EARLY LAST SUMMER I was invited by the Ulster-American Folk Park in Northern Ireland to participate in an international conference on Emigration Studies. It was a fascinating experience, involving representatives of some 20 countries. A number of the European representatives worked at special emigration studies centers which specialized in providing data such as ship passenger lists for Americans seeking information about their ancestors. Some of the representatives came from universities and others from museums and historical sites which interpreted the old world or new world life of those who left homelands to start all over again somewhere else.

Part of the conference was devoted to getting to know Northern Ireland, the goal of the British Tourism Council, which underwrote the conference. This allowed us to see a number of wonderful historic sites and museums and get a feel for the lovely countryside. The visit confirmed for me a suspicion I’ve had for a long time about Pittsburgh’s linguistic heritage. As an “immigrant” from New Jersey who arrived 10 years ago, I was struck by a number of speech patterns, pronunciations, and phrases which had seemed particular to Pittsburghers.

Shortly after taking up residence in Pittsburgh, I found one of the city’s most emblematic expressions, “red up the house,” in
we may assume that what the British saw were fragments of the original sent to an unknown Frenchman. Were the parts translated later deliberately separated from the rest because they so aptly reflected the French officer's sarcastic humor? What appears probable is that the commander appropriated parts of a letter sent to him or to one of his soldiers, and turned its insulting romantic italicizing into a grimly playful warning to the British.

Thus, Pinella Cicere's lines acquire wonderful irony. "Seek [your] fortune elsewhere," the British rival-turned-victims are admonished. "Go away, it is not expedient that you should remain here .... [T]hink not that I shall cease to persecute you." The culminating bit of mockery may be that the French commander did not even bother writing his own warning. Instead, he "re-cycling" an old rejection, forwarding pieces of it to the next fool.

Such a reading also invites our seeing a more complexly human dimension in the action of the French. The Chevalier de Villiers, "after refreshing himself," paused amidst the smoking timbers, scalped soldiers, and women and children weeping, and saw through it all to a world where, as in Hamlet, death's skull bore a grinning visage: "Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her... to this favor she must come, Make her laugh at that."

A broken love affair, a demolished frontier outpost, men dying heroically on the banks of the fast-flowing Juniata — all contributed to some essentially histrionic impulse: "The more you strive to disturb me," said the love letter left behind at Fort Granville, "the more gay I will be...."

Notes
1 The work of such critics as Francis Jennings, however, has helped to correct this imbalance. See particularly his Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America (New York, 1988), for an especially trenchant reinterpretation of the French and Indian War which takes into account the decisive influence of Indian culture.
2 But see Donald Corwin, "Captain Lewis Oury, Royal American Regiment of Foot,"

"Have you seen the history center yet?" is the same in Ulster.

Utilizing a book called Some Handlin, The Dialect Heritage of North Ulster, collected by pupils and friends of Ballyrashave Primary School, we find a number of favorite terms from Pittsburgh speech. For instance, "Don't be so 'neby,,'" derived from the Scots-Irish "neb" (nose); "yinz" (you all) derived from "yin" (one); and the almost universal Pittsburgh habit of dropping the infinitive as in "this needs fixed."

I think it rather fascinating that in Pittsburgh, many people, from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, have adopted the regional speech patterns acquired from one ethnic group whose people settled here in the 18th century. Of course, the Scots-Irish have had many influences on Western Pennsylvania — the number of Presbyterian churches reflects these founding settlers' presence well.

The book Some Handlin, The Dialect Heritage of North Ulster, is available in our library, should some of our members or readers want to see words which have not been retained on this side of the Atlantic. As language helps define a people, I was happy to find some clues in the beautiful countryside of Northern Ireland.

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Jane Austen's novel Jane Eyre. In the novel, it is used by people in the borderland area between England and Scotland and it occurred to me that this expression, so widely used in Western Pennsylvania, could have traveled from Scotland to Northern Ireland and then here with the Scots-Irish who settled the region.

In Albion's Seed, historian David Hackett Fischer takes an in-depth look at the transplanting of British folkways by emigration from four distinct areas of the British Isles. The dialects, traditions of vernacular architecture, ideas of family and marriage, attitudes toward gender and sexuality, child-naming and -raising, forms of work and play, customs of food and dress are examined and compared. Our region, Western Pennsylvania, had a predominance of Scots, Scots-Irish, and English borderland settlers. While Fischer looks at Appalachian and Ozark dialects in America as descended from the Scots-Irish speech, I believe Pittsburgh's linguistic pattern can be traced to Northern Ireland as well. For instance, many Pittsburghers tend to emphasize the first syllable in words such as insurance, Thanksgiving, umbrella, as they do in Ulster. The kind of sing-song pattern of asking a question such as