

# Suggested Topics for Local Historiography

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After sixty-nine volumes of papers published on Lancaster County history, one may be expected to question whether there is much more to be written on the subject. The answer is an emphatic "yes!" Actually very little has been touched when the potential amount of local history to be written is considered. Nor is there much likelihood that we will run out of subjects worthy of examination and publication; after all, history pursues our footsteps, nipping at our heels, and reminding us that what we said and did one moment before is now "history."

The purpose of this article is to suggest some areas of local history which are commended to the local history writer in search of a subject. The idea that history must be a lofty account of man's most heroic efforts in his struggles with the fates or some more tangible villain no longer moves many historians although timid souls often seem to be overwhelmed by that notion. Of greater value to us are the accounts of normal political, social, economic and intellectual activity; these are the stories that answer our questions concerning our heritage, and which explain the causes of the "great events."

All we demand of our writers is that they use reliable sources, get the facts in presentable order, and ask themselves "Why?" "What was the cause?" and "What was the effect?" Leopold von Ranke insisted that the historian must look at the past without being influenced by present prejudices, and must describe the events of the past as they actually happened. His followers frequently took the old scholar too literally and ignored his other advice, which was that historians should study thoroughly the character, personality, tendencies and disposition of the author of each source.

The typical local historian of years ago was a chronicler of events; he compiled what had happened into "annals." The chronicler sometimes took a critical view of his sources, excluding those which seemed to him of doubtful veracity, and including those which appeared accurate and truthful. He rarely, if ever, attempted to analyze the causes of the event, or its effects. The early historian did not ask "why?" His works appeared either in chronological form, or in "departmentalized" form, such as wars, civil lists, physicians, lawyers, churches, prominent citizens (prominence often was attained by the generous subscription for the purchase of several copies of the published work), boroughs and townships.

The less-ambitious chronicler prepared compilations of information on a limited scope or subject; later, when subjected to critical analysis, the result was given the dignity of a monograph.

It must not be assumed that early works by earnest local historians—amateur or trained—are without worth. Today's scholars would be impoverished if someone had not bothered to record "what actually happened." In view of the lack of critical standards, it is amazing that so much of our early historiography is accurate and well done. Amateur local historians, especially, appear to have had uncanny insights at times. The worth of the local historian must be measured by the degree to which all professional historians are indebted to him, not simply by his unsophisticated approach to local history.

Consequently, we continue to value highly the contributions of "unlettered" amateurs as well as those of scholarly attainment. No contributor to the *Journal* has ever received a "rejection slip" for choice of subject, grammatical errors, unpolished style of writing or an unpopular viewpoint. In fact, rejection of manuscripts occurs rarely, and then only when the author violates the principles of historical accuracy, or has nothing new to offer. When a writer states "An history" or "An historical—" we simply shudder and quietly change the article to "A".

The history of various ethnic groups in Lancaster in the nineteenth century has not been touched at all writers of local history. From the 1840 to 1900 many hundreds of German settlers from Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Baden, Prussia, Saxony and Hesse-Darmstadt poured into Lancaster to settle on the hilly southwest quadrant of the city, known locally as "Cabbage Hill," and regarded by the politicians as a Democratic stronghold. These good, sturdy folk from the rugged hills and valleys of southern Germany came to Lancaster to escape the economic and political plight of mid-nineteenth century Germany. Here they built their little houses and planted their "cabbage" gardens along the narrow streets of the 8th Ward, secure and contented in the shadows of St. Joseph's Catholic Church and Christ Lutheran Church steeples. A devout, closely-knit group of people who became stalwart Americans without losing the best of their continental culture, these Germans have contributed greatly to the history and life of Lancaster, but they do not appear in our history. Why not?

Smashing into the early frontier with their rugged individualism and disdain for the Quaker tradition, the Scotch-Irish settlers of Lancaster County left a tradition of their own which fills many volumes of history. These Presbyterian frontiersmen were said to have conquered the wilds and Indians of Pennsylvania with their nervous trigger fingers grasping their trusty weapons, Bibles in their coat pockets, and flasks in their hip pockets! But the Irish who came here a century later to dig canals and build railroads, and later labor in the iron works of our county were sons of Erin. The McGoverns and the McGranns and the Reillys came as contractors, and with them came droves of Irishmen to drive the teams, break the rocks, and lay the ribbons of iron. It is said that Lancaster's "Irishtown" was along East King Street from Church Street to Marshall Street, and that many an Irish jig was danced, and many an Irish whiskey downed on the "commons" be-

tween Pershing Avenue (then Freiberg Street) and S. Ann Street. But for that digging and driving and dancing and drinking, the Irishmen of Lancaster are not to be found in the history now written. Two other groups which have not been studied historically are the Italian and Greek settlers, most of whom arrived in Lancaster near the end of the nineteenth century. Both ethnic groups have contributed heavily to the remarkably substantial character of the city; both groups are basically conservative, stable, civic-minded, and industrious. Delinquency and law-breaking is almost unknown among them. Why have these splendid citizens been overlooked in the writing of local history?

The Negro has been a part of Lancaster's history for many generations; indeed, Lancaster County in 1790 was one of the largest slave-holding counties in Pennsylvania. Newspaper accounts during the last century indicate Lancaster's Negroes were fairly well-integrated with the white residents of the southeast quadrant of the city. Census records reveal the Lancaster Negro as being as well-educated as his white neighbor, but his employment was limited to whitewashing, draying, hotel service, and domestic service. A few were barbers, iron works laborers, or plasterers. But we have nothing written on the Negro community in Lancaster County except a short piece many years ago on the Columbia race riots. Here is a fertile field for a graduate student with interests in history and sociology.

Aside from possible papers concerning Lancaster's ethnic groups, the local historian will find the area of population and immigration-emigration studies ripe for examination. Mobility of the population from urban to rural areas, and the character of such changes ought to come under the scrutiny of the historian.

The sports-minded local historian will find our published accounts of life in Lancaster County barren of material on the development of sports including those which have been organized. "Old-time boxer" Johnny Hauck has taken a deep interest in the history of local boxing, and his methodical preservation of records plus his own knowledge of the sport will be invaluable to the historian. But what of the history of baseball, basketball, football and golf in Lancaster? While we are mentioning the history of sports and the promotion of health, we should encourage some writer to study the watering places, health springs, and spas of the Garden Spot. Drove of people took the waters at Ephrata decades before that water was peddled from door-to-door in the highly-polluted suburban areas. And that brings us to another untouched subject! We need a history of local plagues and epidemics. The cholera plague of 1854 has been examined, but we have had many other melancholy events in our long history, notably the typhoid, polio and influenza epidemics. Occasionally we have submitted to us a paper on an illustrious physician or dentist, but the history of medicine has been neglected. We must not overlook the darker side of healing in our Pennsylvania German culture: the hex or "pow-wow" doctor, and his (more often "her") magical treatments.

Readers of old newspapers in our newspaper library frequently comment on but never write about the old-time medicinal preparations offered for sale in large, eye-catching advertisements. Mishler's "Herb Bitters" (was that the "Geritol of a century ago?) was concocted in Lancaster, and ad-

vertised with a convincing self-assurance that covered whole pages of newspaper and cured all ailments including cancer. Lydia Pinkham already was a formidable competitor for the patent medicine brewers, but the prim and proper Victorian ladies of Lancaster could not open their newspapers without witnessing the latest skirmish in the battle of the medicinal wonders: Dr. Pardee's Remedy was outdone by Vogeler's St. Jacob's Oil in the inventory of pains and ailments supposed to be cured by the tonics and balms, but neither could match the claims of Salvation Oil. Parker's Ginger Tonic was good for everything from weak lungs to gout; the same concern also advertised hair balsam which restored natural color, removed dandruff and held on to falling hair. Meanwhile, Dr. Kennedy's Gravel Remedy, Dr. Thomas' "Eclectric Oil", and Winchester's Hypophosphite of Lime and Soda (for consumptives and female weakness) vied with each other in large fancy black type. Imagine the amount of history behind those old advertisements! Imagine the impact on American health the medicinal alcohol and printers' ink provided!

Alcohol probably had more effect upon the social history of our country, and for some unexplained reason our local historians have been reluctant to investigate the role of alcohol in the life and culture of Lancaster. At the present time a history of the brewing industry is being written, and a similar endeavor is planned for the distilling industry. But the temperance movement in Lancaster, although well-organized and vigorous in attack, has not been explored by the critical writer. At one time Lancaster County was the brewing and distilling center of Pennsylvania. Why? It also was the recognized citadel of conservative morality, where piety was second only to Republicanism in the catalog of qualifications for public office—and a respectable credit rating! Some brilliant historian may even dedicate himself to the task of examining in all its fascinating detail the workings of the Rural Mind in Lancaster County.

It is a reasonable assumption that nearly every amateur historian has given warm thought to the presence of quaint old inns and taverns, but apparently it is unreasonable to expect such persons to sit down and write a history of those fine old hostelries and not-so-fine old tippling houses. The Sign of the Hat, the Sign of the Cat, the Sign of the Plough, the Sign of the Sow, the Sign of the Sorrel Horse, and the creaking, squeaking signs of the Grape, Indian Queen, Cross Keys, Lamb, Leopard, Lion, and other beasts of the barnyard and jungle have long since disappeared. Now the Stevens House has been razed, the Wheatland has been smashed to bits, and next month the Brunswick's steel and concrete will meet the wrecker's ball. Soon the Franklin House (Hotel Pennsylvania) will crumble, and all that will remain is the King Douglas known to old Lancastrians as the Hotel Weber and to ancient Lancastrians as the Leopard. We need some histories of Lancaster's old public houses as well as the newer ones being destroyed by "urban renewal."

Industries of Lancaster ought to make splendid subjects for historical papers. Our major industry of the early and mid-nineteenth century was cotton spinning and weaving. One would never know it from the amount of history written concerning that industry and its vast mills, most of which are still standing. When the Conestoga Cotton Mills were begun in the late

1840s, the leading promoter for Lancaster and himself was David Longenecker. Despite his leadership in the cotton mills, banking houses and mercantile establishments, "King David", as the *Intelligencer* preferred to call him, left almost no record of himself. The new historical research tool of psychoanalysis could have a field day with him! But first the genealogist must uncover the facts of "King David."

Other industries for which we need good historical accounts are the cigarmakers (segar-makers), agricultural machine works, and the umbrella factories. In the 1880s and 1890s, the cigar industry was tremendous. Its history? Unwritten! Numerous country works dotted the landscape, their machine shops and little foundries turning out the latest labor-saving implements for the busy farmer. Perhaps some day a member of the "Rough and Tumble Engineers Historical Association" will write us a history of the industry that produced, in one instance, the gigantic, world-wide New Holland Machine Division. Sherwin-Williams Company likes to persuade the buying public that its paint products "cover the world" but at one time another industry did just that feat with its umbrellas. Lancaster was the umbrella-maker for the world, and its largest umbrella plant was the Follmer-Clogg complex. The J. C. Van Sciver store and the Dodge Cork Company plant occupy two of the Follmer-Clogg structures. No one has covered or (recovered?) the history of this industry.

The motor car does not possess either the charm or the legitimacy of the horse-drawn carriage; however, we would be unrealistic to say it has not had the greatest single influence on the economy and culture of America. Early in the present century motor car dealers and garages in Lancaster commenced the task of putting America on wheels. About 1500 different brands of motor cars have been built or sold in the United States, from the "A.B.C." to the "Zust", and many of them have appeared in local dealers' showrooms. What hasn't appeared is a history of the motor car and truck in Lancaster. Wouldn't you like to know who sold the Abbot-Cleveland in 1917, the Ajax in 1914, the American Chocolate in 1903, the Dixie Flyer in 1915, the Dragon in 1921, or the Izzet of 1910? How many World War I (The Great War) veterans remember the Rowe army truck manufactured in Lancaster by the Rowe-Stuart Motors Corporation? Numerous other local industries such as the K-D Manufacturing Company had long had a part in the automotive industry.

Lancaster has done much to sweeten America's "sweet tooth" with its many chocolate and candy industries. A good history of this important industry, even if chocolate-coated, would not be difficult to digest.

Whenever we think of industries we remember the working men. They haven't fared any better than their employers at the hands of the local historians. Around the turn of the century Lancaster was caught up in a strong labor union movement with no less than two dozen labor unions representing local workers. Although the Typographical Union, No. 70, is the oldest local union, strikes by the Carpenters and the Cordwainers (Shoemakers) were known in Lancaster as early as 1836. An ambitious student may find the writing of the history of local unions challenging to his research abilities. Naturally, our encouragement is offered.

In this age of strikes, demonstrations, and picket lines, it may come as

a surprise to some patriotic souls to learn that a number of non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Pennsylvania Line after the Revolution revolted at Lancaster, and marched to Philadelphia to make demands of the Supreme Executive Council and the Congress. This ought to make a good historical essay.

Because Lancaster County rarely suffered intensely from the panics and depressions which reoccurred periodically throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is insufficient reason for historical writers to ignore the actual impact business cycles had upon the local economy. By using the new research tool of econometrics the economic historian probably could produce entirely new insights in the understanding of Lancaster's economic development. We know that the panics of 1819 and 1857 hit Lancaster rather hard, according to early newspaper accounts. The change in the demands throughout the world for American commodities disrupted the economy in 1819, driving the prices of cotton and flour down about thirty per cent in less than one year, and causing numerous failures of manufacturers, merchants and banks. The crisis in 1857 closed the locomotive works and the cotton mills in Lancaster, and brought similar hardships to the county's iron industries. There are abundant hints that the contraction of 1887-1888 gave Lancaster's business men a rude awakening which was transformed into action by the downturn of the economy in 1890.

The impact of the iron industry in the Columbia-Marietta area upon the economy between 1840 and 1890 currently is under study. Lester Newcomer prepared an interesting account of the Lancaster Board of Trade and its successor, the Chamber of Commerce, which we will publish shortly. William Shand has under preparation a history of the effort to bring new industry to Lancaster and expand existing business during the twentieth century. Someone could assist the students of local history greatly by exploring the economic factors involved in the development of the transportation industry and its systems in this locality.

Strangely enough, the history of the communications business has not been written. We know that the first telegraph line after the experimental line was demonstrated was placed between Harrisburg and Lancaster in 1845, and by January 1846 was in service. We also know that the first telephone message (actually a cornet solo) was heard in Lancaster in 1879. But we have nothing recorded on the development of the telegraph and telephone systems in Lancaster city and county. Wireless telegraphy and radio have been ignored by the local historians despite the pioneering efforts of several Lancaster scientists. As early as 1913 Hamilton Watch Company received wireless signals from the Naval Observatory at Arlington. Atop School Lane, near the Williamson mansion, Dr. D. Galen McCaa experimented with radio research. Television has come to Lancaster in several forms, with two transmitting channels handling national network programs; and the RCA color tube plant. Must we wait until our color television receiving sets look as antiquated as the crystal sets and "speaking trumpet" loudspeakers of the early 1920s before some good soul decides to write the history of television in Lancaster? Some years ago Dr. Horace Barnes prepared an illuminating history of the electric power and gas industries. It was a survey history and necessarily did not examine in detail all aspects of

those utilities. The little matter of where to plant the utility poles and the painting thereof obsessed the minds of the city fathers to no end, and their quarrels with the utility companies became so laughable the running fracas caused more delight than a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. By the time the city fathers had become adjusted to the presence of "those stark and ugly sentinels of the greedy utility trusts" a new and even more entertaining game developed in Lancaster. Inasmuch as the street car, electric power and gas utilities all seemed to be headed by a gentleman who also happened to be the undoubted leader of the Republican party, the more vehement of the common citizenry found great sport in attacking the "trust." The "trust" could afford to take a detached, if not amused, view of the quixotic tactics until one day a coalition of supposedly political independents put Frank Musser into the mayor's office. The new mayor, who was to become a hero in the style of the Greek tragic drama, soon had the trolley company at its wit's end. This story ought to be told in print.

Before the trolley car was able to reach the villages and boroughs of Lancaster County the public omnibus provided that accommodation. Stage lines ran to all parts of the county much as did the later trolleys. So far no one has described the history of the stage lines. Toll roads were a prominent feature as well as obstacle on the country landscape. Each road had its stock company and its toll houses, each with a gate, or in the dialect of our Germanic country folk, a "Schlagbaum". The advent of the motor car was a challenge to the private toll roads, and the Lancaster Automobile Club made the challenge more challenging. By the time Henry Ford's new Model A was replacing the venerable Model T the toll road was being replaced by the public highway, and usually the change in ownership had little to do with change in the condition of the surface. Perhaps some day an automobilist with a historical sense will tell us about the toll roads, the muddy ruts, and the demise of the toll house.

The amusement park was quite "the thing" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; a few of the healthier specimens are still going strong but not in our county. Several concrete piers are all that remain of the roller-coaster at Maple Grove, and all the rides and thrills are a thing of the past. Conestoga Park and Captain People's Park are almost beyond memory. Who is going to do some research on the old institution, that bedlam of roaring rides, lusty promoting, and the mechanical strains of the merry-go-round, all well-seasoned with the odors of frankfurters, creosote and spilled Moxie?

Few remember the Lancaster County Fair, a casualty, we are told, of the determination by its managers to keep the fairgrounds and midway free of gambling, drinking, evil sideshows and lewd exhibits. The Law and Order Society discovered that fifty-one gambling games and an extremely lewd girl show were featured on the midway in 1929 while most of the Law and Order Society's directors were away on their vacations, unfortunately. Despite the prevalence of sin at the fairgrounds, other products of Lancaster County were exhibited in competition for prizes. Frank R. Diffenderffer prepared a history of the Lancaster County Agricultural and Horticultural Society for the period 1866-1905, but later fairs—especially those which became so popular during the early twentieth century—have not come under the scrutiny of the historian.

Yesterday's historians generally preferred their social history to be a concoction of marzipan souls whose saintly anatomies were clothed in respectability right down to the tips of their clay feet. As a consequence only the society of today seems perched on the brink of the fiery pit. The "good old days" had their many virtues, and they had a few interesting vices, too. Social history to local historians too often has been the institutions of the aristocracy and the more ambitious bourgeoisie. We prefer to think of social history in a broader sense: the history of the social institutions and conventions of all classes. While the upper and lower classes seem to provide more entertaining if not naughtier material for the researcher, the great middle class to which every respectable, God-fearing, patriotic American belongs without question holds the key to many riddles in American history, and from this class we may yet learn the secret of America's greatness, and possibly its *hamartia*.

While not pleasant subjects, crime and social disorganization were characteristics of our earlier populations, and ought not be ignored. Juvenile delinquency in the form of street gangs brought forth editorial thunderings in the 1840-era local newspapers; there were the "East Orange Street Gang" and the "Lime Street Boys". Saloons were a prominent feature in Lancaster and not all saloons were considered above reproach. Inasmuch as the early polling places were established in saloons and public houses, a connection often was made between "corrupt" politicians and the hapless voters.

Since 1890 the Law and Order Society has been guarding the morals of Lancaster city with what some persons regard as a tireless zeal. It may come as a shock to the good folk of Lancaster to learn that the City of Churches was not always free from organized vice. In 1914, according to the Law and Order Society, forty-five houses of ill repute flourished in the city and were visited by "3000 to 5000 men weekly, including college men, high school and even grammar school boys, and spent \$6,000 to \$9,000 there each week." In the same year, the report revealed, there were burlesque shows every Saturday afternoon and evening in the Opera House crowded by 1200 men and boys at each performance, and dance halls, which were "recruiting grounds of vice and the ruination of young girlhood in many instances," were unregulated and unsupervised. Motion pictures were found to be a direct incentive to immorality a third of the time. Turning to liquor the Society was distressed to locate 72 saloons "with innumerable side-rooms or back-rooms" in the city, and another 250 in the county. Adding to the unhappy situation were 50 beer clubs "which broke the law constantly and were allied with vice." Singled out for special censure was one beer club which held "sacred concerts on Sunday and was a veritable sink-hole of iniquity." The Turn-Verein was characterized as "one of the worst centers of vice and corruption in the city." Ten-thousand persons including boys and girls patronized the city's numerous gambling devices in 1914. Within a decade the Law and Order Society had abolished vice in Lancaster, much to the disgust of saloon-keepers, gamblers and other colorful personalities. Turning its attention to evil and lewd magazines, the Society was able to have 104 publications, ranging from *Scarlet Confessions* to *Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang*, *Winter Annual*, banned from sale. By 1962 the venerable Society was able to pronounce its efforts wholly successful in Lancaster, find-



ing Lancaster "pure" but expressing its dismay that vice (prostitution) had fled to Columbia, beyond the financial reach of the Society. The efforts of the Society to rid Lancaster of vice would make a most interesting paper of both historical and sociological worth.

Although the Law and Order Society did not always regard the local constabulary with the esteem one expects to find among kindred warriors—a coolness occasioned by the periodic discovery of policemen consorting with saloon-keepers, gamblers and other practitioners of vice—the Lancaster police have been a well-organized and effective agent in the fight against crime. Some local policemen and constables gained colorful reputations for always "getting their man." The sight of Herbert Steigerwalt and George (Buzzy) Lollar racing their black carriage in hot pursuit of a wrongdoer was a spectacle of terror to the criminal element. By the time A. K. Spurrier and W. S. Doebler had processed the accused persons through their aldermanic courts all the weight and majesty of justice had been brought to bear on the evil souls, and the lesson was not easily forgotten. Historians of the local police will find a rich and untouched treasury of stories concerning the on-going battle to preserve law and order.

Other subjects which ought to stimulate local historians into action are the rise and decline of private banks, the development of the stock yard industry, and evolution of the city government. Architecture in Lancaster never was covered fully. In the realm of religion, we cannot find any account of the evangelistic movement in our county, and the attitude of the regular clergy to it. Nor have we seen an adequate history of the Roman Catholic churches, many of which have a long and illustrious history. The political movements of the nineteenth century are largely unexplained except for the very early part of the century and the Anti-Masonic period.

The student of local political history could amuse himself without end with the internecine strife engaged in by the Republican factions (the hog ring, whiskey ring, Yellow Front Cigar Store boys, &c.) between periodic clobberings of the local Democracy. During the Gilded Age politicians were not noted for excessive piety; and Lancaster County was a microcosm of the U. S. Grant administration, an institution not regarded as the paragon of integrity and political piety.

Around the turn of the century Socialists started turning up on local ballots. Elmer Smith ran for mayor and received 124 votes, a feat which didn't shake the foundations of the Hamilton Club. By 1936 the Socialists polled 241 votes and the Communists picked up 63, one of which was cast in Maytown, that impregnable bastion of Cameron Republicanism. Think of the fun one could have with political history! Why not have a go at it?