators. Both groups wanted many changes in the schools, such as higher levels of teacher training, better school facilities, teacher pensions, more modern school buildings; all this, in turn required a larger tax base. It also required centralized control and direction. Many of the ward-controlled school boards were opposed to these changes; both because they were costly and because they did not think them necessary. Consequently, reformers argued that a shift in control was essential, that the influence of smaller ward-school institutions should be reduced, and that of centralized city-school institutions strengthened.

Municipal government and schools were not the only examples of

centralization in public institutions. One of the first cases concerned the police and fire systems. In the early nineteenth century, fire companies were private and community based; whenever a fire took place they hitched up their horses and tried to beat another competing company to the fire. Often fire companies had particular ethnic or religious identities which heightened the rivalry. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, steps were taken which gradually centralized city fire-control activities into larger systems. The crucial turning point came when some new technology, such as fire wagons or alarm systems, appeared to be necessary which the community company could not finance; when the city government provided the funds for these improvements it also demanded control.

Public-health affairs greatly stimulated systematization and centralized control beginning in the late nineteenth century.22 The germ theory of disease gave rise to efforts to combat contagious illness, such as typhoid fever, and, in turn, to control conditions which created and spread disease. A major struggle occurred, for example, over the conditions for producing and selling milk. Customarily it was sold from open cans from which it was ladled into the customer's bucket. New regulations, bitterly opposed by small retailers, brought this under control; the key element was centralized bottling where milk quality could be supervised with the least effort. Finally, welfare activities became centralized as the community chest was developed to organize fund raising by many smaller welfare ventures into a major financial effort, but not without establishing significant central controls over the direction and type of welfare activities.23

The centralization of urban institutions from former small-scale affairs can be traced through a wide variety of institutions and activities. Pittsburgh was not unusual in this process, but it may well be that systematization had peculiar characteristics in a city in which large-scale systems of manufacturing dominated. Whether this was the case or not in Pittsburgh, the process of centralization and systematization is one of the most significant aspects of the city's history.

These, then, are some of the important ways in which historians


23 For an excellent account of Pittsburgh in the 20th century, including treatment of changes in social welfare organization, see Roy Lubove, Twentieth Century Pittsburgh (New York, 1969).
are beginning to look at urban history and, specifically, the history of Pittsburgh. The crucial element in this approach is the focus on the human drama of the entire city and the patterns of circumstance, experience, values, and human relationships which emerged as the city grew and developed. These matters are often not very visible to the historian. Human relationships, for example, are not very concrete and not easily and directly recorded. We can secure historical pictures of buildings and can write about events dramatized in the newspapers. But the city is distinctive for the number of people who live in close proximity to each other, and it is logical to assume that the most important aspect of the city, therefore, is the way in which interaction among those people took place. With this focus, concepts which emphasize patterns of relationships and changes in them become all-important. Through testing such ideas as these in historical research and writing we will gradually bring about a satisfactory history of Pittsburgh as a major example of American urbanization.