

Patrick Willoughby – History of Pittsburgh Midterm Paper

Throughout the history of Pittsburgh, its citizens have constantly reinvented their culture and industry from a small, rough military fort to a multi-faceted manufacturing behemoth in the late 19th century. Modern historians have compartmentalized Pittsburgh's progress from fort to industrial town using several distinct time periods: the military fortification period, the trading center period, "Gateway to the West" period, "Birmingham of America" period, and iron and glass manufacturing center of the US period.

To fully understand Pittsburgh, it is necessary to start with the city's origins as a small group of traders and Indians living amongst the trees, wildlife, and rivers. Life in the area was not peaceful because two major European powers, France and England, wished to acquire this land. The French desired the prime river land to protect the water route from their northern colonies in New France to the southern area of Louisiana. In order to claim the land, the French sent Blainville to place lead plates as claim markers all along the rivers. The British wished to acquire the land so it could be sold and populated by their colonists. To further this goal of land speculation, an "association of gentleman" formed the Ohio Company of Virginia and King George gave the group a land grant of 200,000 acres, providing that they settle 100 people in seven years. The British also attempted to purchase the land from Indians, which was futile since the selling Indians were often not residents of the purchased land. To enforce the land grant, the Ohio Company sent Christopher Gist to explore and settle the area. After Gist successfully opened a plantation on Mt. Braddock, Pennsylvania Quakers arrived and settled in an area known as Logstown. Problems appeared when Indian attacks became more frequent and the settlers appealed to the Ohio Company and the Quakers for protection. Because the Quakers would not support the construction of a fort, the settlers appealed to Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia, who dispatched George Washington to Fort LeBoeuf in 1753 with instructions for the French to leave Western Pennsylvania. Naturally, the French declined this offer. On his return to Virginia,

Washington noted that the Point in Pittsburgh was an ideal location for a fort, as it provided coverage of both rivers and had an excellent supply of wood. The Ohio Company agreed with Washington's assessment and sent William Trent to the area with the intent to build a fort at the point. Three weeks into the construction of the new fort, named Fort Prince George after the English prince, the French deployed a 500-man force to remove the English. George Washington was dispatched to Pittsburgh to protect Fort George, however he was unable to reach the fort in time and its occupants surrendered without a fight. On the way to Pittsburgh, Washington and his forces met a group of French soldiers under Jumonville and defeated them soundly. Washington's victory against Jumonville is considered an unofficial start to the French and Indian War. On July 4, 1754, Washington was forced to surrender to the French at the hastily built Fort Necessity and he returned to Virginia.

While Washington traveled back to Virginia, the French were busy rebuilding Fort George with the new name Fort Duquesne after the Marquis Duquesne, Governor of New France. The English considered the new Fort to be a threat to their holdings in PA, so they hired Edward Braddock to purge the Gallic, or French, menace from Western PA. Because Braddock believed in the inefficient open field style of battle, this unsuccessful professional soldier and his troops were decimated by an ambush attacks in 1775 around the area now known as Braddock. Combined with other worldwide events, these battles lead to the French and Indian War that lasted from 1756 to 1763.

The French and Indian War influenced early Pittsburgh history by distracting the French long enough to allow William Pitt, a statesman and later Primer Minister in England, to deploy General Forbes to the colonies. In 1758, Forbes arrived in Pittsburgh with 6,000 men, which convinced the 500 French soldiers that defeat was eminent, so they burnt Fort Duquesne and fled. One of the most important events in Pittsburgh history occurred on November 26, 1758 when Gen. Forbes named the reclaimed land Pittsburgh, after William Pitt. To protect the recovered land from the French, Forbes stationed his subordinate Hugh Mercer in Pittsburgh with 300 men.

Mercer began construction on Fort Mercer at the Point to provide protection from the impending winter and the threat of French return. However, the French never returned to Pittsburgh because of severe losses incurred during the French and Indian War at their northern forts of Presque Isle and Niagara.

When Forbes' successor, General Stanwix, arrived in Pittsburgh, he decided that Fort Mercer was insufficient defense and he ordered the construction of a new fort. This fort was to be the largest fort in colonial America and was to be called Fort Pitt, again after William Pitt. The presence of a fort as massive as Fort Pitt was actually unnecessary because the French were occupied with their northern losses and the war, but the fort's presence demonstrates the military significance and purpose of the area. Due to the lack of military threat, the construction of Fort Pitt passed uneventfully and soldiers performed the first census of Pittsburgh in 1760. The population was a meager 151 residents.

Peace was not to last long at Fort Pitt, for in 1763, Pontiac of the Ottawa Indian tribe led a series of successful Indian attacks known as Pontiac's Rebellion. Pontiac observed the unfaithfulness of the British in obeying treaties and gathered several tribes together into an army. In PA, Pontiac and his army managed to destroy several forts, although Forts Ligonier, Bedford and Pitt remained free. In the middle of the war, Pontiac laid siege to Fort Pitt, which required the 600 residents of the Pittsburgh area to move into the fort for protection. This siege was the only battle fought at Fort Pitt until its closure in 1772. For ten weeks, Pontiac laid siege to the fort, until the British sent Col. Henry Bouquet to protect it. Bouquet's Army successfully broke the siege and ended the Rebellion at the battle of Bushy Run. While stationed in Pittsburgh, Bouquet was responsible for the addition of the blockhouse to Fort Pitt, which is the only remaining part of the fort.

Between Pontiac's Rebellion and the Revolutionary War, development of Pittsburgh began with the generation of an unofficial city layout in 1764 by John Campbell, a soldier at Ft. Pitt. Even though the Campbell Plan organized the land, disputes still arose over who owned the

land – Pennsylvania or Virginia. Pennsylvania’s claim for the land stemmed from purchase agreements with Indians, while Virginia’s claim was through the land grant from King George. Despite the disputes over land ownership, Pittsburgh continued to develop as a trading center, although it was still industrially primitive. The life of residents was simple and considered a “frontier of depravity” by a visiting minister because of the rude and vulgar behavior present.

This situation changed drastically when Great Britain began to tax the 13 Colonies for the military support against the French and Indians. Naturally, the colonies disagreed with the tax, paused the land dispute for Western PA, and declared war on Britain. Because of the Revolutionary War, local Indian tribes began to harass the citizens of Pittsburgh again, so the Virginia Committee sent John Neville and 100 men to occupy Fort Pitt and protect the city from the Indians. However, when Robert Campbell is promoter to commander of the fort, the policy changed to active defense (i.e. aggression) against Indians, which lasted until the end of the Revolutionary War and did not completely cease until 1792 at the battle of Fallen Timbers.

During the revolution, Pittsburgh began the important transition from a military garrison town to a trade center as it fulfilled the role of supply headquarters for the colonists. In addition, river trade down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans became established, despite constant Indian attacks and a Spanish presence in the south. The debate over possession of Western PA continued after the war until the Provisionary Government decided in favor of Pennsylvania. This progression of ownership was demonstrated in the development of counties. Virginia was in control of the Monongahela Country until 1781, shortly after PA and VA agreed to a final location for the Mason-Dixon line. At the time, six counties were present: Bucks, Chester, Philadelphia (all 1682), Bedford (1771), Westmoreland (1773 – Location of Pittsburgh), and Washington (1781). Currently, PA consists of 67 counties, including Allegheny County (1789), the location of Pittsburgh.

In 1783, the Revolutionary War concluded along with Pittsburgh’s primary role as a garrison and the transition to the commercial “Gateway to the West” commenced. This change

was most signified by the development of the Woods Plan, named after George Woods. Woods was hired by the heirs of William Penn to survey the land and distribute it into 490 lots based on the earlier Campbell Plan, with a standard size of 60 ft X 240 ft. This size could contain enough land for a house, garden, and stable and had a cost ranging from \$10 downtown to \$1 in the farming area of Oakland. The Penn family provided some free land for the establishment of the three original churches (First Presbyterian, Trinity Episcopal, and Smithfield Evangelical) and for educational purposes.

Before 1786, Pittsburgh was a pioneer village dominated by log cabins inhabited by people of Scotch-Irish, German, and English descent. The town possessed two medicos, two attorneys, two taverns, and a schoolhouse, although no religion or church dominated. Because the city lacked any real churches, Pittsburgh was considered to have so little morality that one visitor even noted that business was made by overcharging and cheating strangers. Goods such as wheat, flour, and skins were bought and sold in Philadelphia via Forbes Rd. and Baltimore via Braddock's Rd.

The condition of Pittsburgh began to change on the arrival of Hugh Henry Brackenridge in the city. Brackenridge is considered to be one of Pittsburgh's founding fathers, as he recognized the potential of the city and strived to reach this potential and improve conditions. In addition to his duties as a lawyer, Brackenridge was involved in three major projects: the creation of a newspaper, a University, and a county. His first project began with the recruitment of John Scull and Joseph Hall to start the Pittsburgh Post Gazette newspaper in 1786, with the first issue published on July 29, 1786. In addition to their reporting talents, these gentlemen brought along a press and paper and often bartered with poor families for the newspaper in exchange for their goods. Two problems existed with publishing in Pittsburgh – lack of paper and no effective distribution method. In 1791, the creation of a paper mill in Fayette City solved the first problem, while the establishment of a Post Office in 1788 with postmaster William Tilton solved the second problem. Brackenridge's second project was the formation of the Pittsburgh Academy in

1787 (today, the University of Pittsburgh), which was the first school of higher education west of the Alleghenies and provided local students with higher education possibilities at home. The third project was the establishment of Pittsburgh in a new county, Allegheny County.

In 1790, the U.S Census provided a detailed cross section of Pittsburgh's population, especially the separation into a biracial city of blacks and whites. The black residents started as slaves from Virginia and Maryland, while the white ethnic population consisted of West Europeans, such as the English, Scotch-Irish, and Germans. Churches were from the wide range of the Protestant religion, specifically Methodists, Presbyterians, and Quakers, but the Presbyterian Scotch-Irish represented the political elite of the city.

Pittsburgh of the 1790's further developed from a simple trading center into the "Gateway to the West," as several industries appeared specifically to provide immigrants traveling further west with necessities only available in the east. Merchandise available in Pittsburgh became more varied and of higher quality as highly skilled artisans moved into the area. Foreshadowing Pittsburgh's metal future, the first iron blast furnace appeared in 1792-93 under William Turnball. Turnball's furnace, the Shadyside Blast Furnace, was doomed due to the lack of iron ore close to the city and the furnace closed in 1794. Other burgeoning industries were saw milling, coal mining, and whiskey distilling.

The distilling of whiskey was an important business in Pittsburgh because it allowed farmers to easily ship their grains to the east in a value added product and provide many rural families with money. When Alexander Hamilton instated the Whiskey Excise Tax in the 1790s, Pittsburgh distillers protested the tax since it placed an unfair burden on them. In addition to the tax, the distillers had to pay for transportation over or around the mountains using flatboats, horses, or foot. The distillers in Western PA refused to pay the tax and started the largest armed insurrection in the U.S. until the Civil War. The rebels went so far as to burn down the house belonging to the head excise man, John Neville. Because of this violence, President Washington deployed the Whiskey Army of 13,000 men to suppress the rebels. This action was an important

event in U.S. history because it represented the first concerted effort of the government to support its laws. When confronted by this massive army, the Whiskey Rebellion collapsed and the rebels left Western PA or were pardoned, except for the ringleader David Bradford.

As the 18th century came to an end, Pittsburgh and the U.S. began the last round of wars with the Indians. The renewal of Indian wars spawned the construction of Pittsburgh's last fort, Fort Fayette, to replace the decrepit Fort Pitt. In addition, the wars were a blessing to the city because the military turned to Pittsburgh as a supply center for flour, meat, supplies, and boat travel. Fort Fayette remained a military presence in Pittsburgh until 1815, however its distance from the Point demonstrates the secondary role of the military in the commercial city.

Beside the cessation of major troubles with the Indians, the 1790's terminated the role of Pittsburgh as "Gateway to the West" with the establishment of larger cities and new states in the west. This role transitions into the manufacturing and industrial empire known as the Birmingham of America, after the English city of similar industry and pollution. Pittsburgh's industrial empire was formed from four main industries: glass, coal, boat making, and iron, along with smaller industries like textiles and tobacco.

In 1794, Pittsburgh entered onto the world map with a series of firsts including status as the first borough of Allegheny County, formation of the Eagle volunteer fire company, and the first glass house. The first glass house was built by Isaac Craig and James O'Hara and produced glass in 1797, although the first glass was produced in a factory owned by Albert Gallatin outside of Pittsburgh a few years earlier. A unique fact about all three men involved in the early glass business was that they were businessmen and knew very little about glass production. Gallatin, for example, was involved in financing the Louisiana Purchase, finalizing the Treaty of Ghent to end the War of 1812, and held the office of Secretary of Treasurer for the longest term ever. Another factory unique and important to Pittsburgh was the glass factory of Benjamin Bakewell in 1808. Rather than producing the basic staples of windowpanes and bottles, Bakewell's factory produced high quality flint glass or crystal that graced the tables of two Presidents. Glass was

shown to be one of Pittsburgh's prominent industries in the 1800's as the value of glass facilities jumped from a meager \$13,000 in 1803 to over 1.26 million dollars in 1836.

The production of glass in Pittsburgh was greatly improved by the discovery of vast deposits of bituminous coal throughout the region. In fact, Pittsburgh sits on one of the largest coal deposits in the world, known as the Pittsburgh Seam, where coal could be easily mined from the surface. Coal and its high quality product coke, first developed by Henry Clay Frick, created Pittsburgh's legendary smoke cloud, furthering its image as the Birmingham of America. Coal spurred development of several heavy industries including nail production, steam mills, and iron working. By 1815, several steam mills became prevalent including a cotton spinning facility under Peter Eltonhead and iron splitting facilities under Christopher Cowan.

Besides increasing the efficiency of glass production, coal and coke ushered in the most influential industry in Pittsburgh history, iron. The iron industry started as early as 1792 with the ill-fated Shadyside Furnace, although no furnaces were in the Pittsburgh proper until 1859. However, rolling mills and iron works were common. More time will be spent on this industry later.

In addition to these three big industries, several smaller industries thrived, including a second newspaper (called the Tree of Liberty), a circulating library owned by Zador Cramer, a detailed navigation manual for the three rivers called the Navigator (written by Cramer), the first bank, several breweries, and the rapid development of boat travel. Boat travel represented an important development to Pittsburgh, as it decreased the time to ship goods over land, especially since roads to the west in 1800 consisted primarily of Indian trails and military roads. A quality road system was not present until after the War of 1812, so the city turned to river transportation. Due to the shallow and treacherous nature of the three rivers, flat boats (or Kentucky boats) and keelboats were popular. These boats were useful for downstream trade, but flat boats could not return upstream and keelboats were slow. The keelboat operators offer a look into the seedier side of Pittsburgh life. A good example of this side was the crewman Mike Fink, whose

reputation for fighting, drinking and partying was well known. However, this situation changed with the invention of the steamboat by John Fitch and Robert Fulton. The steamboat first arrived in Pittsburgh after Fulton sent his associate Nicholas Roosevelt to travel down river to New Orleans and investigate the use of steamboats. In 1811, Fulton launched the New Orleans steamboat and sent it down to New Orleans, which demonstrated that the steamboat could decrease the journey time of one month to Philadelphia by Conestoga wagon to a matter of weeks by river travel.

Along with the booming industries, Pittsburgh's population also began to blossom from 376 people of the 1790's to 1565 in 1800, to 4786 in 1810. The population changed rapidly as the 1810's progressed into the War of 1812. This war had a positive influence on Pittsburgh through redirection of trade through the city in order to avoid the restricted sea routes. In addition, the east began to rely on Pittsburgh for a variety of goods, especially for the military, and military commerce became so important to Pittsburgh that the Allegheny Arsenal was established in 1813. The arsenal was responsible for construction and repair of military equipment up to the Civil War and contained barracks, shops, magazines for arms and powder, and stables. As the population continued to grow, Pittsburgh could no longer count as a borough and was incorporated as a city in 1816 with Ebenezer Denny, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, as the first mayor. The new city was divided into four wards and would not change physically until 1837 with the addition of Bayardstown as the 5th ward. With conditions in Pittsburgh as they were, the city was easily earning its Birmingham reputation as the population and pollution kept increasing, although it still had problems with muddy streets and loose animals downtown.

Conditions in the city began to change when the population doubled to 7248 in the 1820's. Houses were being numbered, streets were paved, hogs and dogs were being confined, and one of Pittsburgh's first bridges was built in 1819, to later be replaced by John Roebling of Brooklyn Bridge fame. In 1824, a new waterworks was begun, yet it was not sufficient to help prevent a string of deadly cholera outbreaks starting in 1832 and lasting until the 1850's.

However, on a better note, Pittsburgh was improving under the political period known as the “Era of Good Feeling,” where the politics were dominated by character rather than party affiliation, although Pittsburgh had a Republican stance until 1934.

While Pittsburgh was politically happy, problems began to occur as national transportation improved. In 1816, the U.S. Government struck a blow to the economy of Pittsburgh by deciding to route the National Road through Wheeling, rather than Pittsburgh. The effects of this blow were negated in the 1830’s, when the Strict Constructionists of the Constitution, including Presidents Monroe and Jackson, decided that taxes should not pay for projects that specifically benefit one region. The National Road became a toll road or turnpike across PA. Another strike to Pittsburgh was the construction of the Erie Canal. Known as “Clinton’s Big Ditch” after Dewitt Clinton, who proposed the 360-mile long canal, the canal siphoned trade from Pittsburgh and Philadelphia through the Great Lakes. To counter this problem, the two cities begin building the PA Mainline Canal to connect the cities using a combination of canals, railroads, and inclined planes at the Allegheny Portage. Although the canal was a technological wonder, it was an economic flop, especially due to the arrival of the Baltimore & Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroads in the 1850’s. Travel in the 1830’s also improved on the rivers due to the formation of the Monongahela Navigation Company in 1836. This company finished dredging the rivers and installed a series of locks and dams to make the river more navigable.

The 1830’s were also a time for various improvements in the entertainment industry of Pittsburgh. In 1833, the Pittsburgh Theater, affectionately known as Old Drury, was established and hosted a long series of famous events. One popular form of entertainment was the minstrel shows that played on prejudice against blacks. These shows sustained Pittsburgh’s most famous early artist, Stephen Foster, who wrote many minstrel songs still known today, like Old Susanna and Camp Town Races. Although he was somewhat successful while alive, Foster died penniless in a hospital. Another famous artist was David Blythe, who painted scenes of rural and urban

settings and represented the ideal starving artist. Unappreciated while alive, Blythe's work only gained recognition after his penniless death. At the end of the 1830's, Pittsburgh's population once again showed an astounding increase of three times to 21,000 people.

With the start of the 1840's, many varied advancements were made around Pittsburgh. 1842 saw a new courthouse designed by John Chislett and a new water supply system that would not be completed for seven years. One year later, Pittsburgh is officially declared a Catholic diocese under Bishop O'Connor. The steady increase of immigrants to Pittsburgh, specifically the Irish Catholics, caused the formation of the Temperance Movement and Know-Nothing Party in Pittsburgh. The temperance movement stemmed from the danger of having a drunk operating the increasingly complex and heavy machinery, hence the appearance of "Irish need not apply signs" throughout the city. The "Know Nothing" party, formally the American party, believed that Catholics and immigrants were the cause of all problems. This party falls as a minority to the two main parties existing at the time, the Whigs and the Democrats. The American Party played an important role in Pittsburgh history through the election of the caustic Joe Barker to Mayor. Barker, a staunch anti-catholic Evangelist street preacher from Bayardstown, was elected Mayor for a term while incarcerated for starting a riot. While Mayor, Barker went so far as to sue the new Bishop when the Catholic owned Mercy Hospital released some waste into the street.

Development of the city continued with the construction of the Allegheny Cemetery in 1844 and the installation of the first telegraph system a year later. However, development came to an abrupt halt on April 10, 1845. On this day, a Great Fire raged through Pittsburgh and destroyed 56 acres of downtown including around a thousand buildings, causing \$2.5 to \$8 million in damages. Luckily, only two people lost their lives to the fire. The devastation from the fire captured the hearts of the world so that approximately a quarter of a million dollars was donated to the city from around the nation to assist the reconstruction. During reconstruction, the first Jewish congregation, the Rodef Shalom Temple, was formed and shortly thereafter, the new Monongahela House was completed. This hotel was to become the hotel of celebrities and

presidents. A famous singer, Jenny Lind, stopped in Pittsburgh and sang while staying at the hotel. More importantly, the hotel housed Lincoln on his post election tour. Lincoln made a point to stop in Pittsburgh because of the overwhelming support he received from Allegheny in his election for his policies of free labor and high protective tariffs. Lincoln spoke his famous rhetorical question “Where is the state of Allegheny?” from the hotel, referring to the amazing influence of the region in electoral politics.

Another important development after the Great Fire was the incorporation of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which connected Philadelphia to Pittsburgh and allowed Pittsburgh to easily distribute its products to the east. The final important developments in Pittsburgh before the civil war were in the medical area. Throughout the 1840’s and 50’s, Pittsburgh was plagued by cholera epidemics and in 1849, the Birmingham area was almost completely depopulated. Therefore, several hospitals were created including Mercy Hospital in 1847 and the Western Pennsylvania Hospital in 1853. A pioneer department specializing in the treatment of the insane was founded at the Western PA Hospital – Dixmont with funds from healthcare reform advocate Dorothy Dix.

With all the growth in Pittsburgh, the city had grown to become the 16th largest city in the U.S with a population of over 49,000. The city contained around 100 industries and 400 manufacturing facilities, with iron as a primary industry. There were well over 25 rolling mills in the Pittsburgh proper and in 1859, Graft, Bennot, and Company completed the first permanent blast furnace as part of the Clinton Iron Works. Iron manufacturing value had increased from \$56,548 in 1803 to \$525,616 in 1817 and an impressive 6.3 million dollars in 1836 and 1850. With these revenues, Pittsburgh had definitely earned its title as the Birmingham Of America and was well on its way to becoming the Iron and Glass Manufacturing Center of the United States in 1860.