race, gender, and ethnicity); and there were important differences between small and large companies. This heterogeneity of backgrounds, experiences (and expectations) needs to be taken into account in narrating the history of steelworkers in the Pittsburgh region.

No single opinion arises over the meaning of steel work, although most ex-steelworkers agreed it was the best paying job they ever had. Some blamed unions, and others management or foreign competition, for the collapse of steel. All dealt with the post-mill world as individuals; after the mills closed, the union faded into insignificance. After the mill closed, most experienced a decline in their standard of living. Although the authors make clear this is not an examination of deindustrialization, the stories of how these individuals made their way, mostly into the lower rungs of the service sector, are heart-rending. Most individuals despised that their children or grandchildren would never find such well-paid work as a job in a mill. A few were optimistic about their own, or at least their children’s, fortunes. Taken as a whole, these workers underscore not only the complexity of the history of this occupation, but the different interpretations that workers had of their jobs and of themselves.

The final lines of an interview with a steelworker and his wife in their mid-40s about how they handle driving by where he used to work suggests the importance, as well as the difficulty, in remembering or representing the history of steel: “Well, when the two kids and Mark and I are in the car, Mark and I sort of look the other way, we watch the waterfront. And then you’ll hear from the back seat, ‘Mommy, wasn’t that Shenango?’ And you’ll look at each other and it’s like, ‘Yeah! That’s where Daddy used to work,’ you know, and you don’t want to look that way. It’s like, you know; it’s in the past and you leave it there.” (177)

Ever a Frontier: The Bicentennial History of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
James Arthur Walther, editor

by Charles D. Cashdollar

Along Highland Avenue in Pittsburgh, across from Peabody High School, there is an elegant, wrought iron fence that marks the boundaries of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary campus. Many Pittsburghers no doubt have admired the cluster of red brick, neo-colonial buildings that stand serenely within. Pittsburghers with longer memories may recall the institution’s predecessors — Western Theological Seminary, whose buildings along Ridge Avenue are now occupied by the Community College of Allegheny County, and Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary, which taught its students at the corner of North Avenue and Buena Vista Street on the North Side before relocating to the current Highland Avenue site in 1954.

This book celebrates the seminary’s 200th year. And what a tangled, fascinating story it is. Depending on how one counts, a half-dozen or more once-separate schools of theological education eventually converged into today’s Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. As the story unfolds, it touches down in Washington and Beaver counties, Philadelphia, New York, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri, as well as various locations in Pittsburgh.

The title, Ever a Frontier, is intended to convey not only the school’s origins on the Western Pennsylvania frontier, but also its perpetual role as a pioneer in scholarship, overseas missions, and the church at home. The school counted a woman, Lee Alma Starr, among its 1893 graduates decades before American Presbyterians were willing to ordain women (she secured ordination in the Methodist Protestant Church); the first African-American student graduated in 1842, more than 20 years before slavery ended in the South.

Actually, this is a collection of 10 articles by nine authors. John E. Wilson, Jr., who teaches modern European and American church history at the seminary, opens the story with an essay on Presbyterian groups in Scotland. Dwight R. Guthrie, an emeritus professor of religion from Grove City College, follows with a description of early Western Pennsylvania Presbyterianism. The next five chapters tell the story of the seminary and its antecedent institutions; the writers are Wallace N. Jamison, former president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary; Robert L. Kelly, Jr., one of the seminary’s professors of Bible; James A. Walther, who taught New Testament literature at the seminary; and Howard Eshbaugh, a retired pastor and writer. Three additional chapters by current seminary faculty — librarian Stephen D. Crocco, historian Charles B. Partee, and curator Nancy L. Lapp — tell the histories of the seminary’s library, of its graduates’ work in overseas missions, and of leadership in archaeological research.

Wilson’s chapter on Scottish church divisions makes a natural starting point because these factions, when transplanted to America during the colonial period, organized separate Presbyterian denominations; these, in turn, founded separate institutions for theological education. As the groups gradually merged over the next 200 years, they consolidated their seminaries as well. This is at once Pittsburgh Theological Seminary’s rich heritage and the reason for its complicated path to the present.

There were three major streams of Scottish Presbyterians that came to America. The largest outpouring of immigrants came from the established Church of Scotland and became the main Presbyterian Church in this country; by the twentieth century, it was three times as large as the other streams combined. Headquartered for much of its history in Philadelphia, this body founded Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh in 1827.

The other two sources of American Presbyterianism were both Scottish dissenters. The first of these, the Covenanters, broke away in the seventeenth century in a bloody dispute over church-state relations; in America, these Scots called themselves Reformed Presbyterians. A second group, the Seceders, separated from the Scottish Church during pietistic awakenings that swept the Western world in the 1730s; in America, they became the Associate Presbyterian Church.

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Once in America, many Associate and Reformed Presbyterians realized they had a good deal in common, and in 1782, a union drew most, but not all, of them together into the Associate-Reformed Presbyterian Church. The remaining Reformed Presbyterians went their own increasingly isolated way, unconnected with the history of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. But the Associate and the Associate-Reformed Presbyterians, which merged in 1858 to form the Pittsburgh-based United Presbyterian Church of North America, were the creators of institutions that eventually became Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary.

By the mid-twentieth century, then, there were two denominations, each represented by its own seminary. (They were also represented, by the way, in many Western Pennsylvania communities by separate congregations, which frequently explains the otherwise puzzling presence of two Presbyterian churches in the same town today.) When the Presbyterians and the United Presbyterians merged into a single national denomination in 1958, the united church found itself blessed with an embarrassment of riches in Pittsburgh — two strong, healthy seminaries. It decided to consolidate the two and, in 1959, a unified Pittsburgh Theological Seminary was born.

The seminary dates its official beginning in 1794, when Associate Presbyterians established a theological school at Service, Beaver County. It moved to Canonsburg in 1821, to Xenia, Ohio, in 1855, and finally to St. Louis in 1920. Along the way, it absorbed a small seminary that operated in Philadelphia in the 1820s and others in Oxford, Ohio, and Monmouth, Ill., between 1839 and 1874. In 1930, its financial health never strong and by then crushed by the Great Depression, Xenia Seminary was brought to Pittsburgh and merged with a stronger United Presbyterian school to form Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary.

The institution with which Xenia merged was founded in Pittsburgh in 1825 by Associate-Reformed Presbyterians. For the first few years of its life, it was part of Western University of Pennsylvania (University of Pittsburgh). It became independent in 1833 as Allegheny Theological Seminary, so named because it was located on today’s North Side, then still the city of Allegheny. After Allegheny became part of Pittsburgh in 1912, the seminary became Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, until the 1930 merger made it Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary.

By comparison, Western Theological Seminary’s story is straightforward. Founded by the main Presbyterian body in 1827, it remained on Pittsburgh’s North Side until 1959, when it was consolidated with Pittsburgh-Xenia at the latter’s campus on Highland Avenue. Prior to the opening of Western, the Presbyterians provided theological education in Joseph Smith’s home and at John McMillan’s Log College in Washington County, and there is at least an indirect line back to those early teachers. One footnote suggests that if the seminary were willing to be more audacious in its claims, a plausible case could thus be made for 1785, rather than 1794, as the founding date.

One benefit of the consolidation of so many different seminaries is that Pittsburgh has inherited all of their libraries, and Crocco explains the history of this superb collection well. Partee’s chapter about graduates who served in China, India, Egypt, the Sudan, and Ethiopia will fascinate many readers, for Partee tells a good story. Given faith, courage, danger, and sometimes even death to work with, he makes the most of it. Nancy Lapp describes the seminary’s extraordinarily productive record in Biblical archaeology, a record which, by the 1960s, was unsurpassed by any other Protestant seminary in the world. Professor M.G. Kyle began the work in Palestine in the 1920s, and it continued under the guidance of James Kelso, Howard Jamieson, and Paul Lapp. Following Lapp’s tragic drowning off Cyprus in 1970, the work on the Dead Sea Plains has been carried on by Walter Rast of Valparaiso University and Thomas Schaub, one of Lapp’s students now teaching at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

This is a good book, and it will undoubtedly bring much satisfaction to graduates of the seminary and to Pittsburghers seeking knowledge about one of the city’s real treasures. In that sense, the book is a success. Professional historians, I fear, will be less enthusiastic. Not all of the scholarship is up to date; for instance, the chapter on Presbyterianism in Western Pennsylvania cites no source published after 1958. In fact, throughout the five central chapters, references to important recent books and articles that would have provided a broader framework are absent.

As a result, the book’s central chapters lack context; they chronicle the seminary’s deeds, but leave dozens of unanswerable historical questions, particularly about what was believed and taught. Where exactly did these institutions place themselves along the theological spectrum? What positions did the faculty take on Biblical interpretation or the ordination of women? What were Western’s professors doing while their denominational colleagues at Princeton battled fiercely over modernism and fundamentalism? Strangely enough, theological controversy seems almost nonexistent here, yet we know that Presbyterians have always had their share of it. The 1959 consolidation of Western and Pittsburgh-Xenia, for instance, was controversial (at least a president and a librarian are mentioned as leaving because they opposed it), but we are not given enough to know the nature of the dispute.

In short, if set alongside the frank, insightful, and richly contextual histories written recently by George Marsden on Fuller Seminary and by Robert Handy on Union Theological Seminary in New York City, this one seems rather pale by comparison and is, therefore, somewhat disappointing. A first-rate institution deserves a first-rate history, one that can withstand professional scrutiny while, at the same time, justly celebrating a rich tradition.