

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM A SUCCESS

Launched by a Buhl Foundation Grant

C. V. STARRETT

THE Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania has served the people of this city and county for many years, but in 1971 it was decided that a special effort should be made to carry its program to schools, clubs, and other organizations throughout the region.

A three-year grant of \$39,000 was made by The Buhl Foundation, contingent upon the Society's pledge to assume the responsibility for at least three more years of the program.

Three years have passed, and the Community Service Program, under the direction of Joseph G. Smith, has been launched, and its accomplishments duly reported to The Buhl Foundation.

The story of this program is told in detail in the following documents.

December 16, 1971

Dear Dr. Henderson:

I enclose a proposal from the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania requesting a grant from The Buhl Foundation to launch a three-year program of public education in local history, which the Society's Board of Trustees believes will be a useful and essential service to our community at this time.

Please note that the Society's Board pledges that the Society will provide funds to guarantee continuation of the program for an additional three-year period.

This proposal has been drawn up in conformity with several informal conversations held with you to explore the merits and possibilities of such a program in regional history.

We shall be honored if The Buhl Foundation will take our proposal under consideration.

Dr. David Henderson, Director
The Buhl Foundation
Gateway Four
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222

Sincerely yours,
C. V. Starrett
President, H.S.W.P.

A former executive director of the Buhl Planetarium who prefers to be known as antiquarian rather than historian, Mr. Starrett serves as president of the Board of the Society and chairman of the semiannual Seminar on Western Pennsylvaniana at the Hidden Valley Farm Inn.—Editor

A PROPOSAL TO THE BUHL FOUNDATION, PITTSBURGH
FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
DECEMBER 16, 1971

The Officers and Trustees of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania hereby apply to the Buhl Foundation for a grant to be used to launch a three-year program of public education in our regional history.

General Background — The Society

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania is an incorporated organization of citizens concerned with the preservation and dissemination of our regional history. It was founded in 1879 and at present has a dues-paying membership of approximately 750.

The Society was founded by and for those citizens of our region who, though not professional historians, nevertheless have a warm and abiding concern for the men and women and events that gave this region its place in our national history. As a Society we are the custodians of many records and documents and of certain important ideas and ideals which had much to do with the building of the Region and of the Republic during their formative years.

The Society comes to The Buhl Foundation as no stranger.

One of the Society's most important achievements in the past was its participation in the *Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey*. During the 1930's we cooperated with The Buhl Foundation and the University of Pittsburgh in a program of research, writing, and publication which produced ten volumes summarizing Western Pennsylvania's early history. These books constitute one of the most comprehensive regional series that has been published.* Through the interest and support of The Buhl Foundation these books were placed in libraries not only in this region and this State but in college and public libraries across the nation:

Pittsburgh: The Story of a City, by Leland D. Baldwin (1937)

Early Western Pennsylvania Politics, by Russell J. Ferguson (1938)

Guidebook to Historic Places in Western Pennsylvania (1938)

Pen Pictures of Early Western Pennsylvania, compiled by John W. Harpster (1938)

* Readers who care to go more deeply into the history of the Society are referred to the excellent "Updated History" by vice-president Niles Anderson, published as the lead article in the January 1974 issue of *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*.

With Rifle and Plow, Stories of the Western Pennsylvania Frontier, by J. E. Wright, Elizabeth M. Sellers, Jeanette C. Shirk (1938)

Whiskey Rebels: The Story of a Frontier Uprising, by Leland D. Baldwin (1939)

The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania, by Solon J. and Elizabeth Hawthorn Buck (1939)

Pioneer Life in Western Pennsylvania, by J. E. Wright and Doris Corbett (1940)

Council Fires on the Upper Ohio, by Randolph C. Downes (1940)

The Keelboat Age on Western Waters, by Leland D. Baldwin (1941)

Current Services to the Community

Our facilities, our extensive library of books and documents, and all our lecture meetings are open to the public, as are our unique collection of regional glass, our extensive collection of historic paintings and portraits, and our modest collection of historical memorabilia. All of these exhibits and the library are housed in the Society's building at 4338 Bigelow Boulevard immediately adjacent to The Twentieth Century Club. The building is a fireproof brick structure containing a lecture hall which seats 150 to 200 at the formal evening historical lectures presented by the Society in fall, winter and spring — and provides working space for the staff who conduct the Society's activities five days a week.

The Society publishes *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, a quarterly which is distributed to all members, and to historical societies and libraries in this and many other states. The Magazine has been published continuously for fifty-four years.

With the support of Pittsburgh foundations the Society has sponsored publication, in recent years, of the following books:

Drums in the Forest, by A. P. James and C. M. Stotz (1958), sponsored by Richard K. Mellon Foundation

A Guide to the Old Stone Blast Furnaces in Western Pennsylvania, by Myron B. Sharp and William H. Thomas (1966), sponsored by Richard K. Mellon Foundation

The Maurice and Laura Falk Foundation, by Agnes L. Starrett (1966), sponsored by the Falk Foundation

Point of Empire, by C. M. Stotz (1970), sponsored by Richard K. Mellon Foundation

Currently the Society is sponsoring publication of two important

books with the aid of Pittsburgh foundations whose grants have financed the research, writing, and publication:

Early Western Pennsylvania Glass, by Lowell Innes, sponsored by Laurel Foundation

Colonial Fortifications, by C. M. Stotz, sponsored by Richard K. Mellon Foundation

New Goals — 1972

In recent years we have become increasingly aware that the major emphases in our program have been predominately used by our own membership — the people who have given the Society its sustained support.

We have also become aware that there is a need for us to share with the general public — particularly with the children and youth of the region — the historical traditions, ideals, and values which we have so carefully preserved for almost a century.

Our Trustees have therefore determined that we should go outside our four walls to carry an educational program to the community.

In the past decade it has been fashionable for sophisticates to scoff at fundamentalists in general and in particular those who hold staunch views concerning religion, ethics, and politics. Almost all of the persons and groups who brought their strong convictions into the wilderness, and built them into our laws and institutions during the early years, have been fair game for sophisticates. Too many of our citizens have become an existential society living in the "now," having little regard for the past and its influence on the development and the success of our country.

The Society's Trustees believe that through the mass media we should reach the new generation and their children. We should and must familiarize them with what we believe to be the philosophy and the sound experience of those who laid the foundations of the United States of America two hundred years ago.

Can we reach these people? We think we can.

We propose a program designed to reach the schools, the colleges, and the general public. In support of our ability to launch such a program we submit a brief outline of how we plan to serve the community and the surrounding area, and of our assets for accomplishing such an effort.

A New Department

By good fortune it happens that early retirement has made avail-

able to the Society a man who not only has the qualifications for launching such a program but has long had a serious interest in our regional history. Joseph G. Smith is a member of our Board of Trustees. We plan to add him to our staff with the title of Director of Community Services, and give him the additional secretarial help he needs and an expense account to enable him to carry out the assignment mandated by the Trustees.

The Proposed Program

The Director of Community Services has outlined a comprehensive program to cover an extended period of time. He understands, however, that small steps must be taken first. Once a firm base has been established, further operations will be studied and will be expanded. The scope of the projected program is described briefly in the following paragraphs.

A. Services to the Communications Industry

The Director of Community Services will at once begin to deepen and broaden the Society's personal relationships with *all communications media*, not only in Pittsburgh but in the surrounding counties — and to make the Society's records and resources familiar to and available to the people who write for:

1. *The newspapers*, daily and weekly, throughout this region.
2. *The television stations* of the region.
3. The ever-more-numerous *radio stations* of the area.
4. *The magazines, trade publications, and house organs* in Pittsburgh, in Allegheny County, and in adjacent counties.

B. Services to Education

The Director will at once explore all possibilities for serving education at the elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels; at the college undergraduate and graduate levels—working with and through the established educational system. This program must be built step by step, as the field is explored.

C. To the General Public

Through the spoken word — at the historical societies, at schools, at service clubs, churches, and wherever talks are welcomed — the Society will at once attempt to take the story of our heritage, and of the importance of that heritage, into the uncertain and troubled world

of today. Our resources and our facilities will be offered at all levels — and our museum facilities made available to organized groups of visitors of all kinds.

A special effort will be made to work through and with youth groups such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, where we hope to establish new interest in our local history.

Finally, a vigorous effort will be made to promote the *sale* and the *use* of the historical books produced by the Survey in the 1930's, and those published since then — as listed above.

These, then, are the major fields we propose to explore.

We shall report progress semi-annually, and where we find success we shall push harder and expand our scope.

If we find certain fields are fruitless we shall cut our losses and concentrate our efforts where good ground has been broken.

We shall welcome consultation, criticism, and suggestions.

And, in conclusion, we shall appreciate being given a chance to share with the greater community those long established historic values which we have found in the traditions which we have tried to cherish and to disseminate.

C. V. Starrett, President
December 16, 1971

January 5, 1972

Dear Mr. Starrett:

It is my pleasure to confirm the action of the Board of Managers of The Buhl Foundation at its December, 1971 meeting in approving a three-year grant to The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. The total amount of the grant is \$39,000 to be paid as follows: \$22,000 in the first year; \$10,000 in the second year; and \$7,000 in the third year for the purposes of initiating and developing A New Program of Community Services as outlined in your letter and proposal of December 16, 1971.

We appreciate your willingness to share your experience in this program with us. The sharing of information on progress made towards the objectives noted in the proposal is surely as important as notifying the Foundation that funds are spent for the purposes outlined in the proposed budget. Accordingly, as agreed, we will expect to be informed of your needs for the next six months and will then forward a check for that amount. At the conclusion of the initial six months, the Foundation will be informed of program progress and funds

spent together with projections for the next six months with similar procedures until the conclusion of the three-year period. At the conclusion of the program we look forward to a summary report and evaluation of the entire program and trust that at that time the Society will be able to continue it as a significant effort.

The Board of Managers of the Foundation consider this new venture to be a tremendous opportunity for the Society. Through it we hope that you can rekindle an interest in the history of the region; stimulate young people to an awareness of the value of history; and in the process, gain a great deal as a Society. Part of the proposal speaks to the relationship between the enthused amateur and the dedicated professional. Surely, there are great benefits to be realized in any field of endeavor in such a relationship.

You are embarked on a new program which will bring many challenges, but we are confident that you will successfully meet those challenges.

Mr. C. V. Starrett, President
The Historical Society of
Western Pennsylvania

Sincerely yours,
David Henderson, Director
The Buhl Foundation

April 22, 1975

Dear Dr. Henderson:

The Buhl Foundation grant to the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania for Community Services terminated December 31, 1974. The grant of \$39,000 was awarded the Society January 5, 1972. The unexpected illness and untimely death of the then Director, John W. Harpster, was responsible for some delay in the execution of the Society's plan for a Community Services program but, starting in the middle of 1972, the Historical Society has pursued the Community Services program with vigor and with most satisfactory results. This brief report, with its attachments, gives some evidence of how the money was spent and what benefits to the Society, The Buhl Foundation, and the Community resulted.

Statistics, we know, do not always tell the complete story of achievement. Those attached to this report, however, give some evidence of the transformation of the Society due mainly to the Buhl grant. The grant was a transfusion which brought new life to the organization. It enabled the Society, under direction of the officers and trustees, to carry out an educational program in regional history for Western Pennsylvania.

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania stands today as a well respected institution in the Western Pennsylvania community. It is recognized as the current source of much of the historical information of the area. As such, it has become a major resource center for scholars and the community in general. Its relationship with the communications media is sound and it has developed a fine rapport with the educational community at all levels.

The Buhl grant has been especially helpful as regards the Society's work with the elementary and secondary schools in this area. The Society is visited by school groups from all over Allegheny County and, occasionally, from beyond the County's boundaries. The Society's staff makes numerous visits to the schools of this area and has assembled a "traveling exhibit" of historical documents, slides, and objects to use as visual aids in telling the story of the important history of this area. Research programs at the high school level are sponsored by the Society.

This can be said also for the Society's work with adult groups. In the past three years the Society has reached out into the Community to tell its fascinating story. Literally thousands have been made aware of the part this area played, and continues to play, in the history of our nation. One factor contributing to this successful story has been the printing and distribution of many pamphlets and brochures, especially the now famous "What's in a Name?" series. These pamphlets all tell something of our past history in an informative and informal manner.

The Society pledges that this work will continue. It sees its future as involved in three main lines of endeavor: a) building an even more professional organization with the definite goal of increased scholarship, b) reaching even more people in the community to interest them in the important and fascinating story of the history of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and Western Pennsylvania, and c) realizing that the twentieth century is seventy-five percent in the past, a concentration on the acquisition of library, archives and memorabilia material relating to this area in the twentieth century.

Specifically, the Community Service program of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania instituted as a result of the Buhl grant will continue for at least three years in fulfillment of the terms of the grant.

The Officers and Trustees of the Society are indebted to The Buhl Foundation for its Community Services grant. The staff of the Historical Society is deeply grateful to the Foundation for making

it possible for them to participate in so worthwhile an effort.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph G. Smith, Director, H.S.W.P.

VISITORS REPORT

	1974	1973
Visitors to Museum	3,341	2,004
Visitors to Library	1,255	1,241
Groups Visiting Society	1,898	1,661
Groups Spoken to Outside	2,983	4,050
Attendance at Lectures	1,850	1,690
	<hr/> 11,327	<hr/> 10,646

MEMBERSHIP

1974	1973	1972
1,080	937	797

Note: As of September 15, 1975, this year's statistics are not yet available. Suffice it to say that 1975, too, is a very good year.

PAMPHLETS PRINTED

Historical Maps of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.
 Pennsylvania's Signers of the Declaration of Independence.
 What's in a Name? (A Series)

Pittsburgh Streets
 Allegheny County Townships, Part I
 Pittsburgh Suburban Boroughs
 Western Pennsylvania Counties
 Pittsburgh Communities
 Allegheny County Townships, Part II

These were printed in quantities of 25,000 each. In addition, at the Society's own expense, a brochure describing its history and activities was printed. This brochure is in its second printing. The Society also reprinted the first four pamphlets in units of 25,000 each for distribution by "Welcome Wagon." For the benefit of its members the Society prints quarterly its newsletter, *Notes from the Three Rivers*. The *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, published quarterly by the Society, now has a subscription list (including the Society's membership) of over 1,400.

And so begins the second three-year Community Service Program, expanding and growing with the Bicentennial needs of the hour. The Society is prepared to serve and is serving any and all organizations who are engaged in the celebration of the two hundredth birthday of the Republic.

The trustees and staff of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania wish to add their deep appreciation for the timely support of The Buhl Foundation, and especially for the encouragement and interest of Director David Henderson.