

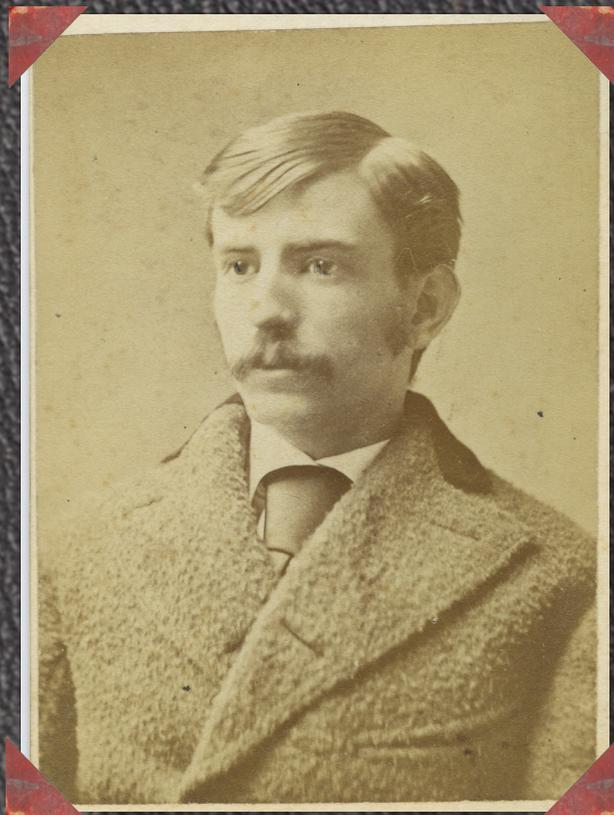
# “*Troubled WITH Desire*”

## IN 19TH-CENTURY PITTSBURGH

THE JOURNALS OF WILSON HOWELL CARPENTER

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By Tim Ziukas





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*Having been long troubled with a desire to write a journal, I today make the first attempt. And in looking over these pages years hence, I know I will feel an almost uncontrollable impulse to commit them to the flames. But I implore my future self by all the ties you hold most dear and all the memories of the past, to withhold your iconoclastic hand ... 20 Years [of age].*

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**Opposite Page: Wilson H. Carpenter formal photograph taken in the 1870s at W. H. Whitehouse studios on Pittsburgh's Fifth Ave.**  
HHC Detre L&A, 2016. 0026.

**Volume one of Carpenter's journal, a 16 ¼" x 7" one-inch-thick Pennsylvania Railroad account book with a label on the cover that reads "PRIVATE."**  
HHC Detre L&A, Carpenter Family Papers, MSS 120. Photo by Liz Simpson.

From the end of the Civil War to the beginning of the Jazz Age, Pittsburgher Wilson Howell Carpenter—“Wilse” to his friends—kept a journal, a document in three volumes that contains more than 200,000 words, now preserved in the Thomas & Katherine Detre Library & Archives at the Heinz History Center.<sup>1</sup> Within those journals he articulated the desires of his heart, among them, to be a writer of fiction (he wrote a novel and several short stories, which were never published and are presumably lost), to be a husband (he never found a wife), and to have what his near-contemporary Walt Whitman would have called a same-sex comrade (he seems to have found one of those).

Such desires could be seen as typical for a man of the 19th century, when society placed high value on hard work, family, and friendship. But part of what makes Carpenter’s journals extraordinary is the detailed descriptions of his romantic feelings that he recorded throughout his life, which make up the majority of the early entries. His descriptions of these desires and attractions, especially to other men, may confuse some contemporary readers, but they offer a window into the complex interpersonal relationships of Gilded Age America.

*Carpenter’s journals are a window into a different world, especially in those most personal selections of the journals in which he describes his private thoughts.*



THE RAILROAD DÉPÔT AT PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, ON THE SITE OF FORT DUQUESNE.—[PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN ROGERS.]

Carpenter worked at the Duquesne Depot from 1864 to 1871.

HHC Detre L&A, SPC.B001.F056.

Carpenter’s monologues take us from a young man embarking on his social and entrepreneurial career and culminate in the reflections of an older man as he addresses his younger self. The stage is Pittsburgh during its post-Civil War industrialization, a time seemingly ruled by the robber baron and the millworker. Here, a middle class man—a portion of the population often lost in the historical retelling of this tumultuous time—plays the starring role. The journals of Wilson Carpenter restore the voice to an under-represented portion of the population, and his writings give us a unique view of private life during the decades when Pittsburgh became Pittsburgh.

As the Civil War ended, Wilson H. Carpenter took his first job as a cashier at the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Duquesne Depot, a position that provided him with economic stability, a place in society, and (perhaps most importantly) access to blank receipt books from the railroad. It was in these receipt books that Carpenter began his journaling. Each entry is handwritten in the precise penmanship of a full-time clerk. Carpenter began writing his journal on January 22, 1867, by entering,

Having been long troubled with a desire to write a journal, I today make the first attempt. And in looking over these pages years hence, I know I will feel an almost uncontrollable impulse to commit them to the flames. But I implore my future self by all the ties you hold most dear and all the memories of the past, to withhold your iconoclastic hand ... 20 Years [of age].

His entries are often nervous, full of skepticism and apprehension in their tone. Born on November 7, 1846, in Allegheny City, Carpenter was the youngest of nine children, and it is possible that his childhood was not a happy one, perhaps contributing to the palpable loneliness of his writing. His father, James Jackson Carpenter, worked as a bookbinder, grocer, and bank teller, and died when Carpenter was just six years old. The family, under the care of his widowed mother, Elizabeth (McKee) Carpenter, lived in poverty.<sup>2</sup> Carpenter writes on January 13, 1877, that he had “never been kissed, even by my mother.”

A major theme appears early in the journals of Wilson Carpenter: friendship. Perhaps unsurprisingly for the youngest



This partial tintype is affixed inside the front cover of the first volume of Carpenter's journal. While no photos of Ed Waring are a part of Carpenter's archival collection, this is possibly the journal's primary subject.

HHC Detre L&A, Carpenter Family Papers, MSS 120. Photo by Liz Simpson.

child in a large family who lacked parental affection, Carpenter details his desire for a true friend, often using the language of romantic friendships, a diction more distant from us than its chronology would suggest. In her groundbreaking article, Caroll Smith-Rosenberg first fully articulated the concept of 19th-century romantic friendships. She describes them as “[a]n intriguing and [now an] almost alien form of human relationship, [which] flourished in different social structure and amidst different sexual norms.... Intimate friendships between men and men and women and women existed in a larger world of social relations and social values.”<sup>23</sup> Axel Nissen summarizes historical theory on male romantic friendships by describing them as “noninstitutionalized, socially sanctioned, (often) temporally limited and premarital, (ostensibly) platonic, nonexclusive yet

primary emotional relationships, (usually) between young, coeval, coequal white men of the middle and upper classes... [experienced without] “being considered effeminate, unnatural, or perverse.”<sup>24</sup> Passionate love between men could be expressed verbally, physically, and emotionally because men could unconsciously touch, live, and sleep together without our current Freudian baggage. Thus, the importance of using the romantic friendship lens through which to read Carpenter’s journals cannot be overstated.

Carpenter lived and wrote in a time when he was afforded a pre-gay, indeed, pre-hetero/homosexual worldview.<sup>25</sup> Author George Chauncey points out that “heterosexuality was an invention of the late 19th century. The [idea of the] ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’ emerged in tandem at the turn of the [last] century as powerful new ways to conceptualize

human sexual practices.”<sup>26</sup> In short, Chauncey claims, “the hetero-homosexual binarism ... hegemonic in [20th-century] American culture, is a stunningly recent creation.”<sup>27</sup> Carpenter’s writings also evoke a pre-Freudian social world of interpersonal communication, where the “[b]oundaries between romantic friendships and erotic love were muddy.”<sup>28</sup> These intense and sometimes erotic relationships, between men in particular, were generally perceived as a part of youth, a rehearsal for marriage, when such youthful activities presumably stopped.

Contemporary readers, perhaps blinded by a more defined and rigid (and socially constructed) hetero/homosexual dualistic viewpoint, have asked questions and leveled charges at historic figures like Daniel Webster, Alexander Hamilton, even Abraham Lincoln, among others, whose 19th-century

prose to male friends sounds like intimate, even sexual communications to modern-day ears, but simply may be the anachronistic diction of romantic friendships.<sup>9</sup> Overall, Carpenter's journals are a window into a different world, especially in those most personal selections of the journals in which he describes his private thoughts. Clearly, Carpenter's phrasing about how he felt toward men in general and one man in particular may make more sense when read through the conventions of romantic friendship.

Never sexually explicit, Carpenter's journals were written during the waning of those conventions, just as a new broadening of

personal relationships was emerging, especially in the industrializing, urban world.<sup>10</sup> Early in his writing, for example, Carpenter introduces us to Ed Waring, the man who would be his greatest love, best friend for some time, and briefly his business partner. The two met at dancing school, which Carpenter attended (he also took instruction in elocution, piano, and singing). Such schools offered lessons to men and women separately: men danced with men and women with women. Carpenter's recollections of the lessons, and of Waring, are evocative. He wrote of their first meeting in his June 24, 1867, entry:

How I dreaded going to dancing school

that first night. How often I wished Third Street would never come. But wishing was of no avail. Third Street did come and putting on what assurance I had, I marched in. As soon as I had regained my composure, I took a glance at the scholars and was very much disappointed to see such a rough looking set there. There were, however, two or three rather nice looking fellows among them and as nobody knew anybody's name, I had to have recourse to nicknames...

When I had attended about three weeks, I was much surprised to see Joe Eton stepping in, and I guess he was as much astonished to see me. Beckoning him to me, I told him not to dare tell that I went there, for although our folks were not opposed to dancing, they thought it extravagant to go to dancing school. He also bound me by a like promise. He brought with him two fellows whom he introduced as Mess'rs Waring and Taylor. I took Waring as a partner right away and each succeeding night increased my respect for him until it grew almost into a passion. And so the first quarter passed away....

Carpenter's language, strange to our post-Freudian ears, conforms to the intimacies permitted in the florid diction of romantic friendships. Consider the following journal entries. Not long after meeting Waring, Carpenter planned to,

pour out my whole heart when I write, but I thought actions speak louder than words. I would let him know my love by my actions ... (How funny anybody reading this would think my passion for Ed.) I wonder if I ever will love any woman as I love him.... (August 12, 1867)

Oh Ed, How I love you! ... I wish with all my heart that I did not love him so, that some portion of it could be transferred to a person of the opposite sex who, I could govern in her affection

68 PITTSBURGH ADVERTISEMENTS.

**HOSTETTER & SMITH,**  
SOLE MANUFACTURERS AND PROPRIETORS

OF  
**DR. J. HOSTETTER'S**  
**STOMACH**  
**BITTERS**  
**No. 267 Penn Street.**

Orders from any part of the United States promptly attended to.

One wine glass full of these BITTERS, taken three times each day, before meals, will be a sure cure for

**DYSPEPSIA;**  
Will remove all flatulency or heaviness from the stomach, keep you free from  
**CONSTIPATION, ASSIST DIGESTION,**  
GIVE A GOOD APPETITE,  
Impart a healthy tone to the whole system, and is a certain preventive of  
**FEVER AND AGUE.**



A bottle of Hostetter's, c. 1856. Contemporary ads boasted that the tonic "will save unacclimated individuals from epidemic fever, dysentery, diarrhea, liver attacks, fever and ague, and other complaints."

Arabia Steamboat Museum, L2014.1.610. Photo by Liz Simpson.

Carpenter also worked as a clerk and cashier for Hostetter & Smith selling, a stimulant and corrective tonic with a high alcohol content.

HHC Detre L&A.

*Carpenter's musings on women consistently reveal a desire for closeness with a woman like his peers, but an awareness that he would not be able to fully love them as a husband would.*



**Carpenter (far right, hat in hand) with friends in an undated photograph. From left to right is: Wilson McWhinney, Sarah (Dolly) Young Aiken, Wilson H. Carpenter, Hattie Young Aiken, Ada Beareas, and Emma McWhinney.**

HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.103.

and love and be loved. I do not believe I shall ever love a woman as I have loved a man. At twenty-two, there are not many men who have not fallen in love at least once or twice, but I am free from anything more than a fleeting fancy for any of the female sex. And I have loved four of my male friends passionately. (February 12, 1868)

The idea that a man could never feel for a woman the closeness he shared with a friend of the same sex is common in romantic-friendship thought but could also suggest same-sex attraction as well. Carpenter's musings on women consistently reveal a desire for closeness with a woman like his peers, but an awareness that he would not be able to fully love them as a husband would.

There is none among the female sex that I feel the least affection for. To me there is no "bright particular one." For some reason I have sincere liking, but there is not one that I can respect or esteem. When I see the foolishness and frivolity of the sex, it sets me to wondering where

my wife is to come from. (July 18, 1868)

In early 1868, letters were exchanged between Carpenter and Waring after the holidays and Carpenter, while not reproducing his letter to Waring, did copy his response in an entry dated January 8. Waring wrote:

Wilse,

I have written you or have partially written four letters and have destroyed them, this will be my last attempt, and I shall send this whether it pleases me or not. I think you would rather have something from me than nothing at all...

Wilse, well, I, of course, was surprised, for I did not expect that you entertained anything more than a real friendship for me. I would have to be very conceited indeed not to be surprised in finding I had excited a feeling, a love, which I always supposed never existed between two persons of the same sex, unless they were brothers or some natural relation to one another.

Wilse, I cannot write you and be can-

did and say that I love you as you say you love me, but you must know that you have in me a real friend. I have the deepest friendship for you. You are the only friend I have. I exclude my dear [Dora Hileman, his fiancée] for she is more than a friend to me. I would exclude her exactly as you write. I, like you, never had a real friend until I met you....

Dear Wilse, I can't accept your invaluable New Year's gift. It is more than should be given to me. It must be kept for one who sometime will be able to give her whole heart in return for yours. Wilse, that gift was never meant for me. I am not worthy of it. Are you surprised that I write this way? ...

When read destroy and oblige.

"Ipse Dixit"<sup>11</sup>

Fare thee well, Oh Minnehaha!<sup>12</sup>

Waring's letter is arresting. He is clearly concerned with Carpenter's feelings and is trying not to abandon his friend. What, though, was the "invaluable" gift he could not accept, something that should

*Carpenter wrote lengthy journal entries over a period of months and even years reexamining the friendship with Waring, who remained a social friend and later was his business partner, despite Carpenter's seeming resentment of Waring's fiancée and eventual wife, Dora.*

be given to a woman (“her”) who will love him in return? It seems that Carpenter’s feelings for Waring were deeper than (or different from) Waring’s for Carpenter, that, perhaps, Carpenter was in love while Waring considered theirs a romantic friendship. Without Carpenter’s letter to which this is a response, that is impossible to tell for sure.

If, however, Carpenter and Waring’s relationship were a male romantic friendship and not a clandestine love affair, the relationship would have substantially changed upon the marriage of one or both of the participants.<sup>13</sup> That seems to have been the case, at least for Waring, after his marriage in 1875. Carpenter was a groomsman in the wedding party, and Waring seems to have cooled his connection with Carpenter afterward, conforming to the conventions of male romantic friendships. Carpenter, on the other hand, while always feeling some resentment about the break with Waring, began then to develop friendships with other men, yet never to the extent, or it seems the intensity, of his interest in or affection for Waring.

Carpenter wrote lengthy journal entries over a period of months and even years reexamining the friendship with Waring, who remained a social friend and later was his business partner, despite Carpenter’s seeming resentment of Waring’s fiancée and eventual wife, Dora. Carpenter complained of not having enough solitary time with his best friend now that he was married.

Perhaps Carpenter’s feelings changed too. On May 5, 1868, for example, still stinging four months after Waring’s letter, Carpenter invoked the tradition of the Biblical David and Jonathan, whose love was “passing the love of women.”<sup>14</sup>

Do I care as much for Ed now as I did? I think not ... I can only compare our friendship [now] to that of David and Jonathan. It always seemed to me that Jonathan cared a great deal more for David than David did for Jonathan; and though when the latter died, David

mourned for him sincerely, yet it was not with the mourning that Jonathan would have mourned had David died.

Three months later, he still wrestled with his feelings:

I confided in Ed the secret of my attachment. He does not like it, and I am not surprised. Neither do I like it, but regret it on every account. I must go with her more [he may be referring to Mollie Algers, a woman who he was thinking of asking to a dance] and either cure myself of my fancy or else become deeper interested. (August 6, 1868)

Carpenter periodically mused about his relationship with Waring. On November 24, 1873, he wrote, “Yesterday, November 23, was the seventh anniversary of the day on which I first met Ed, — our wedding day, we call it.” Again, the diction of 19th-century friendships suggests an intimacy that can be as misleading as it is illuminating. Talk of weddings, husbands, and wives in the context of romantic friendships is within its norms. Carpenter’s “wedding day” comment implies a consummation that could be physical, emotional, intellectual, or any combination thereof.

But on February 24, 1877, almost 10 years after he first met Waring, Carpenter wrote:

I have never had a *passion* for girls but have had a sort of “notion” or admiration, by spells, for almost every attractive girl I ever knew ... The grand passion of my life, that for Ed Waring, is plentifully delineated in these pages. I hope I may never have another. It lasted for eight years, till he married, after which I lost interest in him.

In addition to his intimate thoughts, Carpenter recorded some of the events that formed the background of his life and set the stage for another important theme in Gilded Age society: success in business. Of the Financial Panic of 1873, Carpenter wrote, “The outlook is gloomy. Two months ago we had a financial panic that came upon the country like a thunder gust, and it was prophesied would be fleeting in its effects, but confidence is a plant of slow growth.”

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(November, 1873). Also affecting Pittsburgh businessmen was the Great Railroad Strike of 1877: "On Saturday night just as I left the office for my usual train, excited individuals rushing pale and breathless down the street proclaimed that the soldiers had just fired on the crowd, killing scores." (July 7, 1877). His work was impacted by the Johnstown Flood of 1889 as well: "Every contractor left the city and took his men up to help clean away the rubbish. The whole country was thrilled with horror, and three million dollars subscribed. Business here was almost suspended." (January 5, 1890).

In 1871, Carpenter left the railroad depot and took a job at Hostetter & Smith, makers of stomach bitters (a tonic of alcohol and sugar), and was making \$1,350 a year. "I like it better than railroading," he wrote on January 15, 1872. With Waring as his business partner, Carpenter made a bold move in



**Top: Carpenter on his beloved horse, Kitty.**  
HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.102.

**Bottom: Snapshot of the Acropolis likely taken by Wilson Carpenter on one of his many trips abroad.**  
HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.1010.

1872, when, with some borrowed money, he bought shares in the steam pump shop of Winter & Epping, forming the firm of Epping, Carpenter and Company, later called Epping-Carpenter Pipe Company. On his 26th birthday, November 7, 1872, he wrote,

This birthday finds me in business for myself. I am afraid that I do not deserve my good fortune, and I fear some catastrophe awaits me.... I have to carry a heavy load of debt which I cannot possibly discharge inside of five years, but I will trust in God and I know He will help me, miserable and undeserving as I am.

Carpenter was born at the right time for such vaulting entrepreneurial spirit. After the Civil War, Pittsburgh became a cauldron of industrial might and development,

*As a new member of the vibrant, professional middle class, Carpenter began attending gatherings with rigid social mores and etiquette that were called sociables.*

offering opportunity, wealth, and social advancement to (mostly) men with the brains and/or the brawn to participate. Historian Francis Couvares reports: “While industrial employment in Allegheny County doubled in the 1860s—as it did in coal and glass—it nearly tripled in iron and steel. While capital investment nearly tripled and value of product more than tripled in Allegheny County in these years, they rose in iron and steel by a staggering 330 percent and 532 percent, respectively.”<sup>15</sup> Despite the admissions of fear and insecurity in his journals, Carpenter, using those very private pages to exorcize his demons and as a springboard to his public advancement, began his ascent in Pittsburgh and into a professional middle class.



**Carpenter on what appears to be a riverboat. He often mixed business and vacation travel from the 1870s on.**

HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.1006.

A bigger professional move came five years later on February 2, 1877:

J.D. Thompson has renewed his proposition of a year ago to consolidate our concern. It would be a good move for many reasons, if we could only work satisfactorily together. He says he will give Epping and me full control. We have agreed so far as naming appraisers to value each establishment as a preliminary move. I would not be so independent, but could easily sacrifice that if I saw a prospect of making money.

Carpenter, now 31, made the move and consolidated with Thompson. His timing was perfect. By 1880, iron and steel workers in Allegheny County were producing one-sixth of the national output.

Historian Couvares writes:

If to the total of rolling mills, blast furnaces, and assorted nut, bolt and pipe firms is added the host of smaller machine shop and foundries and the associated metal-working and hardware firms, the significance of iron and steel to the life of [the] city and region becomes even more apparent.<sup>16</sup>

Wilson Howell Carpenter was a Pittsburgh steel-pipe baron. As a new member of the vibrant, professional middle class, Carpenter began attending gatherings with rigid social mores and etiquette that were called sociables. He recorded many of these social happenings and in November 1873, he wrote,

For several years, parties called “sociables” have been in vogue.... A young man was generally notified what par-

ticular lady he was expected to escort, then if he wished not to appear mean, he would have to hire a carriage at five dollars, a pair of kid gloves at two dollars and twenty-five cents, and then contribute from three to five dollars towards defraying the expenses of the music or supper, for often the lady merely gave the use of the house for the party, and then scarcely be allowed to invite any of her own friends.

Carpenter thrived at his business and achieved the financial security that allowed him to have leisure time and travel extensively in the United States and Europe. His moderate financial success also afforded him the luxury to pursue varied interests and hobbies like card games (especially whist and euchre), activities like archery and tennis, and entertainments



**Top: Carpenter (center) with an unidentified man and his nephew, Andrew Carnegie Wilson (right).**

HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.1009.

**Right: Carpenter (right) at the shore with two unidentified men at the beach.**

HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.101.





Carpenter spent much of his time in Pittsburgh with his sister Caroline A. Wilson and her family.

HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.1005.

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*As a bachelor, Carpenter did not conform to the Victorian ideal of the married family man, and the thread of family and stability is present in his journals.*

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such as concerts, operas, plays, and lectures that appeared in Pittsburgh theaters and concert halls. The one-time railroad clerk had become a successful manufacturer and a middle class Pittsburgh gentleman.

As a bachelor, Carpenter did not conform to the Victorian ideal of the married family man, and the thread of family and stability is present in his journals. During the last quarter of the 19th century, Carpenter moved out of his family house in Allegheny City to spend much of his life residing in boarding houses, including those in Emsworth (1874), Bellevue (1875), and Edgewood (1877), among other places. He often took up residence at boarding houses in downtown Pittsburgh, some with up to two or three boarders in a room, many who snored, much to Carpenter's annoyance. Even in cities smaller than New York, men with same-sex attraction often preferred to live in boarding houses in the late 19th century to not only facilitate their double life but to experience a socially acceptable way to live with other men.<sup>17</sup> Ellen K. Rothman, a cultural historian who wrote a book on courtships in America and has had access to Carpenter's journals, contextualizes his nomadic impulses and his lack of a conventional relationship:

Wilson Carpenter's intense need to fall in love with a woman must have been a large part of his desire to resolve his sexual identity in a socially acceptable way, but it also reflects the common pattern of a young man's pushing himself to fall in love. If he failed, then, perhaps he would not fall in love and would be forever excluded from the most sought-after circle of middle-class life: the home.<sup>18</sup>

In 1885, as Carpenter neared the age of 50, his nomadic domestic situation stabilized somewhat with some help from his family. Two years after her husband, James R. Wilson, died, Carpenter's sister Caroline built a Queen Anne-style house on Lilac Street (now St. James Street) in Shadyside, then a suburb of Pittsburgh. Carpenter spent much of his time there with his sister and her family. Caroline

expanded the house in 1905, and the home became more of an extended family dwelling. The house, now restored, still stands.

In the summer of 1892, while the Battle for Homestead raged seven miles up the Monongahela River from his boarding house in downtown Pittsburgh, the conflict pitting steel workers against Carnegie's management team, Carpenter was finally negotiating to buy his own property and his own home. Somewhat surprisingly, he never mentioned the history-making event in his journals, despite the fact that his sister had been married to one of Carnegie's managers and her son (Carpenter's nephew) was named Andrew Carnegie Wilson after the steel magnate. The Homestead omission is understandable, perhaps, as the battle was not a happy story for this family with close ties to Carnegie. Carpenter was,

after all, busily packing to move to the first home he ever owned, the Rebecca Cottage in Logans Ferry, 20 miles east of Pittsburgh. He eventually sold that cottage and purchased a 40-acre farm in Monaca, Pa., a place with a railroad connection to Pittsburgh. He lived there, and stayed at his sister's home when he was in town.

Carpenter's second volume essentially ends his journals, as the third volume contains mostly lists of ephemera and jottings. Contemplating his remaining years at the end of volume two, he seems resolute. Yet there is a wistfulness to his entries as, perhaps, he prematurely faces the autumn of his days:

Today, February 3, 1895, the thermo was at zero. The river gorged but cleared again.... I feel more cheerful than for three years and hope for a prosperous life

and peaceful old age.... Gottfried and Louise (his manservant and housekeeper) are with me and suit me very well. I have my old cow Marigold and her 18 month heifer calf Ruby. I have a crop of white Leghorn fowls and one of mixed breeds. The Leghorns came out one egg ahead last year but raised no chickens. I got six eggs today. My dog Sam still "dogs" my footsteps. He is getting old and fat.

A decade after beginning to write his journal, Carpenter reopened the first page and wrote an addendum to that initial entry, one that could be read as his own coda for his entire opus:

[Ten] years of my life are enclosed in these pages, and I cannot destroy it. I have a feeling that they may be of interest and of use in the future. Such as they are, they have been faithfully recorded.



**Carpenter's sister Caroline's house in Shadyside was located at 716 St. James St.**

HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.1011.



**Wilson Howell Carpenter, steam pipe baron, in maturity in an unidentified location.**

HHC Detre L&A, Wilson Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 105.B03.J012.

Of course, no one enters his sins down in black and white to stare him in the face; this is chiefly a record of my heart and mind in their social relations. I am younger and happier now than I was when I began this book. I commenced an era in my life. Did I finish one?

On November 10, 1919, at his late sister's home in Shadyside, Carpenter died of kidney disease.<sup>19</sup> Funeral services were held at the residence two days later and he was laid to rest at Homewood Cemetery in the Carpenter

family plot.<sup>20</sup> The sale of his farm and remaining goods—a walnut bedroom suite for \$50, a roll-top desk for \$10, a piano organ for \$25, among other items—was held in Monaca shortly after his interment. A flyer promoting the sale along with his journals and photographs at the History Center are all that remains of his estate.

Nearly a century after his death, Wilson Carpenter the Pittsburgher, the journalist, the entrepreneur, has finally come out of the shadows if not the closet. Works like his have not

always been preserved, much less elevated into history books or onto the pages of newspapers, magazines, or journals. That is changing. The preservation of his journals, then by his heirs and now the History Center, is remarkable according to Paul Robinson, Richard W. Lyman Emeritus Professor of Humanities at Stanford University, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and an expert in journals and diaries. He explains that voices of unrepresented classes are rare and now vigorously sought after for inclusion in the history of America.<sup>21</sup> He adds that while there are many documents concerning the extremes of Gilded Age life—the immigrants and the workers, the robber barons and the ruling class—there are far fewer documents of this kind, a portrait of the newly emerging middle or professional class, that have survived intact, since people of Carpenter's time and class rarely kept so extensive a record for so long a period.

Along with its rendering of his social and personal life, desires of the heart, and some historic moments, Carpenter's journals also articulate his ardent desire to be acknowledged as a writer, something he never experienced in his lifetime. He may achieve something of a literary afterlife, as his journals find an audience to contextualize the struggles and introspection he shared about relationships in Gilded Age Pittsburgh during the period in which Pittsburgh became Pittsburgh (and Wilse became Wilse). More than a century ago, Carpenter wrote that his efforts might, after all, someday, be "of interest and of use." On that matter, he needn't be troubled any longer. ☀

For Kerry Stoner (1954-1993)

**Tim Ziaukas** is a professor of public relations at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford and a Pittsburgh native. His last piece for *Western Pennsylvania History* was "Carrying the Flame: Zippo Lighters during the Depression, into World War II and onto the Beach at Normandy," in the spring 2015 special World War II issue.

*He may achieve something of a literary afterlife, as his journals find an audience to contextualize the struggles and introspection he shared about relationships in Cilded Age Pittsburgh during the period in which Pittsburgh became Pittsburgh (and Wilse became Wilse).*

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<sup>1</sup> HHC Detre L&A, Carpenter Family Papers, 1827-1919, MSS 0120. Summaries of Carpenter's experiences, unless otherwise indicated, are from his journals. In this article, the spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of his entries have been brought up to modern practices. Some abbreviations and contractions have been expanded. A few cases where errors have been clearly made ("than" to "then," "it's" to "its," etc.) have been corrected. Carpenter's text has also been broken up into more paragraphs than he used. Parenthetical insertions are Carpenter's; editorial inserts are indicated with [brackets]. Ellipses indicate jumps made by Carpenter. A complete transcription of the original journals, including translations of the German entries, is now underway.

<sup>2</sup> The children of James Jackson and Elizabeth McKee Carpenter are: Mary Emma (1827-1905), Sarah Hannah (Beares, 1829-1896), Casper Augustus (the first, 1831-1834), Harriette (sic) Eliza (Young, 1834-1881), Casper Augustus (the second, 1836-1892), Caroline Amelia (Wilson 1839-1917), Albert Riddle (1842-1881), Edward James (killed in the Civil War, 1844-1862) and Wilson Howell Carpenter (1846-1919).

<sup>3</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Signs*, 1, University of Chicago Press, 1975, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Axel Nissen, *The Romantic Friendship Reader: Love Stories Between Men in Victorian America* (York, Pa.: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Brett Genny Beemyn, "The Americas: From Colonial Times to the 20th Century," *Gay Life and Culture: A World History*. Robert Aldrich (ed.), New York: Universe, 2006), 144-165; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 100; Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Chauncey, 100.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present*, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 4.

<sup>9</sup> "But Were They Gay?: The Mystery of Same-Sex Love in the 19th Century," *The Atlantic*, Sept. 7, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/09/but-were-they-gay-the-mystery-of-same-sex-love-in-the-19th-century/262117/> (accessed August 5, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Chauncey, especially chapters four and five, "The Forging of Queer Identities and the Emergence of Homosexuality in Middle-Class Culture" and "Urban Culture and the Policing of the 'City of Bachelors,'" 99-151.

<sup>11</sup> *Ipse Dixit* is a legal Latin term, literally meaning "He himself said it," suggesting that the authority of the statement or argument lies wholly with the speaker.

<sup>12</sup> "Minnehaha" (Carpenter's pet or pen name?) is the Native American female lover of Hiawatha in Wordsworth's 1855 epic, *The Song of Hiawatha*.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Horner, *Jonathan and David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978); Rotundo, 83.

<sup>15</sup> Francis G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrial City, 1877-1919* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) 10. See especially chapter two, "The Craftsmen's Empire," 9-30.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Chauncey, 131-149.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) 106-107.

<sup>19</sup> *Pennsylvania, Death Certificates, 1906-1963*, certificate 106079. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com.

<sup>20</sup> *Pittsburgh Press*, November 11, 1919, 33; also see Wilson H. Carpenter's will, September 15, 1919, Monaca, Pa. Witnesses Herman Fox and Samuel Booth (Carpenter Family Papers, 1827-1919, The Senator John Heinz History Center, The Thomas and Katherine Detre Library & Archives). His will bequeathed his personal property (which included his journals in three volumes) "to the children of my sister Caroline A. Wilson." Thus, the journals then went to Caroline's sons, James Robb Wilson (1914-1978) and Kirke Carpenter Wilson (1917-1973), who retained the materials through much of the 20th century. During World War II, Carpenter's nephews typed up the journals into a 372-page, bound single-volume tome. Robb's wife Gertrude (nee Cunningham) said it took about a year to complete the typing (interview with the author, June 16, 1987). After Kirke died, Mona (nee Horst) began working for the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society (the forerunner the Senator John Heinz History Center). She donated the single-volume version to the Society in 1976, and then she oversaw brief sections of the journals into two publications, a 2,500-word selection published in *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine* in 1977 in an article marking the centenary of the 1877 railroad strike and riots edited by Mahrer—the material from the journals is on pages 307-312 (see note 3) and also excerpts amounting to about 250 words in Rothman's 1984 book on courtships in America, 106-107, 172 (see note 17). These previously published excerpts represent less than one percent of Carpenter's journals. After Rothman worked on the journals, Helen contacted Kerry Stoner, president of the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force, in 1987 to see if he would be interested in working with the material. Stoner passed the opportunity on to colleagues Tony Silvestre and the author. Finally, in 1999, Helen donated the three original journals and a number of Carpenter family photographs to the History Center. She died in 2003, Gertrude the following year. That collection is the basis for this article.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Robinson, interview with the author, July 18, 2013.