

REVERSE AND RESPONSE

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

About a year ago, I got off my usual theorem in this series to tell you about some degrading remarks certain characters have written about Pennsylvania. People like the late Carl Sandberg, and that sweet scented geranium from Baltimore, H. L. Mencken. It was fun for a change to relate what we called "Penn-Negations" and here we go again, lest we get smug in our admiration of Pennsylvania. I didn't mention Mencken enjoyed heckling his neighboring Pennsylvania. He wrote that Lincoln gave a wretched, imbecillic Gettysburg Address. He said Lincoln intended to say something intelligent, but when he looked out over the faces of "dull Pennsylvania peasants from adjacent farms, he knew the audience would be mortally offended if he were brilliant". There was not only Mencken. The writer Jack London, long before his Alaska days made the mistake of passing through Erie and the police tossed him into jail as a vagrant. At the time he was, so what's the beef? Edgar Allan Poe never approved of proper Philadelphians, so he didn't lose any status when he moved into town. But his writing in the Philadelphia period turned more ghoulish, his drinking increased, his health began to crumble and he would have jumped into the Schuylkill once, except for the fact that attempted suicide is a crime in Pennsylvania. All these troubles I gather are because he invited his mother-in-law to live with him, although that's never been proved. Did you know that Stephen C. Foster

dropped out of Towanda Academy and then Jefferson College, and that Stephen Crane played shortstop and captained the Lafayette baseball team, but he made no bones about disliking Lafayette and transferred to Syracuse, which he couldn't stand either. Richard Harding Davis quit Swarthmore and was tossed out of Lehigh, where he was a halfback on the football team. Their malefactions were certainly their own faults and not those of Pennsylvania. Oh, we've been insulted by experts. Marquis Childs called Philadelphia "the City of Brotherly Loot" and when asked what should be done about Pittsburgh, Architect Frank Lloyd Wright said simply, "Abandon It!" Mencken once said that Greensburg had sheer, revolting monstrosity. W. C. Fields related that he went to Philadelphia one Saturday night and found it closed. One smart alek in the San Francisco Chronicle two years ago called Chicago, "the Scranton of the midwest"--I'd say Chicago should be flattered. The same fellow wrote that Philadelphia was the town George Washington liked so much that he wintered at Valley Forge. Would you believe that in this game of jocularities about Pennsylvania--even Benjamin Franklin did so? He called Pennsylvania in one letter "a good country to die in, though a bad one to live in". Benjamin Franklin? I don't believe it.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.