

With History On Our Side

By John A. Herbst
Executive Director

WE are feeling very evangelical these days about the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. A growing body of people in the area support our mission to protect and present an important regional heritage. As with any good proselytizer, our zeal is reinforced by an increasing number of converts and we are

150 faithful attendees focused on exhibit planning for the Pittsburgh Regional History Center, and engaged in spirited small group discussions followed by a reporting session. They considered plans for the Society's headquarters that will be located in the former Chautauqua Ice Co., and how renovation of this 160,000 square foot space will transform the building into an exciting museum, educational and research center. This large turnout, and more importantly, the degree of participation, indicated a high level of interest.

Another sign of interest was the actual membership growth in 1989. Membership doubled in that busy year of new exhibits, industrial salvage efforts, ethnic history collection projects, special tours, lectures, and educational programs such as National History Day. Of course, members receive the quarterly, *Pittsburgh History: A Magazine of the City and Its Region*, which has proven to be a major attraction for new members.

We still have more adherents to gain. If you are reading this issue of our magazine and are not a member, we invite you to join and support the vital work our curators, archivists, librarians, editors and educators do in bringing history to the public. If you are already a member, how about sharing the spirit of a region by bringing Society membership benefits — tangible and intangible — to the attention of a friend? Passing the word is the most effective method of evangelism for the best of causes. ■

The exhibit "Homestead: The Story of a Steel Town," drew some 10,000 people to the Society last year. At the February 1989 opening ethnic music and food were added attractions.



encouraged by other signposts indicating the interest of area residents in our cause.

Take, for instance, the large visitation which the exhibit, "Homestead: The Story of a Steel Town," enjoyed in its first year — more than 10,000 people. Or consider the enthusiasm at the Society's Annual Membership Meeting, held on February 17, 1990; although it was not attached to an exhibit opening, as in the three previous years, nearly



The Society's tour last year of Pittsburgh's North Side, rich in German heritage, was immensely popular. Tom Pastorious, *above*, who follows strict German traditions to make his high-quality beer at the Allegheny Brewery & Pub, — once the Eberhardt and Ober Brewery — leads a group past the copper kettles in the main brew room. "Steel Valley Night," an evening event, *left*, that gave Mon Valley residents a chance to see the Society's Homestead exhibition, drew more than 500 people in May 1989.