These are the closing words of the introduction to minutes kept by William Gormly, secretary, of the first meeting of the "Old Residents" (later changed to the Historical Society of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania and then shortened further to its current name). The meeting was held at the First Methodist Church at Fifth and Smithfield, "pursuant to invitations published in the daily press during the past fortnight;" so that "all residents, that have resided in the city or vicinity for a period of Fifty years,...might meet together and revive old associations...." The date was April 10, 1879, making April 2004 the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Because of Mr. Gormly's complete minutes, we can learn much about the creation of this organization. It was as if he knew right from the beginning that these records would hold significance many years later, yet was also humble in his manner. In his introduction to the minutes from that first meeting he wrote:

"It is patent to any intelligent mind that the reminiscences [sic] of the past are invaluable."

The Secretary and writer of this introductory to the minutes of this association, desires to leave to his successor this minute in brief, with the hope, in the future that the work will be more efficiently performed than as has already [sic] been done, further that those coming after us, and to occupy our places, will infuse more vigor, in keeping alive the association, than the originators were in its establishment.

He remained secretary until his death in the summer of 1886. His position as the driving force of the organization is evident by the fact that until the fall of 1887 no one recorded subsequent meetings.

Meeting attendees were invited to reminisce about their lives, families, and events of importance. However, apparently their attention spans began to wane during the first meeting because after one gentleman "related several matters of interest that came under his observation in the long ago;" it was moved that speeches be limited to five minutes. Most of the minutes provide a brief synopsis of what was actually said, but at the third meeting held May 15, Mr. Gormly recorded at length a description of the Great Fire that occurred 34 years earlier and the destructive railroad riots of the summer of 1877. These narratives are invaluable as eyewitness accounts to these events.

Although much of the first few meetings were, as described, full of members reviving old associations and refreshing each other's memories of the past, there was some business transacted — officers elected, action committees formed and a constitution and bylaws adopted. By the second meeting, they had agreed on a name: Old Residents Association of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. Initially this meant only male old residents, but that rule changed the following year and by 1882 the organization opened membership to anyone, "of good moral character over the age of twenty-one."
The site of the Historical Society's founding meeting, as pictured in *Closing Services, First Methodist Protestant Church, Pittsburgh, May 11, 12, 13, and 15, 1892.*

The Archives holds the official meeting minutes of the Historical Society from its founding to present with the exception of the period between 1899 and 1908 when no minutes were kept. It also maintains the minute book from a historical society that was the precursor to the present one that only lasted two years 1858–1860.

The Library & Archives is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., or visit [http://digital.library.pitt.edu/hswp](http://digital.library.pitt.edu/hswp) to search the L&A catalog.

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