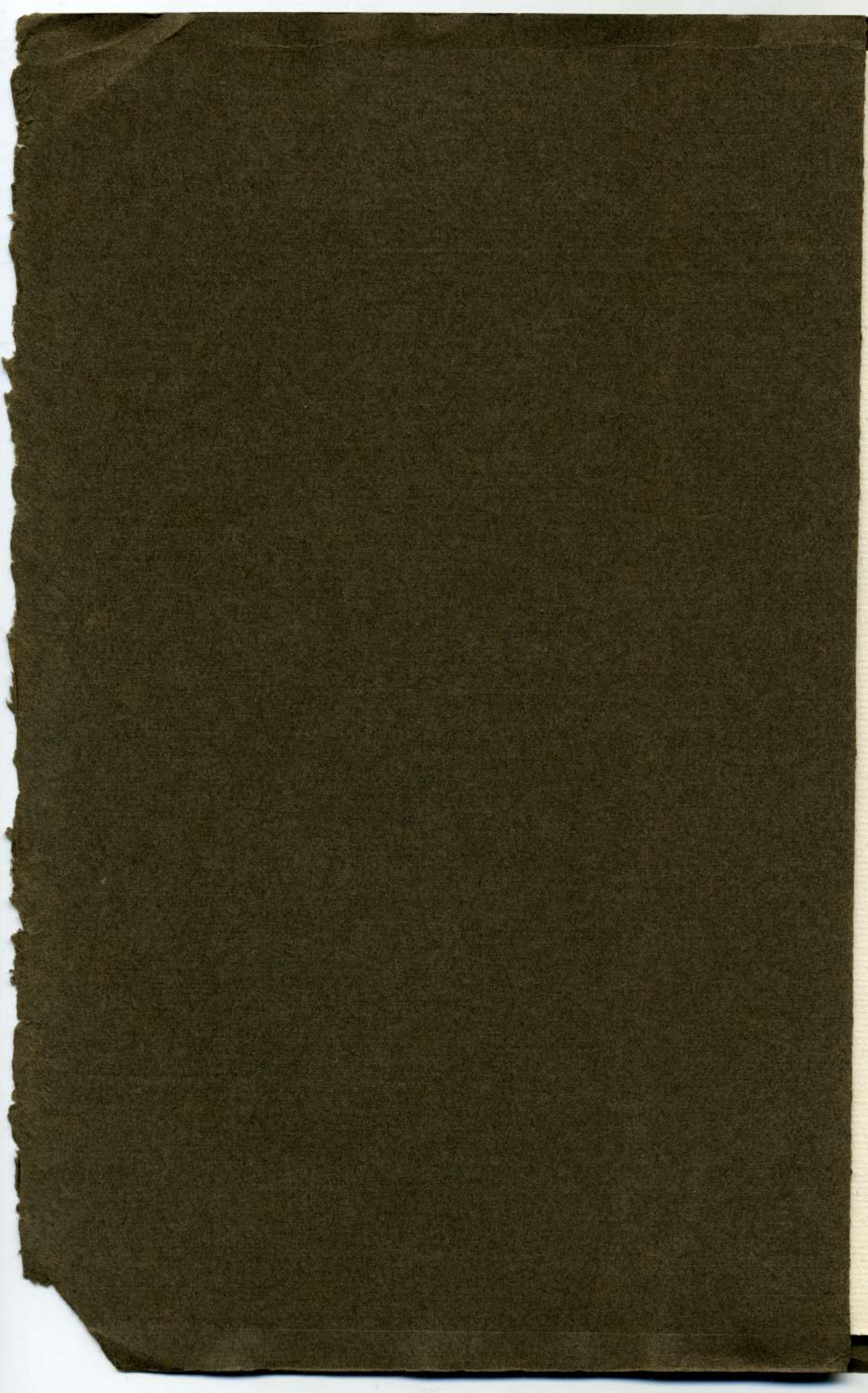
Washington's Birth Day

Nineteen Hundred Four

Washington County
Historical Society.

Washington, Pennsylvania.



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The Washington County Historical Society

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ADDRESS BY DR. W. J. HOLLAND

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1904

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THE ADDRESS OF
REV. W. J. HOLLAND, D.D., PH.D.
BEFORE THE WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
FEBRUARY 22, 1904.

Subject: THE EARLY MONONGAHELA AND OHIO VALLEYS.

At the stated meeting of the Washington County Historical Society, held in its rooms off the third corridor of the court house on the evening of February 22, 1904, the third anniversary of the organization of the Society, a large audience was in attendance. After the rendition of a number of vocal solos, and the reading of a paper upon the life and character of Mrs. Katharine Duane Morgan, daughter of Colonel George Morgan, prepared by Mrs. Helena C. Beatty, a granddaughter of Mrs. Morgan, (published in the *Washington Observer* for March 1st last), the President of the Society introduced Rev. Dr. Holland, of Pittsburgh, as "a gentleman well known over this country and in Europe; an ex-Chancellor of the Western University of Pennsylvania; now the Director of The Carnegie Museum, a section of The Carnegie Institute at Schenley Park, Pittsburgh, that is full of immense wonders; and the editor of the *Carnegie Annals*, now publishing some of the important collections of the Washington County Historical Society; a scientist as well as a historian. He it is who is directing the explorations in Wyoming and the far places of the west, and finding in the solid rock and shales the remains of the prehistoric period, to which are devoted appellations so jaw-breaking that they almost give one the neuralgia even to look at them; and yet he studies and pictures for us the coleoptera of this day, here and all over the world. It has been at a sacrifice that he has come here this evening, but his loss is our gain, that he may

see us in our own home and surroundings and may give us encouragement in our beginnings."

DR. HOLLAND spoke as follows, impromptu:

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I have been told that it is fondly believed by a great many of the inhabitants of the city in which I live, that "good Pittsburghers when they die go to Little Washington." I rejoice to have the privilege this evening of being able to anticipate the joys that come after death, and to share the pleasure in your society of "just men made perfect." (Laughter.)

I understand that in calling your beautiful town "Little Washington" I run the risk of offending the judgment of many. A healthful self-respect in personal and in civic matters is commendable, and I do not wonder that, in view of the great strides that have recently been made by your city, many of you object to having the adjective, which I have used, applied to it. I see before me one of my friends, a professor in the time-honored seat of learning which is located here, whom I recently met at a scientific gathering in Pittsburgh, and who, upon hearing your town alluded to as "Little Washington," rather warmly retorted, "Washington is not little; Washington is the Athens of Western Pennsylvania." This wholesome pride in your town, characteristic of its inhabitants, is illustrated by a story which I heard some years ago in reference to a citizen of this place, who was paying a visit to the City of Smoke, as he had frequently done before. On this particular occasion he had partaken a little too freely of the diluted water of the Monongahela. He was laying his course in somewhat devious lines along Liberty Street in the direction of the Union Depot, when he was observed by one of the blue-coated guardians of the peace, who gently laid his hand

upon his shoulder and said to him, "My friend, I am afraid I shall have to run you in." The man straightened himself up and, assuming an air of magnificent indignation, exclaimed, "Sir! Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you realize, sir, that you are talking to a Washington County man? If it were not for Washington County men (*hic*) like Judge Thomas Ewing (*hic*) you people would all be in jail! If it were not for Washington County men (*hic*) like Dr. Frank LeMoyne you would all be in your graves! If it were not for Washington County men like Reverend Samuel J. Wilson (*hic*) you would all be in hell!" (Laughter.) The policeman was so impressed by his eloquent defence of his native county that he relented, and meekly assisted him to board his train, and he returned to the heaven from whence he had come. (Laughter.)

It is scarcely necessary to remind you that this county was the first in the United States to receive the name of the great general who afterwards became the first president of the United States. Washington County was erected out of Westmoreland County in the year 1781, long before the adoption of the constitution under which we live.

I take it for granted that you all recall this evening the fact that this year marks the sesqui-centennial of the first movement looking toward the colonization of the valley of the Mississippi by Anglo-Saxons, and that this movement was represented in its very inception by that distinguished Virginian gentleman whose name is borne by your city, your county, by the capital of the nation, and by one of the greatest states in the Federal Union. (Applause.)

General Washington in the year 1753, when not twenty-two years old, was sent by Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia to notify the French, who had already begun to enter the valley of the Ohio, that Virginia by virtue of her charter

claimed the region, and he was instructed to warn the French to desist from all further attempts to advance into the territory. He was accompanied by Christopher Gist, who was at that time a resident of North Carolina, but who had already visited the region as a trader and adventurer. It is not necessary for me in this presence to even outline the story, interesting though it might be to recount its incidents and its perils. Thirty years ago, when I came as a mere boy to Pittsburgh, I was taken one day by Mr. William M. Darlington, the vice-president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, to certain spots which he pointed out to me as historical. Among the places he showed me was a point not far from where the Lucy furnaces now stand, which he told me was the spot which unimpeachable tradition indicated as that where Washington met with his memorable adventure in the icy waters of the Allegheny, having been thrown from a raft which he and Gist had hastily constructed a little below the mouth of Pine Creek.

Washington arrived at Williamsburg, the capital of the Virginian colony, upon his return from his visit to the French, on January the 17th, 1754. Accordingly, at this hour, one hundred and fifty years ago, George Washington was celebrating his twenty-second birthday among his friends in Virginia.

Permit me to briefly recall some of the incidents associated with the name of Washington, which took place in the year 1754, one hundred and fifty years ago. When Washington had reported to Governor Dinwiddie that the French were determined upon an advance, the Governor determined upon resistance, and sought aid from the other colonies, and more particularly from Pennsylvania. New York responded with a grant of money after some time, but Pennsylvania refused either to grant money or to send troops to

resist the French. Governor Dinwiddie was not, however, a man to be easily discouraged. He was pugnacious. The indifference and apathy of the colonies to the north, while disappointing, did not cause him to stay his hand. Even before he had secured a grant of money from the Burgesses, upon his personal responsibility he ordered armed men into the field. We owe the possession of the broad valley of the Ohio, and of the lands watered by its tributaries, to the men of Virginia. Had it not been for the sturdy and determined stand which they took, under the lead of their doughty governor, the French, unresisted, would have occupied the territory, and, in all probability, the whole tide of history would have been turned from the channel in which it has flowed for a century and a half. The initial movement for the occupation and possession by Anglo-Saxons of the greatest and richest agricultural area on the face of the globe was due not to the men of New England, or to the men of the middle states, but to the men of Virginia. All honor to them! (Applause.)

The advance was led by William Trent, after whom the capital of New Jersey was subsequently named. The second in command was Ensign Edward Ward. The body of men under them was but a mere handful — some forty or more. They were engaged in building a stockade at the point where the Monongahela unites with the Allegheny, when, on the 17th day of April, 1754, an overwhelming force of French and Indians came down the Allegheny River in bateaux and ordered the work to be stopped. Overpowered by force of numbers, there was no alternative but to obey, and Ward, (his superior officer, Trent, being absent,) withdrew his men. They rejoined Washington, who was pressing forward at the head of one hundred and fifty men, at a point not far from the mouth of Redstone Creek, and were then sent to the rear because of a disposition among them to create disturbances.

While engaged in cutting his way through the forest toward the mouth of Redstone Creek, which he had not yet reached, on the 27th of May information was brought to Washington by the Half-king, an Indian chief, who had been one of his guides on his expedition to Fort Le Boeuf, that a body of Frenchmen was near at hand, concealed in a lonely glen. Just where this glen is situated, I, for one, would like to know exactly, and, could it be discovered, I would gladly contribute, — as I know others would, — a generous sum of money to have the spot suitably marked by a monument. Guided by the Half-king and his Indians, Washington led a detachment of forty men to meet the French, who, upon his approach, flew to arms. When in the gray of the dawn Washington ordered his men to "Fire!", "that word of command", says Bancroft, "kindled the world into a flame." The skirmish in the woods, in which the young officer pitted himself against the troops of France, marked the beginning of an epoch in the history of mankind. The conflict which ensued led to the banishment of the lilies of France from the soil of the new world and to the substitution therefor of the cross of St. George, to be shortly afterwards replaced over broad territories by the Stars and Stripes. It marked the beginning of that great movement which has led to the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxon race in the diplomacy and in the commerce of the globe. It was the beginning of one of the greatest movements in human history. This is a fact which the men and women of Western Pennsylvania should remember. We live on soil which is historic. Out of the woods, of what was then a western wilderness, sounded a voice, which was the voice of Freedom, and its echoes, deepening and rolling farther as the years went by, were heard wherever there was an ear to hear. The crackle of those volleys of musketry was the prelude to the greater music of Quebec, Bunker Hill, Yorktown, Trafalgar and Waterloo.

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The bold attack made by Washington, resulting in the death of Jumonville and the capture of the men under him, with one exception, was not allowed by the French to pass unavenged. Washington, apprehending that they would attack him, threw up intrenchments on a spot to which he gave the name of Fort Necessity. Here he withstood the advance of the French and Indians, who came upon him in force. Defeated, he was nevertheless allowed to withdraw with the honors of war. Thus practically ended the military operations of Virginia against the French in 1754.

In the following year occurred Braddock's memorable and disastrous defeat. The frontier was practically left defenceless. The savages in marauding bands harrassed the border, while in Pennsylvania the legislative authorities remained deaf to all appeals for help, until raiding bands of Indians had crossed the Susquehanna, and their war-whoop was heard within two days' march of Philadelphia, where the insensate Legislature was in session. Terrified and at last brought to their senses by popular indignation, this unenlightened body reluctantly made a grant of money to enable the governor of the state to establish frontier defences. The frontier forts built at that time have recently been made the subject of much historical inquiry, and the Legislature of our State, at considerable expense, a few years ago published an account of them in two portly volumes handsomely bound in half-morocco. The fathers fought, we write. They built forts, we build and whitewash their sepulchres. Our attitude is perhaps represented by the remark which is said to have been made by Mr. Choate, our present Ambassador to England, who, at a festive gathering of the New England Society, is reported to have said, "Ladies and Gentlemen: We have met this evening to applaud the sufferings of our ancestors, and to admire our own virtues as illustrated by them." (Laughter.)

It is well, however, to call to mind the historic past. The formation of societies such as yours is most laudable. As I look over this great and intelligent assemblage I wish to congratulate you upon what you have achieved. Under the intelligent and enthusiastic leadership of my honored friend, Mr. Boyd Crumrine, you have certainly made a most notable beginning. The Historical Society of Washington County, judging from what I have seen and heard, may well rejoice in its vigorous youth, which promises an equally vigorous and flourishing old age. You have a delightful place in which to hold your meetings. You have a beautiful room, in which to store in safety from fire your librarv of books and manuscripts, as well as your collection of historical relics. In these respects you have advantages, I am sorry to say, far superior to those that are possessed by the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, located in Pittsburgh. This latter organization, which is an outgrowth of what was formerly known as "The Old Settlers' Association," is, I regret to say, not flourishing as it should. At the last meeting, at which I was present, there were only three persons in attendance, a number contrasting sadly with this splendid audience.

Permit me to express the hope that your evident success will provide a stimulus for renewed effort in other localities. Associations like this should be formed in every county in the Commonwealth. There is a vast amount of valuable historical material scattered in the homes of the people, which ought to be brought together, classified, and arranged, and made available for the use of the future historian. In the prosecution of certain historical researches, which I have been called upon to make in recent times, I have sometimes been sadly disappointed by my inability to discover records, which I know full well must be in existence somewhere, but which have been lost to sight. A concerted effort ought to be made in all the counties of the

Commonwealth to gather up and preserve whatever may bear upon local history or questions of genealogy. It is a duty which we owe to the past to do this, and I may say that it is a duty to ourselves of the present day to preserve for those, who may come after us, such records as may enable them to know who we were and what we did, when we shall have passed over to the silent majority. Your county has been the mother of many men who have attained to high distinction. I venture to say that the past will repeat itself, and in this great audience this evening there are men and women whose grandchildren and great grandchildren in 1995 will be very glad to find here in the archives of your Society memorials of your activity.

But, let us return to that first immigration into Western Pennsylvania, the leader in which was the immortal Washington. In studying such records as have come down to our time, I am impressed by the fact that the migrating body was for the most part composed of people of English descent. In recent numbers of the Annals of the Carnegie Museum I have, through the kindness of the authorities of your county, been able to publish the records of the old Virginian courts, which claimed jurisdiction over the region, after the fall of Fort Duquesne until the time when a final adjustment of the boundary dispute was effected between Virginia and Pennsylvania. I have been interested in looking over the names of those who appear in these records. Without wearying you, I may, however, recall a few of these names in proof of my contention that the first settlers were principally of English descent. Almost the first name which we encounter is that of "Smith." But then, you know, Smith is not a name — it is simply a "generic term." (Laughter.) Such names as Hart, Harrison, Skidmore, Smallman, Ward, Hedges, Shepherd, Matthews, Hawkins, Hawthorn, Carpenter, Vallanding-

ham, Crawford and Sweet, are all purely English. Some of the names are Scotch, as Lockhart, McDowell, McBride, Moffat, McElroy. A few are Irish, Connolly, O'Hara, Moore and Croghan. A few are Dutch; I find one man by the name of Vanmeter. He may have represented in his person the original colonization of Manhattan Island. There are a few German names, as Frohman, Bausman, Beeler and Meyer. Here and there I discover a name of French origin, as Devore (Devoir), Reno (a corruption of Renault), and Teabolt (a corruption of Thiebault). The French represented for the most part the Huguenot immigration; and those bearing French names, as well as those bearing German names, represented a migration into the country at a date no doubt some years prior to the movement into Western Pennsylvania, for the French and the German names have for the most part been already more or less anglicized. The first wave of immigration into the valley of the Ohio and through it into the valley of the Mississippi was therefore distinctly English in its origin. The first settlers brought with them English customs, English traits, respect for English law, and the tongue of Shakespeare and of Milton.

In studying the migration to the west we find that the first wave of colonization from Virginia was very quickly followed by a wave of immigration from central Pennsylvania, the leaders in which were mainly Scotch, or the descendants of Scotchmen who had been temporarily domiciled in the north of Ireland. Of all Scotchmen the Scotch-Irishman is most intensely Scotch. As you are all aware, political events led to a very large migration to the new world, toward the middle and latter part of the eighteenth century, of Scotchmen from the north of Ireland. Coming originally into central Pennsylvania, they established themselves in numbers in the Cumberland Valley, where they acquired large holdings of land. They were

prolific. They gave no promise at that time of realizing any of President Roosevelt's recently expressed fears in relation to the dying out of the race. When these first settlers came to make their last wills and testaments, and to divide up their holdings among their children, it often happened that the paternal estate of a thousand or two thousand acres, on an equal division left the children each a paltry hundred, or two hundred acres. Filled with "the Anglo-Saxon hunger for land," deeming such small holdings insufficient, the second generation pressed across the mountains, where land was still abundant and cheap, and repeated the experiment of their fathers. Like Daniel Boone they "wanted more elbow room." I have been recently led to look up some of the old records, and I find it was this hunger for possessions in the soil which undoubtedly led many of the men who came into western Pennsylvania to forsake the older settlements on the eastern side of the mountains in order to cast in their lot with the newer communities springing up about the headwaters of the Ohio. Only last night I read the will of the father of the man who was the first settler of Indiana County, Pennsylvania. I find that by this instrument he disposes of his plantation, in what is now Franklin County, Pennsylvania, to his children, giving them each farms of two hundred acres in extent. But I discover that his oldest son, who is in his will remembered solely by a grant of money, had already provided for himself by crossing the mountains and taking up a tract of land quite equal in size to that which his father by his last will and testament disposed of to his heirs. This is only one of a host of illustrations which I might cite to show that those who took part in what is known as the "Scotch-Irish immigration" were impelled thereto very largely by the desire to acquire land. Some of the early settlers took up as much as two thousand, in some cases as much as twenty, forty, or even fifty thousand

acres, acquiring title in any way in which they could, to the fertile territory which they coveted. The truth is that the principal commodity, in which men at that time could invest, was land. The machinery of our great stock exchanges, based upon the share-emitting power of vast corporations, had absolutely no existence at that day. The capitalist of the eighteenth century in America found employment for his money by trafficking in real estate. Land was cheap. It was perpetually changing ownership. Men speculated in land at that time as men speculate to-day in stocks. From six pence to four shillings an acre was the price in many cases. I held in my hand the other day a book in which one of these thrifty men of the old Colonial days gives an inventory of his holdings of lands in Pennsylvania at a time antedating the Revolution. I find that he owned thousands of acres in the very heart of the anthracite coal region, and, in large part, the sites of the cities of Scranton and Wilkesbarre, which at that time had no existence whatever. He bought the land for a song; he sold it again for a trifle. If he only could have foreseen what the future would be!

When the Scotch-Irishmen, impelled by their appetite for broad acres, forsook the fertile valleys of the central part of the State, the plodding and thrifty Germans pressed in, and acquired the small holdings which were left behind. Their agriculture, intensive rather than extensive, proved nevertheless remunerative in the end. There are no better farmers in the world than the industrious Germans. They converted Lancaster, York, Dauphin, and other adjacent counties, into veritable gardens.

The Scotch-Irish immigration into western Pennsylvania, coming through Maryland by the old army trails down the upper waters of the Youghiogheny, or by way of Bedford, continued for a number of years and was succeeded by a

still larger movement for the occupation of the West, when all of the great territory claimed by Virginia had been turned over to the National Government, and the great states lying north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi had been created. In this movement the men of New England took part, but it was principally by way of New York and the Great Lakes, and did not greatly affect western Pennsylvania.

In the effort to promote the means of communication between the eastern settlements and the valley of the Mississippi, the construction of canals, and then of railways, took a prominent place. This led to a fourth wave of immigration, in which the south of Ireland is represented. The great industrial enterprises which came into being toward the middle of the ninteenth century necessitated the employment of a host of men who were willing to use the pick and the shovel. For a long succession of years we find that the south of Ireland contributed a vast multitude to our population from its Roman Catholic population. I have under my care many of the old records of the old Portage Railway, which was constructed across the Allegheny Mountains. Among these old documents I frequently find letters addressed by Gallitzin to those in charge of the works, recommending to favorable attention Irishmen, who, no doubt, had appealed to that worthy and noble ecclesiastic for assistance. He seems to have been asked by all the O'Briens and the McSweeneys to get them "jobs" to work on the railway "at a picayune a day." And he never appears to have lent a deaf ear to the appeal. While that Irish immigration added very largely to our population in western Pennsylvania, the Irishman is ambitious, and here, as elsewhere, he soon asserted a preference for political rather than industrial employment. It was Li Hung Chang, I believe, who said, "The Irishman has succeeded in governing every country but his own." Some years ago

I was present at a dinner in the city of Boston, given by the Mayor to a few Pittsburgers, and I found myself seated between two gentlemen who were members of the city council. They were both of them of distinctly Hiberian origin, as their speech revealed, and one of then confided to me that 'it gave him great pleasure to say that every gentleman present representing the city, except the Mayor, Mr. Josiah Quincy, was an Irishman.' As it has been in the land of the "Pilgrim Fathers" so it has also been in Pittsburgh, and, I presume, in Washington. (Laughter.)

But there came a time in the lapse of years when Ireland could no longer provide men in sufficient numbers to do the work which had to be done in the great and growing industrial establishments of the region. The work of the railroads, the mines, the foundries, the factories and the mills called for "hands." The demand created a supply. Another wave of immigration set in, no longer from English-speaking territory, but from the south of Europe, from Italy, from Austria, from Hungary and from Bulgaria. The descendants of the Caesars, — brown little men from the olive-clad hills of Naples and the rose-gardens of Sorrento, — sturdy men from the valley of the Danube and the mountain passes of southern Europe, pressed forward to gain the wage of labor in the dark mines, and before the glowing furnaces of this western half of our Commonwealth. Mingling with this wave of immigration is an element coming from southern Russia, distinctly Hebrew in its origin. In the city where I live there is a section almost entirely populated by people of this class, constituting a veritable Ghetto.

I have thus in a few sentences rapidly surveyed the successive waves of immigration, which have swept into western Pennsylvania since first the young Virginian surveyor, attended by his frontiersmen and Indian guides,

made his memorable journey from John Fraser's cabin on Turtle Creek to the camp of the French at Fort Le Boeuf. Washington, whose birthday the nation commemorates to-day, became in the process of events "The Father of his Country." His name is universally revered; he has almost ceased in the thought of some to be human; he has wellnigh become a demigod. His character of matchless strength and probity shines before us as a luminous example — pure, white, stately, like that noble shaft, which on the banks of the Potomac rears its head, high above all surrounding objects, to greet the rising, and to salute the setting sun. While the nation possesses in his character a rich inheritance, we of western Pennsylvania have a peculiar interest in the story of his life, for in a peculiar sense he belonged to us, for we belonged to Virginia. He was the leader in our first immigration. All that have come after him have been his followers, English and Scotch, French and Irish, Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Russians, Jews.

And now let us look forward into the future for a moment. "God hath made of one blood," we are told, "all nations for to dwell on the face of the earth." Here in this western Pennsylvania it seems to me that God is making of all nations of the earth one blood. What is true of western Pennsylvania is also true of the whole land. Our country has become the Mecca of the world. Hither have been brought elements apparently the most discordant, to be ultimately fused into one united and harmonious whole. Nothing like this movement of immigration from the lands across the Atlantic to this western world has ever been witnessed before in the annals of human history. It far exceeds in magnitude that invasion of the tribes of Northern Europe which swept down upon the shores of the Mediterranean at the breaking up of the Roman Empire. Its results no man can exactly forsee, but I believe that the

issue will be a blessing to mankind. The typical American a few years hence will represent in himself a fusion of the best elements that are to be found in all the races of mankind, for while the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children for "three or four generations," the promise is that the mercy of God shall be revealed to those who love him "for thousands of generations."

In the days of Queen Elizabeth the English tongue was spoken by seven millions of men, not as many as there are to-day living within the limits of our Commonwealth ; to-day English is the speech of one hundred and fifty millions of men. One hundred and fifty years ago Washington and his little band of Colonial soldiers were hewing their way through the forests across the mountains. To-day the Anglo-Saxon has conquered the forest wilderness ; he has pressed across the western prairies, he has scaled the steeps of the far-off Sierras, he has taken possession of the strand upon which beat the long rollers of the Pacific. He holds the continent in his grasp, — the fairest gem which shines upon the broad round buckler of the globe. And the end is not yet, for in the islands of the deep seas he is finding new jewels to place as settings about the central gem. The flag of freedom for which Washington fought waves over free men to-day half way around the globe, and the children of the great Republic of which he was the first President can say to-day as proudly as says the Englishman, that the sun never sets upon her domain. What is the end to be ?

England and America, the two great Anglo-Saxon world powers, representing the spirit of Magna Charta and of Cromwell, of the Declaration of Independence and of Washington, standing for justice, truth and liberty, in the van of human civilization, are called to act as the arbiters of the destiny of humankind ! It is a fearful responsibility, but if we meet the trust in the spirit of the heroic man

whose natal day we celebrate, the problems which confront us will, with God's blessings, all be rightly solved. The issue will be "the thousand years of peace."

I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the attention which you have given to these necessarily extemporaneous thoughts, suggested by the place and the hour.