

S NOW was flying horizontal to the ground in its Pittsburgh way one day last winter when I realized I had four manuscripts in hand that consisted either of historical letters or of people writing about their lives. We the staff — Susan Lewis, Curt Miner and I — puzzled about whether to place them evenly over several issues. We decided against that linear approach in favor of this, an issue purely of correspondence and memoirs.

It has been said that the best way to advance appreciation for a goal or belief is to show people how to do it themselves. That's the point of this presentation of what historians call "primary documents." Personal accounts can be so good because even if the analysis is anecdotal and not so conclusive, lesser processing packs a special flavor of insight. Sometimes, even the author of such work senses his or her passion or poignancy. Then you have something really special.

I think you will see that here. Henry Koerner, whose painting is on the cover, has written but not published his autobiography. He and I worked together slicing out parts of his manuscript to make the fillet that begins on page 172.

Evelyn Pearson had written a full account of her life, mostly to please her family. I asked her to answer a long list of questions about her earliest recollections — about her father's commuting habits, her mother's home-tending and shopping habits, family servants, much more — because I thought social historians might value the work especially. Her parents were in many ways typical of the suburban pioneers who helped transform American cities socially and spatially early this century. She wove the answers into a stylish account that is extra valuable because of its low percentage of "hearsay."

The letters of Everett Johns about World War II Pittsburgh fill a major hole in the historical literature on the city. There are the subtly gripping Civil War letters edited by Peter Boag, himself a descendant of soldier-author Francis Elliott from Bedford County. Finally, see a Civil War surgeon unmasked as an imposter. (This one would have played big in check-out counter tabloids of the late nineteenth century.) Both it and the Johns letters come from the Historical Society's Archives.

All these articles taken together give the issue an impressive sweep of 130 years, with studies in three distinct, historically important, periods. Our usual book review section rounds out our seventy-second

year of publication, and our first of *Pittsburgh History*. We will publish personal recollections in future issues, but we hope you enjoy us going overboard just this once.

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Courthouse history defended

Dear Editor,

In reference to Franklin Toker's book review in *Pittsburgh History* (Fall 1989), *Majesty of the Law: The Court Houses of Allegheny County* is, in fact, an abridgement of James Van Trump's original manuscript, which would fill two large printed volumes, was much more detailed, and did in fact contain extensive notes. For those who are interested, the full manuscript is on file at the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. The abridgement (*Majesty of the Law*) was admittedly a compromise, ending as a work for architecture lovers rather than architectural historians and reduced in bulk to make it more readily affordable. Publication in full was cost-prohibitive and would have resulted in a book daunting to the general public. Obviously, much more can be done with the county buildings and their local and national historic and architectural contexts, and it may be that Jamie's full text would be a useful contribution to such an effort.

Walter Kidney

Historian, Pittsburgh History and Landmarks

Courthouse historian defends

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you as a result of a review of my book, *Majesty of the Law*, which I had published with the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation in 1988 in connection with the bicentennial of Allegheny County. In the early 1970s I had written the book — it was a half- or two-thirds longer than its published version. It had been done under a grant from the late Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., and I felt that it was fairly complete as far as a description of the
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Maclay remained active in public affairs to the end of his life. As a presidential elector in 1796, he voted for Jefferson. He spent his final years in public office serving in the state legislature as a representative from Dauphin County in 1795, 1796, 1797 and 1803. On April 16, 1804, at the age of 77, Maclay died in his Harrisburg home. He was buried in the Paxtang Presbyterian Church cemetery.

Contemporaries viewed Maclay as one with "great talents for government," "independent in fortune and spirit," "a perfect republican," "a decided federalist," and "a scholar, philosopher, and a statesman." However, Maclay was

not so gracious in his assessment of his colleagues. John "Adams's preoccupation with ceremony so disturbed Maclay's republican sensibilities" that it prompted his decision to keep a record of the Senate's business (xiii). He later referred to Adams as a "fool" and a "viper." Maclay, opposing Washington's policies, called him "a dishcloth in the hands of Hamilton." He thought of James Hutchinson as "greasy as a skin of oil," and his witticisms as the "belchings of a bag of blubber." He had choice words, as well, for the Antifederalists John Smilie and William Findley. "As to Smilie he is so incorrigible a Savage and withall so giddy and man(a)geable,

That every attention would be lost on him" (175). Maclay thought Smilie and Findley had "nothing further in View than the securing themselves Niches in the Six dollar Temple of Congress" (385). This new edition of *The Diary of William Maclay* is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the man who wrote it, the early politics and constitutional history of the United States and Pennsylvania, and Maclay's important ties with Western Pennsylvania. ■

Rodger C. Henderson and
Danny F. Opel
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(Correspondence from page 159)

building was concerned. Since then I retired from Landmarks and in 1978 I was struck by an automobile and badly injured. Since then I have written my local history articles, acted in television programs, and also had a radio program for some years on WQED.

In part of that time, I acted as a bibliographer for the present Hunt Institute of Botanical Research. I was head of the Historical American Buildings Survey at CMU. I was until 1970 editor of *Charette*. In the midst of all this I got the job of writing about the Court House. I spent several years on that, but I published only what I thought people would be interested in reading. I guess I was interested less and less in footnotes.

I was only interested in describing the building as it was now and I tried to include what people thought of it.

Mr. Toker is a much younger man than I, and really a first-class art historian.

Mr. Toker wanted more than I had to give. I'm sorry, but I don't think he's pleased. I like my book, such as it is. The county commissioners wanted something supernatural and I was aware of that, but, alas, it didn't come through to Mr. Toker. My book was a *cri du coeur* — my testament of the heart.

So be it.

Jamie Van Trump

Photograph Credits

Memoir, 1910-1922

All photos courtesy of author except: page 163 and 168, Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh; page 170, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania (HSWP) Archives.

All An Illusion, But Maybe Not So

Page 112, 117 The Carnegie Museum

Page 113, 114 Courtesy of Henry Koerner

'HI BUTCH': the World War II Letters of Everett Johns

Page 179 Pennsylvania Room, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Page 180 Historical Society of Pennsylvania Archives, Philadelphia
Page 181 Courtesy of William J. Gaughan
Page 182 Pennsylvania Room
Page 183 HSWP Archives
Page 184-85 HSWP Archives
Page 186-87 Pennsylvania Room
Page 188, 189 HSWP Archives
Page 190 Pennsylvania Room
Page 191 Mementos for collage courtesy of Jo Clapperton

'Dear Friends': The Civil War Letters of Francis Marion Elliot, A Pennsylvania Country Boy

Page 193-94 Courtesy of Peter G. Boag
Page 195-97 Collection of the HSWP
Page 198 Courtesy of Peter G. Boag